

## **CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH FIRE AUTHORITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – MINUTES**

**Date:** Wednesday 19 October 2016

**Time:** 10:00 – 10.50am

**Place:** Room 128, Shire Hall, Cambridge

**Present:** Councillors B Ashwood, M Jamil, M McGuire and J Peach

**In attendance:** Councillor S Bywater

**Officers:** J Anderson – Area Commander for Community Safety, R Greenhill - Democratic Services Officer, S Ismail – Monitoring Officer, C Strickland – Chief Fire Officer and D Thompson - Scrutiny and Assurance Manager

### **120. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN/ CHAIRWOMAN**

In the Chairman's absence and with the role of Vice Chairman/ Chairwoman being vacant it was necessary to elect a Chairman/ Chairwoman for the duration of the meeting. It was resolved unanimously that Councillor Peach be elected Chairman of the Committee for the meeting.

### **121. APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIRMAN/ CHAIRWOMAN**

It was resolved unanimously to postpone the election of a Vice Chairman/ Chairwoman of the Committee until the next meeting in light of possible changes to membership following the meeting of the Fire Authority on 20 October 2016.

**(Action:** Democratic Services Officer)

The Monitoring Officer reported that the way in which appointments were made to Fire Authority Committees was being reviewed with a view to reducing delays in changes to membership.

### **122. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

The Clerk reported apologies for absence from County Councillor R Butcher, Deputy Chief Executive M Warren and Area Commander R Hylton.

### **123. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **124. MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 11 AUGUST 2016**

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 August 2016 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman. The actions were reviewed and the following points noted:

- Minute 112 - Operational Command Review 2016: A review of work on whether the six additional Station Commander (SC) posts that were not conditioned to the Flexible Duty System rota required the post holder to be a SC would be included in the Committee's work programme in the new year;  
(**Action:** Democratic Services Officer)
- Minute 114 - Terms of Reference for Member Led Review of Transfer Policy: Members noted that it had been resolved that the Scrutiny and Assurance Manager would liaise with the Chairman and Councillors Ashwood, Bywater and McGuire to progress arrangements for the review. However, in practice only the Chairman had been involved. It was agreed to note that other members of the Committee had been willing to take part in this work and that future reviews would benefit from having more than one member involved.  
(**Action:** The Scrutiny and Assurance Manager)

## **125. REVIEW OF PERFORMANCE AGAINST INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT TARGETS**

The Committee received a report by the Area Commander for Community Safety setting out performance against Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) targets. In introducing the report he highlighted:

- A 21% increase in accidental dwelling fires in the year to date (April to September 2016). This represented 132 fires in the current year compared to 109 in the same period in 2015. There was a trend around kitchen and cooking related fires and it was planned to run an information campaign shortly targeting this area. There had been no fatalities to date;
- A 1% increase in deliberate fires compared to the same period in 2015. This included a surge in secondary fires during August and September. Deliberate primary fires had also been higher in almost every month compared to the same period last year;
- A 21% reduction in fire-related casualties in the year to date (30 so far in 2016 compared to 38 in the period April to September 2015). There had been one fire related fatality in the period due to suicide;
- Overall performance in relation to protection measures was good with the only exception being the number of automatic fire alarm (AFA) activations which were slightly above target. Officers were working with businesses to target this issue;
- The increase in average attendance times had continued to increase due to the need for appliances to travel further to cover other station grounds. The combined whole time and on-call average attendance time for the first pump on scene stood at 93.5% attendance on scene within 18 minutes, compared to a target of 95% attendance. On-call availability remained an area of challenge and significant work was being carried out to address this issue.

In response to questions, the Area Commander for Community Safety reported that:

- The Fire Service had no statutory role in relation to the safety aspects of road planning applications and would not necessarily be consulted on plans;
- Injuries sustained during a road traffic accident which resulted in death within 28 days would be recorded as arising from the accident.

It was resolved to note the contents of the report and the Committee's comments as recorded above.

## **126. COMPREHENSIVE SPENDING PLAN REVIEW UPDATE**

The Committee received a report by the Area Commander for Operational Support which provided an update on activity completed and proposed actions relating to the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) settlement.

The Chief Fire Officer said that in the light of the grant funding settlement for 2016-20 Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service (CFRS) would need to find total savings of £3.87m. Officers were doing all they could to avoid impacting on front-line services, but the success of previous efficiency plans meant that there were no more easy wins left. He said that without a 2% increase in council tax and 1% increase in band D housing the service would be left with a significant gap in its savings plans which would need to be filled by increasingly challenging cuts to service.

During discussion and in response to questions from members it was noted that:

- CFRS had already reviewed and implemented business efficiencies across the organisation, including reviewing the terms of contracts with other organisations;
- Wide ranging and constructive discussions had been held with staff which had identified potential savings of around £27k;
- The Government had made clear that police service and fire service budgets would be kept entirely separate, irrespective of any closer working arrangements between the two services in the future;
- A collaborative board had been established with Cambridgeshire Constabulary looking at potential efficiency savings across the two organisations, including possible property rationalisation. Discussions had also taken place with the health service about possible collaborations;
- Action to generate funds from available grants would continue, but would be delivered through existing staff rather than the creation of a dedicated role as the sums involved would not justify a full time post.

It was resolved to acknowledge the work undertaken to date and to comment as recorded above.

## **127. MEMBER LED REVIEW OF CAMBRIDGESHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE TRANSFER POLICY**

The Committee received the findings and recommendations of the Member-led review of the Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Transfer Policy. In the absence of Councillor Butcher, the Chairman invited the Scrutiny and Assurance Manager to introduce the report.

The objective of the review had been to ensure that CFRS's transfer policy and processes were robust, fair and transparent; to provide assurance to the organisation and to the Fire Authority that the policy met the strategic aims of putting people first and incorporating best practice from the sector, subject to any applicable legal considerations; and to make any necessary recommendations should available evidence not provide this assurance.

Constructive discussions had been held with the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) over a two year period on this issue and CFRS acknowledged their contribution. However, a clear difference of opinion on two specific issues had led to the FBU issuing a failure to agree notice on these points in August 2016. These were:

1. The requirement that staff repay any honoured leave following a compulsory move, in the form of roster reserve duties or other. The Member view was that CFRS did recognise the impact which moving duty systems, work locations or shift patterns had on individuals that were compulsorily transferred. The Review Group considered it reasonable that CFRS honour pre-booked leave in this situation; however, it did not consider it reasonable or fair to other officers or to the taxpayer that the individual should not subsequently repay the time taken at mutually agreed times;
2. The requirement that staff be given a maximum period of 30 days' notice of their compulsory move. Legal advice was clear that the period of notice must be reasonable, and that a 30 day period met this test. CFRS was very willing to offer a longer period of notice where this was operationally viable, but the need to ensure the capacity to deliver front-line services meant that this would not always be possible. The Member view was that any greater period of notice would potentially have a detrimental effect on operational efficiency and service delivery.

In response to questions it was noted that:

- CFRS recognised that its previous practice was unsatisfactory and had addressed this issue. The changes which were recommended represented the most reasonable option available which would still ensure its ability to provide an efficient and effective service and discharge its statutory duties;
- There were variations in practice across different fire and rescue services, but these reflected wider differences in operational and organisational demands. The transfer policy described above represented the most suitable model to meet the specific needs of Cambridgeshire;
- 200 transfers had taken place since the first version of the revised transfer policy was implemented in October 2015 and there had been no reported grievances;
- Having noted and responded to the issues and concerns raised by the FBU in its failure to agree notice there was no restriction on CFRS implementing the proposed transfer policy.

It was resolved to:

1. Consider the findings and recommendations of the review group;

2. Present the report and recommendations to the Fire Authority to inform the decision-making process.

## **128. TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR DISCIPLINARY APPEALS PROCESS**

The Committee considered and discussed the proposed terms of reference for the Member-led review of the Disciplinary Appeals Process. It was noted that this work would be taken forward by Councillors Butcher and Jamil. A report would be submitted to the Committee in January 2017.

It was resolved to:

1. Agree the proposed terms of reference.

## **129. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME**

Members reviewed the Committee work programme for 2016-17.

It was resolved to:

1. Add the report on the outcome of the Member-led Review of the Disciplinary Appeals Process to the agenda for January 2017; (**Action:** Democratic Services Officer)
2. Note the proposed work programme for 2016-17.

## **130. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny would take place on Thursday 5 January 2017 at 2.00pm at Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters, Hinchbrook Cottage, Huntingdon.

**CHAIRMAN**