ESSEX FIRE AUTHORITY
Essex County Fire & Rescue Service

MEETING	Audit, Governance & Review Committee	AGENDA ITEM **6**
MEETING DATE	13 July 2016	**REPORT NUMBER** **EFA/091/16**
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 Committee are asked to review the progress.

BACKGROUND

This report brings forward the progress made by the Service in response to Audit recommendations.

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	Finding 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	Completed

Source	Finding 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.	Completed

Source	Finding from Audit report	Original (<mark>or amended</mark>) 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	<mark>Corporate Communications and Engagement Strategies to be approved by SMB. New Timescale May 2016</mark>	Completed

Source	Finding from Audit report	Original (<mark>or amended</mark>) 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.	<mark>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</mark>	Completed

Source	Finding 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	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	Finding 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
Key Financial Controls	Unable to confirm if roles agreed for new starters	HR will review the process for ensuring that all employee documents are easily accessible within one central area	HR Transaction Processing Manager April 2016	Completed
Key Financial Controls	Amendments were not able to be evidenced with manager approval	Emails containing authorised amendments will be stored to show authorisation.	HR Transaction Processing Manager April 2016	Completed
Key Financial Controls	One instance found of an incorrect pension percentage	Payroll will carry out monthly checks of pension payment deductions to provide assurance	Payroll Manager April 2016	Completed
Key Financial Controls	No evidence of manager approval for overtime payments in 5 out of 10 test samples	Station Managers will be reminded of the importance of regularly reviewing claimed overtime.	Payroll Manager April 2016	Completed
Property Maintenance	Concerto Project Closure Report not approved by the Strategic Management Board	Management will ensure that the report is presented to the Strategic Management Board	Finance Director & Treasurer June 2016	Completed
Purchase of New Appliances	The Procurement Strategy requires formal approval	The Strategy will be presented for formal approval by the Policy & Strategy Committee	Purchase and Supply Manager August 2016	On Track
Risk Management	6 out of 15 control descriptions reviewed were not detailed enough	Drop in risk sessions will be used to advise risk and control owners on adequate description of controls.	Risk and Business Continuity Manager October 2016	On Track

Source	Finding from Audit report	Original (or amended) Service Action Plan	Responsibility and Timescales	Progress
Risk Management	Project owners are not uniformly using JCAD to record risks and controls	The Risk and Business Continuity Manager will assist project managers in maintaining all project risk registers on JCAD	Risk and Business Continuity Manager September 2016	On Track
Risk Management	The Strategic Management Board are not subjecting the Corporate Risk Register to an adequate level of challenge and scrutiny, actively seeking assurances around controls, or ensuring that action palns are in place to reduce specific risk to an acceptable level.	The Strategic Management Board (and the Service Leadership Team) will ensure it fulfils its remit with respect to risk management	Finance Director & Treasurer December 2016	On Track
Risk Management	Members of the Strategic Delivery Board individually review risk registers but do not do so as a group.	This will now sit with the revised Service Leadership Team	Finance Director & Treasurer December 2016	On Track
Risk Management	The Policy & Strategy Committee is not taking an active role in setting and determining risk management policy and strategy	The Committee will fulfil its remit with respect to setting and determining risk management policy and strategy.	Finance Director & Treasurer December 2016	On Track
Risk Management	The Corporate Risk Register presented to the February 2016 Authority meeting included incorrect information under the control details	The reports being produced by JCAD will be reviewed to ensure they are reporting complete information	Risk and Business Continuity Manager December 2016	On Track
Risk Management	The Authority's risk appetite as currently defined is not aligned to the Authority's risk scoring system in such a way as it can be used to assess whether a given risk level is acceptable.	The Authority will review its risk appetite to ensure it can be used to consistently assess whether a given risk level is acceptable or if further action is required.	Risk and Business Continuity Manager September 2016	On Track

Source	Finding from Audit report	Original (or amended) Service Action Plan	Responsibility and Timescales	Progress
Workforce Planning	An implementation plan has not been drafted for the workforce tasks and initiatives due to be undertaken	There will be a formal implementation plan for Initiatives to be rolled out across the Service.	Deputy Director of HR July 2016	On Track
Workforce Planning	Key details of the process for monitoring early retirement had not been identified.	Service operational lead will be identified. The prediction process will be completed for on-call firefighters. The frequency of updates will be communicated. The reporting line for statistics will be identified. The impact on succession planning will be considered.	Head of HR July 2016	On Track
Workforce Planning	Trend analysis had not been undertaken on agency and overtime spends to monitor achievement of objectives within the HR departmental strategy.	Reporting requirements for temporary staffing and overtime will be identified. Adverse trends will be reported to the Workforce Planning group and the Strategic Management Board	Deputy Director of Finance September 2016	On Track