ESSEX FIRE AUTHORITY
Essex County Fire & Rescue Service

MEETING	Audit, Governance & Review Committee	AGENDA ITEM **7**
MEETING DATE	20 April 2016	**REPORT NUMBER** **EFA/059/16**
SUBJECT	Audit Recommendation – Report on Progress Against Action Plans	
REPORT BY	The Finance Director & Treasurer, Mike Clayton	
PRESENTED BY	The Finance Director & Treasurer, Mike Clayton	

SUMMARY

This paper reports on the progress against the action plans developed by the Service in response to audit reports. Items reported as completed in the previous quarter's report have been deleted from the table.

RECOMMENDATION

Members of the Audit Sub Committee are asked to review the progress.

BACKGROUND

This report brings forward the progress made by the Service in response to Audit recommendations. It includes those made by the Audit Commission in their annual audit letter, and in internal audit reports. The recommendations in the review of Risk Management are the subject of a separate action plan and a progress report will be made to the next meeting of the Committee.

MATTERS RAISED IN THE FOLLOW UP REVIEW

At the July 2015 of the Committee the Internal Auditor presented their follow up review for 2014/15. There are now two recommendations that had been outstanding in the previous year where the actions remain in progress. The position regarding these audit recommendations is detailed below:

Original Recommendation	Current Position
Partnerships - A signed agreement between all parties should be held by the Service for each partnership to provide assurance to the Service that all parties have agreed to their	**Completed –** Signed agreements available for all current agreements.

Original Recommendation	Current Position
respective responsibilities.	
Employee Taxes - In addition to the work already undertaken, Essex Fire Authority should continue to recover the excess Class 1A NIC from HMRC. As there is likely to be tax and NIC due to HMRC on the payments discussed in 3.7 any overpayment can be set off against these sums.	**Completed** –

RISK MANAGEMENT, LEGAL, FINANCIAL, ENVIRONMENTAL & EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

There are no risk management, legal, financial, environmental or equality implications from this report.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985	
List of appendices attached to this paper: Table of Recommendations	
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Source	Recommendation from Audit report	Original (or amended) Service Action Plan	Responsibility and Timescales	Progress
HR Transactional Processes	We would recommend that a workshop is run to identify the HR Transactional processes and to identify opportunities for process simplification and automation.	We will be undertaking a complete review of processes to ensure they remain fit for purpose, under the SAP Next Steps Project. Policy & Strategy Committee approved SAP replacement in March 2016 and new project initiated.	Head of HR March 2016	Completed
HR Transactional Processes	The Authority should undertake a 'Phase Two' of the HR Transaction Project to ensure the original PID is delivered. A separate Project Initiation Document (PID) should be drafted for the Phase Two piece of work and the Benefits identified within the original PID should be substantiated. The measures must also be quantified to ensure the Authority can identify whether all benefits have been realised.	The next steps project for SAP will address these issues. This is expected to be a 12 – 18 month project, so benefits realisation will be subject to the project milestones which are yet to be scoped and agreed. Policy & Strategy Committee approved SAP replacement in March 2016 and new project initiated.	Head of HR & OD March 2016	Completed

Source	Recommendation from Audit report	Original (or amended) Service Action Plan	Responsibility and Timescales	Progress
Communications	The Head of Communication should devise three separate strategies and implementation plans, demonstrating outcomes and performance measures for the following: ☐ Corporate Public Relations; ☐ Employee Engagement; and ☐ Community Safety. These documents should be approved at the Strategic Management Board, and then disseminated to staff via the Service intranet.	A restructure to give the Head of Corporate Communications strategic lead on these activities and professionalise the department with resources to deliver these three key strands of activity have been agreed and recruitment process is under way with funding from April 2014/15. Work to develop these strategies to support strategic ambitions of the Service is already under way.	Head of Corporate Communications Following the departure of the Head of Corporate Communications agreement has been reached with Essex CC to provide oversight of Corporate communications. New Timescale May 2016 for approval of new corporate communications and engagement strategies/ restructure of corporate communications team	Delayed

Source	Recommendation from Audit report	Original (or amended) Service Action Plan	Responsibility and Timescales	Progress
Communications	The Communications governance structure needs to be established for each of the three work streams: ☐ Corporate Public Relations; ☐ Employee Engagement; and ☐ Community Safety. This structured needs to demonstrate the relationship between each individual and group.	This proposal was put forward by the Head of Corporate Communications to introduce wider governance from within the SMB team with the benefit of ensuring more cohesive communications activities with consistent messages delivered to all stakeholders and all three strategies working together. Expanding reporting lines will also assist SMB in presenting a collective narrative. CFO to maintain line management for Corporate PR, Director HR & OD for Employee Engagement and Director Safer and Resiient Communities for Community Safety marketing	Head of Corporate Communications Following the departure of the Head of Corporate Communications agreement has been reached with Essex CC to provide oversight of Corporate communications. New Timescale April/ May 2016. The Interim Head of Corporate Communications is a visiting member of SMB, with the ACFO directing activities in respect of delivering communications to meet service priorities and enable improved outcomes.	Delayed

Source	Recommendation from Audit report	Original (==or amended==) Service Action Plan	Responsibility and Timescales	Progress
Communications	The Fire Service should ensure there is an appropriate process for managing the Communications Plans for each project implemented. This should include: ☐ An approval process, during project initiation, from the Head of Corporate Communications for each Project; and ☐ Monitoring of the Communications Plan of the project.	This process is in place for major programme boards but a number of projects undertake communications activities beyond the oversight of the professional Corporate Communications team. This approach will ensure corporate scrutiny and provide more corporate context and alignment, maximising opportunities to share corporate lines. Will require buy in, particularly from operational side of the organisation. First step to consider communication implications in meeting papers and as part of all project planning. Additional resources will allow introduction of greater governance around communications activity	==Corporate Communications and Engagement Strategies to be approved by SMB. New Timescale May 2016==	Delayed

Source	Recommendation from Audit report	Original (or amended) Service Action Plan	Responsibility and Timescales	Progress
Communications	The Fire Service need to ensure that it has appropriate policies, procedures and/or protocols in place governing the key channels of external communications, such as the media, press releases, 'images as incidents' and acceptable uses for all social media platforms. These should be approved, dated and assigned an annual review date to ensure they remain fit for purpose. Following this, the documents should be made available to all staff via the Service intranet	These policies, procedures and protocols exist in practice but need to be formalised. Additional resources will allow introduction of greater governance around communications activity. In January, the Service procured a social media management system and is currently training official service users to operate via a single, formal channel. This allows oversight of activity and encourages sharing of current messages and campaigns through a single portal. A programme of training supports new users and will allow expansion of official social media participants without some of the significant associated risk.	Essex County Council Communications policies and protocols for communications, with a particular focus on social media, to be versioned for ECFRS. New Timescale June 2016	Delayed

Source	Recommendation from Audit report	Original (or amended) Service Action Plan	Responsibility and Timescales	Progress
Communications	The Head of Corporate Communications should implement a training needs analysis, identifying which service personnel require communications training, and a training log, to effectively monitor training completion. Additionally, the Service could incorporate a training incentive scheme with the new social media software purchased by the Head of Corporate Communications.	Corporate Communications offers in house Media, Social Media and internal communications skills training, primarily to uniformed staff to give them the skills they need to present the Service in a professional way, limiting risks to ECFRS image. Currently delivered on request, there is some urgency now to train more station managers to be able to deliver information to the media, particularly at incidents. This recommendation supports the delivery of a more formal programme of training and development that is recorded and recognised. Rather than incentive, it is proposed to implement a proficiency standard before individuals can represent the Service to the media.	TNA to be completed post strategy sign off, service strategy sign off and restructure completion. New Timescale June 2016	Delayed

Source	Recommendation from Audit report	Original (or amended) Service Action Plan	Responsibility and Timescales	Progress
Communications	The Fire Service should ensure a guidance document or procedure is developed for processing Freedom of Information requests, to ensure the process is implemented consistently.	This will be reviewed when management of the FoI process moves in to Corporate Communications. This work will be completed once additional resources are in place. FoI processes have moved to the Performance and Data Team. Corporate Communications has the oversight of any responses which have potential reputational impacts (eg FoI requests from media organisations). All other requests are signed off at Director level before release.	Head of Corporate Communications Following the departure of the Head of Corporate Communications agreement has been reached with Essex CC to provide oversight of Corporate communications. New Timescale March 2016	Completed
Business Planning	The Service should monitor the submission of departmental plans against planned completion dates. Each Department Strategy document should be annotated with details of submission date, document author, reviewer and approver.	Agreed – this will be incorporated into the process running during 2015/16.	Performance Improvement Manager March 2016	Completed
Business Planning	The Service should ensure that the Guide to Business Planning is reviewed annually to ensure it mirrors current practice and effectively guides the business planning process for the year ahead.	Agreed – the process is likely to change during 2015/16 as it will need to fit with changes being riven by Programme 2020. For 2016/17 Service plan to be adopted	Performance Improvement Manager March 2016	Completed

Source	Recommendation from Audit report	Original (or amended) Service Action Plan	Responsibility and Timescales	Progress
Business Planning	The Service should ensure that the action plans within the Department Strategies are formally monitored.	Agreed – this will monitored by SDB. For 2016/17 Service plan to be adopted	Performance Improvement Manager March 2016	Completed
Business Planning	The Service should ensure that there is an annual self-assessment of the business planning process to identify areas where the process was effective and areas that could be improved upon, taking the process forward.	Agreed – this will be built into the business planning cycle from this point onward. For 2016/17 Service plan to be adopted	Performance Improvement Manager March 2016	Completed
Business Planning	As part of the Business Planning process, the Service should evidence and retain the initial assessment of resources required to meet objectives within the Departmental Strategies and future iterations including the final version which matches the approved budget.	Agreed – this will be built into the business planning process from this point onward. For 2016/17 Service plan to be adopted	Performance Improvement Manager March 2016	Completed
IT General Controls	The information security policy does not include all of the information that should be within such a policy.	The Service will be documenting a full information security policy and this will be completed using ISO 27001 guidance.	ICT Security Officer Dec 2016	On Track
IT General Controls	Backup restore testing is not performed as part of a defined schedule.	The Service will implement a defined schedule to confirm that servers and data can be restored in a continuity event.	ICT Service Manager Jun 2016	On Track

Source	Recommendation from Audit report	Original (==or amended==) Service Action Plan	Responsibility and Timescales	Progress
IT General Controls	Information sharing agreements are in place with third parties, however there is not an information sharing register which identifies all of the sharing arrangements in place.`	We will complete a register to identify the information that we transfer that will include the transfer methods and the information types. This will ensure that all data is transferred securely.	Senior Information Risk Owner (Finance Director & Treasurer) Dec 2016	On Track