

AUDIT & PERFORMANCE REVIEW COMMITTEE

(Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Authority)

10 May 2019

Present:

Councillors Healey MBE (Chair), Bown (vice Napper), Bowyer, Clayton, Saywell and Wheeler.

In attendance in accordance with Standing Order 38:

Councillor Randall Johnson.

Apologies:

Councillors Mathews and Napper.

- * **APRC/20** **Minutes**
RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 18 January 2019 be signed as a correct record.

- * **APRC/21** **External Audit Progress Report**
(Barrie Morris – Grant Thornton) in attendance for this item.
The Committee received, for information, an external audit progress report and sector update from Grant Thornton (the Authority's external auditor) covering:
 - interim audit findings and initial value for money risk assessment; and
 - a sector report highlighting Grant Thornton publications, insights from local government sector specialists, reports of interest and accounting and regulatory updates.

- * **APRC/22** **External Audit Fee Letter 2019-20**
The Committee received, for information, a letter from Grant Thornton identifying the fee and work to be undertaken on planned external audit activities for 2019-20.

- * **APRC/23** **International Auditing Standards Compliance Letters**
a **International Auditing Standards - Response Letter from Management**
The Committee considered a draft letter from the Director of Finance in response to enquiries from Grant Thornton, as part of its work on the Authority's financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2019 and in accordance with International Auditing Standards, on management processes in place to prevent fraud and corruption and to ensure compliance with relevant laws and regulations.
RESOLVED that the Director of Finance be authorised to sign and return the letter to Grant Thornton.

b **International Auditing Standards - Response Letter from Chair of the Audit & Performance Review Committee**

The Committee considered a draft letter from the Committee Chair in response to enquiries from Grant Thornton, as part of its work on the Authority's financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2019 and in accordance with International Auditing Standards, on how the Committee gains assurance over management processes and arrangements for fraud risk assessment and compliance with the law and regulation.

RESOLVED that the Committee Chair be authorised to sign and return the letter to Grant Thornton.

* **APRC/24** **Audit & Review 2018-19 Progress Report**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Service Improvement (APRC/19/4) summarising assurance statements for all audits completed for the 2018-19 Internal Audit Plan together with updates on additional review work undertaken. Based on the work completed in 2018-19 and knowledge from previous years, the systems in operation within the Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service continued to demonstrate a good level of internal control.

Councillor Wheeler sought information on the latest position in relation to introduction of the Emergency Services Network – in particular, the implications for the Service of delays in the national project as recently announced in the media.

RESOLVED

- (a). that a report be submitted to the next meeting on the Emergency Services Network project and the potential implications for the Service of delays in the project;
- (b). that, subject to (a) above, the report be noted.

* **APRC/25** **2019-20 Internal Audit Plan**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Service Improvement (APRC/19/5) identifying the proposed Internal Audit Plan for 2019-20. The Plan was divided into audits to be undertaken on an annual cycle (mainly legal requirements) along with examinations of areas of organisational risk and audits to evaluate organisational improvements. The Plan would be delivered by in-house internal audit staff and the Devon Audit Partnership.

RESOLVED that the 2019-20 Internal Audit Plan as appended to report APRC/19/5 be approved.

* **APRC/26** **Draft Annual Statement of Assurance 2018-19**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Service Improvement (APRC/19/6) to which was appended the draft Authority Statement of Assurance for 2018-19. The Statement had been prepared to comply with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015 and the latest version of the Fire and Rescue National Framework and examining organisational systems of internal financial control, corporate governance along with operational assurance.

RESOLVED

- (a). that the Authority draft Annual Statement of Assurance 2018-19 as appended to report DSFRA/19/6 be approved in principle and submitted as part of the audit process for the 2018-19 Statement of Accounts;

- (b). that a further report be submitted to the July Committee meeting seeking approval of the final statement, subject to incorporation of any issues identified during the audit process.

* **APRC/27** **Corporate Risk Register**

The Committee received, for information, a report of the Director of Service Improvement (APRC/19/7) on an addition to the Corporate Risk Register. Risk management within the Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service was used to protect Service assets, to ensure service continuity and to facilitate innovation and opportunity. The Service Corporate Risk Register captured the most significant risks (with a focus on cross-cutting risks and major projects) together with identified actions to mitigate against these risks.

The report identified that the Service risk profile had changed in the last six months, with one new risk (that of the potential for industrial action stemming from the National Joint Council pay proposal) having been added to the register. In response to questions from the Committee, the Chief Fire Officer provided assurance on Service business continuity and resilience arrangements.

* **APRC/28** **Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service Performance Report: October 2018 to March 2019**

The Committee received, for information, a report of the Director of Service Improvement (APRC/19/8) to which was appended the Service performance report covering the 2018-19 financial year. The report featured performance measure details with information on the measure status (positive performance; monitor performance; negative exception) established through assessing performance against that in the previous year and medium to long-term trends. Commentary was included to provide additional contextual information and activities being undertaken to improve performance.

* **APRC/29** **Authority Policy For Regulation Of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) - Review**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Corporate Services (APRC/19/9) identifying amendments to the Authority's policy and processes in relation to the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA) 2000. The amendments were in response to changes in both legislation and responsibility for national oversight of the investigative powers regime, together with updating the list of Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Services Designated Officers with designated roles in the Authority's RIPA authorisations process.

The report also identified that this Authority had not used RIPA during the past twelve months. The Authority – along with other fire and rescue authorities - had never previously used RIPA and did not envisage any scenario where it would be necessary to do so. Given this position and in response to representations from the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC), the Investigatory Powers Commissioner had agreed to relax the external RIPA inspection regime for fire and rescue authorities until such time as any such authority made use of the RIPA provisions.

RESOLVED

- (a). that the amendments to the Authority's RIPA policy as set out in Section 3 of report APRC/19/9 be endorsed;
- (b). that a report reviewing the current RIPA policy be submitted to this Committee in twelve months' time; and

(c). that, subject to (a) and (b) above, the report be noted.

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

The Meeting started at 10.00 am and finished at 11.10 am