

**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, 15 September 2016 at 2.00 pm**

Present

Members

Councillors Barnes, Hosken, Hurst-Knight, Dr Jones (Chair), Mellings (Vice-Chair) and Pinter

Officers

Chief Fire Officer, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Treasurer, Head of Finance, Head of Operations and Risk, Planning and Performance Manager and Executive Support Officer

For items 13 to 15

Group Manager Operations and Risk, Assistant Group Commander Shrewsbury, Assistant Group Commander North, Station Manager Operations, Operational Assurance Manager

External Bodies

Mr Stocks (Grant Thornton, External Audit)
Mr Chadderton (Audit Services, Shropshire Council)

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Adams.

2 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

The Chair reminded Members that they must not participate in the discussion of, or voting on, any matter, in which they had a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest, and that they should leave the room prior to the commencement of the debate on any such matter.

No Disclosable Pecuniary Interests were declared.

3 Minutes

Members received the minutes of the Audit and Performance Management Committee meeting, held on 7 July 2016.

It was proposed by Councillor Mellings, seconded by Councillor Hurst-Knight, and

Resolved that the minutes of the Audit and Performance Management Committee meeting, held on 7 July 2016, be agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record

4 Public Questions

No questions, statements or petitions had been received from members of the public.

5 Statement of Accounts 2015/16

This report presented the completed Statement of Accounts to the Committee for consideration and approval.

It was proposed by Councillor Mellings, seconded by Councillor Hurst-Knight, and

Resolved that the Committee:

- a) Approve the Statement of Accounts 2015/16 (subject to final auditor amendment); and
- b) Delegate final amendments following completion of the audit to the Head of Finance, in consultation with the Chair of the Committee.

6 Annual Governance Statement 2016/17 Improvement Plan

This report summarised the progress made to date against the improvements contained in the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) Improvement Plan 2016/17.

Councillor Jones referred to IRN 6 – Operational Assurance – and asked what role Members would play in the Operational Assurance (OpA) assessment. The Chief Fire Officer (CFO) explained that the Head of Operational Risk Management is currently undertaking work to develop a self-assessment that incorporates themes identified in OpA, the Peel Review and the new Fire Service Reform Programme. Member involvement will be clearer once the self-assessment has been developed.

It was proposed by Councillor Mellings, seconded by Councillor Jones, and

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

7 Audit Findings 2015/16

Mr Stocks presented the Audit Findings Report on the audit for the year ended 31 March 2016.

Councillor Jones referred to item 1 on the table on page 12 of the report and asked for clarification of the phrase 'a non-adjusting post balance sheet event'. Mr Stocks explained that this was an event that had occurred after the financial year end and, as such, whilst the issue had been discussed with the Head of Finance, it did not require any adjustments for its effect to be made to the balance sheet for the year.

Councillor Jones thanked Mr Stocks for his work, and the work of his colleagues, on the audit and congratulated the Head of Finance (HoF) on the audit outcome.

It was proposed by Councillor Jones, seconded by Councillor Hosken, and

Resolved that the Committee formally adopt the Audit Findings for 2015/16

Committee Clerk's Note

The Letter of Representation for the year ended 31 March 2016 would be signed at a later date, when the Statement of Accounts had been finalised, by the Committee Chair, Chief Fire Officer and Treasurer (in accordance with the authority delegated to them by the Fire Authority at its meeting on 13 February 2012).

8 Changes to Arrangements for Appointment of External Auditors

This report summarised the changes to the arrangements for the appointment of external auditors, following the closure of the Audit Commission and the end of the transitional arrangements at the conclusion of the 2017/18 audits. The Fire Authority will need to consider the options available and put in place new arrangements in time to make a first appointment by 31 December 2017.

Councillor Hurst-Knight asked if any interest, from other fire and rescue authorities, had been shown in Option 2 – Set up a Joint Auditor Panel / local joint procurement arrangements. The HoF explained that there was no apparent interest at present.

Councillor Pinter asked if there was the possibility of opting in to another option once a decision had been made. The Treasurer responded that he believed that the majority of authorities would pursue Option 3 – Opt-in to a Sector Led Body – and that the likelihood of a scenario where another option could be opted into would be minimal.

It was proposed by Councillor Mellings, seconded by Councillor Pinter, and

Resolved that the Committee, having considered the options for the appointment of external auditors as laid out in the report, agree to recommend Option 3 – Opt-in to a Sector Led Body – to the Authority as the preferred approach.

9 Quality Assurance and Improvement Programme

Shropshire Council Internal Audit Service complies with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS). As part of this process, the Service must develop and maintain a quality assurance and improvement programme (QAIP) that covers all aspects of the internal audit activity. The QAIP assesses the efficiency and effectiveness of the internal audit activity and identifies opportunities for improvement, based on internal and external assessments. This report provided Members with an update on the External Assessment review planned in November 2016.

Mr Chadderton explained that there was the possibility that the external assessor may wish to contact Fire Authority Members and / or officers as part of their assessment but this was not yet known for definite.

It was proposed by Councillor Hurst-Knight, seconded by Councillor Barnes, and

Resolved that the Committee have considered and endorse the information set out in the report.

10 Review of Whistleblowing Policy

This report requested the Committee to recommend that the Fire Authority approve the Whistleblowing Policy (attached as an appendix), following the annual review conducted by officers.

It was proposed by Councillor Hosken, seconded by Councillor Mellings, and

Resolved that the Committee have considered the Whistleblowing Policy and recommend that the Fire Authority approve the Policy without amendment.

11 Annual Review 2015/16

This report presented the draft Annual Review (also known as the Annual Statement of Assurance) for 2015/16 and gave the Committee an opportunity to make comment on the draft, prior to its going forward to the full Fire Authority for consideration and approval.

It was proposed by Councillor Jones, seconded by Councillor Pinter, and

Resolved that the Committee, having made comment on the draft Annual Review 2015/16, forward the Report to the Fire Authority for consideration and formal adoption

12 Corporate Risk Management Summary

This report was the latest of regular risk summary report, to the Audit and Performance Management Committee.

Councillor Hosken commented that he found the level of detail contained within the report to be correct and requested that, for future reporting, officers include a 'traffic light' display system within the existing document to highlight risks that are mitigating and / or becoming more relevant.

It was proposed by Councillor Jones, seconded by Councillor Hosken, and

Resolved that the Committee note the report and agree to keep the current report format for 6 months to aid Member learning and after this, to focus on high level risk reporting.

The Committee took a short break, at this point (2.45 pm) and Mr Stocks left the meeting. The Committee reconvened at 2.55 pm.

13 Health and Safety in the Fire and Rescue Service – Embedding the Lessons Learned

As agreed at the July 2016 meeting of the Committee, the Group Manager Operations and Risk gave a presentation on Health and Safety in the Fire and Rescue Service.

It was proposed by Councillor Jones, seconded by Councillor Mellings, and

Resolved that the Committee note the contents of the presentation.

14 Service Transformation Programme

The following ICT products, which have been developed under the Service Transformation Programme, were demonstrated to the meeting.

The Station Manager Operations demonstrated the Operational Monitoring Form, the Assistant Group Commander Shrewsbury demonstrated the Station Audits site and the Operational Assurance Manager demonstrated the Officer Individual Development Records.

It was proposed by Councillor Jones, seconded by Councillor Mellings, and

Resolved that the Committee note the demonstrations given.

15 Performance Monitoring

15a Service Targets April to September 2016

This report presented a summary of the Service's performance for the period April to September 2016.

It was proposed by Councillor Jones, seconded by Councillor Mellings, and

Resolved that the Committee note the report

15b Presentation on Service Targets

As agreed at the July 2016 meeting of the Committee, the Group Manager Operations and Risk gave a presentation on the following 2016/17 Service Target:

The first fire engine will arrive at an emergency incident with at least 4 firefighters within 15 minutes on 89% of occasions

A copy of the presentation slides has been placed on the signed minute file for this Committee.

It was proposed by Councillor Jones, seconded by Councillor Hurst-Knight, and

Resolved the Committee note the presentation

15c Wholetime and Retained Duty System Performance Monitoring April to June 2016

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.

It was proposed by Councillor Jones, seconded by Councillor Mason, and

Resolved that the Committee note the report

The meeting closed at 3.45 pm.

Chair.....

Date.....