

Minutes of the Audit Committee

**23rd March, 2015 at 12.10 pm
at Fire Service Headquarters, Vauxhall Road, Birmingham**

Present: Councillor Singh (Chair);
Councillor Mottram (Vice-Chair);
Councillors Aston and Quinnen;
Mr Ager.

Apologies: Councillors Lines and Yardley.

8/15 **Minutes**

The Chair advised that with regard to the establishment of a Pensions Board (Minute No. 7/15 refers) guidance had been received that an independent person could be the Chair of the Board, but without voting rights. The two employee positions on the Board had been advertised and six applications had been received.

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 19th January, 2015 be confirmed as a correct record.

9/15 **Internal Audit Plan 2015/16 – 2017/18**

The Committee received the internal audit plan for the period 2015/16 to 2017/18. The plan would remain fluid and kept under review and any proposed changes would be reported to the Committee for approval.

There was some consideration about possibly moving towards developing a one year plan, in order to ensure that it remained current and focussed upon the areas of highest risk. This would be revisited during the year.

A member commented that he found it difficult to link the information reported in Appendix 1 to the corporate risk. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer and the internal auditors advised that assurance against the risks was provided from a number of sources, and not just from the internal auditors.

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This is reflected in the risk and assurance report later on the agenda. Further cross referencing could be introduced in the future if the Committee would find this helpful.

Resolved that the internal audit plan for 2015/16 to 2017/18 be approved.

10/15 Internal Audit Progress Report

The Committee noted a report from their internal auditor which detailed the progress made against the delivery of the 2014/2015 Internal Audit Plan. The information contained within the report would inform the overall opinion in the Internal Audit Annual Report at the end of the year.

11/15 Corporate Risk Update Quarter 3

The Committee received the Corporate Risk Assurance Map and noted the position statement detailing the work undertaken in support of the management of each of the Service's Corporate Risks.

Corporate Risks were those which, if they occurred, would seriously affect the Authority's ability to carry out its core functions or deliver its strategic objectives as set out in The Plan. The Authority currently had eleven corporate risks. The Corporate Risk Assurance Map summary provided a description of each risk and an overview of its rating. The position statement set out the outcomes of the regular review of each risk by the risk owner. The Committee noted the position with regard to each risk.

It was noted that with regard to Risk 4 and partnership working that the Scrutiny Committee was about to commence a review which might impact on this area.

A member commented that if a risk required a level three assurance, particularly an independent assurance, it would be helpful if that was spelt out in the report.

Resolved that the Corporate Risk Assurance Map Summary be approved.

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12/15 Work Programme 2014/15

The Committee noted its work programme for 2014/2015.

13/15 Audit Plan 2014/15

Approval was sought to Grant Thornton's Audit Plan 2014/15 which set out the audit work Grant Thornton would undertake in respect of the Authority's financial statements and the delivery of its value for money conclusion on the Authority's arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

The Chair requested that the Auditors amend the report in relation to the risk of maintaining service delivery around potential strike action so that it was apparent that any negotiations with the Fire Brigades Union would be between the Government, and not the Authority.

Resolved that the Grant Thornton's Audit Plan to enable the delivery of the audit of financial statements and the value for money conclusion 2014/15 be approved.

14/15 Audit Committee Update

The Committee received an update from the Authority's external auditors, Grant Thornton, on progress with their audit work; a summary of emerging national issues and developments that might impact on the Authority; and a number of challenge questions on these emerging issues. The Committee also received the auditor's report on their continuing to deliver value to the West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority.

The external auditors drew the Committee's particular attention to issues around emerging national issues and developments that could impact upon West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority.

15/15 Communication Update

The Committee received an update from the Authority's external auditors, Grant Thornton relating to the progress of the external auditors in delivering their responsibilities, which included matters that related to fraud, law and regulations, going concerns, related parties, and accounting estimates.

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Update on Topical, Legal and Regulatory Issues

There was no new information to be presented.

(The meeting ended at 12.45 pm)

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