

## **CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH FIRE AUTHORITY POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE – MINUTES**

Date: 26<sup>th</sup> January 2017

Time: 11.05 am – 12.35 pm

Place: Fire & Rescue Service HQ, Hinchbrook Cottage, Brampton Road, Huntingdon

Present: Councillors: Sir P Brown, D Giles, M Loynes, L Nethsingha (Chairwoman), D Over (Vice Chairman), M Shellens and J Schumann

Officers: Hayley Douglas - Head of Transparency, Media and Communication, Callum Faint - Area Commander Operations Support and Combined Fire Control, Rick Hylton - Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Sam Smith - Human Resources Business Partner, Chris Strickland - Chief Fire Officer, R Sanderson - Democratic Services Officer and M Warren - Deputy Chief Executive

Apologies: Councillors: D Divine and P Sales  
Officer: Shahin Ismail – Monitoring Officer

### **96. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **97. MINUTES OF THE POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING ON 8<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER 2016 AND THE MINUTE S ACTION LOG**

It was resolved:

To agree the Minutes of the meeting held on 8th December 2016 as a correct record.

### **98. MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETINGS HELD ON 19<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2016 AND 5<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2017**

The minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings held on 19<sup>TH</sup> October 2016 and 5<sup>th</sup> January 2017 were noted.

### **99. FIRE AUTHORITY BUDGET 2017/18**

The Committee considered a report by the Deputy Chief Executive presenting the Fire Authority's Budget for 2017/18 and seeking a review of the Budget Book attached as Appendix 1 to the report and for the Committee to endorse the proposed recommendations for submission to the Full Fire Authority.

As there had been a Member budget briefing prior to the Committee before the meeting, the Deputy Chief Executive provided a light touch introduction.

It was highlighted that:

- The Revenue Support Grant has been reduced by £1.280 million, over that received in 2016/17 in keeping with the Government strategy that would see Local Government receive no Revenue Support Grant past this Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) period. As a result the Authority would receive a total grant, including

Council Tax freeze grant and Business Rate Contributions, of £9,816k. The Revenue Support Grant and Business Rate Contributions represented £7,566k of this total and was a reduction of £1,054k over the grant received in 2016/17, equivalent to 12.2%.

- All single purpose fire and rescue authorities are funded through a two percent share of each district or unitary council's business rates income topped up by central Government. A safety net and tariff/top-up adjustment mechanism is being applied to this funding to ensure no service make excess gains or losses through this funding. Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service received a top up adjustment of £2.250m which offset the loss of Revenue Support Grant (RSG).
- The recent CSR to 2019/20, presented significant financial challenges for the Authority. Grant cuts along with inflationary pressures resulting in a total pressure of £3.870 million, along with pressures from a mandated apprenticeship levy and increased business rates.
- The provisional RSG settlement was received on 15th December 2016. The budget presented assumed that there will be no change when the final settlement is received.
- After discussion at the December Policy and Resources Committee, the Authority consulted on the option to increase Council Tax by 1.9%. An update on the outcome of this consultation presented orally indicated that of the responses received, 75% were in favour of the proposed 1.9% Fire Authority levy Council Tax increase.
- The Service had established a project which has focussed on making cost savings to balance the budget over the four year period. As part of this project, the senior management team has been restructured, the on-call budget has been reduced and there has been a reduction in the Regional Contribution to Capital Outlay (RCCO) for funding, with additional reductions coming from individual groups. These savings, when taken alongside increases in Band D taxbase which was being estimated to increase by 1% per annum and a 1.9% increase in Council Tax, enables the Authority to achieve a balanced budget for 2017/18.
- Approval was being sought for a budget of £28,191,500
- The budget has been prepared for the medium term after making the following assumptions:
  - As already stated a 1.9% increase in Council Tax for 2017/18;
  - A pay award has been received for support employees, that in part, relates to 2017/18;
  - Non pay inflation will be 1%. In discussion it was explained that there was a risk on this figure as inflation was already above 1%. The anticipated costs of inflation between 2016-17 and 2017-18 were £387k an average of 1.4%. Any inflationary pressures would have to be met from within the budget.
  - 1% pay rise - this was an assumption at the current time as there were union pressures for this to be increased and currently it was the subject of ongoing discussions.

Questions / issues raised included:

- In reply to a question on whether it would be necessary to raid reserves, it was

confirmed that this was not currently required as a result of the savings identified, but that reserves were available if required.

- Property Development Reserve – A question was raised regarding what this was for. It was explained that it was for all property enhancements.
- Page 19 – (39 sequential numbering) St Neots Storage, Gym (Ass Training) – It was suggested that the name of this training should be set in full on the final version of the budget book
- Page 21 (41 sequential numbering) - in response to a query regarding the section on Total Agency charges £142,000 it was explained that this was in relation to work carried out by other fire authorities on behalf of this Authority.
- On a question that on the basis that inflation will increase and will lead to higher interest rates, whether borrowing should be undertaken when interest rates were low. It was explained that at the current time as only 0.6% was being received on investments as currently set out on page 13 (sequential page 33), reserves were to be used to finance future capital expenditure rather than taking out further loans, thereby securing future savings by reducing the requirement for debt financing. Financial adviser advice would be sought if rates changed, but currently there was only borrowing of £3.2m borrowed on a 4.4% rate of interest.

It was unanimously resolved:

To agree to recommend on to the full Fire Authority the following recommendations:

1. That approval is given to a Fire Authority budget requirement of £28,191,500.
2. That approval is given to a recommended Fire Authority precept for Authority Tax from District Authorities and Peterborough City Authority of £18,375,558.
3. That approval be given to an Authority Tax for each band of property, based on the number of Band D equivalent properties notified to the Fire Authority by the District Authorities and Peterborough City Authority (275,166):

Band	Authority Tax	Band	Authority Tax
A	£44.52	E	£81.62
B	£51.94	F	£96.46
C	£59.36	G	£111.30
D	£66.78	H	£133.56

4. That approval is given to the Prudential and Treasury Indicators as set out on page 9.
5. That approval is given to the Treasury Management Strategy Statement on pages 8 to 13.
6. That approval is given to the Capital Programme detailed at page 6.
7. That approval is given to the MRP Policy Statement detailed at page 14.

## 100. INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN 2017 TO 20120

This report provided the Committee with the refreshed draft Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP).

As a correction it was indicated that the draft plan was attached as Appendix 2 and not Appendix 1 as stated on the front page of the report. Appendix 1 provided the Planning Framework and was now the Corporate Plan for the whole organisation. The Plan had been drawn up after looking at the performance over the last five years and the opportunities in the future.

Highlights drawn attention to included:

- The graphs and text on pages 16-18 (pages 58 and 60 of the sequential numbering) showed that there had been a steady decline in the number of incidents attended, despite a steady increase in population as a result of the Service actively managing its demand through fire prevention and protection work, together with initiatives such as call challenge and management of premises with a large number of false alarm activations. Over the last five years there had been a decline in the number of primary fires and chimney fires attended, as well as a significant drop in the number of secondary fires.
- Strategic challenges, risks and opportunities were set out in paragraph 5.4 of the cover report and on page 29-30 (pages 71 and 72 sequential numbering) which included:
  - an ageing population and the need to drive down the number of fire related deaths and injuries in the elderly age group,
  - reliance on the on-call service, while at the same time having the ongoing challenge of their recruitment and continued retention as a result of life style changes. Highlighted was the fact that when service calls were at their highest during the day, the availability of on-call fire engines was at its lowest, which was linked to the lack of achievement of the target attendance times. Currently there were ongoing negotiations with the Fire Brigades Union regarding increasing the whole-time appliance pumps by two.
  - Loosing highly skilled staff through the retirement profile, but also the opportunities for actively driving workforce reform.
  - The opportunities presented by closer collaboration with the police service and other successful collaborations to help achieve greater efficiency, improved resilience and delivery.
- As a result of the above the Service was proposing the following areas of work to mitigate the risks / maximise the opportunities:
  - diversification of the role of the fire service to provide greater value to the public by increasing the work undertaken with health and social care, together with assisting police colleagues to provide a more coherent response to certain types of incidents,
  - working with representative bodies and staff to better align resources to demand and considering a range of alternative ways to support the retention of on-call staff,

- further extend the number of safe and well visits to reach more of the vulnerable in our communities,
  - review recruitment and promotion processes to ensure any barriers are removed that might affect recruiting and retaining a diverse workforce,
  - through the Blue Light Interoperability Board, exploring the opportunities for shared estate and resources where there was a clear case to do so.
- Whilst it was recognised that the current response measures provided an accurate reflection of the Services' performance (as set out on pages 20-21 (62-63 sequential numbering), it was hard for the public to understand why there should be a slower response time for rural areas compared to urban areas for the most significant incidents. Officers were therefore proposing to consult the public and stakeholders on a single response measure across urban and rural areas.

Issues raised included:

- With logfires currently fashionable in many homes, a question was raised on whether they were causing an increase in incidents for the service. As a response an officer indicated that it was not a significant issue and that home visits included ensuring they were well maintained. There was a discussion regarding what proactive advice could be provided by the Service to highlight the importance of regular flue / chimney cleaning / the importance of closing the door on log burners to prevent carbon monoxide build up in a room. **It was agreed that Officers would look further at what additional advice could be provided and then included on the website.**  
**Action: Hayley Douglas**
- One Member highlighted that some villages had raised issue with him of having the Service providing an appliance located in the village so that local people could use it themselves and not have to wait for a tender to arrive. In reply while the Service was always willing to look at self-help measures, these should be in respect of getting people out of a building safely and that specialist equipment for fighting the fire needed to be operated by the appropriate professional staff. Budgets were available for district councils to bid for funding distraction activities to help reduce the number of arson attacks.
- Page 24 (page 66 sequential numbering) the text regarding accidental dwelling deaths stating that so far there had been none in the current year needed to be amended, to take account of the deaths reported the previous weekend concerning two people over 65.
- Regarding a question whether the Union/ representative bodies were happy with the policy document, it was explained that the risk profile / analysis had been shared as part of the formal consultation and their comments had been taken on board in shaping the final Plan's contents.
- What the **policy was regarding firefighters tackling fires on roofs with solar panels**, with the Member citing Wiltshire Fire Authority having a policy to protect the workforce from potential electrocution? In response it was indicated that there was a Standard Operational Procedure to help reduce the risk **which the relevant Officer was happy to circulate to the Committee outside of the meeting.** **Action: C Faint**

The Officers were congratulated on the excellent report with the Chairman of the Fire

Authority suggesting that it should be passed on to the Police and Crime Commissioner for his information being a very informative document, setting out the work carried out by the Service. **Action. R Hylton**

It was unanimously resolved:

To approve the draft plan at appendix 2 and recommend it to the Fire Authority for public consultation.

## **101. UPDATE ON STRATEGIC WORKFORCE OBJECTIVES**

This report updated the Committee on the Service's strategic workforce development activity and sought approval of the proposed draft strategic workforce development objectives for 2017/18. It was explained that the Service's progress had been considered against the context of the recently published Adrian Thomas independent review of conditions of service for fire and rescue staff in England, with the Government having an expectation that Authorities would consider the findings and recommendations and incorporate them into their local plans.

The Service had focused for some time on the development of its workforce, and in particular, developing the skills needed to enable it to meet the expected challenges and to be able to take advantage of future opportunities. This progress had been subject to an internal audit in March 2016, with positive feedback received regarding the direction of travel. When considering the Authority's strategic objectives for the coming year, the Thomas report had been reviewed for areas of current good practice with the full report detailing Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service (CFRS) position against the five sections (listed below) included at Appendix 1 to the report:

- a) working environment,
- b) Documented conditions of service,
- c) industrial relations,
- d) retained duty system,
- e) management of the fire and rescue service.

In addition, a 'gap analysis' had also been undertaken against the Thomas Review recommendations to identify opportunities for the focus of on-going workforce development to best reflect the diverse communities served and ensure that employees were equipped to meet the future Service requirements. The identified opportunities were set out in Appendix 2 of the report. A prioritised action plan had been developed to cover a three to five year period to link to the related risks and opportunities identified in the draft Integrated Risk Management Plan for 2017 to 2020. The draft Strategic Workforce Development Objectives for 2017/18 were set out at Appendix 3 and had been drafted with reference to the gap analysis of opportunities presented by the Thomas Review recommendations. Progress against these objectives would be via internal review by the senior leadership team and via a half and full year update to the Authority's Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Committee noted that the Service was in a strong position in relation to the

recommendations, as many were already embedded in their work, demonstrating the proactive approach taken to strategic workforce development, reform and working practices in recent years. There was now also the opportunity to share the good work undertaken with other authorities.

Highlights / particular issues referred to included:

- Page 91 Employee Engagement Survey - as a result of the issues raised, an Action Plan had been created.
- Providing details of the management and leadership development that had been undertaken through the 'Workforce Development Strategy'.
- Page 93 on industrial relations - details on the introduction of the new whole-time shift system and on-call rostering model.
- Page 96-97- details of the measures being taken to seek to address the decline in retained (on-call) firefighters, including employing a dedicated on-call Recruitment Officer to engage with both potential candidates and local employers. It was highlighted that this appointment had, had such an impact on the ratio of successful candidates to applicants that the postholder presented a best practice case study to the Chief Fire Officers' Association (CFOA) Retained Duty System (RDS) Conference in 2016, and was also an active member of the national CFOA RDS working group. Regarding this, the Chairwoman fully supported senior officers' involvement in national level forums as it provided a valuable voice for the Service at a national level, and received the Committee's support to this. In addition, due to the small size of the senior leadership team, should such activities result in undue pressure these needed to be highlighted and reported back to the Committee, as Members did not want Officers becoming ill from work related stress.
- Page 109 - the opportunity was being taken to review the provision of the pay policy statement in alternative formats for people with sight problems and translating them into different languages.
- The opportunity would be taken to put actions into the Strategic Plan and work streams especially as most recommendations were business as usual.

Comments included;

- The Chairwoman queried whether some of the recommendations would be contentious and whether this could lead to future conflict / industrial action. In response it was explained Officers were mindful to ensure that the unions were kept fully engaged with the actions being taken on the recommendations. No concerns had been expressed in respect of them. What was an issue was in relation to the age related claim due to pensions changes. **Action: There was a request for a member briefing to be arranged regarding this issue. R Hylton / D Thompson.**
- Page 98 – a query was raised regarding whether it was necessary to require entry standards for whole-time fighters to have 5 GCSE's at grades A\*-C (including Maths and English). In response it was explained that this was to ensure candidates would be able to pass the written tests that formed part of the selection process and to

reflect that the role of the firefighter had become increasingly technical. There was also the need for sufficiently high academic standards to be able to potentially recruit future fire chiefs from staff within the local service. Officers were looking to ensure the entry requirements were not excluding sections of the community and the previous requirement that the GCSE's should include Science had been dropped. this already included recognising equivalent qualifications to GCSE's.

- There was discussion regarding the recommendation on fire authorities reviewing their membership profile. The consensus was that a report should not be produced until after the May County Council elections when a new Fire Authority membership would need to be agreed and by then more details would be known regarding the new joint authority and the appointment of the elected Mayor. It was suggested by one member that reviewing the membership make up and whether it was fit for purpose should be carried out on a periodic basis. It was suggested that as a first step Officers should start scoping the review to include seeking Members views outside of the meeting with a report with recommendations to be made to the new Authority post May. **Action: M Warren to speak to the Monitoring Officer Shahin Ismail to action this request.**

It was unanimously resolved to:

- 1) note the information given as an update;
- 2) approve for Officers to proceed with converting the identified opportunities from the Adrian Thomas Review into a prioritised action plan to be brought back for comment and approval;
- 3) approve the draft strategic workforce development objectives for 2017/18 and the proposed approach to review of progress.
- 4) Instruct the Deputy Chief Executive to ask the Monitoring Officer to begin scoping a membership review report so that a report with recommendations could be presented to the new Fire Authority following the May County Council elections.

## **102. FIRE AUTHORITY PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT – MONITORING REPORT**

The Committee received an update monitoring report providing details of the current status of projects directly linked to the delivery of corporate priorities for 2016/17 with the Programme Status Report as at January printed in colour for the Members and attached as Appendix 1 to their hard copy version.

Key issues highlighted / oral updates included:

- Virtual Desktop Infrastructure project (VDI) rollout had been protracted but there would be a need to upgrade in due course as the supplier was doing to withdraw support for the current version. There was ongoing constructive dialogue regarding providing sufficient licences.
- Redevelopment of Yaxley Fire Station - this was now finished with the opening



ceremony set for 1<sup>st</sup> March to be presided over by the Fire Authority Chairman.

- Mobile Data Terminal Review (MDT) – this was making good progress.
- Review of Rescue Capability – this was currently on hold pending a crewing decision.
- Review of Reporting – this was making good progress and should be completed soon.
- Strategic Review of Training Resources – The Deputy Chief Executive expressed confidence that in the next six months there would be a physical building.
- Milton – It was indicated that this should not have been shown as amber, as this was a Central Government led initiative for a new communications system utilising the 4G network for which the project date kept slipping.
- Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme (SMCP)– a Member pointed out that the text in the 'Issues' column did not make sense and required re-drafting for future reports. In answer to a question it was explained that ICCS stood for 'Integrated Communications Control System'.
- Co-Responding Project – This was a national trial due to finish in February which was going well, but it was unclear at the current time whether it would be continued.
- Cambridgeshire Public Services Network (CPSN) - this was the network to all the Fire Authority's stations which was being led by Cambridgeshire County Council's Procurement Team – however due to the turnover of staff, the Service had concerns that it would not be in place at the appropriate time which was an issue not only for the Fire Authority but also for the County Council's schools. There was a request for an update, including milestones. **Action: The Committee Chairman and the Chairman of the Fire Authority undertook to raise the issue with Sue Grace / Noel Godfrey at the County Council Action: Sir Peter Brown / Cllr Nethsingha. Deputy Chief Executive to provide them with the latest correspondence as background.**

It was resolved:

To note the Programme Status Report as at January 2017.

### 103. COMPREHENSIVE SPENDING REVIEW UPDATE

This report provided the Committee with an update of activity completed and proposed actions with regard to the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) settlement. Table 1 of the report as set out below provided a breakdown of the savings required in each period of the four year CSR on the presumption of a 1% pay rise and 1% inflation which had been discussed in the earlier budget report. Sections 5.1 to 5.3 of the report provided an update on activities.

Table 1

Financial year	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	Total
CSR Year	1	2	3	4	
Saving required	£1.2m	£1.44m	£0.755m	£0.475m	£3.87m

Table 2 of the report as set out below provided details of the savings for CSR Year 1 (2016/17) which had all been achieved.

*Table 2*

<b>CSR Year 1 – 2016/17</b>	<b>Saving</b>	<b>Running total</b>
Savings already made from previous CSR and previous council tax increase (permitted by central government)	£0.650m	£0.650m
Increase of council tax precept by 1.96%	£0.346m	£0.996m
Increase in number of houses within Cambridgeshire and Peterborough paying council tax (growth)	£0.271m	£1.267m
Total	Target for year = £1.2m	Actual = £1.267m
Deficit still to be found		Complete

It was explained that following achievement of Year 1, the project was now focused on CSR Year 2 (2017/18); which was the most significant year for reduction of funding with paragraph 5.6 of the report setting out details of the activities undertaken.

Table 3 of the report as set out below provided the detail of where the savings for CSR Year 2 (2017/18) had been achieved/identified. Two thirds of the savings would be made in years 1 and 2. Further to this positive position tribute was paid to the work already undertaken by Amy Jackson and Matthew Warren to identify the necessary savings to enable balanced budgets to be achieved.

*Table 3*

<b>CSR Year 2 – 2017/18</b>	<b>Saving</b>	<b>Running total</b>
Carry forward from Year 1 (extra savings made)	£0.067m	£0.067m
Reduction in group budgets – Operational Equipment	£0.010m	£0.077m
Reduction in group budgets – Training	£0.030m	£0.107m
Reduction in group budgets – Community Fire Safety	£0.025m	£0.132m
Removal of budget – Area Commander Operational Support	£0.030m	£0.162m
Removal of vacant post (part time) – Health and Safety	£0.015m	£0.177m
Removal of Deputy Chief Fire Officer role and reduction in salaries of Chief Fire Officer and Assistant Chief Fire Officer roles	£0.231m	£0.408m
*Implementation of staff suggestions (pending business case proving viability and agreement for investment)	*£0.027m	*£0.435m
Increase in number of houses within Cambridgeshire and Peterborough paying council tax (growth)	£0.274m (estimated)	£0.709m

Removal of operational contingency budget (previous on-call budget)	£0.301m	£1.001m
Reduction of capital funding from revenue (or short term reserve usage)	£0.100m	£1.101m
Authority request to consider increase of council tax precept by 1.9%	£0.340m (estimated)	£1.441m
Total	Target for year = £1.44m	Actual = £1.441m (estimated)
Deficit still to be found		Complete

*\*Please note: Table 3 includes the potential staff suggestions savings; it is unlikely that they could be fully implemented in 2017/18 and may run into 2018/19.*

As a result of the above, the Authority was in a positive position moving into Years 3 (2018/19) and 4 (2019/20) and the Project Team were now focussing and planning on options moving forward.

It was resolved:

To acknowledge and note the work undertaken.

#### 104. POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

In noting the Work Programme, it was highlighted that the April meeting was scheduled too soon for the Final Accounts and taking into account the forthcoming local elections, it was agreed to cancel it.

It was unanimously resolved:

- a) To cancel the 6<sup>th</sup> April committee meeting (**Action: Democratic Services to send out cancellation**)
- b) To note the Policy and Resources Committee Work Programme subject to the above.

#### 105. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the Committee would meet next on Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2017 at 10 a.m. at Fire and Rescue headquarters Huntingdon.

As the meeting was the last before the County Council elections, the Chairwoman Councillor Nethsingha took the opportunity to thank all the Members of the Committee for their contributions and helping make chairing the Committee over the last year such a pleasure.

Chairwoman / Chairman  
22<sup>nd</sup> June 2017