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MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE POLICY COMMITTEE held on Wednesday, 22 June 2016 at Fire Service Headquarters, Winsford, Cheshire at 10.00 am

PRESENT: Councillors B Rudd, S Nelson, D Flude, D Mahon, S Parker, T Sherlock, G Merry, K Mundry, J Weatherill and S Wright

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Internal Auditor: Kevin Lloyd, Mersey Internal Audit Agency (MIAA) and External Auditor: Perminder Sethi, Grant Thornton.

1 PROCEDURAL MATTERS

A Recording of Meeting

Members were reminded that the meeting would be audio-recorded.

B Chair and Membership of Committee 2016/17

Members were asked to note the appointment of a Chair, Deputy Chair and membership of the Policy Committee (who also acted as the Closure of Accounts Committee) for 2016/17, as agreed by the Fire Authority at their annual meeting on 15 June 2016 and listed below:

Councillors B Rudd – Chair
S Nelson – Deputy Chair
D Flude
D Mahon
G Merry
K Mundry
S Parker
T Sherlock
J Weatherill
S Wright

Substitutes E Johnson
M Tarr

C Apologies for Absence

No apologies for absence were received.

D Declarations of Members' Interests

There were no declarations of Members interests.

E Minutes of Policy Committee

RESOLVED: That

The minutes of the meeting of the Policy Committee held on 29th April 2016 be approved as a correct record.

2 TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REPORT 2015-16

The Head of Finance introduced this report which provided a review of the Authority's treasury management activities during 2015-16. The report also provided information about compliance with the Authority's Treasury Management Practices during the year.

The Head of Finance highlighted the key areas of the report and provided details on the following:

- a) the Authority's loans portfolio position at 31st March 2016;
- b) the Authority's investment portfolio position at 31st March 2016;
- c) a summary of performance for the year 2015-16; and
- d) the Authority's performance in 2015-16 against the key Prudential Indicators.

Members were satisfied with the content of the report and the explanatory notes provided.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the report on Treasury Management activities for 2015-16 be noted.

3 INTERNAL AUDIT OPINION AND ANNUAL REPORT 2015-16

The Corporate Programme Manager introduced the Assistant Director from Mersey Internal Audit Agency (MIAA) who was in attendance at the meeting to present the report.

The Assistant Director informed Members that the annual report included the Director of Audit's Opinion and a summary of the implementation of the Internal Audit plan for 2015-16. Members were asked to note that the overall opinion was positive and provided significant assurance. He explained that this was a key document in preparing the Authority's Annual Governance Statement (AGS), which formed part of the Authority's Annual Statement of Assurance and used the intelligence gathered from all MIAA's work during the year to come to an overall conclusion. The Assistant Director explained that the appendices provided a summary of the audit reviews undertaken during the year, further information on the links to the AGS and assurance in respect of the quality of the service provided and compliance with Public Sector Internal Audit Standards. He added that engagement with officers during the year had been very good and a positive working relationship had developed.

Members discussed the report and were pleased that there were no major issues identified and a positive opinion had been issued. A Member queried whether the Authority was still having issues with Princes Trust funding. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer confirmed that there was still an annual issue when negotiating funding with colleges and officers were working hard to secure a more stable funding source. He added that this was a significant issue for the Princes Trust programme nationally and a report would be submitted to Performance and Overview Committee in respect of the current financial position.

Members thanked Officers for the considerable amount of work carried out that had resulted in the positive assurance.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the Director of Audit's Opinion and the Internal Audit Annual Report 2015-16 be noted.

4 RISK MANAGEMENT BOARD ANNUAL REPORT

The Corporate Programme Manager presented this report to Members. She explained that the annual Risk Management Board (RMB) report was presented to Policy Committee for review and assurance and provided a summary of the key activities and decisions of RMB during 2015-16 and the forward plan for 2016-17.

The Corporate Programme Manager highlighted the key areas of the report and provided a brief explanation of each of these key areas. She drew Members attention to the quarterly review of the Strategic Risk Register, which was undertaken by RMB and explained that a number of strategic risks had been closed during 2015/16. These were summarised in the report. She commented that the risks that remained on the register were beyond the Authority's control as they were externally driven. However the Authority had mitigation action plans in place and these were monitored and updated on a regular basis.

The Corporate Programme Manager provided a summary of the analysis of emerging risks, risk management training and the annual refresh of the framework. She informed Members that the Crisis Management Plan (CMP) had been reviewed and business continuity exercises were scheduled for 2016/17. A full test of the CMP was currently planned for 2018.

The Chair drew Members attention to risk no 889: lack of commitment from housing providers to fit sprinklers. He stated that it was important for the Authority to continue to persuade key providers in the area to make a commitment to the sprinkler system programme as this could also assist in expanding the programme nationally. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer provided a brief summary of the current position for Members and explained that Officers were still working in all four constituent areas to try to get a commitment to retro-fit sprinklers in at least one high rise building in each area. He added that work was also being done on a proposal to target the most vulnerable and retro-fit sprinklers in individual homes. Members discussed the current position in relation to engaging with housing providers and the changes in demographics in certain high rise buildings. It was noted that if Members had any local intelligence it would be useful if they could pass the information on to the Head of Protection to help inform the programme.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the content of the report be noted.

5 INTEGRATED CONSULTATION AND CORPORATE PLANNING TIMETABLE

The Corporate Programme Manager introduced this report which presented the annual Consultation and Corporate Planning Timetable to Members for approval. She explained that the timetable was designed as a strategic step process that integrated all the Service's corporate key planning dates in a simple visual format which enabled the delivery of the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP).

RESOLVED: That

[1] the integrated Consultation and Corporate Planning Timetable covering development and delivery of the Authority's Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP 14) 2017-18 be approved.