



**DORSET & WILTSHIRE  
FIRE AND RESCUE  
AUTHORITY**

**Minutes of the  
Finance, Governance and Audit Committee  
held at 10:10 hours on Wednesday 22 March 2017 at the  
Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters, Salisbury**

Officer attendance: Assistant Chief Fire Officer Mick Stead; Assistant Chief Fire Officer John Aldridge; Director of Finance & Treasurer, Mr Phil Chow; Director of Corporate Services, Mr Derek James; Deputy Clerk & Monitoring Officer, Ms Grace Evans; Head of Finance, Mr Ian Cotter; Head of Human Resources, Mrs Jane Staffiere; Senior Health & Safety Advisor, Mr John Lincoln; Head of Strategic Planning and Knowledge Management, Mr Robert Ford; Head of Information Management and Communications, Mrs Vikki Shearing and Democratic Services Officer, Mrs Marianne Taylor.

Also in attendance: Mr Robin Pritchard, Engagement Director, Gateway Assure.

**17/1 Welcome**

17/1.1 The Chairman opened the meeting and welcomed Cllr Paul Kimber, Cllr Colin Lovell and the Deputy Clerk & Monitoring Officer to their first meeting of the Committee.

**17/2 Apologies**

17/2.1 Apologies were received from Cllr Les Burden, Cllr Colin Jamieson, Cllr Christopher Newbury and Mr David Parsons, Manager, Audit & Assurance, KPMG LLP.

**17/3 Code of Conduct and Declarations of Interest**

17/3.1 The Chairman asked the meeting for any disclosures of pecuniary interests under the Localism Act. No disclosures were made.

**17/4 Minutes of the Finance and Audit Committee meeting held on 17 November 2016 and any matters arising.**

17/4.1 The Committee considered the minutes of the meeting held on 17 November 2016.

17/4.2 **RESOLVED: That the minutes be confirmed, without amendment, and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.**

**17/5 Internal Audit annual audit programme 2017-18**

17/5.1 At the inaugural meeting of the Fire Authority on 1 April 2016, the Internal Audit Strategy for 2016-17 to 2018-19 was presented. During 2016-17, the progress of the internal audit programme was presented to the Finance and Audit Committee (now titled the Finance, Governance and Audit Committee) at each of their quarterly meetings. The draft audit plan for 2017-18 was presented for approval. Members were informed that this aligned to the approved Internal Audit Strategy.

17/5.2 Mr Robin Pritchard, Engagement Director, Gateway Assure, the Authority's internal audit provider, outlined the draft plan for 2017-18. In particular, attention was drawn to the reduction in the total number of audit days to 80, as part of the three year programme.

17/5.3 After consideration and debate. Members indicated their satisfaction with the content of the draft plan.

17/5.4 **RESOLVED: That the Annual Audit Plan 2017-18, set out in Appendix B to the report, be approved.**

**17/6 Internal Audit progress report**

17/6.1 The Committee considered the Internal Audit progress report for Block 4 2016-17.

Members were informed that internal audits had been undertaken on Key Financial Controls and a Cultural Alignment Review. The report detailed the key findings , together with the agreed management actions being progressed.

Cllr Graham Payne arrived.

17/6.2 Members were informed that in 2017-18, the focus for future action would be on ensuring robust financial management, and purchase orders arrangements were in place. The Head of Finance advised Members that arrangements had already been strengthened.

17/6.3 Members discussed the report and requested updates from Officers on website accessibility. The Head of Information Management and Communications confirmed that the only website now in use was the dwfire.org.uk website. The Head of Human Resources confirmed that a mechanism was in place for staff to raise job evaluation claims following a period of 6 months of departments operating.

17/6.4 **RESOLVED: That the Audit Report for Block 4 2016-17 be approved.**

### **17/7 Progress against audit recommendations**

17/7.1 The Committee considered a report providing an update on the progress of work against the recommendations made by Internal Audit, Gateway Assure. Members were informed that a range of activities had been progressed in relation to ICT migration, workforce planning and business continuity to meet the agreed improvements. Members were advised that staff management procedures were in place for a number of areas, including whistleblowing; absence management and training.

17/7.2 In relation to the recommendation on Member appraisals, the Chairman confirmed that the procedure for Member development had been agreed by the Authority at its meeting on 9 March 2017 and it was highly likely that this would form part of any inspection.

17/7.3 Some concerns were raised about the skills requirement of Members when selected by their constituent councils onto the Authority. The Chairman confirmed that the Chairman of the Authority would raise the particular needs of the Authority with constituent council leaders prior to nominations.

17/7.4 **RESOLVED: That the progress made towards completing the agreed improvement activities be noted where appropriate.**

### **17/8 Performance review quarter 3**

17/8.1 The Head of Strategic Planning and Knowledge Management presented the report setting out the performance achieved during the period 1 October 2016 to 31 December 2016. He reported that there were no significant areas of concern or issues to raise with Members.

17/8.2 Members discussed the report and Officers reported on their areas of responsibility. Members went on to discuss HR functions; HR data systems; fitness equipment; asset management data alignment and ICT migration. Members raised concerns about staffing, particularly the recruitment and retention of officers in the assets department. ACFO John Aldridge advised

Members that a number of staff had been promoted, moved on or retired and recruitment to the majority of existing posts had been undertaken. He added that recruiting to specialist roles had proven challenging and was ongoing. Members remained concerned about the lack of a project plan to converge the assets systems and asked for a report plan to be submitted for consideration at the next meeting of the Committee in July.

- 17/8.3 Particular attention was drawn to the arrangements put in place for sickness recording to be consistent across the Service once the information systems alignment had taken place ready for 1 April 2017. Members discussed sickness levels and were concerned about morale amongst staff; ACFO Aldridge advised that low morale had been an issue in the Control Centre in the past, however this was improving, together with the level of absences. The Chairman asked that comparator figures across quarter 3 and quarter 4 be provided at the next Finance, Governance and Audit Committee meeting.
- 17/8.4 The Senior Health & Safety Advisor advised that there were no concerns which had not already been identified and that action plans are in place to support the recent BSI audit and the convergence process more widely. BSI internal auditor training of district commanders would commence in quarter 2 of 2017-18.
- 17/8.5 The Head of Information Management and Communications reported that 27 requests under Freedom of Information (FOI) had been received and responded to within the required timeframe. There were no obvious trends. She added that there would be plans in place by April 2017 for changes to information handling from May 2018.
- 17/8.6 Members were also informed that complaints were managed well and staff were being trained on how to deal with them effectively. Members asked for ISO 270001 compliance to be kept under review.
- 17/8.7 **RESOLVED: That ACFO John Aldridge present a report and project plan to converge asset management systems be submitted for consideration at the next meeting on 7 July 2017.**
- 17/8.8 **RESOLVED: That comparator figures for absence and sickness in the Control Centre be submitted for consideration at the next meeting in July 2017.**
- 17/8.9 **RESOLVED: That the Quarterly Performance Report be approved.**
- 17/8.10 **ACTION: ACFO Aldridge to present a report and project plan to converge asset management systems for consideration to the meeting on 7 July 2017.**
- 17/8.11 **ACTION: Head of HR to submit comparator figures for absence and sickness in the Control Centre the next meeting as part of the performance report.**

## **17/9 Financial performance report quarter 3**

- 17/9.1 The Committee considered a report which provided an analysis of the financial position for the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of the 2016-17 financial year, reflecting spending to 31 December 2016. The report dealt with the revenue budget which highlighted a potential underspend principally arising from savings on employee costs as previously reported. It also provided an update on reserves and balances, taking into account decisions made in the budget setting process to release funds from earmarked reserves that were no longer required, and the establishment of a number of reserves for Emergency Medical Response (EMR) and the Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme (EMSCP). It also provided an update on the capital programme; the current forecast spending for the year was currently £3.559m. However, this may be less due to vehicle delivery timescales.
- 17/9.2 Members discussed and scrutinised the report including the revised Capital programme and the underspend position. They noted that an outturn report for 2016-17 would be prepared for the next Finance, Governance and Audit Committee meeting in July.
- 17/9.3 **RESOLVED: That the current financial position be noted.**

## **17/10 Strategic risk register**

- 17/10.1 The Committee considered a report setting out the latest position of the strategic risk register and associated controls. The strategic risk register provided Members with details of the strategic risks, their current and targeted risk ratings and the controls planned to reduce and mitigate the risk to the targeted level. Each risk owner was asked to provide an update on each of the risks on the register.
- 17/10.2 In relation to the One team approach, ACFO Mick Stead informed Members that the internal audit and reporting monthly to the strategic leadership team would provide substantial assurance to both Members and staff. He added that the staff survey outcomes were due to be reported and this would provide more information on staffing matters.
- 17/10.3 The Director Corporate Services confirmed that staffing levels continued to be monitored and that he received monthly reports from departments about this..

17/10.4 Members discussed staffing risks and concerns about retained duty (on-call) firefighters, the apprenticeships levy and collaboration across the Service with partners. ACFO John Aldridge advised Members that controls had been put in place and that the new salaried scheme for on-call firefighters would be implemented.

17/10.5 **RESOLVED: That the strategic risks and proposed mitigations be noted.**

**17/11 Work programme 2017-18**

17/11.1 Members considered the outline work programme for the Finance, Governance and Audit Committee for 2017-18.

17/11.2 **RESOLVED: That the outline work programme for 2017-18 be approved.**

**17/12 Date of Next Meeting**

17/12.1 The Chairman confirmed that the next meeting of the Finance, Governance and Audit Committee would be held at 10:00am on Friday 7 July 2017 at the DWFRS HQ Five Rivers, Salisbury.

*Signed:* \_\_\_\_\_