

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 Training Centre, Loose Road, Maidstone on Thursday 19 November 2015.

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 D J Carr, Mr N J D Chard (substitute for Mr S C Manion), Mr G Cowan, Mr D S Daley, Mr P Godwin, Mr A V H Gulvin, Mr R A Latchford OBE, 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, Response and Training, Mr C Colgan; the Corporate Facilities and Environment Manager, Mr P Austen; the Corporate Governance and Risk Manager, Mr R Feltham; and the Clerk to the Authority, Mr S C Ballard.

IN ATTENDANCE:- Mrs J Waghorn, Independent Person (*for item B5*); Mr T Blackman, Audit Manager, Grant Thornton UK LLP (*for item C2*); and Ms S Buckland, Head of Internal Audit and Ms F Chivers, KCC Internal Audit (*for item C3*).

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

16. Minutes
(*Item A3*)

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 14 July 2015 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

17. Financial Progress 2015/16
(*Item B1 - Report by Assistant Director, Finance*)

- (1) The Committee received details of the latest forecast outturn position on the revenue and capital budgets for 2015/16 together with an update on other finance-related issues, and considered proposals for use of the current revenue underspend.
- (2) RESOLVED that:-
 - (a) £2.3m of the forecast revenue budget underspend be transferred to the Infrastructure Reserve;
 - (b) the remaining contents of the report, including the proposal for the Authority to continue to be part of a Business Rate Pooling arrangement for 2016/17, be noted.

18. Treasury Management - Mid-Year Update 2015/16
(*Item B2 - Report by Assistant Director, Finance*)

- (1) The Committee was provided with updates on the national economic position; the 2015/16 prudential indicators; a review of the investment portfolio and borrowing strategy for 2015/16; and the Authority's banking contract, and considered a proposed amendment to the Treasury Management and Investment Strategy for 2015/16.

- (2) RESOLVED that:-
 - (a) the proposed amendment to the Treasury Management and Investment Strategy for 2015/16, as set out in paragraphs 17-18 of the report, be approved;
 - (b) the remaining contents of the report be noted.

19. Development of the 2016/17 Budget and Medium Term Financial Plan
(Item B3)

- (1) The Committee received a presentation from the Assistant Director, Finance, on the development of the 2016/17 budget and the Medium Term Financial Plan.
- (2) RESOLVED that the approach being used to develop the Authority's budget plans, as described in the presentation to the meeting, be approved.

20. Redundancy Policy for Grey Book Staff
(Item B4 - Report by Head of HR Policy)

- (1) The Committee considered a proposal for the adoption of a Redundancy Policy for the Authority's Grey Book (ie, uniformed) staff, using the same methodology for enhancing redundancy payments as the Authority currently applied to Green Book (non-uniformed) staff.
- (2) Members were also advised of the Government's proposals to introduce a cap on exit payments to staff in the public sector.
- (3) RESOLVED that:-
 - (a) the proposed Redundancy Policy for Grey Book Staff, as attached at Appendix 1 to the report, be approved;
 - (b) the Government's proposals to introduce a cap on exit payments to staff in the public sector be noted.

21. Members' Code of Conduct and Standards
(Item B5 - Report by Clerk to the Authority)

- (1) The Committee considered suggested changes to the wording of the Authority's 'Arrangements for Dealing with Code of Conduct Complaints', as recommended by the Monitoring Officers of all Kent local authorities and subsequently adopted by Kent County Council, amongst other authorities.
- (2) Members received the Annual Report on Standards, and Mrs Waghorn, the Authority's Independent Person, commented to the Committee on it.
- (3) RESOLVED that:-
 - (a) the suggested changes to the wording of the Authority's 'Arrangements for Dealing with Code of Conduct Complaints', as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, be approved;
 - (b) the Annual Report on Standards, as set out in paragraphs 7 to 10 of the report, be noted.

22. Revised Service Orders on Premises-Sharing and Complaints
(Item B6 - Report by Assistant Director, Policy and Performance)

- (1) The Committee considered proposals for a new, consolidated, Service Order on the use of the Authority's premises by public sector partner bodies, and a revised Service Order for complaints.

- (2) RESOLVED that:-
 - (a) the revised policy and regulations in relation to sharing the Authority's premises with public sector partner bodies, as attached as Appendix 1 to the report, be approved;
 - (b) the revised policy and regulations in relation to complaints, as attached as Appendix 2 to the report, be approved.

23. Reducing the Authority's Carbon Footprint

(Item C1 - Report by Corporate Facilities and Environment Manager)

- (1) Members were advised of the progress being made in reducing the Authority's carbon footprint.
- (2) RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted.

24. External Auditors' Annual Audit Letter 2014/15

(Item C2 – Report by Assistant Director, Finance)

- (1) The Committee considered the Annual Audit Letter prepared by Grant Thornton UK LLP (GT) in its capacity as the Authority's External Auditor.
- (2) Mr Blackman, the GT Audit Manager responsible for the Authority's audit, introduced the Annual Audit Letter which confirmed that the audit for 2014/15 had been concluded and an unqualified opinion issued in relation to the 2014/15 financial statements.
- (3) RESOLVED that the contents of the report and of the External Auditors' Annual Audit Letter (attached as Appendix 1 to the report) be noted.

25. Internal Audit - Mid-Year Progress Report 2015/16

(Item C3 - Report by Corporate Governance and Risk Manager)

- (1) The Committee considered the Mid-Year Report on progress in delivering the current Internal Audit Plan.
- (2) Ms Buckland, the Head of Internal Audit, introduced the Progress Report.
- (3) RESOLVED that the contents of the report and the Internal Audit Mid-Year Progress Report (attached as Appendix 1 to the report) be noted.

26. Corporate Health Performance

(Item C4 – Report by Assistant Director, Human Resources)

- (1) Members received an analysis of how the Authority had performed against the strategic corporate health indicators relating to human resources between 1 April and 30 September 2015.
- (2) RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted.

27. Members' Allowances and Activity Reports 2014/15

(Item C5 – Report by Clerk to the Authority)

- (1) The Committee received details of the allowances and expenses paid by the Authority to each Member during the 2014/15 financial year, together with a summary of the reports submitted by Members on their activities as Members of the Authority during the 2014/15 municipal year.
- (2) RESOLVED that contents of the report and its appendices be noted.

28. Corporate Risk Monitoring

(Item C6 – Report by Corporate Governance and Risk Manager)

- (1) Members considered the latest corporate risk monitoring information following the most recent review.
- (2) RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted.

29. Annual Report on Insurance Activity

(Item C7 – Report by Corporate Governance and Risk Manager)

- (1) The Committee considered a report on the establishment by nine fire and rescue authorities, including the Authority, of a new discretionary hybrid mutual insurance arrangement, known as the Fire and Rescue Indemnity Company (FRIC), which commenced providing cover from 1 November 2015.
- (2) The Committee also received details of the insurance claims performance of the Authority for the five years from 2010/11 to 2014/15 based on the information available as at 30 September 2015.
- (3) RESOLVED that:-
 - (a) the Committee place on record its thanks and congratulations to the Corporate Governance and Risk Manager and his colleagues for all their hard work in successfully establishing FRIC;
 - (4) the contents of the report be noted.

30. Pension Board Update

(Item C8 – Report by Assistant Director, Channel Tunnel and Resilience)

- (1) Members received information about the establishment of the Authority's Pension Board; the Minutes of the first meeting of the Board; and details of the latest developments relating to the National Pension Scheme Advisory Board.
- (2) RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted.