

Audit Committee Meeting

Friday 28th September 2018

13:00, GF01, Kelvedon Park

PRESENT:-

Members: Chair: Jonathan Swan (JS); Alan Hubbard (AH); Julie Parker (JP); Simon Faraway (SF)

Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (OPFCC): Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner Roger Hirst (RH); Finance Officer Abbey Gough (Minute Taker); Anthony Maude (AM); Pippa Brent-Isherwood (P-BI)

Essex County Fire and Rescue Service: Dave Bill (DB); Glenn McGuinness (GM); Jo Turton (JT)

RSM: Dan Harris (DH)

Grant Thornton: Paul Grady (PD); Hiruni Weekasekera (HW)

1. Declaration of Interest and Apologies for absence:

Charles Garbett (CG); Anna O'Keeffe (AO); Jane Gardner (JG)

2. Minutes of the meeting held on 27th July 2018

Minutes of the meeting were approved.

3. Action Log / Matters Arising

The following actions were agreed closed, 02/18, 03/18, 04/18, 05/18, 10/18, 11/18, 12/18, 13/18, 14/18, 16/18, 17/18, 18/18, 19/18, 20/18, 21/18, 22/18, 24/18

15/18 – GM agreed to circulate a list of projects and costs

23/15 – It was agreed that the third party declaration letter would be sent to the independent members in relation to the 2017/18 accounts.

4. Risk and Business Continuity Progress Report

DB updated the committee and noted that a number of risks had been added to the risk register since the previous meeting. There has been a step forward in progress of the report. DB confirmed that he has seen the Essex Police risk register and was also an observer on the Essex Police JAC earlier that day.

DB said that there was a phased Star Chamber approach to the risk register underway and that this was a useful forum to challenge the strategic risks. Two strategic risks are being reviewed at each Senior Leadership Team (SLT). JS noted that good progress has been made and highlight that this should be a management tool for ECFRS to use.

The members questioned the descriptor 'treat' and what this referred to. DB confirmed that this was a descriptor used in JCAD. The members asked for a list of the descriptors to be provided.

Action 25/18 – List of JCAD classifications/descriptors to be provided

The members asked what the blue colour referred to in the table; DB said that the blue referred to opportunities. The members discussed the benefits of having this shown on the table and it was agreed that the opportunities would be removed.

Action 26/18 – Opportunities to be removed from the risk register

The members questioned the relationship ECFRS had with safeguarding boards. DB said that ECFRS supports all the safeguarding boards in the county and provide the necessary statutory duties. The annual Safer Communities report includes a safeguarding section.

There was a conversation held on the scoring of some of the risks; DB confirmed that a Star Chamber approach would be useful to help score the risks. A risk appetite statement has been developed and ECFRS may need to reflect back on this. DB explained that the colour coding was designed to show when a risk was increasing or decreasing.

5. Audit Reports

DH updated the committee on the GDPR report. This was an advisory report and DH noted that this was a fast moving area, therefore many of the recommendations had been completed or superseded. DH said that there was the potential to complete another review which would look at the current position.

The members highlight that the report was completed in April/May and not presented in September so what was the value of the report. At the time the report was for management to understand their position.

DH noted that the ICT Contract had a number of recommendations; DH said that there were 3 medium recommendations. AH asked why one of the recommendations had a completion date of 31st May 2019. It was agreed to review this date.

Action 27/18 – Performance management recommendation in ICT Contract audit report due date to be updated

DH said that the 4 previous risk management reports had received a negative opinion. DH confirmed that this report could provide the committee with reassurance that the tracker was accurate.

It was noted that significant progress has been made in this area, and that ECFRS were working to ensure that this was embedded. DH said that they anticipate a full assurance piece to be completed in February 2019.

6. Internal Audit Progress Report

DH confirmed that the Governance Transition audit would be presented at the next committee, the reason for the delay was due to a delay in identifying the action owners.

GM confirmed that the HOBS system was due to go live on 1st December 2018, it was confirmed that the internal audit for this was due to take place in October and November.

7. ECFRS Progress Report on Internal Audit Recommendations

GM presented the report and noted the 21 outstanding recommendations. It was noted that significant progress had been made. The committee asked if the information presented could be more concise, and used the Essex Police template as an example. GM noted the comments.

8. Revised Internal Audit Plan

DH confirmed the internal audit plan was now linked the 25 strategic risks and was presented to the committee as an update.

9. Revises Internal Audit Annual Report

DH noted that there were two amendments to the document following the last committee and this was now presented to ensure transparency.

10. External Audit Progress Report and Sector Update

Grant Thornton introduced themselves for their first meeting and PG noted the meetings which had already taken place with colleagues in ECFRS and future meetings already scheduled.

The committee thanked the Grant Thornton.

11. Cultural Change

JT presented her report on cultural change. JS asked JT what does success look like for cultural change. JT noted that this would be measured through KPIs and quantitative and qualitative measure, such as appraisals completed, staff survey and number of staff attending briefings.

RH also noted that success could be measured once fewer complaints are received and there are fewer grievances. Feedback from HMICFRS will be beneficial and ability to benchmark against peers.

AH noted that it was important that there was buy in at all levels of staff. This could be achieved through so called 'change champions'. AH also noted that it was important to make an example of inappropriate behaviour.

JT noted that she has run 'slice groups' to ensure that all levels of the organisation are included. It was noted that in conjunction with OPFCC a whistle blowing policy is being developed.

JS asked JT what obstacles she perceives in making the necessary changes. JT said that sometimes processes could be onerous and that there were a number of policies within ECFRS; some of these needed to be updated and others changed to guidelines. RH said it was also important to ensure that we are rewarding good behaviour.

JS asked how the members of the audit committee can help the process, highlight that they have received feedback from individuals when visiting stations. JS asked who would be a suitable conduit to provide feedback to. JT said that she would be the most suitable person to feed this back to.

JS asked for a verbal update on cultural change to be presented at every audit committee for the foreseeable future.

12. Emergency Services Sector Update

DH presented the sector update. The members asked if ECFRS will be given notice prior to HMICFRS attending for their first review. JT said that they would be given 6-8 weeks' notice. A peer review is due to take place in October 2018 ahead of HMICFRS.

13. Any Other Business

N/a

14. Date of the next meeting

12th December 2018