

**Minutes of the Meeting of
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority
Audit and Performance Management Committee
held in the Oak Room, Headquarters, Shrewsbury
on Thursday, 7 December 2017 at 2.00 pm**

**Present
Members**

Councillors Adams, Hosken, Mellings, Milner and Price

Officers

Rod Hammerton	Chief Fire Officer	CFO
Andy Johnson	Deputy Chief Fire Officer	DCFO
James Walton	Treasurer	
Joanne Coadey	Head of Finance	HoF
Ged Edwards	Planning, Performance and Communications Manager	PPCM
Adam Matthews	Assistant Group Commander	AGC
Jon Temple	Assistant Group Commander	AGCSR
Guy Williams	Group Manager Prevention	GMP
Lynn Ince	Executive Support Officer	ESO

External Bodies

Mr McLarnon	Grant Thornton, External Audit
Mr Chadderton	Audit Services, Shropshire Council

1 Apologies for Absence

Councillors Pinter and Sahota

2 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

None

3 Public Questions

None

4 Minutes

Resolved that the Committee agree the minutes of the Audit and Performance Management Committee meeting, held on 14 September 2017, and that the Chair sign them as a correct record.

5 Audit and Performance Management Committee Work Plan 2016/17

This report put forward a 2018/19 Work Plan for the Audit and Performance Management Committee for consideration and approval by Members. The report also reviewed implementation of the activities listed in last year's Work Plan.

Resolved that the Committee approve the Audit and Performance Management Committee Work Plan 2018/19, attached as an appendix to the report, without amendment.

6 External Audit Annual Audit Letter

The Committee received the External Auditor's Annual Audit Letter, which summarised the key findings of the work carried out for the year ended 31 March 2017.

Mr McLarnon presented the Annual Audit Letter and summarised the key outcomes as detailed in the Executive Summary on page 3 of the Letter. Mr McLarnon stated that he was confident that issues such as the valuation of assets, as detailed on page 4 of the Letter, would be resolved and that it was, overall, a positive message about the audit. Officers had provided, and delivered on a timely basis, good quality working papers, and Mr McLarnon commented that he was confident that the timescales for the 2017/18 audit would be achieved next year.

Members queried if the setting of the materiality level for the audit at 2% was standard. Mr McLarnon explained that the company standard is to set materiality at between 0.5 and 3%. 2% is an average figure, which would only be changed if significant or fundamental errors were found in an audit.

Mr McLarnon undertook to amend the reference on page 4 of the Letter to the Audit and Accounts Committee. This should read the Audit and Performance Management Committee.

Resolved that the Committee note the Annual Audit Letter for the Year Ended 31 March 2017.

7 Internal Audit Plan from 2018/19

This report recommended that the Fire Authority approve the programme of audit work for the financial year 2018/19 as set out in the report.

The HoF presented the report and explained that the Authority reviews its Internal Audit plan, for the coming year, on an annual basis. The HoF also highlighted the change from a 4 year to a 3 year plan and the impact that the implementation of Shropshire Council's Enterprise Resource System will have on internal audit services from 2019/20 onwards.

Mr Chadderton explained that Internal Audit, together with officers from the Service review the audit plan each year, taking any risks into account. Provision from April 2019 will need to be considered carefully and this will be brought back to the Committee in late 2018 for discussion.

Resolved that the Committee agree to recommend that the Fire Authority approve the audit plan for 2017/18, as set out in the report.

8 Corporate Risk Management Summary

This report updated Members on the status of risks on the Corporate Risk Register.

The PPCM presented the report and highlighted the issues set out in Section 6 on page 2 of the report, entitled Current Position.

With regard to the Enterprise Resource Planning System (ERP), the PPCM advised that the Service is looking to stay with ResourceLink due to the resources already invested in this system. An options appraisal to identify the impact for the Service is being undertaken, with the aim of a report on this being presented to the Service Management Team before the end of the year.

The PPCM explained that a new risk, which relates to the Integrated Communication Control System (ICCS), had been added to the Risk Register. The system provider has informed the Service that the current maintenance contract will not be renewed in April 2018 with the ICCS becoming obsolete in August 2018. Officers have written to Motorola regarding this and are meeting with the company next week to discuss the issue further. The issue has been escalated to the Risk Register, as it is business critical.

Members asked if an alternative supplier could be found for the ICCS. The PPCM explained that this is being investigated but officers are also trying to establish why the technology is being made obsolete. The CFO further commented that there are other suppliers but there is a chance that Motorola may supply them. Officers are also investigating proprietary brand technology as a solution.

Members noted the change to the direction of travel for the Service Delivery risk on page 4 of the report and asked why this was. The PPCM explained that this is a general risk and that the increase in direction of travel is due to the two issues highlighted in the paper, which are the ERP and the ICCS.

At Members' request, the PPCM undertook to keep Members updated, via email, with regard to the ICCS.

Resolved that the Committee note the contents of the report

9 Annual Governance Statement 2017/18

This report summarised the progress made to date against the improvements contained in the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) Improvement Plan 2017/18.

The PPCM presented the report and talked through each of the Improvement Areas set out in the Appendix to the report.

Members asked for clarification as to what the electronic retained payments referred to in IRN 5 where. The PPCM explained that this referred to the FB76 form, which Retained firefighters submit to claim payments for turnouts. The Service is looking to put this form into an electronic format. Part of this involves reviewing and improving the process where possible. Electronic solutions to this change are now being considered.

With regard to IRN 2, Members asked what skills were needed and how many people the Service was looking to recruit. The CFO explained that there have been difficulties recruiting and retaining staff at technician and developer level, part of which is due to the number of other competitors in the area, for example in Telford. The HHRA advised that work is being undertaken to identify how market factors could be used to aid future recruitment.

Members asked for an explanation of the issues with operating system that were referred to in IRN 1. The PPCM explained that Microsoft regularly updates software with, for example, security patches. Android devices do not do this so they are much better for use in the field and for multiple users. The CFO added the Service chose to try to universally adopt the Windows system but it does not seem to be the best operating system for mobile devices.

Resolved that the Committee note the progress made against each of the improvements contained in the Annual Governance Statement Improvement Plan 2016/17.

10 Performance Monitoring

10a Service Targets April to October 2017

This report presented a summary of the Service's performance from April to October 2017.

The DCFO presented the report and advised that performance against the 8 targets is improving. In particular, there is relatively good news with regard to the suite of service targets relating to Service Aim 2 – to reduce the number of fires in our community. Performance against 2a (all accidental fires will be reduced to not more than 490 fires during 2017/18) is improving. Target 2b (Accidental dwelling fires to be reduced to not more than 221 during 2017/18) should come in on target for the year and target 2c (Deliberate fires will be reduced to not more than 622 fires during 2017/18) has seen a reduced number of bonfires etc, over the period covered by the report.

The DCFO advised that unfortunately there had been a fire related death over the previous weekend. The GMP explained that the fire had occurred in Bridgnorth and had involved a 92-year-old individual who was self-sufficient and had working smoke alarms. It appears that the individual concerned removed items that were alight and then returned to the property to attempt to tackle the fire. The GMP advised that the cornerstone of the Service's message remains to get out and stay out. Since the incident, 108 visits to properties have been undertaken in the surrounding area and 16 smoke alarms have been fitted as a result of these visits.

The GMP highlighted that people over 80 years of age are three times more likely to die in a house fire. However, in this case, the Service's use of data from other agencies would not have had an impact, as the individual concerned was not part of a care package or support from Social Services. This presents a challenge for engagement with this vulnerable group.

Resolved that the Committee note the report.

10b Presentation on Service Targets

The GMP gave a presentation on the outcome of the Prevention Strategy Review.

Members asked if the target would continue with a 5% year on year reduction. The CFO explained that performance will need to be monitored and the target then changed, if required.

With regard to the issues that the GMP had covered concerning the Frankwell and Porthill areas of Shrewsbury, Members asked if the main source of information for identifying those at risk was registration data from doctor's surgeries. The GMP confirmed that Health Service data does underpin the main listings with additional referrals coming from care providers; however, it is the people who do not fall into these areas that the Service needs to target. The Service is working to develop a system that ties in with hospital discharges but this can be difficult and there are issues related to data sharing that need to be addressed.

Members asked for further information about the Oswestry pilot scheme. The GMP explained that the Service had piloted Safe and Well visits as part of this scheme, which looks to provide local support based on the area.

Members suggested that another way to identify the groups that need targeting might be through the information held by the DVLA. The GMP commented that that option might be worth exploring. The GMP also explained about Community Connectors, who are based in GP surgeries and match individuals to appropriate services. Further work needs to be undertaken on this scheme to ensure integration and avoid duplication. The Committee thanked the GMP for his presentation and the teams involved for their work and wished them luck with their work going forward.

Resolved that the Committee note the presentation.

10c Wholetime and Retained Duty System Performance Monitoring April to October 2017

This report provided information regarding the ongoing performance and management in terms of the availability of wholetime and Retained Duty System (RDS) appliances in Shropshire.

The AGC presented the report and highlighted its' main points including at paragraph 5 the 15% improvement at Albrighton which is due to a wholetime firefighter who is responding as RDS when off duty. The AGC also highlighted the women's taster sessions held during 2017. Out of the 26 attendees at these sessions, there have been eight applications for RDS firefighter positions.

With regard to the upskilling referred to at Bishops Castle, Members asked what the timeframe was for the completion of this. The AGC explained that personnel need to attend an initial course, which is followed by a development period and assessments, so it is likely that the upskilling will be completed towards the end of the first quarter of next year.

Members asked how RDS firefighters are recruited and their numbers maintained. The AGC explained that the Service has invested time, resources and effort in its RDS system. The Retained Review, which was undertaken approximately 10 years ago, highlighted the need for investment in the RDS. The Service is now starting to look at sustainability and is undertaking a review to 2025. It is recognised that recruitment and retention of RDS staff will become more difficult going forward due to changes in society as a whole and other factors, such as employment.

The CFO commented that Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service is a RDS service with wholetime backup. The Service Transformation Programme has invested £1.4m on systems to make being an RDS employee easier. The current position of the RDS is a credit to the investment of Members and officers. The CFO also commented that he thought that the Service would start to suffer from the problems affecting the RDS that have been seen nationally and that there is a need to look at adapting the RDS to a new world.

The AGC commented that RDS staff want to be going out on appliances so the investment made into XL cabs has helped with morale, as it allows more people to respond. The CFO added that co-responding might also help make RDS roles more attractive. Members acknowledged that it was good to hear about the positive impact of XL cabs, as there had many issues around their introduction.

Resolved that the Committee note the contents of the report.

11 Exclusion of Press and Public

Resolved that the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

12 Corporate Risk Management Summary (Paragraph 4)

The Committee received Appendix C to Report 8 – Corporate Risk Management Summary, which contained exempt information.

Resolved that the Committee note the exempt appendix to report 8.

The meeting closed at 3.20 pm

Chair

Date