

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

**Date:** Thursday 24th March 2016

**Time:** 14:00 – 14:55

**Place:** Fire Headquarters, Hinchingsbrooke Cottage, Huntingdon

**Present:** Councillors R Butcher (Chairman), S Bywater (Vice-Chairman), B Ashwood, M McGuire, J Peach and C Swift

**In attendance:** Councillor P Brown B Pryke and Z Thompson (Auditors)

**Officers:** J Anderson, R Hylton, S Ismail, D Snowdon, C Strickland, D Thompson and M Warren

**Apologies:** Councillor M Jamil

**95. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**96. MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> January 2016 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman subject to the alteration of minute 91 to read “Suzanne Lane of RSM UK”.

**97. ANNUAL MEETING WITH THE CHAIRMAN AND CHIEF FIRE OFFICER**

The Committee received an oral update from the Chairman of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority and the Chief Fire Officer. Highlighted to Members were potential areas that the Committee may wish to provide an overview and scrutinise. These included:

- The STEP Transformation Fund that had 2 years remaining for work to be completed with Bedfordshire and Devon and Somerset and whether the £1.4 million grant been spent and is it being spent wisely?
- Special Services Animal Rescue and whether the Service should be attending those incidents and whether they should be charged for.
- The Transfer Policy due to be presented to the Fire Authority in May.
- The disciplinary appeals procedure and whether the current policy was consistent with best practice.
- Communications and media functions of the Fire Authority and whether the function was cost effective and efficient.
- The aerial appliance review to review the capability required for the next 20 years. Feedback had been received from staff regarding the reliability of the current Mulitstar vehicles.

- Rescue vehicle crewing. Officers explained that any proposed changes would have a profound impact on the organisation and therefore would be keen for Members to be involved in the process.
- Comprehensive Spending Review – Approach to reducing the Service revenue budget

During discussion Members welcomed the suggested items and agreed for items to be included in the Committee's work programme.

It was resolved to note the oral update provided to the Committee.

#### **98. OVERVIEW REPORT – CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH FIRE AUTHORITY COMPLIANCE WITH THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY CODE**

The Committee received a report which provided an update on the work undertaken following a Member-led review of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority compliance with the Local Government Transparency Code in July 2015 and the subsequent launch of the Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service website.

Officers highlighted that the conclusion of the review was that, with the exception of procurement information, the Fire Authority was complying with the majority of the requirements of the code. Certain information regarding the organisation and senior salaries required expansion and some information was fragmented across a variety of website sections.

Members welcomed the work that had been undertaken and praised the improved website. The importance of recommendation b) was emphasised by Members.

It was resolved to:

- a) note the work that had been completed and current position in terms of compliance.
- b) add an annual review of compliance with the Code to the committee work programme to ensure currency is maintained.

#### **99. OVERVIEW REPORT: INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN PERFORMANCE TARGETS**

The Committee received a report, the purpose of which was to provide the Committee with the performance against the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) targets.

Officers highlighted the downward trend in the number of accidental dwelling fires and despite a spike in the number of deliberate fires in Peterborough and Cambridge, the overall trend was downward. Work was being undertaken with the Police to tackle the issue.

During discussion:

- It was questioned why the numbers of people killed or seriously injured in road traffic collisions increase during quarter four of 2014-15. Officers explained that the overall trend was downward however; as the economy moved out of recession there could be an increase in road deaths due to increased volume of traffic on the roads.
- Clarification was sought regarding subsequent deaths resulting from injuries sustained in road traffic collisions and whether they were included in the figures. Officers agreed to verify that they were included in the statistics.
- Members expressed concern regarding the funding of the Road Safety Partnership. Officers agreed to provide further information regarding the funding.
- Noted that response time had increased due to congestion and amalgamation of rural and urban response time. Overall targets were being met.
- Noted the use of the Tactical Delivery Group to maintain On-Call attendance times. Officers agreed to provide further detail regarding the On-Call availability at future meetings.
- Officers explained that the number of days lost to sickness was mainly long-term sickness due to injury and short-term sickness was low. The measure would be separated in future reports.
- Noted the link between the fall in false alarms and the implementation of the non-attendance policy. The figures were predicted to fall further as schools would not be attended during the day time.

It was resolved to note and comment on the contents of the performance report in Appendix 2.

## **100. OVERVIEW REPORT: STAFF ENGAGEMENT SURVEY ACTION PLAN**

The Committee received a report which provided an overview of the actions taken with regards to the staff engagement survey and the associated action plan.

During discussion:

- It was confirmed that that benchmarking did not take place directly between Fire Authorities but Harris Interactive who carried out the survey carried out a benchmarking exercise with other organisations. Officers agreed to forward a copy of a recent presentation on the topic to Councillor McGuire.
- Members noted the importance placed on staff being updated on the

progress of the action plan. The implementation of the action plan would be led by staff.

- It was confirmed that the Senior Leadership Team would monitor and review progress against the plan regularly with staff as they were clear that improving engagement was key to ensuring the Service was able to work effectively and deal with the challenges faced by the Service.

It was resolved to note the action to date and the draft action plan set out in appendix 1 of the report.

**101. AUDIT REPORT: PLANNING REPORT TO THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – AUDIT FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31 MARCH 2016.**

The external audit planning report was presented to the Committee that highlighted and explained the key issues that were relevant to the audit of the financial statements and use of resources of the Fire Authority. Officers highlighted that the triviality threshold was set at £30k. Significant risks had been identified around finance, specifically regarding reductions in funding for the Fire Authority and “management override” which was a standard risk for all organisations.

Members questioned whether the fees for the audit would increase from those quoted in the Code Audit Fee. It was confirmed that the scale fee should not increase but if something significant arose during the course of the audit, resulting in significant additional work, then the fee may increase.

It was resolved to note the contents of the report.

**102. AUDIT REPORT: INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT.**

Members received the Internal Audit Progress Report and noted that two reports on risk management and training and development. There were no changes to the audit plan.

It was resolved to note the contents of the report.

**103. AUDIT REPORT: ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2015/16**

The draft Annual Governance Statement 2015/16 was presented to the Committee. The significant governance issues were highlighted to Members. These included the financial settlement from the Government, ensuring staff understand and apply the behaviours identified in the revised One Team Behaviours, the implementation of key audit recommendations and ensuring that strong controls were in place to manage the build and move to the new Huntingdon Hub.

It was confirmed that the proposed legislative requirements regarding Fire Authorities and Police and Crime Commissioners would be addressed through work carried out by the Internal Audit team.

It was resolved to note the draft Annual Governance Statement.

#### **104. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2016/17**

The Committee considered its work programme and considered further the feedback from the meeting with the Chairman of the Fire Authority and Chief Fire Officers detailed in minute 97.

During discussion:

- The review of aerial appliances was highlighted by officers as an area for overview by the Committee.
- Confirmed that scrutiny of animal rescue was not required. The cost of animal rescue was £60k over 3 years and feedback from staff indicated that animal rescues were valuable for training and maintaining competence.
- Overview and scrutiny work was identified regarding budget reduction proposals to ensure that targets were met.
- The Transfer Policy, communications function and the disciplinary appeals procedure were highlighted as a priority for the Committee to scrutinise.
- The Huntingdon Hub and co-responding were also highlighted as areas for the Committee to consider.
- Officers agreed to contact Members to determine who would lead on particular areas of work.

It was resolved to note the work programme and the suggested areas of work above.

#### **105. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

14.00 on Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> July 2016, at Hinchbrooke Cottage in Huntingdon.

**CHAIRMAN**