AT A MEETING of the HAMPSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE held at Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters, Eastleigh on 25 November, 2011

PRESENT:

Councillors: S. Darragh, D. Harrison, T. Knight (Chair), K. Morrell, R. Smith and M. Tucker

Also in attendance was Kate Handy and Graham West from the Audit Commission.

Due to the Chairman and Vice Chairman both giving their apologies, it was agreed by the Committee that Cllr Tim Knight would take the Chair for this meeting.

83 **APOLOGIES** **ACTION**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors L. Fairhurst, D.Fuller and R. McIntosh

84 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members were mindful that, where they believed they had a personal or personal prejudicial interest in any matter to be considered at the meeting, they should normally, at the time of debate, declare their interest and having regard to the circumstances described in paragraphs 9, 10, 11 and 12 of the Fire Authority's Code of Conduct consider whether to leave the meeting whilst the matter was discussed, save for exercising any right to speak in accordance with Paragraph 12 of the Code.

There were no declarations of interest.

85 **MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 23 September, 2011 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Matters Arising:

Audit Letter 2011/12 (81)

Pursuant to Minute 81, it was noted that the fee figures quoted of £87,500 in 2010/11 and £80,500 in 2011/12 were correct. The 10% reduction quoted was incorrect as the reduction for Fire Authorities was in fact 8%.

86 **CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman welcomed Kate Handy and Graham West from the Audit Commission

87 DEPUTATIONS

There were no deputations received for this meeting.

88 ANNUAL AUDIT LETTER 2010/11

The Committee received the Annual Audit Letter from the Audit Commission (Item 6 in the Minute Book), which was introduced by Kate Handy.

It was pointed out that the letter would appear on both the Audit Commission and the HFRA websites; and the Letter was primarily for public information.

The Letter issued an unqualified opinion on financial statements and value for money, and both were very positive.

It was felt that the letter deserved a positive press release and the Chief Officer agreed to issue something to that effect. Chief Officer

RESOLVED:

1. The Committee noted the response in the Audit Letter 2010/11

89 EFFECTIVENESS OF INTERNAL AUDIT

The Committee considered the report of the Treasurer (Item 7 in the Minute Book) that detailed the measures currently in place to monitor internal audit effectiveness.

It was noted that only some very minor issues came out as a result of the assessment, and these were due to changes in process and being dealt with effectively. It was confirmed that no significant issues had been reported in the ‘client feedback’ surveys that were carried out, other than some minor dissatisfaction with the timing of audit work. It was noted that overall the satisfaction score was 86% [paragraph 3.21 of the report]

RESOLVED:

1. The review conducted in assessing the effectiveness of internal audit was approved
2. The action plan generated from the review of the effectiveness of internal audit was endorsed

90 **INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT 2011/12**

The Committee considered a letter from the Treasurer (Item 8 in the Minute Book) detailing an overview on internal audit work completed and the status of 'live' reports.

It was confirmed that a new format was being used to present the results of findings, making information easier to read and less overwhelming. The results were positive and progress was on track for the time of year.

RESOLVED:

1. The progress of internal audit work for the period ending 30 September 2011 was noted

91 **PROGRESS REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATIONS OF INTERNAL AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Officer (Item 9 in the Minute Book), which updated the Committee on action plans agreed for the 2010/11 audit plan.

The Committee noted that implementation of the recommendations was generally on target and that progress is continually monitored.

Members requested that more opportunity be given for them to raise any issues arising from the audits. It was agreed that Members would be consulted on the draft Internal Audit Plan before it was agreed and brought to the Committee in March. Members requested that the level of detail currently reported to Committee should continue - rather than the streamlined approach being proposed.

RESOLVED:

1. The audit action reports and progress made towards the implementation of recommendations was approved
2. It was agreed that full details would be included in progress reports to keep Members fully informed

92 **HEALTH & SAFETY (H&S) ANNUAL REPORT 2010/11**

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Officer (Item 10 in the Minute Book), which provided an overview of the progress made to further improve arrangements for operating a healthy and safe working environment.

It was the second year that a report in this format had been produced for the Committee. It was acknowledged that it provided strategic direction and a sound reporting / monitoring process to both officers and Members of the Authority and that the procedures in place help to identify any significant trends so that action can be taken to reduce work injuries. It was agreed that in future updates, a brief breakdown of recent safety events would be included to give the data a better context. Chief Officer

The Committee were informed that the Member Champion (paragraph 4.2.6) was the first port of call for H&S issues. It was agreed that it was important for the Member Champion to have greater day-to-day involvement in monitoring the processes and data.

In response to a question about breathing apparatus safety, Members noted that the new equipment due to be rolled out in the new year would be capable of supporting personal telemetry capability. But this was not included in the initial roll-out of equipment.

RESOLVED:

1. The Health and Safety Annual Report for 2010/11 was approved

93 **REFRESH OF THE ANTI-THEFT, FRAUD AND CORRUPTION STRATEGY, WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY AND ABRIDGED VERSION OF THE CODE OF CONDUCT FOR STAFF**

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Officer (Item 11 in the Minute Book), which introduced three policies that had been reviewed and updated.

The key intentions of the new documents was explained. These were due to be rolled out across the Service using promotional materials so staff were fully aware of their responsibilities, and how advice could be obtained.

In Paragraph 4.3.1 of the Anti theft, fraud and corruption strategy (Appendix A), it was agreed that all aspects of the procedures (fraud, corruption, bribery and theft) would be listed, as they are in paragraph 5.4.3. Chief Officer

In Appendix B of the Whistleblowing Policy, it was agreed that it would be made clear that the Chief Chief Officer

Executive of Hampshire County Council is the Monitoring Officer, and will be added to the contacts list. The Head of Legal Service's details will remain in the list.

During the discussion on Appendix C, is was agreed that the Members' Code of Conduct would be included to the planned intranet page displaying the three policies for information, although it was acknowledged that the Service's officers had no mandate to amend it. Chief Officer

RESOLVED:

1. The Committee approved the following three policies:
   a) The anti fraud and corruption policy
   b) The Whistleblowing policy, with the former title 'Reporting Concerns At Work' to be included on the front page for clarity
   c) The Code of Conduct for staff (abridged version)

94 **STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER**

The Committee considered the report of the Chief Officer (Item 12 in the Minute Book), which is presented to Members annually.

Members were given a summary of the Risk Register process and a briefing on the processes involved in identifying, evaluating 'scoring', and reviewing strategic risks.

It was confirmed that risks were formally reviewed by SMT quarterly, but that there was also the ability to update the register at any time. Members were informed that they could be presented with further more detailed information on anything in the Risk Register on request.

RESOLVED:

1. The current version of the Strategic Risk Register was approved by the Committee, and Members were invited to make comments or suggestions as appropriate

2. It was agreed that the following risks be removed from the 'active' register:
   a) Failure to ensure that the transition to the Regional Control Centre will not adversely affect the delivery of service (entry number 07b)

b) Failure to ensure effective and resilient emergency call handling and mobilising arrangements (entry number 07c)

c) Failure to collect, maintain, store and provide relevant, timely and accurate site specific risk information to adequately inform the risk assessments at an incident (entry number 13)