

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

8 May 2013

Present:-

Councillors Radford (Chairman), Burridge-Clayton, Dyke, Gribble and Mills.

Apologies:-

Councillor Way

***APRC/57. Minutes**

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 31 January 2013 be signed as a correct record.

***APRC/58. Grant Thornton Items**

(Mr. Alun Williams, Grant Thornton, in attendance to present the following items).

(a) Audit Committee Update

The Committee received for information a report from Grant Thornton on progress in delivering its responsibilities as the Authority's external auditor. The report covered, amongst other things:

- completion of the detailed plan for audit of the Authority's 2012-13 accounts (see Minute *APRC/58(c) below);
- details of the interim accounts audit; and
- emerging issues including draft local audit bill which would see the introduction of a new regulatory regime for 2015-16 and local authorities appointing their own auditors from 1 April 2017.

(b) Planned Audit Fee for 2013-14

The Committee received for information details of the work programme and scale fees in 2013-14 for external audit work of the Authority's financial statements.

(c) Authority Audit Plan for Year Ended 31 March 2013

The Committee received for information details of the work to be undertaken by Grant Thornton in relation to the Authority's statement of accounts for 2012-13. The audit work would comply with all required standards, be time constrained and would address all appropriate risk areas.

(d) Declutter Your Accounts - Top Ten Tips

The Committee received for information an information sheet produced by Grant Thornton offering a checklist tips to local authorities to "declutter" their statements of accounts.

***APRC/59. Auditing Standards - Communication with the Audit & Performance Review Committee**

The Committee considered a report of the Treasurer (APRC/13/3) setting out the response to questions posed by Grant Thornton on the processes and procedures in place to ensure that the Authority discharged effectively, efficiently and lawfully its responsibilities in relation to fraud and corruption, law and regulation, accounting for estimates and related parties.

RESOLVED that the response prepared by the Treasurer to the issues raised by Grant Thornton, as detailed the appendix to report APCR/13/3 and detailing the arrangements in place for the Authority to discharge its responsibilities in relation to fraud and corruption, law and regulation, accounting for estimates and related parties be endorsed.

***APRC/60. 2012-13 Internal Audit Year End Report and 2013-14 Internal Audit Plan**

The Committee considered the report of the Audit and Review Manager (APRC/13/4) on:

- work completed during the 2012-13 financial year by the Service internal audit section and the Devon Audit Partnership against the approved internal audit plan for that year; and
- the proposed 2013-14 internal audit plan and three year strategic internal audit plan 2013-16.

In relation to 2012-13, the report listed assurance statements for audits completed, identified additional work completed over and above that contained in the approved plan for the year and highlighted both good practice examples and areas for improvement arising from key audit findings.

The 2013-14 internal audit plan detailed the proposed scope of audit work to be completed in that year either by the internal audit team or by the Devon Audit Partnership.

RESOLVED

- (a) That the proposed 2013-14 Internal Audit Plan and Three Year Strategic Internal Audit Plan, as attached as Appendices A and B respectively to report APCR/13/4, be approved;
- (b) that, subject to (a) above, the report be noted.

(SEE ALSO MINUTE *APRC/62 BELOW

***APRC/61. Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service Performance Report April 2012 - February 2013**

The Committee received for information a report of the Deputy Chief Fire Officer (APRC/13/5) setting out Service performance between April 2012 and February 2013 against those measures contained in the approved Service Corporate Plan. In particular, the following issues were highlighted:

- Measure 1 (fire deaths where people live): While a downward trend was being maintained, there had been 10 fatalities during the reporting period. The report identified further details in relation to this measure, including performance against emergency response standards and location of incident. The Service was committed to eliminating all preventable fire deaths and had instigated a series of measures, including fatal fire reviews, aimed at identifying and enhancing as necessary inter-agency working to promote prevention;
- Measure 2 (fire injuries where people live): This measure was showing an upward trend albeit that this was as a result of the exclusion of data prior to the introduction of the new Incident Recording System (IRS). IRS provided more accurate data and now facilitated benchmarking in performance. The Service had secured a reduction in this measure when compared to the same period last year (48 compared to 62 injuries).
- Measure 3 (fire incidents where people live): A downward trend was being maintained with performance showing an improvement when compared to the same period last year;

- Measure 4 (fire deaths where people work/visit): Although overall a neutral trend was being maintained, performance had improved over the same period last year (2 deaths as compared to 4). Additionally, the Service continued to record no fire deaths in non-domestic properties;
- Measure 5 (fire injuries where people work/visit): This measure continued to display a good downward trend, with an improvement over the same period last year (14 injuries compared to 20);
- Measure 6 (fire incidents where people work/visit): As with Measure 5, this measure continued to display a good downward trend, with an improvement over the same period last year (1,229 incidents compared to 1,455);
- Measures 7 and 8 (performance against Emergency Response Standards for fires and road traffic collisions): efforts to secure performance against these measures continued to be a priority for the Service. The Committee was reminded of the background to the introduction of the Service area-bespoke standards - which were now based around life-risk rather than the previous, national, property-risk based standards – and the range of factors that could have a detrimental impact on performance against these measures (e.g. for the retained service, both time taken to respond to the station and to turn out from the station – both of which could be impacted by traffic conditions; time taken to establish precise incident location etc.). The Committee also noted several case studies of recent fatal fires where, in each case, the response had been well inside the required emergency response standards. It was, as such, acknowledged that while performance against emergency response standards remained an important measure, it was not the determinant in terms of fatalities.

***APRC/62. Critical Incident Defusing**

The Committee received for information a presentation by the Area Manager (Community Safety and Risk Reduction) on the “defusing” process used by the Service following critical incidents, typically where there may have been a fatality or serious life-threatening injury. The process was a highly effective staff welfare tool aimed at seeking to mitigate against the potential for on-going psychological distress stemming from attendance at traumatic incidents.

The Service process had been cited as an example of good practice following a recent internal audit, with further improvements and refinements suggested to enhance its effectiveness.

(SEE ALSO MINUTE *APRC/60 ABOVE)

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

The meeting started at 10.00hours and finished at 12.00hours.