

Minutes of the Audit Committee

**19th January, 2015 at 12.30 pm
at Fire Service Headquarters, Vauxhall Road, Birmingham**

Present: Councillor Singh (Chair);
Councillors Aston, Quinnen and Yardley;
Mr Ager.

Apologies: Councillors Mottram and Lines.

1/15

Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 13th October, 2014 be confirmed as a correct record.

2/15

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 WMF&RA.

The external auditors drew the Committee's particular attention to issues around a 2020 Vision, Where Growth Happens and the right to report and the National Fraud Initiative. They also highlighted the seminars and workshops organised by Grant Thornton on topical issues. If members or officers let them know of any help required on a particular issue these could be worked into next year's programme.

In response to a member's enquiry about the responses to challenge questions, the Deputy Chief Fire Officer reported that he and the Strategic Enabler for Finance and Resources usually answered these on behalf of the Authority. Many were addressed at the closedown of the Authority's accounts. With regard to the Parliamentary order for facilitating public and media access to Authority meetings, he had been liaising with officers in Sandwell to ensure the Authority's compliance.

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3/15

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.

With regard to the Audit Committee's knowledge and skills framework, the Audit Services Manager requested members, who had not already done so, to complete their self-assessment returns and send them back so they could be collated and reported to the Committee to enable the third and final stage (evaluating the effectiveness of the Audit Committee) to be undertaken.

A member enquired as to why in the summary of work completed the item in respect of Fire Stations – Management of Fuel was shown as not finished and was still draft. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer reported that there had been a little difficulty in dealing with some of the recommendations and these were being fine-tuned. An update on the matter would be made to the next meeting.

4/15

Internal Audit Charter – Annual Review

Further to Minute No. 3/14 (20th January, 2014), the Committee was asked to consider its first annual review of the Internal Audit Charter as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2013. There was a statutory requirement for internal audit to work in accordance with the 'proper audit practices' which were in effect the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards. A copy of the Charter was submitted.

Resolved that the Internal Audit Charter be approved.

5/15

Work Programme 2014/15

The Committee noted its work programme for 2014/2015.

6/15

Corporate Risk 2014/15 – Quarter 2 Update

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.

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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.

A member asked whether it might be possible for the Committee to get an independent review of Corporate risk 2 which related to disruption to ICT functionality and whether the grant settlement might increase the risk. The Strategic Enabler for Finance and Resources assured that the Authority intended to set a balanced budget for 2015/16.

Resolved that the Corporate Risk Assurance Map Summary be approved.

7/15

Update on Topical, Legal and Regulatory Issues

Further to Minute No. 41/14, the Deputy Chief Fire Officer reported that it was to be proposed that under the Public Services Pensions Act 2013 the Pensions Board should report to the Audit Committee. A report on the proposals would be submitted to the Authority meeting in February 2015.

The Chair indicated that he would report further to the Committee if he received any further update on Pensions Boards from Wolverhampton City Council, he commented, however, that the regulations were still to be finalised.

(The meeting ended at 1.00 pm)

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