

AUDIT AND PERFORMANCE REVIEW COMMITTEE
(Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Authority)

25 September 2013

Present:-

Councillors Radford (Chair), Burridge-Clayton, Dyke (vice Brazil), Edmunds and Healey.

Apologies:-

Councillors Gribble and Horsfall.

***APRC/9. Minutes**

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 29 July 2013 be signed as a correct record.

***APRC/10. Audit Findings for the Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Authority for the Year Ended 31 March 2013**

(David Bray, Grant Thornton, in attendance for this item).

The Authority considered a report, as presented by David Bray of Grant Thornton, summarising the findings from the audit of the Authority's 2012/13 financial statements. The report highlighted:

- two misstatements to the financial statements that had been adjusted including £860,000 on Debtors and Creditors and an adjustment of £1,261,000 on the split of property, plant and equipment within note 11;
- details of unadjusted misstatements which were not material to the financial statements;
- the recommendations that had been made in respect of deficiencies identified in respect of internal financial controls and particularly on Information Technology (IT) systems which it was felt merited reporting to the Authority;
- that, on the basis of the audit, it was proposed to issue an unqualified opinion on the financial statements;
- that it was proposed to issue an unqualified Value for Money conclusion.

Accompanying the report was a revised Statement of the Authority's Accounts for 2012/13, together with a document circulated at the meeting that set out a further amendment to the accounts in respect of the notes to the core financial statements (page 45 of the accounts) together with a draft Letter of Representation on the Authority's financial statements.

RESOLVED

- (a) that the Audit Findings 2012-13 including the recommendations contained therein be approved;
- (b) that the revised Statement of Accounts 2012-13, including the amendment circulated at the meeting and referred to above, containing the financial statements on which the Audit Findings are based, be approved; and

- (c) that the Letter of Representation also enclosed with the agenda for this meeting be approved and the Treasurer authorised to sign it on behalf of the Authority.

(SEE ALSO MINUTE *APRC/11 BELOW)

***APRC/11. 2012-13 Annual Statement of Assurance**

The Committee considered a report of the Audit and Review Manager (APRC/13/10) that set out details of the Annual Statement of Assurance, incorporating the Annual Governance Statement for 2012/13 to accompany the 2012/13 financial statements, as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations (England) 2011 (as amended).

The Committee had considered the draft Statement of Assurance at its meeting on 29 July 2013 (Minute *APRC/7 refers). The Statement had subsequently been considered by Grant Thornton as part of its audit of the Authority's 2012/13 financial statements, with no material issues identified.

RESOLVED that the Annual Statement of Assurance (incorporating the Annual Governance Statement required to accompany the 2012/13 final accounts) be approved for publication, with the Chair of this Committee and Chief Fire Officer authorised to sign it on behalf of the Authority.

(SEE ALSO MINUTE *APRC/10 ABOVE)

***APRC/12. Audit and Review 2012-13 2nd Quarter Progress Report**

The Committee received for information a report of the Audit and Review Manager (APRC/13/11) that provided an update on the audit work that had been undertaken since July 2013 and which in particular detailed the key findings of the audit of the Service's P Card provision.

The Committee was pleased that the audit of the Authority's P Card provision had found that this was being operated to a good standard but noted that there were areas in which further improvement could be made to the control framework. The issues identified had been discussed with lead officers, however, and a suitable action plan had been agreed to improve the management of the risks identified. The Committee requested that an update on this be reported to a future meeting. Reference was made to the initial high volume of usage of P Cards on their introduction which had reached a peak in 2009/10 of £873,550 but then subsequently dropped to £369,832 in 2010/11. The Clerk indicated that he would seek an explanation of this and report back to the Committee via email in due course.

Anne Parsons of the Devon Audit Partnership (DAP) was also present at the meeting and she gave an overview of her role and the work that was being undertaken by the DAP in conjunction with the Audit and Review Manager.

***APRC/13. Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service Performance Report April - August 2013**

The Committee received for information a report of the Area Manager, Community Safety (APRC/13/12) that set out Service performance for the period 1 April to 31 August 2013 against those measures contained in the approved Corporate Plan for 2013/14 to 2015/16.

In particular, the following points were highlighted:

- Measure 1 (fire deaths where people live): there had been 5 fire fatalities recorded to the end of August 2013 which was the highest in this period since reporting on these measures started in 2007/08. It was noted that 3 of these fatalities tragically related to one fire in Honiton, however. The Service was actively working to try to identify whether there were any further steps that could be taken to prevent fire fatalities occurring.
- Measure 2 (fire injuries where people live): there had been 27 injuries occurring between 1 April and 31 August 2013 as compared with 19 in the same period in 2012/13. 8 of these injuries were incurred as a result of deliberate fires which was the biggest increase recorded since 2010/11.
- Measure 3 (incidents where people live): there had been a slight increase in the number of fires to 441 in April to August 2013 which represented an increase of 21 incidents as compared with the same period in 2012/13 although overall this measure was still showing a downward trend since combination in 2007/08.
- Measure 4 (fire deaths where people work): there had been one further death reported in September 2013 since the statistics had been prepared to take the total to 2 deaths in places where people work, although this was a potential suicide and was still subject to the Coroner's verdict at inquest.
- Measure 5 (fire injuries where people work): the statistics for April to August 2013 showed an increase to 23 injuries in comparison to the same period in 2012/13 which had 7 recorded injuries. 16 of the total injuries recorded were as a result of vehicle fires, 12 of which were accidental and which it was felt had stemmed from the incidence of hot weather earlier in the year with vehicles overheating with 4 deliberate vehicle fires.
- Measure 6 (incidents where people work): there had been a substantial increase in the number of incidents reported in April to August 2013 to 682 as compared with 601 in the same period in 2012, with an increase of 43 vehicle and 49 outdoor fires (and a decrease of 11 non-domestic property fires). This was attributable largely to the long spells of hot, dry weather that had been experienced this year with, for example, cars overheating on long trips into Devon and Somerset.
- Measures 7 & 8 (emergency response standards): the Committee received a presentation at this point, a copy of which has been appended to these Minutes for information and ease of reference. The performance on both of these measures had improved during the period April to August 2013 with a performance at 65.88% for 1st attendance within 10 minutes and 75.78% for 1st attendance within 15 minutes for a road traffic collision.
- Measures 9, 10 and 11 – an update on progress on these measures was set out within the report for information.

In terms of sickness absence, it was reported that there had been a slight decrease to date in 2013/14. The Service continued to monitor the trend on sickness absence and to work towards improving performance in this area.

*** DENOTES DELEGATED MATTER WITH POWER TO ACT**

The meeting started at 14:00hours and finished at 15:15hours.