

CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH FIRE AUTHORITY
POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE: MINUTES

Date: 14th December 2017

Time: 10.30 a.m. – 12.15 p.m.

Place: Fire and Rescue Services HQ, Hinchbrooke Cottage, Brampton Road, Huntingdon

Present: Councillors: S Bywater, D Giles, M Jamil, L Nethsingha, J Peach (Vice Chairman) T Rogers, K Reynolds (Chairman) and M Smith

27. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence received from Councillors Adey and Shahin Ismail (Monitoring Officer).

28. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

29. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 28th SEPTEMBER 2017

The minutes of the meeting held on 28th September 2017 were confirmed as a correct record and were signed by the Chairman.

30. POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MINUTE ACTION LOG

Action on Minute 20. ISA 260 Report where the Committee had requested the need to amend the text on page 17 under the title 'Working with partners' as the assumption as written was that the new governance arrangements would be implemented by April 2018 and was premature in advance of the final Home Office decision which had not yet been made. As an oral update it was indicated that the change of text had been made and the action could therefore now be changed to 'completed'.

The Minute Action Log was noted as amended above.

31. MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 12TH OCTOBER 2017

These minutes which were for information and for which the Committee had previously requested should only be made available via an electronic link to save paper were noted.

32. ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE OPERATION OF THE ICT SHARED SERVICE AGREEMENT

This report provided the Committee the outcome conclusions of the annual review of the operation of the ICT Shared Services Agreement, a five year contract entered into in October 2013 and reviewed the period 1st April 2016 to 31st March 2017. It was undertaken by the Heads of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) for both Cambridgeshire and Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Services and the ICT Shared Service Delivery Manager.

The report highlighted that:

- The ICT Shared Service continued to deliver successfully as a shared environment with identifiable improvements in day to day ICT service provision and management of incident resolution in both organisations.
- There were increasing challenges to maintain service provision and to achieve further improvements due to the increasing demands for ICT in both services with the issues highlighted in paragraph 6.1 of the report.
- The quality of the shared service had been reviewed and one of the key aims identified for it, which had been lacking previously, namely to embed customer focus within the ICT Shared Service, had shown a significant improvement. Information under section 7.4 evidenced significant improvement in customer perception of the ICT Shared Service since its formation and was now in line with the upper quartile achieved by 108 local authorities in 2010.
- The flexibility of the ICT service overall had been increased through the introduction of the shared service largely by pooling of the resources available to each organisation with the detail provided in paragraph 9.2.
- The introduction of a Project Manager had enabled a clear picture of the resource demands with it being highlighted that there are severe demands on infrastructure team resources, resulting in prolonged project timescales and some business as usual activity slipping.
- The review had demonstrated ongoing improvement in the aims of resilience flexibility cover and quality. However the improvements had been achieved utilising agency staff at times which had added to the overall running costs. As a result of the demand for IT solutions to enhance service delivery, severe pressures had been placed on resources and a review of capacity requirements was being undertaken with the aim of better utilising skills to help increase resilience.

In the presentation of the report it was highlighted that the shared services agreement was next year reaching its five year term. Due to the performance highlighted and the benefits gained, it was the intention to renew it for another five years.

Points raised in the discussion / responses provided included:

- As the agreement did not end until October 2018 the Chairman queried why the Committee was being asked to endorse a five year extension at the current time. It was explained that the current agreement required 12 months' notice if there was the intention for either partner not to continue with the shared service. On that basis one Member stated that the report should have been received at an earlier cycle. It was explained that the delay had been due to the Bedfordshire Head of ICT post being vacant for a period and therefore the joint review had been unable to be completed at an earlier date.
- Additional to the above, asking whether the agreement precluded seeking other options, such as with the police etc, it was explained that there was nothing to prevent the contract being terminated at any point provided 12 months' notice was given. It was explained the police are currently interested in a joint ICT shared service as the equipment used was different and related to the requirements of each of the two blue light services. Cambridgeshire FRS used the same core systems as Bedfordshire FRS and sharing non fire centric IT provision would be problematic. Breaking the IT alignment at the current time would also cause severe service provision issues.
- In response to a question on whether any other Fire and Rescue Service had expressed an interest in joining the shared service partnership, it was explained that Hampshire had originally expressed interest but then had never followed it up. In any event at that time it would have been difficult to provide the necessary resource.
- With reference to the consultation exercise there was a request that a report should come back to the Committee. **Action: John Fagg / Deb Thompson to programme.**
- Another Member highlighted that the report provided no details on how much money had been estimated to have been saved as a result of the Agreement? While there had been savings on infrastructure costs, the original premise had been not so much to save money, but to improve resilience and customer service both of which had been achieved. The next stage was to target skills sets to continue to improve the service.
- In response to a follow up from the same Member asking whether the shared service had cost more (due to contract staff having to be used) or less, the reply was that it had been cost neutral. This was further queried by another Member that surely if agency staff had to be employed these additional staff would have increased costs. In response it was explained that the agency staff were used to backfill vacancies and were not additional staff. The current restructuring exercise was not seeking additional staff but realigning existing staff to make better use of their skills set.

- Whether if a number of Fire Services joined, the economy of scale savings would be even greater, leading to significant cost savings. It was explained that working collaboratively and improving service efficiencies was a key aim of the new 'National Fire Chiefs Council' especially with the challenges of the new inspectorate regime.
- Concerns were raised regarding what the position would be if Bedfordshire withdrew or if key people left? It was explained that the current restructure exercise was looking at where key pinch points were and the current constraints. This included seeking to put in place a career structure to help staff retention as well as seeking to align the pay structures with Bedfordshire. The latter had not yet been agreed. There was a request that if the Chairman could meet with his opposite number in Bedfordshire to try to move things on, this would be helpful. **Action Officers to provide Chairman with appropriate contact details.**

In discussion Members still expressed concern regarding signing up to another five year extension as the IT industry was so competitive and changes occurred so rapidly in the technologies available, as well as being concerned that greater opportunities might be missed if a competitive procurement exercise was not explored. The Chairman asked whether there was scope to approach other Fire Authorities such as Norfolk and Suffolk. In response the Officers stressed that the current advantages of the shared agreement clearly outweighed the disadvantages and that as explained, there was always the option of a 12 month advance notice termination period. In terms of the other Fire Authorities, as both Norfolk and Suffolk were under local authority control there were unlikely to be opportunities with these services.

Having considered the report

It was resolved to;

- a) note the outcomes of the third annual review of the operation of the ICT Shared Service Agreement,
- b) note the progress in achieving the aims of improved resilience, flexibility, cover, quality and customer focus,
- c) note the demands placed upon the function and the need to review the structure, resource and capacity of it.
- d) That Members would seek meetings with counterparts in Bedfordshire to look at the possibilities of expanding and improving the Shared Service.

33. FIRE AUTHORITY BUDGET 2018-19

The purpose of report was to present the Committee for endorsement the draft budget and precept for 2018/19.

It was highlighted that the draft budget book was subject to change owing to final figures being unavailable for council tax collection funds and non-domestic rates from four districts and as some internal adjustments might also be required during the draft stage with an expectation that the final Band D figure would be lower than currently shown which would be a good news story. **The Deputy Chief Executive undertook to provide the final B and D figure to Members when finalised. Action Matthew Warren.** In addition, the Service was still waiting for Central Government to confirm final grant settlement figures for 2018/19 which had not been received at the time of the meeting and was not expected now until the 19th December. There was no expectation that there would be significant changes.

The final budget would be presented to the Fire Authority for approval in February 2018, along with feedback from the budget consultation process.

The key highlights of the budget overview explained that:

- The Revenue Support Grant has been reduced by £1.440 million, over that received in 2017/18. This was in keeping with the Government Strategy that will see all Local Government receive no Revenue Support Grant past this Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) period.
- All single purpose fire and rescue authorities were funded through a two percent share of each district or unitary council's business rates income and topped up by Central Government. A safety net and tariff/top-up was applied to this funding to ensure no service made excess gains or losses through this funding. The funding for Cambridgeshire Frs was impacted by a top up adjustment of £2.320m through this adjustment mechanism. This top-up offset the loss of Revenue Support Grant.
- The most recent CSR taking the Service to 2019/20, presented significant financial challenges for the Authority. Grant cuts along with inflationary pressures would result in a total pressure of £3.870 million. There were also pressures from a mandated apprenticeship levy and increased business rates.
- The Service had established a project focussing on making cost savings to balance the budget over the four year period. This was now forecast to be achieved, the savings, when taken alongside increases in Band D tax base and a 1.9% increase in council tax, would enable the Service to achieve a balanced budget for 2018/19.
- The capital budget showed the intention to invest in new pumps.

In summary the Authority was expected to receive a total grant, including Business Rate Contributions, of £9,128k. The Revenue Support Grant and Business Rate Contributions represented £6,808k of this total. This was a reduction of £553k over the grant received in 2017/18, equivalent to 7.5%.

The budget has been prepared for the medium term after making a number of assumptions, which were;

- A 1.9% increase in Council Tax for 2018/19,
- Non pay inflation will be 1%.

In discussion issues raised included:

- Whether only having a figure of 1% for pay inflation was prudent and whether greater provision should be made in case the final settlement was higher. In response the suggestion was that if Band D monies came in at a higher value, that this could be held to offset any pay settlement inflationary pressures.
- Linked to the above question regarding the pension liabilities if the 1% was exceeded, it was explained that these would be negligible. It was confirmed that there would be no additional money from Government for a higher pay settlement and any shortfall would have to be from savings in other areas. Cambridgeshire being a growth County helped with such pressures, as other fire authorities in low growth areas would be in a worse position to respond to such pressures.
- There was a query on what revenue opportunities there were in selling on older fire appliances to countries in Africa to help finance the cost of new vehicles. In response it was explained that the sell on value was negligible with an average sell on price of £3k for a vehicle that would have cost £250k when purchased new.
- It was confirmed that Band D properties included new properties with the district councils providing an estimate of the number of new homes expected to come on stream in the year ahead. It was explained that currently the Service was undertaking an exercise on the retention by district councils of additional Band D money received from properties coming on stream during the year as there could be a case for them releasing some of this additional income to partner authorities.
- Page 19 – Cambridge - reconstruction of dormitories – explanation requested for £120k proposed spend for 2018/19 – it was explained this was to enhance all the dormitories so they were all individual units (everyone had their private space) which had been welcomed across the Service.
- Page 19 – spend on St Ives replacement capital items – it was explained in answer to a question that a decision on this investment spend would be taken nearer the time.
- Page 32 - in querying the figure of non-pay inflation being shown as 1% which was clearly now an underestimate the Officers were asked if they were going to adjust the figure to a more realistic estimate in the final version of the budget to be presented to the Fire Authority. It was

explained that most non-pay inflation was discretionary spend and so would be constrained within the budget to the money that was then available. The Member requested that text was added to the final version to make clear that individual budgets would be cut to limit inflation pressures. The Officer undertook to make the change **Action: M Warren**

It was resolved:

To endorse the draft Budget and approve that the Service consults on the proposed precept increase (attached at Appendix 1 to the Officer's report).

34. CAMBRIDGESHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE PROBATION POLICY

This report provided an update on the work undertaken to revise the Probation Policy (attached as Appendix 1 to the report) and supporting toolkit (attached at Appendix 2), and sought the Committee's approval to both documents.

The draft revised Policy was first presented to the Committee last December. At that time, it was still subject to consultation with representative bodies. The Committee requested that the consultation should be completed before seeking approval to the revised policy and that at the same time the management toolkit to accompany the draft policy should also be completed and presented. It was confirmed that the representative bodies had agreed in writing the draft Policy.

The background to the revision exercise was that the current Probation Policy had only applied to support staff. While any probation issues for operational staff had been managed in accordance with the principles of the published Policy, to ensure maximum clarity and transparency, it was considered appropriate that the Policy should be re-drafted to explicitly apply to all employees.

Issues raised in discussion included

- Clarification of the definition of 'reasonableness' as used in the Policy. It was explained that this depended on the circumstances and the need to ensure a fair and transparent process was in place to ensure employees were where they needed to be and that if further action was required, it was undertaken in a fair and consistent manner in accordance with the principles set out in the Policy.
- In reply to a question on whether the Monitoring Officer had been consulted on the contents, it was confirmed that she had and endorsed the contents.
- Page 56 - with reference to the fifth paragraph under the heading 'Policy Statement and Scope' one Member highlighted that the current wording was confusing and needed to be redrafted to make it clear that the

reference to advertised vacancies referred to internal, advertised vacancies. **Action: Redraft section for clarity. (Sam Smith)**

- Whether with respect to the new toolkit, there was to be a training programme for managers in its use? In response it was confirmed that the HR team would be providing close support, especially as there were a number of new managers in order to help them understand their responsibilities and ensure they correctly implemented the Policy using the toolkit.
- In reply to a query on how the Policy would be reviewed for effectiveness, while it was not the intention for there to be an annual review, it would be closely monitored in the first 12 months.

It was resolved:

- a) to approve the draft probation policy attached at Appendix 1 to the report.
- b) To note the contents of the accompanying management toolkit at Appendix 2 to the report.

35. EQUALITY AND INCLUSION COMPLIANCE REPORT 2016-17 (INCORPORATING GENDER PAY GAP)

This report provided details about equality progress in the year 2016-17 and the gender pay gap as at March 2017 to ensure compliance with the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2011 and 2017.

The key priorities identified was the action being taken to achieve a more diverse workforce and the continuing work to improve the workplace culture to ensure all employees felt valued.

On workforce diversity there had been improvements in terms of gender diversity and ensuring there were no barriers to prevent women applying to be firefighters.

The progress in recruiting more people from an ethnic background was slower with steps being taken to analyse successful recruitment initiatives operated by the police and other fire and rescue services and to adopt appropriate best practice approaches where applicable.

In terms of:

- the culture of the organisation - the team had been quick to identify and address banter that was unacceptable to ensure an appropriate internal culture.
- sexual harassment – there were still some areas where unacceptable behaviour had been reported.

- bullying was at a higher level than had been expected but only involved isolated incidents and therefore more work still required to be undertaken in this area.

In terms of the overall gender pay gap this was lower than the national average with this being the first year this information would be published on both the Service website and the Government website.

In debate the following issues were raised:

- The Officers were congratulated on an excellent report.
- Disappointment was expressed by one Member on the progress regarding recruitment of both women and people from ethnic minority communities and she asked what could be done to improve it and whether Committee Members could assist. She made the further point that a white male firefighter service potentially limited the amount of preventative and home visit work that could be undertaken. Officers in response also expressed their disappointment with current progress and as a result, had presented a business case for more dedicated resource to tackle the issues, which Chief Officers had agreed. This would include bringing in more marketing expertise. A specific piece of work was being undertaken to engage with minority communities.
- A question was raised on whether a recruitment update report should be considered on a greater frequency than once a year, as recruitment was undertaken throughout the year.
- While a dedicated additional resource was welcomed, the comment was made that it was hoped that this would involve a fresh approach to recruiting from minority communities. One of the traditional approaches of engagement by making contact with elders in Mosques tended to bypass younger people. Following up on this Councillor Jamil highlighted that there was still a perceived problem of racism associated with the fire services that needed to be addressed in the same way the police were dealing with the issue. He suggested targeting recruitment at places like gyms, schools and colleges in order to attract a younger demographic. It was explained that there was a recruitment programme undertaken targeted at schools, colleges and community events in both Cambridge (such as the Cambridge Pride event) and in Peterborough.
- As it was clarified in response to a question that there was only one Member on the Inclusion and Equality Board it was suggested that there needed to be greater representation. As Councillor Jamil was happy to volunteer, the Committee supported the nomination of Councillor Jamil to serve as an additional nomination on the Board. **Deb Thompson to action.**
- Page 21 - with reference to the diversity of leavers statistics a question was raised regarding whether more information should be provided on

the reasons for leaving and further to this the question was raised on whether exit interviews were carried out. In response it was explained that most resignations were the result of moving to other jobs with it being confirmed that exit interviews were undertaken and any trends were reported back to senior officers. The main reason was more attractive pay in other employment areas for example, fire fighters leaving the Service to become train drivers as the pay was so much higher.

It was resolved:

- a) to agree the attached report and recommend its content to the Fire Authority including the recommendations on page 35 in respect of the Gender Pay Gap Report.
- b) To agree to receive an update report on progress on diversity recruitment at either the July or September meeting.
- c) That the Report be published on the website in advance of the Fire Authority meeting.

36. JOINT PROPERTY STRUCTURE PROPOSAL

One of the key measures of the Policing and Crime Act 2017 was the creation of a statutory duty to collaborate, which covered police, fire and ambulance services. Since late 2016 the Service has been in discussions with the Constabulary to explore the possibility of creating one property team to provide a service across both organisations. This report presented an outline of the initial plans for a joint property structure with Cambridgeshire Constabulary.

The main objective of the collaboration was to provide an improved service with greater resilience across the combined estate with the expectation of savings across the two organisations. To further assist, a full review of the property teams was being undertaken in order to understand how they might be merged effectively to create a resilient, single team of skilled professionals working across the entire property portfolio without duplication of effort.

A full business case, including potential options for creating a merged team, was to be presented to the Fire Authority and the Police and Crime Commissioner in February 2018.

It was resolved:

to note the contents of this report and endorse plans to develop a business case for presentation to Fire Authority.

37. CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH FIRE AUTHORITY RESPONSE TO GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION - ENABLING POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONERS TO SIT AND VOTE ON COMBINED FIRE AND RESCUE

On 27 November 2017, the Government published a consultation paper seeking views on the proposal to vary the combination schemes of Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs) established under section 2 or continued in existence under section 4 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 (the 2004 Act) to implement the 'representation model' of the Policing and Crime Act 2017 (the 2017 Act). The intention was to enable Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) to become a fire and rescue authority where a local case was made and it appeared to the Home Secretary to be in the interests of economy, efficiency and effectiveness or public safety.

To encourage greater collaboration in areas where a PCC does not take on responsibility for local fire and rescue services, the 2017 Act also enables a PCC to be represented on the FRA (outside London) with voting rights, where the FRA agrees (the representation model).

The consultation focused on applying the representation model provisions to Combined FRAs only and as an affected stakeholder to the consultation, which comprised three questions, the following response detailed in section 5.1 and detailed below was recommended to the Committee;

Question 1: *Do you agree with the proposed amendments to the combination schemes of Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs) established or continued in existence under sections 2 and 4 of the 2004 Fire and Rescue Services Act as stated in the proposal above to implement the 'representation model' of the 2017 Act?*

Answer: *Yes (negates an answer to Question 2).*

Question 3: *Please state below if you have any other comments:*

This Authority would welcome clarity on how political proportionality is to be balanced and managed should the representation model be adopted.

While the proposal for the PCC to become a full member on the Authority (in the same capacity as other elected Members appointed by the constituent councils) could be agreed in principle, the above still required greater clarity as political proportionality might come into play as the PCC had been elected on a political party ticket. The legal issue on the potential changes to political proportionality was still being reviewed by Officers.

It was resolved:

- a) to agree in principle to the response at paragraph 5.1 of the report.
- b) to delegate to the Monitoring Officer completion and submission of the consultation response before the closing date of 15th January 2018.

This report provided the Committee with an update on revenue and capital spending as at 30th November 2017 with a budget summary showing the main variations to the end of August attached as Appendix 1 to the report.

On revenue expenditure areas highlighted included the following:

- To the end of November 2017, the Service was above the budgeted establishment for firefighters due to the recruitment undertaken in September. The current underspend against the training budget would be spent on the training of these new recruits.
- The premises budget was currently underspent by £274k. This was expected to reduce by the end of the financial year as property maintenance work was completed and the winter energy bills were received and paid. The Service was receiving business rate refunds from a review of the rateable values of service properties which was also contributing to the current underspend.
- The supplies and services budget was showing an underspend of £448k. The underspend largely related to IT and communication equipment as the Service was awaiting invoices from the Home Office for Airwave charges.
- The overspend of car and cycle allowances related to firefighters outreach community work.
- The trend of underspending was continuing against the On-Call budget.

On the Capital programme it was highlighted:

- That in the current year 47 vehicles had been purchased including three new fire appliances.

It was resolved;

To note the position on revenue and capital spending.

39. POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee work programme was noted.

Additions to be included:

Shared Services IT Report update to either January or the April meeting.

Action: Deb Thompson

To add to January: Update on Report on Independent Review **Action: Deb Thompson.**

With reference to the recent invites sent out for the Committee for 2018/19 which were on different days of the week, there was a request from the Chairman endorsed by the Committee that they should be rescheduled for Thursdays in line with previous years. **Action: Dawn Cave Democratic Services.**

- 40. DATE OF NEXT MEETING – 10.30 A.M. THURSDAY 25th JANUARY 2018
AT SERVICE HEADQUARTERS HUNTINGDON**

Chairman
25th January
2018