

**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 Wednesday, 25 April 2018 at 10.00 am**

**Present
Members**

Councillors Adams, Hosken, Mellings, Milner, Pinter, Price and Sahota (Chair)

Officers

Rod Hammerton	Chief Fire Officer	CFO
Andy Johnson	Deputy Chief Fire Officer	DCFO
Dave Myers	Assistant Chief Fire Officer	ACFO
James Walton	Treasurer	
Joanne Coadey	Head of Finance	HoF
Ged Edwards	Planning, Performance and Communications Manager	PPCM
Guy Williams	Head of Transformation and Collaboration	HTC
Jon Temple	Assistant Group Commander	AGCSR
Rab Dhami	Community Fire Safety Supervisor	CFSS
Lynn Ince	Executive Support Officer	ESO

External Bodies

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

1 Apologies for Absence

None

2 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

None

3 Public Questions

None

Councillors Milner and Price arrived at this point (10:05 am)

4 Minutes

Resolved that the Committee agree the minutes of the Audit and Performance Management Committee meeting, held on 7 December 2017, and that the Chair sign them as a correct record.

5 Code of Corporate Governance 2017/18

This report gave the Committee an opportunity to make comment on the draft Code of Corporate Governance 2017/18, prior to it going forward to the full Fire Authority for consideration and formal adoption.

The PPCM presented the report and advised the Committee that this had essentially been a housekeeping exercise this year following the major changes to the Code, which were implemented for 2016/17. The PPCM also confirmed that the Code had been reviewed by Internal Audit.

The Committee requested that in section 3.1.1, the final paragraph of the supporting text be amended to ‘...deliver the Service Plan in a timely manner.’ The PPCM undertook to do this.

Resolved that the Committee

- a) Having considered the draft Code of Corporate Governance 2017/18, attached as an appendix to the report;
- b) Forward the draft Code, with the amendment to section 3.1.1 included, to the Fire Authority for consideration and formal adoption.

6 External Audit

6a The Audit Plan

This paper set out an overview of the planned scope and timing of the external audit, as required by International Standard on Auditing (UK & Ireland) 260.

Mr McLarnon presented this report and talked through each of the sections within it. Mr McLarnon particularly drew attention to the ‘Reasonably possible risks identified’ as set out on page 7 of the report and explained that whilst there is no significant risk identified in relation to employee remuneration and operating expenses, they do warrant audit focus and attention due to their high value.

In relation to the Value for Money (VfM) conclusion, set out on page 11 of the report, Mr McLarnon informed the Committee that there are no proposed changes to the process. The initial risk assessment identified no specific risks in relation to VfM but External Audit will keep abreast of any possible issues until the signoff date. Mr McLarnon further commented that the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) would play a major part in the audit assessment into the future.

Members expressed the opinion that External Audit's comments in relation to the VfM audit and there being no significant risks identified provided good evidence for the governance issue going forward with Home Office as it gives absolute proof of how good the Service already is. The CFO reassured the Committee that there had not been any criticism of fire authority's ability to govern and the fact that there are no significant risks identified is a testament to the authority

Resolved that the Committee note the External Audit Plan for the Year Ended 31 March 2018.

6b Informing the Audit Risk Assessment

This report contributed towards the effective two-way communication between external auditors and the Audit and Performance Management Committee, as those 'charged with governance'. The report covered some important areas of the auditor risk assessment, where external audit are required to make enquiries of the Committee under auditing standards.

Resolved that the Committee note the report.

7 Statement of Accounts 2017/18 Review of Accounting Policies

This report presented the accounting policies to be used in the production of the Fire Authority's Statement of Accounts 2017/18, for consideration and approval.

The HoF presented this report and advised the Committee that there were no amendments other than those set out in report. The HoF also explained that the Strategy and Resources Committee had agreed to undertake a review of the Authority's reserves, with any proposed changes being agreed by the Fire Authority. The HoF had referenced the review in this report as the names of reserves may change as a consequence of the review being undertaken.

Resolved that the Committee approve the accounting policies, prior to the presentation of the Statement of Accounts 2017/18 in July 2018.

8 Annual Governance Statement 2017/18 Improvement Plan

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 this report and advised the Committee that some of the completion dates in the report have passed. The progress to date and the completion dates will be refreshed following the Service Transformation Board meeting next week. Officers are also developing a new improvement plan and any areas with significant slippage will be included in this.

The PPCM also advised that there is crossover between areas with the completion of both IRN 4 and 7 being dependent on the rollout of Android tablet devices to stations.

In relation to the Service Transformation Programme (STP), the PPCM advised that all the main departments now have performance dashboards and the Business Intelligence team are now looking at SharePoint applications and the development of associated reports.

Members asked what the operational benefits of tablets were. The DCFO explained that they enable improved access to risk management information related to properties around the county. Previously, this information used to be printed, edited, entered and transferred between systems manually which was subject to errors and delays. This work is now done electronically with instant updates being applied if devices are available or when the devices are back on station. This is followed by an assurance process but the system allows data to be available instantly for crews with the proviso that is draft information.

The HTC advised that he has been liaising with other services regarding the definitions of data as referred to in IRN 6. There have been varied responses from around the country but the Service has approximately 95% of the data required and this should be ready for submission at the end of the week.

Resolved that the Committee note the progress made against each of the improvements contained in the AGS Improvement Plan 2017/18.

9 Corporate Risk Management Summary

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

The PPCM presented this report and highlighted section 6 on page 2 of the report, which set out the current risk position. Of particular note, is the legal challenge to a European working time directive legislation by a Belgian firefighter, which centred around the issue of being on standby in his role. Further legal opinion is being sought on the outcome of the case and the possible implications for the Service and its employees.

Members were also asked to note that the risk related to the Police and Crime Commissioner and the inability of the Service to undertake long-term planning because of this had been removed from the Risk Register. A further risk has been identified in relation to this, which recognises the transition activity needed and the impact this may have on employees.

Resolved that the Committee note the contents of the report.

10 Risk Management Group Internal Audit Progress Monitoring Report

This report provided an update on the monitoring of recommendations made by Internal Audit, which is undertaken by the Risk Management Group. It specifically covers details about the progress made against outstanding recommendations.

The Committee asked when the significant risks were likely addressed. The PPCM explained that there would be variable dates and that he could provide further information outside the meeting if required.

Resolved that the Committee note

- a) The progress made against the outstanding recommendations; and
- b) That the Risk Management Group will continue to monitor progress against all recommendations, reporting to this Committee on a regular basis.

11 Review of Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Strategy

This report requested the Committee to recommend that the Fire Authority re-affirm the Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Strategy (attached as an appendix to the report), following the annual review conducted by officers.

The HoF advised that there were no changes needed to the Strategy following the review conducted by officers and therefore, the Committee was asked to re-affirm the Strategy without amendment.

Resolved that the Committee agree the Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Strategy, attached as an appendix to the report, and recommend that the Fire Authority re-affirm the document without amendment.

12 Performance Monitoring

12a Summary of Annual Performance against Service Targets

This report summarised performance against the Service Targets over the last year, the learning that has come out of the last year's efforts to meet those targets and the plans for how the Service intends to meet the increasingly challenging targets going forward to 2020. It also included national comparator graphs to assist in this work.

The DCFO introduced the report by explaining that it summarised the Service's performance and put it into context over the past five years. The report also benchmarks Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) against similar services and across England. At present, there is no formal benchmarking undertaken nationally but Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) may introduce this. The DCFO also explained that the data in the report only allowed direct comparison where there are percentage figures.

The HTC explained that Accidental Primary Fires (APF) and Accidental Dwelling Fires (ADF) are the areas of greatest challenge for the Service. The APF target failed by nine incidents. There has been an increase in vehicle fires but more analysis of the incidents is required to identify if these were accidental fires. There are a variety of causes for APFs, which can be financial and social. This can make the issues difficult to address but work is being undertaken with local garages and trading standards with regard to this.

The CFSS explained that identification of a significant increase in ADFs had led to the ADF strategy being developed. Precision targeting is key to this strategy and this requires access to intelligence, which the Service does have a limited amount of in-house. Partnership work is therefore key to addressing ADFs. The Service has been working with adult social care at Telford & Wrekin Council and they include, in their assessments, consideration as to whether a 'Safe and well' visit from the Fire Service is required. Shropshire Council is keen to pursue a similar process and officers are giving a presentation to Shropshire regarding this on 1 May. The aim is to undertake 'Safe and well' referrals at the time of care commissioning. The HTC stated that SFRS is believed to be the only county to have this process in place at present. The HTC also reported that Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin Councils have agreed to share Strengthening Families data to also support referrals through this route.

Overall, the Service is following national trends with regard to APFs and ADFs and its performance is not dis-similar to other areas. The difference is that SFRS are vulnerable to changes in incident numbers due to the small numbers involved.

The CCFS reported that in relation to deliberate fires, the Service is involved in multi-agency initiatives around issues such as people trafficking. Organised and serious crime is having more impact on numbers of deliberate fires. The Prevention Team has produced an arson prevention film for schools, which has been requested for use by other fire services.

The Service has passed its target for fire related deaths and serious injuries. The HTC explained that the serious injuries recorded against this target involved people being detained in hospital and receiving treatment. Performance has been positive against this target but there is an ongoing challenge around the ageing, and increasingly independent population in Shropshire. The Service is, therefore, keen to continue building proactive and preventative strategies in relation to this target.

The HTC reported that the room of origin target has proved challenging but it has been passed. Over the next 12 months, the Service will begin to undertake case reviews on those incidents where the fire is not confined to room of origin. Currently, this is not uniformly carried out across fire services but this may be picked up on.

Members congratulated officers on the achievements set out in the report and encouraged them to keep pushing to meet future targets. Members also felt that the most important message was to break down the idea that the Service is just interested in 'granny' and to stress that it works with all parts of the community - wherever there is a vulnerability.

Members queried if there was a connection between the increased number of abandoned vehicles due to scrap value disappearing and increases in arson involving vehicles. The HTC responded that there is more opportunity for arson and it does have an impact on numbers of incidents. Crews are active in relation to this and with the reporting of abandoned vehicles and flytipping. The CFO confirmed that the impact can be seen in the Service's results but increased vigilance helps with this as does the ability to report directly to those agencies who can remove the abandoned cars and/or flytipping.

Members commented that the format of the report was very informative and that the provision of benchmarking data is very helpful as it gives a guide to where the Service is currently and what the future challenges could be. The Committee felt that the report demonstrates the tremendous work being undertaken across SFRS, which in some cases is trailblazing. They also asked what lessons could be taken from the benchmarking going forward.

Members asked if there was greater deprivation in the Telford & Wrekin Council area. The HTC explained that 20% of the Telford & Wrekin population is in significant social deprivation. In these cases, there is a need to target work with families and all aspects of their life. There are, however, different challenges outside certain areas. This approach had been developed in the Telford & Wrekin areas due to other work that is being undertaken there, but Shropshire Council are also keen to work in a similar way. The move to Safe and Well Visits has enabled SFRS to share in the public health agenda and added value to the Service's work, which is becoming more of a natural fit with other agencies.

Members commented that the most important message in relation to road traffic collisions was 'drive to arrive' and stated that this should be built on and perhaps targeted more towards younger drivers. The HTC confirmed that the Service has adopted the 'drive to arrive' message for its response drivers. Officers are currently looking at existing road safety messages with new initiatives focused on a younger cohort of drivers.

The Chair commended the CCFS on his work and asked what the main issues were for the next year. The CCFS responded that there is slow and steady progress at present, due to the Service being at different levels with different data sets. One area of focus is adult social care, where the aim is to make the Service's involvement more procedural and automatic, as there can be difficulties if the SFRS are reliant on one person to drive the initiative. The opt-out system can be affected by a lack of understanding, so this needs to be improved and it is hoped that in 12 months, this will be addressed at the time of commissioning. It is also hoped that the Strengthening Families interventions will become a flow of work.

Resolved that the Committee note the report.

12b Wholetime and Retained Duty System Performance Monitoring November 2017 to February 2018

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

The AGCSR confirmed that there had been no change to wholetime availability in the period covered by the report. During the same period, there has been an improvement of 1.5%, up to 97.98%, in Retained Duty System (RDS) availability, with an improvement in availability at Albrighton and Minsterley, although work is ongoing to address issues at those stations.

A sustainability review of the RDS system will be undertaken this year as the Service is mindful that the RDS system and the demographics of the areas it covers are changing. Nationally, work is being done through the National Fire Chiefs Council On-Call Firefighters Practitioner Group, which is designing a national standardised recruitment campaign. A particular area that is currently unaddressed is availability between 9-5.

The AGCSR then talked through the RDS stations highlighted in the Appendix to the report. Minsterley is currently the lowest performing station in the Service, but members noted that even here it is still ahead of national availability trends. Recruitment is difficult, and officers are looking at interacting more with large employers to attempt to get some buy-in at a higher level with regard to releasing staff for RDS duty. It is difficult, however, where stores in local communities only have a small number of employees. Cleobury Mortimer are struggling due to the small population within the station area and officers need to look at recruiting to cover 9-5. Market Drayton had sufficient staff but most of them are shift workers which has an effect on availability.

Resolved that the Committee note the report.

13 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.

14 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 11.35 am

Chair

Date _____