

## KENT AND MEDWAY FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

### GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

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MINUTES of a meeting of the General Purposes Committee held at Kent Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters, The Godlands, Tovil, Maidstone on Thursday 27 June 2013.

PRESENT:- Mr T Gates (Chairman), Mr M J Angell (Vice-Chairman), Mrs A Allen, Mr H G R Birkby, Ms S J Carey, Mr G Cowan, Mr D S Daley, Mr P Godwin, Mr M Heale, Mr V B Hewett, Mr S C Manion, Mr T G Mason and Mrs P A V Stockell.

OFFICERS:- The Chief Executive, Miss A Millington; the Director, Finance and Corporate Services, Mr C Kerr; the Assistant Director, Finance, Mrs A Kilpatrick; the Assistant Director, Planning and Development, Mr P Flaherty; the Area Manager, Operational Response, Mr M Adams; the Head of HR Services, Mrs K Irvine; the Corporate Governance and Risk Manager, Mr R Feltham; the Clerk to the Authority, Mr S C Ballard; and the Deputy Clerk, Mrs M Curry.

IN ATTENDANCE:- Mr D Wells and Mr S Golding, Grant Thornton UK LLP; and Ms S Buckland, Head of Internal Audit and Mr B Cull, KCC Internal Audit.

### UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

#### 4. **Terms of Reference**

*(Item A3)*

Members noted the Committee's Terms of Reference, which had been approved by the Authority at its meeting on 13 June.

#### 5. **Minutes of Human Resources and Equalities Committee – 27 March 2013**

*(Item A4)*

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the former Human Resources and Equalities Committee held on 27 March 2013 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

#### 6. **Minutes of Audit and Governance Committee – 17 April 2013**

*(Item A5)*

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the former Audit and Governance Committee held on 17 April 2013 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

#### 7. **Minutes of General Purposes Committee – 13 June 2013**

*(Item A6)*

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 13 June 2013 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

#### 8. **Budget Outturn 2012/13**

*(Item B1 - Report by Assistant Director, Finance)*

- (1) The Committee was advised of the final position for the outturn on the revenue and capital budgets and prudential indicators for 2012/13, and considered proposals for transfers to reserves. The Committee also received an update on the disposal of assets and other financial issues.

- (2) RESOLVED that:-
  - (a) the final revenue underspend of £904k be transferred into the Infrastructure Reserve to support the programme to build new fire stations;
  - (b) the remaining contents of the report be noted.

**9. Internal Audit Annual Report 2012/13**

*(Item B2 - Report by Corporate Governance and Risk Manager)*

- (1) The Committee noted that the Authority's internal audit services were provided by Kent County Council under a service level agreement, and considered the Internal Audit Annual Report.
- (2) The Head of Internal Audit introduced the Annual Report, which contained her opinion of the overall effectiveness of the Authority's control systems and the outcomes of the annual review of internal audit effectiveness required by regulation, and answered Members' questions on it.
- (3) RESOLVED that:-
  - (a) the contents of the Internal Audit Annual Report for 2012/13, attached as Appendix 1 to the report, and the Head of Internal Audit's overall opinion of "substantial assurance", be noted;
  - (b) the Annual Review of the Effectiveness of Internal Audit, as described in paragraphs 11 to 12 of the report and paragraphs 3.1 to 3.3 of Appendix 1 to the report, be approved.

**10. Treasury Management Annual Report 2012/13**

*(Item B3 - Report by Assistant Director, Finance)*

- (1) The Committee considered a report on Treasury Management activity for 2012/13, and for 2013/14 to date, including the latest position relating to the Authority's deposits in Icelandic Banks.
- (2) RESOLVED that:-
  - (a) the year-end report on Treasury Management activity for 2012/13 be approved;
  - (b) the remaining contents of the report, including the latest position regarding recovery of deposits in Icelandic Banks (described in paragraphs 20 to 21 of the report), and the update on treasury management activity for 2013/14 (set out in paragraphs 22 to 26 of the report), be noted.

**11. Corporate Governance Assurance Statement 2012/13**

*(Item B4 - Report by Corporate Governance and Risk Manager)*

- (1) The Committee considered the Annual Corporate Governance Assurance Statement for 2012/13, which was intended to provide Members with the necessary information and assurances about the Authority's governance arrangements.
- (2) RESOLVED that the Annual Corporate Governance Assurance Statement for 2012/13, attached as Appendix 1 to the report, be approved.

**12. External Auditor's Annual Governance Report for 2012/13**  
*(Item B5 - Report by Director, Finance and Corporate Services)*

- (1) The Committee considered the External Auditor's draft Audit Findings report for the year ended 31 March 2013. The Committee was advised that:-
  - the External Auditor had identified only minor amendments to the Statement of Accounts, which had subsequently been incorporated within the final accounts;
  - the External Auditor had expressed himself satisfied that the Authority had proper arrangements in place for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources;
  - the final audit fee had remained the same as previously advised, at £47.4k;
  - the External Auditor expected to issue an unqualified audit report on the Authority's Statement of Accounts for 2012/13.
- (2) Mr Wells, the Audit Director, introduced the draft Audit Findings report and answered Members' questions on it.
- (3) RESOLVED that the External Auditor's draft Audit Findings report for the year ended 31 March 2013, attached as Appendix 1 to the report, be received.

**13. Annual Statement of Accounts 2012/13**  
*(Item B6 - Report by Director, Finance and Corporate Services)*

- (1) The Committee considered the Annual Statement of Accounts for 2012/13 and the proposed Letter of Representation (a formal statement by the Director, Finance and Corporate Services which was required to be sent to the External Auditor in order to provide assurances as to the robustness of the Authority's approach to the preparation and audit of its Statement of Accounts).
- (2) RESOLVED that:-
  - (a) the Letter of Representation, as attached as Appendix 1 to the report, be approved;
  - (b) the Annual Statement of Accounts 2012/13, as set out in Appendix 2 to the report, be approved, subject to the Chairman being informed of any changes which may be made to the accounts following completion of the External Audit;
  - (c) the remaining contents of the report, including the position on reserves (as set out in paragraphs 15 to 18 of the report); and the commentary on the content and disclosures within the Statement of Accounts (as set out in paragraphs 19 to 28 of the report), be noted;
  - (d) the Committee place on record its congratulations to the relevant staff for their efforts in preparing an accurate Statement of Accounts so speedily.

**14. Compulsory Redundancy**  
*(Item B7 – Report by Chief Executive)*

- (1) The Committee was advised that, although staff numbers had been reduced over the past two years through a voluntary redundancy scheme and natural wastage, increasing financial pressures required the Authority to give continuing consideration to ways in which staff numbers could be reduced still further, and a number of projects and reviews were taking place for this

27 June 2013

purpose. Members were asked to consider approving the use of compulsory redundancy as an option when implementing change projects.

- (2) Mr Godwin moved, Mr Cowan seconded, as an amendment to the recommendations in paragraph 14 of the report, that in paragraph 14.2 the words “where necessary” be replaced by “as a last resort”.
- (3) Following discussion, the amendment was put to the vote and

*Lost 7 votes to 5*

- (4) RESOLVED that:-
  - (a) the principle that, where necessary, compulsory redundancy be used as an option when implementing change projects, be approved;
  - (b) the current voluntary redundancy terms, as agreed by the former Human Resources and Equalities Committee on 8 November 2012 (Minute 17), be used for any future compulsory redundancies.

**15. Budget Monitoring 2013/14**

*(Item C1 - Report by Assistant Director, Finance)*

- (1) The Committee received the latest forecast outturn position on the revenue and capital budgets and prudential indicators for 2013/14, and updates on other financial issues.
- (2) The Director, Finance and Corporate Resources, gave a brief oral report on the Chancellor’s Statement on the day before the meeting on the Government’s spending proposals for 2015/16.
- (3) RESOLVED that the contents of both reports be noted.

**16. Annual Report on Service Users’ Feedback and Freedom of Information (Fol) Requests 2012/13**

*(Item C2 - Report by Area Manager, Operational Response)*

- (1) The Committee received a report setting out an analysis of the complaints and compliments about the Authority, and Fol requests received in 2012/13, and comparisons against previous years.
- (2) RESOLVED that the contents of the report and its appendices be noted.