

For Publication

Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority  
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Item No. 6

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**REPORT AUTHOR:** COUNCILLOR M HEADLEY

**SUBJECT:** AUDIT AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE

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For further information on this Report contact: Nicky Upton  
Democratic and Regulatory Services Supervisor  
Tel No: 01234 845149

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Background Papers: None

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Implications (tick ✓):

LEGAL			FINANCIAL	
HUMAN RESOURCES			EQUALITY IMPACT	
ENVIRONMENTAL			POLICY	
CORPORATE RISK	Known	✓	OTHER (please specify)	
	New		CORE BRIEF	

*Any implications affecting this report are noted at the end of the report.*

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**PURPOSE:**

To report on the meeting of the Audit and Standards Committee held on 6 December 2018.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

That the submitted Minutes of the meeting held on 6 December 2018 be received and the recommendations of the meeting, as noted, below considered.

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1. Introduction

1.1 The draft Minutes of the meeting of the Audit and Standards Committee held on 6 December 2018 are appended for Members' consideration.

1.2 The Audit and Standards Committee made the following recommendation to the Fire Authority:

18-19/AS/038 Statement of Assurance

That, subject to the changes as discussed at the meeting being made, the Chair of the Committee be authorised to sign off the Statement of Assurance for reporting to the full Authority Meeting.

**COUNCILLOR M HEADLEY  
CHAIR OF AUDIT AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

## MINUTES OF THE AUDIT AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 6 DECEMBER 2018 AT 10.00am

Present: Councillors Headley (Chair), Chatterley, Downing and Waheed  
Mr J Atkinson, ACO Z Evans, SOC A Peckham and Mr G Chambers  
Mr N Harris, Ernst & Young  
Ms L Davies, RSM

### 18-19/AS/028 Apologies

28.1 An apology for absence was received from Councillor Chapman.

### 18-19/AS/029 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary and Other Interests

29.1 There were no declarations of interest.

### 18-19/AS/030 Communications

30.1 There were no communications.

### 18-19/AS/031 Minutes

#### **RESOLVED:**

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 25 September 2018 be confirmed and signed as a true record.

### 18-19/AS/032 Public Participation

32.1 There were no members of the public present at the meeting.

### 18-19/AS/033 Internal Audit Progress Report

- 33.1 Ms L Davies, RSM, provided an update on progress made against the internal audit plan for 2018/19. Since the last meeting of the Committee, the audit of Use of Risk Management had been finalised and this had received an audit opinion of substantial assurance.
- 33.2 Ms Davies reported that Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire and Rescue Services had advised that they did not wish to proceed with a joint audit of cyber security.
- 33.3 The Assistant Chief Officer advised that the ICT Service had recently undertaken a cyber security assessment against the government framework. She would clarify the position regarding the audit with the other Services involved as it had been intended that this would form part of Cambridgeshire's annual review for its ISO accreditation.
- 33.4 Members expressed the view that they did not wish this audit to be removed from the internal audit programme.

#### **RESOLVED:**

That the report be received.

### 18-19/AS/034 Audit and Governance Action Plan Monitoring - Exception Report and Summary Analysis

- 34.1 The Assistant Chief Officer presented the Committee with a summary statistical analysis of actions arising from internal audit reports over the last three financial years to date and from the Authority's current Annual Governance Statement.
- 34.2. There were no current exception reports and the actions that had been delayed as a result of the additional resource required to support the HMICFRS inspection had now been either completed or were in progress.
- 34.3 The Assistant Chief Officer reminded the Committee that the Review of the Fire and Rescue Authority's Effectiveness had been deferred to 2019/20, pending the outcome of the current review of governance arrangements.

34.4 The Chair commented that performance against the actions had improved since the current monitoring processes had been implemented.

**RESOLVED:**

That the report be received.

18-19/AS/035 Review of “Monitored Policies”

- 35.1 The Assistant Chief Officer submitted a review of the policies on Protected Reporting (Whistleblowing), Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption incorporating the National Fraud Initiative (NFI), Use of Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) and the Authority’s Complaints and Compliments process.
- 35.2 RIPA powers had not been used during the reporting period. The Service’s use of RIPA powers had been audited in 2016. The outcome of this was positive and a further audit would take place in 2020.
- 35.3 In response to a question, the Assistant Chief Officer advised that the authorising Officer was the Officer on duty at an operational incident, usually the Area Manager.
- 35.4 The Assistant Chief Officer advised that she would circulate the audit report on RIPA from 2016, as well as the current RIPA policy, to Members of the Committee for information.
- 35.5 There had been no complaints received under the Service’s Protected Reporting (Whistleblowing) Policy and no cases of suspected fraud reported under the Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Policy.
- 35.6 The number of complaints had increased significantly from 2017/18. Four complaints had been received in relation to use of social media, all of which had been upheld. There had also been an increase in complaints relating to inappropriate behaviour. Three such complaints had been received, with one being upheld.
- 35.7 In response to questions, the Assistant Chief Officer reported that the service had a clear policy on the use of social media and that this was communicated regularly through the Blue Bulletin.

35.8 One complaint during the period had progressed to Stage 2. This had now been resolved.

35.9 The Assistant Chief Officer reported that the National Fraud Initiative process had commenced in October 2018, with matches expected to be released in January 2019.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the arrangements in place for the Protected Reporting (Whistleblowing) policy, the Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption policy incorporating the National Fraud Initiative (NFI), Use of Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) and the Authority's Complaints and Compliments process and the arrangements for their review be noted.
2. That the Assistant Chief Officer circulate the 2016 audit report on the use of RIPA, as well as the current RIPA Policy, to Members of the Committee for information.

18-19/AS/036 Annual Report on Registration of Interests and Gifts/Hospitality

36.1 The Secretary and Monitoring Officer introduced his annual report on the registration of interests and gifts/hospitality by Members during the past year.

36.2 All Members had updated their register of interest forms since June 2018 and no entries had been made on the register of gifts and hospitality.

**RESOLVED:**

That the report be acknowledged.

18-19/AS/037 Review of the Effectiveness of the Fire and Rescue Authority's Internal Auditors

37.1 The Head of Finance and Treasurer introduced his report on the effectiveness of the Fire and Rescue Authority's Internal Audit arrangements. This had been referred to the Committee by the Humans Resources Policy and Challenge Group following concerns being raised at a national level about the effectiveness of the big four audit firms.

37.2 The Committee was advised that the services of RSM were jointly procured with Essex and Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Services.

- 37.3 RSM conformed with the Global Institute of Internal Auditors (GIIA) International Professional Practice Framework (IPF) and was subject to external quality assessment every five years. The most recent assessment had been undertaken in 2016 by the Chartered Institute of Internal Auditors and this had concluded that RSM had “a robust approach to the annual and assignment planning processes and the documentation reviewed was thorough in both terms of reports provided to Audit & Standards Committee and the supporting working papers. RSM were found to have an excellent level of conformance with the IIA’s profession standards, including the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards.”
- 37.4 Ms L Davies added that RSM was one of only a handful of organisations that had had such an assessment undertaken and that RSM also had internal technical and quality teams that reviewed the work undertaken by the organisation on a regular basis.
- 37.5 Mr N Harris of Ernst & Young introduced himself and advised that Ernst & Young was in the process of contributing to a number of national reviews into the audit profession, including the Kingman review, and that he would be willing to share information about Ernst & Young’s quality assurance processes with the Committee at a future meeting.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the report be received and that the effectiveness of the Fire and Rescue Authority’s Internal Audit arrangements be confirmed.
2. That the Committee review the effectiveness of the internal audit arrangements on an annual basis.
3. That the Committee receive a report on Ernst & Young’s quality assurance processes at a future meeting.

18-19/AS/038 Statement of Assurance

- 38.1 The Committee received the Statement of Assurance to the Committee for onward submission to the full Authority.
- 38.2 It was noted that a number of changes were required and the Committee went through the document page by page, suggesting the following changes:
- Page 2- index- the section numbering in the document should reflect that as set out in the index and that page numbers should be checked to ensure that the appropriate page was being referenced.
  - Page 4 – links should be added to all documents that are publicly available on the Service website.

- Page 8 - the criteria published by the Comptroller and Auditor General that was relevant was from November 2017, not 2016 as stated in the report. The phrase “more visibly effective” should be removed from the end of the first sentence of the second paragraph under section 3.4. A quote from the external auditor’s opinion on the Statement of Accounts should be included in the last paragraph of section 3.3.
- Page 10 – the Chief Fire Officer’s appraisal and the objectives set should be included in the list of internal control measures.
- Page 11- reference to the Statement of Assurance 2017/18 should be removed from the bullet points listed under the second paragraph of 4.1.
- Page 12 – the decrease in incidents attended during 2017/18 should be caveated by including “this is in part due to the temporary cessation of co-responding” in 4.2.1. In the third sentence of 4.2.2 “are” should be replaced with “our”. The second sentence in 4.2.3 should be reworded so that it reads as: “BFRS continues to work with partner agencies in order to target advice and guidance on fire safety awareness in the home to those most at risk in the community”.
- Page 13 – the text for 1.1.1 to be reworded to “the number of Road Traffic Incidents is increasing year on year”. In 1.1.4 an “s” needed to be added at the end of “Home Fire Safety Check” on line 7.
- Page 14 -the word “apparent” should be removed from the sentence on the increase in accidental dwelling fires. In section 1.1.5 the “and” in the second line should be replaced with “a” and the second sentence should refer to an “intelligence” led approach.
- Page 15 – the dates in the penultimate paragraph should be updated to 2018 and the CRMP period to 2019-2023 and it “is” currently still in draft. Reference to HFSCs in the section should be replaced with Safe and Well visits.
- Page 16- the spelling of neighbouring needed to be amended. The last bullet point under section 4.5 should start with the word “facilitate”. “Aide” should be replaced in the first sentence of the third paragraph by “aid”.
- Page 17 – in the fourth paragraph, the word “only” should be removed from the first sentence and “that has a” should be added after FRSs.
- Page 18- reference to police co-locations should be replaced with “shared locations”. “Hotspot crime areas” to be replaced with “crime hotspot” areas.
- Page 19- the last bullet point should refer to “electronic membership applications”, not “membership electronic applications”. In the second paragraph on the page “will” should be replaced with “could”.
- Page 20 – the dates in the last paragraph needed to be updated. “Exploration of a shared Headquarters” should be included in the list of collaborative opportunities with Bedfordshire Police.
- That the use of “BFRA” and “BFRS” were consistently applied throughout the document.



38.3 The Committee agreed all the changes and noted that the Statement would be submitted to a future meeting of the Fire and Rescue Authority.

**RESOLVED:**

That, subject to the changes as discussed at the meeting being made, the Chair of the Committee be authorised to sign off the Statement of Assurance for reporting to the full Authority Meeting.

18-19/AS/039 Corporate Risk Register

39.1 The Assistant Chief Officer submitted the review of the Service's Corporate Risk Register. All changes and updates to risks had been considered by the relevant Policy and Challenge Group.

39.2 There had been no changes to risk ratings.

39.3 There had been eight updates to risks in the Corporate Services Risk Register, three updates to the Service Delivery Risk Register and one update to the Human Resources Risk Register.

39.4 The issue of Brexit risk had been raised at the Corporate Services Policy and Challenge Group. Whether an additional, stand-alone risk was required was being considered at the six-monthly meeting of the Corporate Management Team and Strategic Management Team at its meeting on 10 December 2018.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the continuing development of the Service's Corporate Risk Register be acknowledged.
2. That it be acknowledged that the appropriate Policy and Challenge Groups have considered and reviewed controls proposed to reduce the identified risks.
3. That the work taking place to identify the risks associated with Brexit be acknowledged.

18-19/AS/040 Work Programme

40.1 The Committee considered the proposed work programme for 2018/19 and noted that, as the decision had been made to defer the Review of Effectiveness, this item had been removed from the Committee's work programme for 2018/19.

40.2 Members requested a report on the results of the HMICFRS inspection.

40.3 It was noted that the dates relating to the audit programmes needed to be updated.

**RESOLVED:**

That the Committee's Work Programme for 2018/19 be received, subject to the inclusion of an item on the HMICFRS inspection.

18-19/AS/041 Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A, Paragraph 3 of Part 1: Exclusion of the Public

**RESOLVED:**

That, pursuant to Sections 100A(2) and 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the discussion of the following item on the grounds that the matters to be discussed involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act (as amended):

Item

FRA Requested Report

The meeting closed at 12.23pm