



Minutes

Members present:

Mr D Prodger MBE, (Chair),
Mrs G Hopkins, Mrs F Oborski, Mr C T Smith, Mr J Thomas and Mr P Watts.

1. Apologies for Absence

Mr J Cairns, Mrs L Duffy, Mrs L Eyre and Mr D Greenow.

2. Named Substitutes

None

3. Declaration of Interests (if any)

The Chairman invited any Member present to declare an interest in any of the items on this Agenda; no interests were declared.

4. Confirmation of Minutes

RESOLVED *that the minutes of the meeting of the Audit Committee held on 30 June 2010 and the Extraordinary meeting held on 7 September be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.*

5. Governance Review – changes to the Audit Committee's Terms of Reference

The Clerk told the Meeting that on 28 September 2010 the Authority reviewed and amended the Committee structure and Terms of Reference. In the past 15 years the role of Audit Committees had expanded from Internal and External Audit matters to include governance arrangements and procedures. She emphasised the pivotal role which Audit Committees played in the proper administration and governance of public authorities.

The Committee considered a draft work programme which outlined when they would address various issues mentioned in their Terms of Reference. The Members agreed that all future meetings of the Committee would commence at 10.30 am.

The Director of Finance said that training/development opportunities would be arranged to assist the Committee Members to carry out their functions in relation to the approval of the Annual Statement of Accounts and Committee self-assessment. It was agreed to consider working with other Fire and Rescue Services to provide Audit Committee training.

RESOLVED *that the amended Terms of Reference of the Audit Committee be noted.*

6. Internal Audit Update

Mr Gordon Smith, Chief Internal Auditor, Worcestershire County Council updated the Committee on Internal Audit progress since the last meeting.

RESOLVED *that the report be noted.*

7. External Audit Update

The Treasurer briefed the Committee on the Government's proposals to abolish the Audit Commission at the end of 2012. This proposal was an outcome of Government agendas on Localism and reducing costs in the Public Service. The Committee heard that the Audit Commission would complete the 2010/11 and 2011/12 audits and that the new Audit regime should be in place for 2012/13. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer told the meeting that Fire and Rescue Services wished to continue to evaluate and compare costs between Services and that she was working within the Chief Fire Officers' Association to prepare systems to facilitate this "Benchmarking".

RESOLVED *that the report be noted.*

8. Quarterly Risk Management Update

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer told the Committee that the Strategic Risk Register was a dynamic, live Register used to identify and measure any risks to the Service from events within or outside the organisation. The overall objective of the Register was to ensure that the Authority identified Strategic risks and applied the most cost effective control mechanisms to manage them. The aim was to ensure that the risks were eliminated or reduced to an acceptable level and that systems were in place to monitor and report risks. The Register was reviewed by the Authority on an annual basis and was due for approval at the December meeting of the Authority.

The quarterly risk update had identified the following items:

- the direction of travel for Strategic Risk for 2010/11 was still moving downward
- due to the current economic climate there is potential for reduced budgets in the public sector
- some key suppliers may encounter difficulties within the marketplace
- An audit of Departmental Risk Register was completed for 2010
- Corporate risk training continues for decision loggists in order to update our staff in key skills that would be required in the event of a major incident
- Cllr Peter Watts was appointed as Risk Champion
- Papal visit plans were put in place across the Service to assist and support our partner agencies and bordering Fire and Police Authorities
- Business Continuity Plans were updated and enhanced
- National Capability Survey was completed to inform Government of local and regional resilience arrangements

RESOLVED *that the report be noted.*

9. Statement of Accounts 2009-10 Post Balance Sheet Event

The Director of Finance informed the Members that since the Statement of Accounts was approved by the Committee on 30 June, the Chancellor's budget announced changes to indexation of public sector pensions which would have a significant but not yet quantified reduction on the Service's pensions' liability.

The external Auditors advised that this should be included as an additional note in the published Accounts but that the Accounts did not require re-approval.

RESOLVED *that the Committee note the change to the published Statement of Accounts.*

The Meeting finished at 11.02 am

Signed:.....

Date:.....