

KENT AND MEDWAY FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the General Purposes Committee held at Kent Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters, The Godlands, Tovil, Maidstone on Wednesday 25 June 2014.

PRESENT:- Mr T Gates (Chairman), Mr M J Angell (Vice-Chairman), Mrs A Allen MBE, Mr H G R Birkby, Ms S J Carey, Mr N J D Chard (substitute for Mr D J Carr), Mr G Cowan, Mr D S Daley, Mr P Godwin, Mr R A Latchford OBE, 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, Human Resources, Mrs K Irvine; the Assistant Director, Service Delivery, Mr M Adams; the Corporate Governance and Risk Manager, Mr R Feltham; the Corporate Facilities and Environmental Manager, Mr P Austen; and the Clerk to the Authority, Mr S C Ballard.

IN ATTENDANCE:- Mr D Wells and Mr G Short, Grant Thornton UK LLP; and Mr B Cull and Ms F Chivers, KCC Internal Audit.

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

1. **Membership**

(Item 1)

The Committee noted the Members appointed by the Authority to serve on the Committee for 2014/15.

2. **Election of Chairman for 2014/15**

(Item 2)

- (1) Mr Mason moved, Mrs Allen seconded, that Mr Gates be elected Chairman of the Committee
- (2) There being no other nominations, Mr T Gates was declared elected as Chairman of the Committee for 2014/15.

3. **Election of Vice-Chairman for 2014/15**

(Item 3)

- (1) Mrs Stockell moved, Mrs Allen seconded, that Mr Angell be elected Vice-Chairman of the Committee.
- (2) There being no other nominations, Mr M J Angell was declared elected as Vice-Chairman of the Committee for 2014/15.

4. **Minutes**

(Item A5)

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 16 April 2014 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

5. **Fire at Adams Gas and Leisure, Margate – 24 June 2014**

The Assistant Director, Service Delivery, updated Members on this incident, in which one person had died.

6. Budget Outturn 2013/14

(Item B1 - Report by Assistant Director, Finance)

- (1) The Committee was advised of the final outturn position of the revenue and capital spend and prudential indicators for 2013/14, 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) of the final revenue underspend of £880k, £72k be transferred into the Insurance Reserve to increase the contingency for claims exposure, and the remaining £808k be transferred into the Infrastructure Reserve to support the programme to build new fire stations and other infrastructure projects;
 - (b) the remaining contents of the report be noted.

7. Internal Audit Annual Report 2013/14

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

- (1) The Committee considered the Internal Audit Annual Report prepared by the Authority's Head of Internal Audit (whose services were provided by Kent County Council under a service level agreement).
- (2) On behalf of the Head of Internal Audit, Mr Cull introduced the Annual Report, which contained the Head of Internal Audit's 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. Mr Cull then answered Members' questions on the Annual Report.
- (3) RESOLVED that:-
 - (a) the contents of the Internal Audit Annual Report for 2013/14, 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 Compliance with Internal Audit Professional Standards, as described in paragraphs 11 to 12 and paragraph 3.1 of Appendix 1 to the report, be approved.

8. Treasury Management Annual Report 2013/14

(Item B3 - Report by Assistant Director, Finance)

- (1) The Committee considered a report on Treasury Management activity during 2013/14, and during 2014/15 to date.
- (2) RESOLVED that:-
 - (a) the year-end report on Treasury Management activity during 2013/14, as set out in paragraphs 10 to 19 of the report, be approved;
 - (b) the remaining contents of the report, including the position on Treasury Management activity during 2014/15 to date (set out in paragraphs 22 to 26 of the report), be noted.

9. Governance Assurance Statement 2013/14

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

- (1) The Committee considered the annual Governance Assurance Statement (GAS) for 2013/14, which this year included the Operational Assurance Statement. The GAS was intended to provide Members with the necessary

information and assurances about the Authority's governance and operational arrangements.

- (2) RESOLVED that the annual Governance Assurance Statement for 2013/14, attached as Appendix 1 to the report, be approved.

10. External Auditors' Annual Governance Report for 2013/14
(Item B5 - Report by Director, Finance and Corporate Services)

- (1) The Committee considered the External Auditors' draft Audit Findings report for the year ended 31 March 2014. The Committee was advised that:-
- the External Auditors had not identified any adjustments that needed to be made to the draft set of Accounts submitted for their review and audit; and had commented that the Accounts were of a high quality and included a comprehensive set of supporting working papers, and that there was a good audit trail which was clear and easy to follow;
 - the External Auditors expected to issue an unmodified audit report on the Authority's Statement of Accounts for 2013/14;
 - the External Auditors proposed to give an unqualified Value for Money conclusion, which confirmed 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.
- (2) Mr Wells, the Audit Director, introduced the draft Audit Findings report and answered Members' questions on it.
- (3) RESOLVED that:-
- (a) the External Auditors' draft Audit Findings report for the year ended 31 March 2014, attached as Appendix 1 to the report, be received;
 - (b) the Committee place on record its congratulations to the relevant staff for preparing accounts which had not required any adjustments and had been praised by the External Auditors for their high quality.

11. Annual Statement of Accounts 2013/14
(Item B6 - Report by Director, Finance and Corporate Services)

- (1) The Committee considered the Annual Statement of Accounts for 2013/14 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 Auditors 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 2013/14, as set out in Appendices 2 and 3 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 14 to 17 of the report); and the commentary on the content and disclosures within the Statement of Accounts (as set out in paragraphs 18 to 25 of the report), be noted;

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- (d) the Committee place on record its congratulations to the relevant staff for their efforts in preparing an accurate set of final accounts for 2013/14 so speedily.

12. Budget Monitoring 2014/15

(Item B7 - Report by Assistant Director, Finance)

- (1) The Committee received the latest forecast outturn position on the revenue and capital budgets and prudential indicators for 2014/15, and updates on other financial issues, and considered a proposal for a transfer of revenue budget underspend to reserves.
- (2) RESOLVED that:-
 - (a) £1m of the reported revenue budget underspend be transferred into the Infrastructure Reserve to support the programme to build new fire stations and other infrastructure projects;
 - (b) the remaining contents of the report be noted.

13. Annual Report on Service Users' Feedback and Freedom of Information (Fol) Requests 2013/14

(Item C1 - Report by Assistant Director, Service Delivery)

- (1) The Committee received a report setting out an analysis of the complaints and compliments about the Authority and Fol requests received during 2013/14, and comparisons against previous years.
- (2) RESOLVED that the contents of the report and its appendices be noted.

14. Environmental Update

(Item C2- Report by Corporate Facilities and Environmental Manager)

- (1) The Committee received a report on progress in achieving the Authority's target of reducing its Carbon Dioxide emissions by 35% by 2016/17.
- (2) RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted.

15. Workplace Performance Monitoring

(Item C3 - Report by Assistant Director, Human Resources)

- (1) Members considered information on performance against the strategic corporate health indicators relating to staff sickness and RIDDOR-reportable incidents for 2013/14; the performance targets for the same indicators for 2014/15; and an update on performance against those targets in April 2014. .
- (2) RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted.