

MINUTES
POLICE, FIRE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER FOR ESSEX and
ESSEX COUNTY FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE
FIRE AUDIT COMMITTEE

24 July 2020, 1100 to 1200, via Microsoft Teams

Present:

Jonathan Swan (JS)	Chair
Julie Parker (JP)	Independent Committee member
Simon Faraway (SF)	Independent Committee member
Alan Hubbard (AH)	Independent Committee member
Roger Hirst (RH)	Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner
Pippa Brent-Isherwood (PBI)	CEO, PFCC's office
Janet Perry (JPe)	Strategic Head of Performance and Resources, PFCC's office
Jo Turton (JT)	Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive
Karl Edwards (KE)	Director of Corporate Services
Neil Cross (NC)	s151 Officer
Glenn McGuinness (GMc)	
Paul Grady (PG)	External Auditor, Grant Thornton
Parris Williams (PW)	External Auditor, Grant Thornton
Camilla Brandal (CB)	Minutes, PFCC's office

Apologies:

Elizabeth Helm (EH)	Interim Head of Finance and s151, PFCC's office (Observer)
Dave Bill (DB)	Director of Change, Innovation and Risk

1 Introduction and welcome

- 1.1 JS welcomed everyone to the meeting and accepted apologies from EH and DB.
- 1.2 JS confirmed that AH was intending to retire as an Independent Member of the Audit Committees and both RH and JT wanted to thank AH for his contributions over the last 5 years to both Committees and for providing guidance, challenge and engagement. JS also thanked AH for his considerable contribution and commented that AH's replacement would have a large space to fill.

2 Minutes from the meeting on 26 June 2020 and Action Log

- 2.1 There were no amendments to the minutes of the June meeting and they were therefore agreed.

Matters arising:

- 2.2 AH commented that an action for the log should be from item 14.4 where the Keeping the Vulnerable Safe Background Briefing should be put on the Forward Plan for September.

2.3 Action Log

Action 04/20 Internal Audit Recommendation Tracker
This will be addressed at the September meeting. Due date to be altered to September.

Action 08/20 Audit – Follow Up
This will be addressed at the September meeting. Due date to be altered to September.

3 Updated Accounts Progress Paper and unaudited Statement of Accounts

- 3.1 NC confirmed that the draft unaudited Statement of Accounts had been published on the website and the Narrative Statement has been updated and included as agreed at the meeting on 26 June.
- 3.2 NC confirmed that no changes had been made to the draft financial statements but that some minor adjustments had been made to some notes and these were outlined in the Progress Paper where significant. NC confirmed that some Covid19 relevant narrative on property valuations will be included, along with some small audit notes from Grant Thornton and RSM's suggested wording change relating to the internal audit programme. NC confirmed that Grant Thornton will now sign off the audit in early September as there had been time issues. These were as a result of GT delaying the start of the audit due to the overrun of NHS audits and due to working remotely. The ECFRS finance team have continued to deliver the audit requirements on time.
- 3.3 JPe asked about the delay to the audit and NC confirmed that this had come as a result of the NHS overruns – the current position would be reported on later in the meeting.
- 3.4 JP commented that if the accounts were to be signed off at the end of September, whether NC thought there was sufficient time to make any changes to the Narrative if something unexpected was to happen relating to Covid19 which would have an impact. NC was of the opinion that an element of comfort was already in the Narrative around grants received etc but he will keep an eye on developments.
- 3.5 JS asked about the Narrative and pages 18 and 19, and where mention is made of the PFCC's Boards and suggested that some wording is inserted to clarify what type of boards these are. After a brief discussion, it was confirmed that the Strategic Board and the Performance and Resources Board are not 'external' but are all boards that RH chairs to hold the Service to account. It was agreed that a sentence would be inserted into the Narrative explaining that the Strategic Board and the P&R Board were internal and the Police, Fire and Crime Panel and the Audit Committee were external boards. It was also confirmed that reference to the Joint Audit Committee (on pages 21 and 25) should be changed to Independent Audit Committee (as Joint Audit Committee is the PFCC and Essex Police).

Action: 10/20

It was agreed that a sentence would be inserted into the Narrative explaining that the Strategic Board and the P&R Board were internal and the Police, Fire and Crime Panel and the Audit Committee were external boards.

It was also confirmed that reference to the Joint Audit Committee should be changed to Independent Audit Committee (as Joint Audit Committee is the PFCC and Essex Police).

4 Update from Grant Thornton

- 4.1 PG gave an update on the audit progress. There was a slight concern around the valuations and material uncertainty caused by Covid19 but this is being experienced across all audited bodies in the sector and mitigations have been put in place.

- 4.2 A discussion took place around the signing off process, the Value For Money work, the final opinion from GT, McCloud review, valuation figures and how to deal with the uncertainty of moving valuation figures. PG confirmed that he is not anticipating any material movements on the accounts between now and September.
- 4.3 The Audit Committee commended the accounts to the Authority and advised that they were satisfied with the audit as they had seen it and were happy with the accounts as seen. **RH asked whether the Committee would like to see the accounts again before sign off and JS confirmed that the Committee would only need to see any significant or material changes. The process was agreed as GT to finalise the audit, RH to sign off the accounts (via decision sheet), and GT to produce their management letter.**

5 Any Other Business

- 5.1 NC confirmed that the new Financial Accountant and Compliance Manager had joined the Finance team (Austin Page) and NC asked whether the Committee would be happy with him attending future Audit Committees. The Committee confirmed that they would be happy for the new member of staff to attend future Audit Committees.
- 5.2 The next meeting will be on 25 September 2020.
- 5.3 There was no other business and the meeting closed at 4.33pm.