

CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH FIRE AUTHORITY UPDATE

TO: Cambridgeshire County Council

FROM: Chairman, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority

DATE: 22 March 2016

1. FIRE AUTHORITY BUDGET 2016/17

1.1 At its meeting on 11 February 2016 the Fire Authority reviewed the Budget Book 2016/17 and approved the following recommendations:

- an Authority budget requirement of £28,453,250,
- an Authority precept of Authority Tax from District Authorities and Peterborough City Authority of £17,773,250,
- 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 (271,265) ranging from Band A at £43.68 to Band H at £131.04,
- approval of the Prudential and Treasury Indicators as set out in the Budget Book (page 9),
- approval of the Treasury Management Strategy Statement as set out in the Budget Book (pages 8 to 13),
- approval of the Capital Programme as detailed in the Budget Book (page 6),
- approval of the Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement as detailed in the Budget Book (page 14).

1.2 By way of background, the Draft Revenue Support Grant (RSG) settlement was received on 20 December 2015 and the Budget Book assumed that there would be no change when the final settlement is received. After discussion at the Policy and Resources Committee meeting in December 2015, the Authority consulted on the options of freezing council tax at its current rate and increasing by 2%. The consultation received 100 responses, of which 70% agreed with a proposed 2% increase.

1.3 The approved budget has been set at a level that meets the Government cuts and keeps council tax increases within defined capping limits. Full details can be found at http://www.cambsfire.gov.uk/BUDGET_BOOK_2015_2016.pdf

2. ENABLING CLOSER WORKING BETWEEN THE EMERGENCY SERVICES – OUTCOME OF GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION

2.1 On 11 September 2015, the Government published a 16 question consultation paper seeking views on a range of proposals to increase joint working between the emergency services. The consultation ran for six weeks, ending on 23

October 2015 and a total of 318 full or partial responses were received from a range of organisations and interested individuals.

2.2 Having considered these responses the Government intends to legislate on:

- introducing a high level duty to collaborate on all three emergency services to improve efficiency or effectiveness,
- enable Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) to take on the functions of Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs), where a local case is made,
- where a PCC does take on the responsibilities of their local FRA, this will enable him or her to create a single employer for police and fire personnel,
- in areas where a PCC has not become responsible for fire and rescue services, this will enable them to have representation on their local FRA with voting rights, where the local FRA agrees,
- abolishment of the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority and giving the Mayor of London direct responsibility for the fire and rescue service in London.

2.3 The Government intends to legislate to introduce the measures outlined above as soon as practicable, which means new legislation could take effect as early as November 2016. It still has to determine and promulgate a process for building a business case for any proposed governance changes and any agreed changes will need to be implemented using secondary legislation and will be subjected to parliamentary scrutiny.

2.4 The stated aim of the Government reflects the approach that Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service has historically taken to joint working. It has a proven track record of collaboration with emergency services and other public and private bodies and continues to perform strongly whilst being one of the lowest cost fire and rescue services in the country. Discussions have already started between senior officers within the Police and Fire Service to determine where further collaboration might lead to improved outcomes for the community, financial savings, economies of scale or increased resilience; the Authority will consider the outcome of these discussions moving forward.

2.5 The full consultation outcome can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/enabling-closer-working-between-the-emergency-services>

3. HUNTINGDON PROPERTY RATIONALISATION

3.1 The Authority received an update on progress with the Huntingdon property rationalisation project at its February 2016 meeting. The Authority had previously approved, subject to the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) outcome, the option to progress with rationalising service properties in

Huntingdon (Service Headquarters, training centre and fire station) onto a single site located on St Johns Park in Huntingdon. The CSR announcement was very close to the position forecast thus enabling the Authority to continue with the rationalisation. At its meeting in November 2015 members requested that Making Assets Count partners were approached to gauge interest in sharing premises. This communciation led to two expressions of interest, which are currently being explored, with a charitable organisation and a public sector partner.

3.2 To date the Service has met with the developer, Artisan, to discuss the concept drawings and will continue to work to finalise them and agree a detailed building specification and design. The Service is currently in the process of appointing a Client Advisor to secure the expertise required at the appropriate time, through the contract negotiation and build programme. Such expertise was previously commissioned to build both Cambourne and Coldhams Lane (temporary fire station) and both projects came in on time and budget.

3.3 The next stage is to agree Head of Terms with the developer and to commence the purchase of land from St Johns College; the legal work associated with this will be undertaken by LGSS Law. It is envisaged that the contract will be signed in April 2016, work will start on site late 2016 and the build completed ready for occupancy early 2018. In addition to the new site, the Service will begin marketing the current sites by working with professional agents to establish a marketing strategy designed to maximise the return and thus reducing the financial gap associated with the new build.

4. APPOINTMENT OF MONITORING OFFICER

4.1 In accordance with the provisions of Section 5 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 at its October 2015 meeting the Authority appointed Ms Shahin Ismail of LGSS Law as its Monitoring Officer. The role has a number of statutory duties and responsibilities relating to the Authority's arrangements for effective governance including ensuring that no decision or omission of the Authority, its officers or members, is likely to give rise to illegality or maladministration and promoting high standards of conduct.

4.2 The initial engagement of LGSS Law is for a period of 12 months during which time the Director of Resources, Matthew Warren, will jointly explore and develop a proposal and business case for a longer term solution delivering the in-house legal services optimising the costs and benefits for the Authority.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Source Documents	Location	Contact
Fire Authority Minutes 2015/16	Fire Service HQ Hinchingsbrooke Cottage Huntingdon	Dawn Cave 01223 699178 dawn.cave@cambridgeshire.gov.uk