



**DORSET & WILTSHIRE
FIRE AND RESCUE
AUTHORITY**

**Minutes of the
Finance & Governance Committee
held at 11:00 hours on 19 September 2019 at the
Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters, Salisbury**

Members present: Cllr Bob Jones (Chairman); Cllr Brian Mattock (Vice Chair); Cllr Richard Biggs; Cllr Paul Hilliard; Cllr Pip Ridout; Cllr Ann Stribley

Officer attendance: Chief Fire Officer (CFO), Ben Ansell; Head of Financial Services & Treasurer, Mr Ian Cotter; Deputy Clerk & Monitoring Officer, Ms Grace Evans; Deputy Chief Fire Officer (DCFO), Mr Derek James; Director of People Services, Ms Jenny Long; Head of Strategic Planning & Corporate Assurance, Mrs Jill McCrae; Head of Information and Communications, Mrs Vikki Shearing; Area Manager, Head of Response Support, Development and Resourcing, Andy Cole; Head of Assets, Mr Ian Thomas; Head of ICT, Ms Fiona Kiernan-Tatem; Health & Safety Advisor, Mr John Towner; Management Accountant, Miss Charlie Windebank; Corporate Governance Manager, Mrs Nicki Whitehouse

Guests: Ms Michelle Hopton (Deloitte LLP); Ms Moya Moore SWAP (South West Audit Partnership) Internal Audit Services

19/27 Welcome

19/27.1 The Chairman opened the meeting and welcomed attendees.

19/28 Apologies

19/28.1 Apologies were received from Cllr Peter Hutton.

19/29 Code of Conduct, Declarations of Interest

19/29.1 The Chairman asked the meeting for any disclosures of pecuniary interests under the Localism Act. There were no disclosures.

- 19/30 Minutes of the Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Finance & Governance meeting on 24 July 2019**
- 19/30.1 The Chairman asked Members to review and approve the minutes from the last meeting.
- 19/30.2 **RESOLVED: that the minutes be confirmed without amendment and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.**
- 19/31 Annual Financial External Audit Report (ISA 260)**
- 19/31.1 Ms Michelle Hopton (Deloitte LLP) presented the report and confirmed that the Authority's final accounts had been signed off and published with an unqualified audit opinion. She reported that there had been neither any change in risk, nor any residual issues from the McCloud work. In answering questions from Members, Ms Hopton confirmed that 'completeness and cut-off of expenditure' detailed on page 7 of the appendix was included in the report due to it being a requirement to examine an area of fraud risk in accordance with the international audit standards, not as a result of any inherent risk in the Authority. She also explained that the audit adjustment regarding related parties on page 17 of the report was included as the auditor's opinion was that the sum involved should be disclosed in the financial statements, although she agreed that the value was not material.
- 19/31.2 In answer to Members' questions, Ms Hopton explained that the additional audit fees detailed on page 19 related to the specialist pension work carried out and was outside of normal business included in the standard audit fee.
- 19/31.3 **RESOLVED: Members reviewed the audit findings and noted the recommendations within the report.**
- 19/32 Internal Audit Quarterly Report**
- 19/32.1 Ms Moya Moore (SWAP Internal Audit Services), presented her report, taking the Committee through the audits that had been carried out in quarter 2 and the recommendations arising from them. In answer to a Member's question, the Head of Strategic Planning and Corporate Assurance, Mrs Jill McCrae confirmed that she and Ms Moore liaise regularly regarding the progress of audits and their recommendations.
- 19/32.2 Ms Moore then took Members through the audits scheduled for quarter 3. The Chairman asked that the timescales between application and start dates for on-call staff be included in the Recruitment and Workforce Planning audit.
- 19/32.3 **RESOLVED: Members considered the findings of the audits and approved the management responses.**

19/32.4 **ACTION: SWAP Internal Audit Services to ensure that the audit of recruitment and retention covers the timescales between application and start dates for on-call staff.**

19/33 Internal Audit Progress Report

19/33.1 Mrs McCrae took Members through Appendix A to the report. She reported that work was on track to meet the deadlines and provided an update to the Committee on some of the progress since the publishing of the papers, confirming that the Carbon Management Policy - now called Environmental Sustainability Policy - had now been completed (an action on page 3). She also reported that the work on the accreditation of the Leadership Programme was in place (page 5); and the work on contracts visits and certification tests (page 8) was also now complete.

19/33.2 **RESOLVED: Members reviewed and approved the progress.**

19/34 Financial Monitoring Report Quarter 1

19/34.1 The Head of Financial Services and Treasurer, Mr Ian Cotter presented the report, confirming that there was a projected underspend of £634k in the current year. He referred to section 4 of the report and explained that 19 fire appliances had been ordered that would not be delivered until after the current financial year. The full cost of the vehicles will therefore be charged in 2020-21, reducing the current year's capital programme from £10.3m to £5.2m.

19/34.2 On answering a question from the Chairman regarding potential rental opportunities at the Poundbury site, CFO Ben Ansell confirmed that officers are looking at the potential options for gaining a return from the property.

19/34.3 **RESOLVED: Members noted and commented upon the current financial position at 30 June 2019.**

19/35 Statement of Assurance

19/35.1 Mrs McCrae presented the Statement of Assurance and the accompanying policy assurance statements. She explained that the Statement, once approved, would be signed by the Chairman of the Finance & Governance Committee and the Chief Fire Officer, and then published on the Service's website. She confirmed that the process the Service undertakes to compile the Statement had been examined during the recent LGA (Local Government Association) Peer Review of governance, and that the Service received positive assurance on its approach. She reported that the Service was aligning its methodology to that of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services

(HMICFRS) to streamline the process. She explained that this will start with policies so that it is embedded as business as usual processes. Mrs McCrae further confirmed that the reviewed policies will be presented to the Authority in February 2020.

19/35.2 Members recorded their thanks to officers for their work, and in particular for that related to the on-call duty system mentioned in paragraph 1.29.3 of the Statement.

19/35.3 The Committee approved the Statement to be signed by the Chairman with the following three amendments:
Paragraph 1.26 – add ‘working’ to ‘20-day legal timescale.’
Paragraph 1.26 – add ‘requests’ into the sentence ‘four out of the 121 exceeded this’.
Paragraph 1.28.9 – ensure that the wording makes it clear that there are four constituent authorities.

19/35.4 **RESOLVED: Members approved the Statement of Assurance 2018-19, once amended to include the items stated in paragraph 19/35.3 of these minutes.**

19/35.5 **ACTION: Democratic Services to ensure the recorded amendments are made to the Statement of Assurance.**

19/35.6 **ACTION: Democratic Services to ensure that the Statement of Assurance is signed by the Chief Fire Officer and the Chairman of the Finance & Governance Committee and then published on the Service’s website.**

19/36 Performance Report Quarter 1

19/36.1 Mrs McCrae introduced the report and officers provided the Committee with a summary of progress as detailed in Appendix A. DCFO Derek James outlined the work officers are doing on forward planning in terms of the next Community Safety Plan and financial forecasting, including value for money work. CFO Ansell explained that the fact the Service is one of the three ‘Reference Brigades’ working with the Home Office was strategically helpful.

19/36.2 DCFO James reported the positive work being done in relation to Smarter Working, which is enabling staff to work more efficiently, and that most systems had now been aligned since combination.

19/36.3 The Head of People Services, Ms Jenny Long presented some slides on on-call recruitment, explaining how a new approach is being rolled out and that the processes were being streamlined, tracked and monitored by officers.

- 19/36.4 In answer to a question, CFO Ansell explained that the new model includes ensuring that on-call applicants better understand the reality of the job they are applying for to strengthen retention. He also confirmed that where appropriate, uniform and equipment is retrieved if an operational staff member leaves the Service.
- 19/36.5 On answering a Member's question about staff feedback on the use of a software system for recording training and competencies, Ms Long explained that officers were developing the system in partnership with the software supplier. The aim of this was to ensure it meets the need; is linked to other systems to improve overall efficiency; and that user feedback was being used to help develop the system. She also confirmed that senior management were fully engaged and overseeing this transition and training.
- 19/36.6 Ms Long confirmed that staff who fail the fitness test are supported by the team and put on a plan which is in line with national standards and timescales. She confirmed that that fitness levels were closely monitored by officers.
- 19/36.7 **RESOLVED: Members scrutinised and approved the Performance Report for quarter 1.**
- 19/37 Strategic Risk Register**
- 19/37.1 Mrs McCrae presented the report and explained that the strategic risks remained at the same scores as they had been when last reported to the Committee in July. She explained that the actions to mitigate the risks are progressing well and continue to be monitored and reviewed by the Strategic Leadership Team.
- 19/37.2 In answering a Member's question, CFO Ansell explained that the larger proportion of departmental risks in the prevention, protection and resilience sections related to the scale of responsibility of these teams and the local and national issues they covered.
- 19/37.3 A Member asked officers whether a risk had been considered regarding procuring contracts if there was a change of Government or during a purdah period. Officers confirmed that they would seek legal advice as necessary should this become an issue.
- 19/37.4 **RESOLVED: Members reviewed the strategic risks and mitigations set out in appendix A.**
- 19/37.5 **ACTION: The Head of Financial Services & Treasurer will seek legal advice on the rules around procurement during times of purdah as and when necessary.**

19/38 Date of Next Meeting

19/38.1 The Chairman confirmed the date of the next Finance & Governance meeting as 6 December 2019 at Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters, Five Rivers Health and Wellbeing Centre, Hulse Road, Salisbury SP1 3NR, from 11am.

The meeting closed at: 12.32

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