

WEST YORKSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE AUDIT COMMITTEE HELD AT FIRE SERVICE HEADQUARTERS, BIRKENSHAW, ON 20 APRIL 2012

Present: Councillors T Austin (in the chair), R Brown, J Cole, R Grahame (as substitute for Councillor J Illingworth), P Harrand (as substitute for Councillor V Binney) and A Wallis (as substitute for Councillor J Dodds)

In attendance: Councillor D Ridgway - Authority chair
Mike Wilkinson - Independent chair (Standards Committee)
Paul Lundy - Audit Commission
Simon Straker - Internal Audit

Apologies: Councillors J Dodds, V Binney and J Illingworth

19 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 3 February 2012 be signed by the Chair as a correct record.

20 URGENT ITEMS

None.

21 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC – SECTION 100A, LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

There were no items which required the exclusion of the public and press.

22 DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

There were no disclosures of interest in any matter under discussion at the meeting.

23 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT ACTIVITY REPORT

The Director of Corporate Resources submitted a report which informed Members where key targets were not being achieved or where West Yorkshire had the poorest performance in any given area when compared with all seven metropolitan Fire and Rescue Authorities.

Members commented on the accuracy and timeliness of some of the information. It was reported that some of the information in question came from other agencies and the Authority was reliant upon them for the provision of the data.

RESOLVED

- (i) That the report be noted; and
- (ii) That every endeavour be made to ensure the information providers were made aware of the Authority's requirements for reporting performance management data and associated deadlines.

24 INTERNAL AUDIT QUARTERLY REVIEW

The Chief Finance Officer submitted a report which provided a summary and reported findings of the audit activity for the period from January 2012 to end March 2012.

Members were advised that seven audits had been completed, four of which provided substantial assurance, two adequate assurance and one limited assurance. The area of limited assurance was discussed as follows;

- Change of Supplier bank details following change of Authority bankers (limited assurance) – action plan had now been put in place to address the system deficiencies which had not allowed adequate checking of changes to bank details thereby increasing the risk of potential fraud. No fraudulent requests or losses had been identified from sample checking.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

25 "LET'S BE CLEAR" AUDIT REPORT

Consideration was given to a report of the Chief Finance Officer which presented the Audit Commission document, "Let's Be Clear" which examined ways of making local authority accounts more user-friendly and easily understood following the implementation of the International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) with effect from 2010 / 11. The report was presented by Paul Lundy, District Auditor.

The Audit Commission suggested that the decision to bring local authority accounts in line with private sector accounting standards through the implementation of International Financial Reporting Standards had made the accounts more complicated and consequently more difficult for elected members and council tax payers to understand. The report encouraged the accountancy bodies to look at ways of making the accounts more user friendly.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

26 EXTERNAL AUDIT – PROGRESS REPORT

The Chief Finance Officer submitted a report, presented by the District Auditor, which provided an update on the work of the external auditor in relation to the 2010 / 11 and 2011 / 12 statements of accounts. The report also addressed a number of key issues affecting the provision of external audit and changes to the accounting codes.

It was reported that KPMG had been the successful bidder for the audit services currently provided under the, soon-to-be disestablished, Audit Commission. This would take effect from October 2012. Another issue related to the disestablishment of the Audit Commission would be an anticipated reduction in audit fee of approximately 40%.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

27 SPECIALS IMPLEMENTATION – REVIEW

Consideration was given to a report of the Director of Operations which reported on the outcomes and evaluation of the Specials Implementation project as they related to project management, the achievement of established objectives and learning outcomes. The Specials implementation had been one of the largest projects undertaken by the Authority to date and had been delivered on time and in budget.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted and the learning outcomes from the Specials implementation project be considered when planning and implementing future projects.

28 INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN 2012 / 2013

Members considered a report of the Chief Finance Officer which provided an outline of the proposed programme of internal audit work for 2012 / 13.

The areas to be investigated included;

- Key financial systems
- Other financial systems / locations
- Corporate governance (to include implications of the Localism Act)

- Business Risk and Control
- Joint procurement of replacement Command and Control system (as appropriate)

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

29 OPERATIONAL PEER ASSESSMENT – RESULTS

The Director of Operations submitted a report which advised Members of the results of the Operational assessment and Peer challenge process which had been undertaken in February 2012 following an initial self-assessment process. The Assessment had focused on service delivery and an Improvement Plan had been drafted to address those issues identified in the independent assessors' report.

It was reported that the areas for improvement included some work related to the following (detailed in the annex to the report now submitted);

- Leadership and corporate capacity
- Outcomes for local citizens
- Organisational capacity
- Community risk management
- Operational response
- Prevention and Protection
- Health and Safety
- Training and Development, and
- Call management and incident support

RESOLVED

- (i) That the report be noted; and
- (ii) That the Improvement Plan drafted as a result of the recommendations contained within the Operational Assessment peer challenge report be approved with progress reported to future meetings of the Audit Committee.

Chair