

CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH FIRE AUTHORITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – MINUTES

Date: Thursday 10th January 2019

Time: 14:00 – 14:50

Place: Fire Headquarters, Hinchbrook Cottage, Huntingdon

Present: Councillors Gardener (Vice-Chairman), Gowing, Harford, Kindersley and McGuire (Chairman)

Officers: Rick Hylton - Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Deb Thompson – Scrutiny and Assurance Manager, Jon Anderson – Area Commander, Shahin Ismail – Monitoring Officer, Dawn Cave - Democratic Services Officer; Daniel Harris – RSM Risk Assurance

54. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies were presented from Councillor Bond and Matthew Warren.

There were no declarations of interest.

55. MINUTES – 11th OCTOBER 2018

The minutes of the meeting held on the 11th October 2018 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

56. REVIEW OF PERFORMANCE AGAINST INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN PERFORMANCE TARGETS

The Committee received a report setting out performance against the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) targets. It was noted that the February Fire Authority meeting would be considering this information along with proposed actions.

Members noted the following areas of interest in performance:

- the turnout time of first pump in urban areas had increased slightly compared to the previous year, but was still within target;
- first pump turnout times in rural areas had reduced slightly, but was still slightly over the 12 minute target;
- on call retention and recruitment was still a challenge, but it was envisaged that actions being implemented should result in further improvements;

- the number of secondary fires had increased slightly in 2018, due to the prolonged spell of hot summer weather, leading to grass and scrubland fires. It was confirmed that detailed figures, recording the split between deliberate and accidental, were maintained. Most of the secondary fires in the county during the hot weather had been accidental, e.g. combine harvester fires. Officers advised that where performance figures had worsened, they would be looking to provide more detailed information to the Committee in future;
- three fire fatalities had been recorded in the year to date. It was likely that the most recent of these regrettable fatalities would not be recorded as a fire death by the Coroner;
- there had been a 42.5% increase in fire casualties for the year to date, compared to the same period last year. This increase was mainly attributable to minor injuries related to bonfires going out of control in November;
- disappointingly, the number of co-responding call outs continued to fall;
- progress was being made in terms of creating a more diverse workforce, but performance still fell short of targets. There had been an increase in female operational recruits, but the total number of female operational managers remained low;
- there were currently 144 female staff in the organisation, 32 in operational roles (6.7% of operational staff, the average for fire and rescue services being 5.2% nationally) and this percentage was gradually increasing.

Arising from the report, Members discussed the following points:

- observing that the Service had had an excellent inspection report in December, a Member queried why this was not referred to and linked in with the IRMP. The Member also suggested that the Services excellent communications team could have publicised the result of the inspection more. Officers advised that the intention was to link in the results of the HMICFS Inspection in the report that was being presented to the full Fire Authority. The communications team had put out a number of press releases about the inspection, but it appeared that the media had largely focused on more negative aspects of the inspection reports nationally;
- a Member observed that a lot of effort was going into including articles in parish magazines about recruitment, and asked if there was a substantial time-lag. Officers advised that the Service was constantly recruiting On-Call staff. There was certainly a time lag in terms of engaging minority groups, i.e. from initial interest turning into applications;
- a Member asked about the reduction in co-responding. Officers advised that this related to firefighters at certain stations providing emergency

medical response services, e.g. for cardiac arrest situations, in partnership with the East of England Ambulance Service. It was being trialled at three stations in the county as part of a national trial, and the focus was very much related to pay and broadening the role of firefighters. The FBU had withdrawn from that trial, and all other fire services in the region had stopped co-responding activities, but Cambridgeshire was continuing the arrangements at two stations. The complexities around whether to continue or enhance the co-responding were noted. A major benefit of co-responding was that it was good for retention;

- a Member asked what was being done to encourage female staff to apply for management roles, and what the perceived obstacles were for female staff. Officers explained that the majority of female operational staff were relatively new, and there was a cultural perception that an applicant had to be doing the job for a certain length of time before looking to manage, and this seemed to be exacerbated for female applicants. There was also the issue that promotion to management roles often meant the successful applicant moving stations, and given that many female firefighters were also primary carers, this often proved to be a deterrent. Measures were being put in place to try to reduce or remove these barriers.

It was resolved unanimously to:

note the contents of the performance report.

57. REVIEW OF CAMBRIDGESHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

A report was considered setting out the findings and recommendations of the review of Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service Employee Engagement Activities. The review had been undertaken by Councillors Raynes and Gowing.

Councillor Gowing outlined the findings of the Member Led Review (MLR). The MLR had looked at the results of two independent surveys that had been commissioned in 2015 and 2017 and the action plan that had been implemented to effect change in the low scoring areas.

Members were reminded that the positive results of the recent HMICFRS inspection supported the view that CFRS had good values and culture, and was a self-aware organisation committed to reflection and continual improvement.

A Member commented that the report was a pleasure to read, and gave clear indications of how hard everyone worked in the Service. She was delighted to note that a Learning & Development Officer had been appointed, not least because this sent out a positive message to staff, and asked where that role sat within the staff hierarchy, e.g. whether they were included in making

operational policies and decisions. Officers agreed to set up a meeting between the Learning & Development Officer and the Member so that these issues could be fully explored. **Action required.** Meeting scheduled for 7 February 2019.

A Member asked for more information about the organisation that had undertaken the surveys, and whether Officers considered them Value For Money. Officers confirmed that they did. They explained that the reason for the delay in bringing the results back to Members was trying to schedule an appropriate time to do so.

A Member queried whether the higher than expected reported incidence for bullying and harassment was due to staff being more willing to speak out, or an increased incidence. Officers explained that the first survey was in 2015 in the middle of an industrial dispute, which possibly skewed results. The survey indicated that there were 20% of staff who had witnessed bullying and harassment, but they were comfortable the Service would deal with it. IODA, an independent organisation, had been appointed to come in and help Officers understand these issues further, which had resulted in the RESPECT programme. IODA had concluded that whilst the Service was very good at dealing with bullying and harassment, there were a few pockets which were not being dealt with at a lower level. He stressed that addressing bullying and harassment was everyone's responsibility, and it should never be dismissed as just 'banter'. Whilst it was acknowledged that the RESPECT programme had taken longer than expected to put in place there were now nine RESPECT Champions who would act as role models and could be approached to help address such negative behaviours.

A Member asked if Officers were happy that the recommendations of the report were sufficient to drive through the required change, acknowledging the support and successes of senior management in facilitating this change. Officers confirmed that they were satisfied. The Member concluded that he was happy with the proposed approach to continual review and improvement moving forward.

There was a discussion on how engagement levels may vary between whole time and On-Call staff, and the disruptions suffered by staff over this period, including shift systems and changes to pensions. Given these factors, Members applauded that 88% of staff were proud to work for the Service.

It was resolved to:

- a) consider findings and recommendations of the review group;
- b) present the report and recommendations to Fire Authority for information.

59. INTERNAL AUDIT STRATEGY PLAN UPDATE

The Committee considered a report by RSM Risk Assurance Services on progress with Internal Audit.

Members noted progress against the 2018/19 Internal Audit programme. Two of the main reviews – Key Financial Controls and HR (Training and Development) - had been published, and there were “substantial assurance” opinions against both of those reviews. A number of reports were still to be completed, but would be finalised in time for the next Committee meeting, with the agreed management action plans in place.

In response to a Member query, it was noted that the original intention was for there to be a joint Cyber Security review with Bedfordshire. A third party had been identified to provide that assurance, so it was felt that if a review was undertaken internally, it would essentially be duplicating that piece of work, which was why a potential replacement assignment was sought. It was confirmed that RSM Risk Assurance had numerous appropriately trained IT auditors who could complete cyber security reviews.

It was agreed that as this was a burgeoning area of risk, and an email update would be sent to the Committee from John Fagg. **Action required.**

Options for the replacement audit were discussed, including the impact of Brexit. Officers reassured Members that they had been reviewing both potential strategic and operational impacts of Brexit with partners for some time. It was agreed that as the Committee was not meeting until after March, Officers would be asked to brief the full Fire Authority before March. **Action required.**

It was resolved to:

Note the report.

60. OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

It was noted that the two outstanding Member Led Reviews would be considered at the next meeting.

It was resolved to:

a) note the work programme

CHAIRMAN