

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority Minutes of the Policy and Resources Committee meeting

Date: 28 April 2022

Time: 2.00pm – 3.05pm

Place: Fire HQ

Present: Councillors: S Bywater, B Goodliffe (Chair), M Jamil (Vice Chair), E Murphy, D Over, P Slatter and M Smith

Officers: Jon Anderson, Dawn Cave, John Fagg, Shahin Ismail, Chris Strickland, Tracey Stradling, Deb Thompson and Matthew Warren

Apologies: Councillors Peter McDonald and Kevin Reynolds

9. Apologies for absence and declarations of interest

Apologies were presented on behalf of Councillors Peter McDonald and Kevin Reynolds.

There were no declarations of interest.

10. Minutes of the Policy and Resources Committee held 26th January 2022

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 January 2022 were approved as a correct record.

11. Policy and Resources Committee Action Log

The Action Log was noted.

12. Annual Review of the operation of the ICT Shared Service Agreement

The Committee considered the outcome of the annual review of the operation of the ICT Shared Service Agreement for the period 1 January 2021 to 31 March 2022.

Introducing the report, the Head of ICT outlined the background to the Shared Service Agreement with Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS). He explained that the focus was very much on customers, and the service desk module of the new service management tool, HALO, which was being used to manage ICT incidents automatically canvasses users for their level of satisfaction with how the incident was handled. Members noted that satisfaction levels were very high, at over 98%.

Inevitably the Covid-19 pandemic had impacted significantly on the work of the ICT Shared Service, especially given the high level of remote working, although it was noted that many of ICT team still had to be on site during that period for various aspects of their work.

Cost apportionment between Cambridgeshire and Bedfordshire was approximately 50/50, but adjusted to reflect the use of resources by each organisation, with the detail being checked monthly and confirmed annually.

Progress had been made during the year migrating services to Cloud technology i.e. offsite servers, which provided both organisations with much greater flexibility. In response to a Member question about the use of Cloud technology and cyber security, officers confirmed that one of the benefits of moving to Cloud based was that in-house expertise and experience of cyber security was limited, so being hosted remotely on the Cloud platform meant that both organisations benefited from the expertise of the major IT company on cyber security matters. Officers also outlined additional measures being taken to ensure the Cloud platform could not be accessed e.g. from overseas.

Arising from the report:

- A number of Member queried the split in costs. It was confirmed that it was not an exact 50/50 split, as it was dependent on the running costs of teams and specific individuals. As detailed in the report, the cost allocation for 2021-22 was nearer 51% Bedfordshire/49% Cambridgeshire;
- In response to a Member question, it was confirmed that there had been tentative approaches in the past from other bodies to join the Shared Service, but none of these discussions had come to fruition. Increasing the number of organisations involved would result in greater resilience, but it was a complex, time consuming arrangement, requiring partners to fully engage and have similar objectives. It was also important that partners worked in a comparable sector;
- A Member asked if it would be possible to withdraw from Cloud hosting arrangements in future. Officers outlined the benefits of Cloud hosting, and advised that many providers required organisations to move to Cloud

hosting arrangements, so it was unlikely that it would be possible or desirable to withdraw from these arrangements in future;

- A Member asked if the variances in Terms and Conditions between the two organisations posed a problem, and whether this was a risk the Fire Authority should be aware of? Officers responded that differences had always presented a challenge, especially from a management perspective, as there were two sets of staff working alongside each other on different pay and conditions. This risk was included on the Risk Register, but was not considered to be a high risk area.

Members noted that Mark Dix, a Cambridgeshire Fire officer who was key to the shared service arrangement, had recently retired. The Committee wished Mark well on his retirement, and noted that his replacement, Dave Daws, had experience of the shared service arrangements.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- 1) note the outcomes of the annual review of the operation of the ICT Shared Service Agreement;
- 2) note the progress and direction of travel towards achieving the aims of improved service, resilience, flexibility, cover and cost management.

13. Strategic Risk and Opportunity Management Monitoring Report

Members considered an updated Strategic Risk report, as at July 2021, highlighting those risks that were considered to be above the risk appetite of the Authority.

Members noted:

- Two new risks had been added to the Risk Register, relating to fires involving large scale electric vehicle (EV) charging and battery storage and the lack of regulation and enforcement for EV charging points and storage points. There was little experience generally with these type of fires, including the risk of “thermal runaway” with EVs, which was effectively a self-sustaining fire. Funding had been secured nationally from the Home Office to review these risks. In response to a Member question, it was confirmed that there had not be an increase in these type of fires across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough;
- Cyber security remained one of the highest risks posed to the Service;

- ESMCP Airwave (R164) remained a high risk, which related to the Home Office project to move the current telecoms system from 'Airwave' to a system which was run on the mobile phone network. The project was overrunning significantly, and was not expected to be delivered until 2027 or later. A Member observed that technologies would have moved on significantly by that date. It was debatable whether this was the Fire Service's risk or government's risk, given that the considerable ongoing expense of maintaining the Airwave system was being funded by government;
- The other major risk related to the inherent conflict between staff development and ridership, which means the Service may struggle to meet both priorities at the same time, especially given the significant intake of new operational firefighters.

It was resolved unanimously to:

review and note the strategic risk report.

14. Estate projects - update

The Committee considered an update on ongoing estate projects.

Huntingdon Fire Station and Training Centre was progressing well, and was on schedule for a September handover. Members noted that whilst the site may be completed by September, functions would move to the site in a structured, incremental way, with the site not expected to be fully operational until June 2023.

Pre application advice had been sought from Huntingdonshire District Council regarding the existing Huntingdon site, particularly on scale and density issues, and two residential schemes had been proposed. In response to a Member question, it was confirmed that there would be a significant affordable housing component on that site if housing was progressed, in line with District Council requirements, but other options, including a hotel or care home were also being considered. A balance would be struck so that the District Council's requirements were met, especially with regard to affordability, whilst achieving value for money for CFRS. It was confirmed that the communications aspects, especially in terms of expectations, would be carefully managed for both the new and existing Huntingdon sites.

Cambridgeshire Constabulary had secured a positive planning consent to extend the fire station at St Neots, which would enable a co-located Police

and Fire site. The project plan, including timescales, was currently being drafted.

The Service was working with Cambridgeshire Community Services to potentially redevelop the St Ives site, which would involve relocating the current St Ives fire station. In response to a Member question, it was confirmed that the Service would be engaging with the Town Council and Local Members at the appropriate time.

Cambourne fire station was now ready to house the operational crew, which was being transferred from Papworth. The Service had engaged with both Parish Councils and there was already much interest in the Papworth site.

It was resolved unanimously to:

note the progress against the estate projects to date.

15. Firefighters Pension Scheme

The Committee received an update on the Pensions Immediate Detriment.

Members were reminded that at the Fire Authority meeting in November, they had been advised that an agreement had been made between the Local Government Association (LGA) and the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) that any payments made through the pension administrator, which later transpired to be incorrect, would not be challenged. This proposed approach had been reliant on advice and guidance given by HM Treasury and the Home Office, which had subsequently been withdrawn. This situation left the Fire Authority and individuals potentially vulnerable to additional costs and tax charges as result of the appropriate legislated safeguards not being in place.

There were ongoing discussions between the LGA and FBU, but no revised agreement had been formally agreed. The Home Office had issued very clear advice that immediate detriment claims should not be processed until legislation was in place, which would be no later than 01/10/23. CFRS had communicated with effected individuals throughout this process, especially the potential pitfalls in terms of their personal tax position. It was noted that those individuals would eventually receive the money they were owed, with interest, but it was an ongoing delay.

A Member commented that this was a very unsatisfactory situation, but was regrettably beyond the control of the Fire Authority.

It was resolved unanimously to:

note the latest position with regards to immediate detriment which is to suspend the processing of immediate detriment claims until the appropriate (legislated) safeguards are in place.

16. Commercial and Procurement activity - update

Members considered the first annual review of commercial activity of the organisation for the financial year 2021/22, the key priorities for financial year 2022/23 and an overview of changes to Public Procurement. The Committee noted that the Procurement Team was renamed in 2021 as the Commercial Team to better reflect its core function, which was to ensure managers were aware of their commercial responsibilities and seek to drive value for money. This was particularly important at a time of global uncertainty for the world supply chains and rising inflation.

Arising from the report:

- A Member queried the reference to a Tenancy Agreement in Ely. Officers advised that the Service still owned a number of domestic properties, left over from the days when “fireman’s houses” were offered near fire stations. This property had been retained for some on call use;
- Members noted the importance of the commercial awareness training;
- Members agreed that the report should be presented to the Committee at least annually.

In response to a Member question, officers confirmed that the new regulations required the Service to consider Social Value as part of the scoring process for procurement, and explained how the Service was well networked in different communities, especially through on call officers. An example was given of where an on call officer who worked for a large Cambridge Tech company, and as a result of this connection, high specification, nearly new IT and PT equipment and furniture had been gifted to the Service, which had saved the Service considerable money and also carbon savings.

It was resolved unanimously to:

note the contents of this report.

17. Work Programme

Members considered the forward Work Programme.

Given the proximity of the June and July Committee meetings to the Fire Authority meeting on 16th June, the Deputy Chief Executive advised that he would be taking a view on which reports to bring to which meeting, to avoid duplication of reports. There would also be a Member visit to the St John's site on the morning of 16th June.