

AUDIT & PERFORMANCE REVIEW COMMITTEE

(Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Authority)

18 January 2017

Present:-

Councillors Radford (Chair), Coles, Edmunds (Vice-Chair), Healey, Randall Johnson and Wheeler

Apologies:-

Councillor Way

* **APRC/16 Minutes**

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 12 September 2016 be signed as a correct record.

* **APRC/17 Grant Thornton Update**

The Committee received for information a report submitted by the Authority's external auditors, Grant Thornton, setting out the progress made in delivery of its audit responsibilities to the Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Authority (up to January 2017). The report covered the following matters:

- the progress made to date with the accounts audit plan, interim and final accounts audit, the value for money conclusion and the Annual Audit Letter (Minute *APRC/18 below refers);
- fire sector accounting and other issues such as the CFOA Response to Home Office workforce statistics;
- technical issues such as the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2016/17 and its impact on local authorities; and
- a number of recent Grant Thornton publications including "Advancing Closure: the benefit to local authorities and Integrated Reporting".

* **APRC/18 Grant Thornton Annual Audit Letter for the Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Authority for the year ended 31 March 2016**

The Committee received for information the Authority's Annual Audit Letter for the year ended 31 March 2016 as submitted by the Authority's external auditor, Grant Thornton.

Peter Barber, representing Grant Thornton, drew attention to the work that had been undertaken with the Authority during the year, including the Statement of Accounts and the Value for Money conclusion, both of which had received an unqualified opinion.

* **APRC/19 Audit & Review 2016/17 Progress Report**

The Committee received for information a report (APRC/17/1) setting out the progress made to date against the approved 2016/17 Internal Audit Plan. The report also provided the results from the Service's self-assessment and the assurance statements for the audits completed since the previous meeting of the Committee on 12 September 2016.

Attention was drawn to the point that the Internal Audit Manager, Paul Hodgson, was leaving the Service on 17 February 2017. The Committee thanked him for all of his hard work for the Authority in the past and wished him well in the future.

Reference was made in particular to the progress that had been made with the Service's self-assessment, the results of which had been very encouraging and well received by staff.

The Committee enquired as to whether this work had been cross mapped with the Peer Review. The Area Manager – Organisational Assurance – confirmed that the outcomes had been cross mapped both with this and European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) and that this had resulted in a strategic overview of areas for improvement that could be focussed on by the Service. This was welcomed but a concern was raised in terms of how this information was communicated to staff. The response was given that this was a strategic level management tool and the Service had scored well on communications but it was accepted that this position may change as information was disseminated in the future. One of the key issues identified in the EFQM process was that there was a gap between the Service setting out its strategy and embedding this into the organisation. The Service was aware of the need to address this matter.

*NB. Minute *APRC/20 below also refers.*

* **APRC/20 European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) Committed to Excellence (C2E) Outcomes and Next Steps**

The Committee received for information a report of the Area Manager – Organisational Assurance - (APRC/17/2) in respect of the next steps for the European Foundation for Quality Management progression within Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service following the Committed to Excellence (C2E) assessment undertaken in 2016.

The Area Manager – Organisational Assurance – reported that the key themes of the C2E assessment were:

- Leadership;
- Strategy;
- People;
- Partnerships and Resources;
- Processes, products and services; and
- Customer/people results.

He advised the Committee that the Service was focussing on the areas for improvement identified by the assessment and that actions had been agreed to take these forward which had been built into department plans.

The Committee made reference to the cost of undertaking EFQM, which it understood was approximately £5k, when compared to the savings that it had generated of £40k which it was noted was largely as a result of staff savings. Reference was also made to the point in the document circulated that some of the Service's policies may not be fit for purpose for retained staff. Concern was expressed on this point, given that this group represented approximately 80% of the Service's total staff. The Area Manager – Operational Assurance – advised that the Service was aware of this and was addressing this matter. A temporary post of Retained Development Manager had been created to look at such issues and to draw together a proposed way forward for the Service.

* **APRC/21 Peer Review Update**

The Committee received for information a report of the Area Manager – Organisational Assurance (APRC/17/3) – that provided a more detailed update on the progress made in respect of the actions identified within the Peer Review report that had been received in September 2014.

Reference was made to the lack of longer term contracts for staff that had been identified. The Area Manager – Organisational Assurance – replied that this was a sign of the Service managing its financial position in the light of the current economic climate. It was an issue that had been recognised by the Service as a potential risk and thus, had included within the Corporate Risk Register.

*NB. Minute *APRC/22 below also refers.*

* **APRC/22 Corporate Risk Register**

The Committee received for information a report of the Area Manager – Organisational Assurance (APRC/17/4) - that set out any new risks that had been identified for inclusion within the Corporate Risk Register.

Councillor Healey referred to a recent meeting that he had attended where he had received very favourable feedback in respect of the quality of the training provided by the Training Academy and he congratulated the Service on this.

* **APRC/23 Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service Performance Report 2016/17: Quarter 2**

The Committee received for information a report of the Chief Fire Officer (APRC/17/5) to which was appended a document setting out the performance of the Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service for the reporting period of October 2015 to September 2016 (with a focus on quarter 2 of 2016) against those measures contained within "Our Plan: Creating Safer Communities"; the current iteration of the Authority's Corporate Plan.

In summary, the report was structured around the Service's three priorities, namely public safety, staff safety and efficiency and effectiveness. The primary focus was on the corporate performance measures 1 to 8 and sickness absence and whether any of the changes in data that might be seen were within normal levels. In terms of the trends identified, the following points were noted:-

- Measure 1 – deaths as a result of fires where people live – this was down (all fires) from 10 to 6 at this point in the year;

- Measure 2 – injuries as a result of fires where people live – the number of injuries had reduced but there had been a slight increase on the previous 12 month period so the position was being monitored;
- Measure 3 – fires where people live – there had been little change on the number of fires with 985 in the reporting period from October 2015 to September 2016 as compared to 989 in the previous 12 months;
- Measure 4 – fire related deaths where people work, visit and in vehicles – there had been 3 fire related deaths where people work, visit and in vehicles in the 12 month reporting period from October 2015 to September 2016 as compared with the same period the previous year when there had been no deaths);
- Measure 5 – fire related injuries where people work, visit and in vehicles - there had been a small decrease in the number of fire related injuries where people worked from 37 to 33 as compared with the previous 12 month period (October 2015 to September 2016);
- Measure 6 – fires where people work, visit and in vehicles – there had been 1271 fires where people work and visit and in vehicles in the 12 month reporting period from October 2015 to September 2016 as compared with 1286 fires in the previous 12 month period. There had been 387 fires between July and September 2016, however, which was a 15.5% increase compared to the previous quarter so this measure was being monitored;
- Measures 7 & 8 – achieving the Emergency Response Standards – there had been an improvement in the first response to fire incidents where people live within 10 minutes from the time of call; although the performance in respect of first response to road traffic collisions within 15 minutes had decreased in the same period (October 2015 to September 2016).

In terms of sickness absence, it was noted that for all staff, there had been a decrease from 9.64 days/shifts lost down to 8.9 days/shifts lost in the year October 2015 to September 2016 with both long term sickness and uniformed station based staff sickness rates also being reduced.

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