

CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH FIRE AUTHORITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – MINUTES

Date: Thursday 5 January 2017

Time: 14:00 – 14.45

Place: CFRS Headquarters, Hinchbrook Cottage, Huntingdon

Present: Councillors B Ashwood, R Butcher, S Bywater, M Jamil and J Peach.

In attendance: Councillor S Bywater

Officers: J Anderson – Area Commander for Community Safety, Suzanne Lane – Auditor, Daniel Snowdon – Democratic Services Officer, C Strickland – Chief Fire Officer, Matthew Warren – Deputy Chief Executive, and D Thompson - Scrutiny and Assurance Manager

131. APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIRMAN/ CHAIRWOMAN

The Chairman proposed with the unanimous agreement of the Committee to appoint Councillor Bywater as Vice Chairman.

132. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Clerk reported apologies for absence from Peterborough City Councillor Lillis and Shahin Ismail, Monitoring Officer.

133. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

134. MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON 19 OCTOBER 2016

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 October 2016 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

135. 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:

- Accidental Dwelling Fires were below the IRMP target but showed a 16% increase when compared to the same period in 2015. The increase was attributed to the rise of the number of dwellings in Cambridgeshire. The fires were predominantly caused by people

becoming distracted while cooking and tended therefore to be relatively minor in nature.

- Deliberate fires remained below target but showed a slight increase of 14% over the last year. The increase was largely attributed to deliberate fires carried out by inmates at Peterborough Prison. The privately run prison had been advised by insurers to call the Fire Service for every incident, something that did not occur in publicly run prisons. Work was ongoing with Prison management to address the issue.
- Fire related deaths and casualties had reduced by 58% and with one fatality in last 6 months.
- The number of automatic fire alarms continued to increase. Work was being undertaken to ensure that the data held by the Fire Service regarding the number of commercial premises in Cambridgeshire was as accurate as possible.
- Average attendance times of the first pump on scene continued to rise. On-call availability was decreasing but work was continuing regarding recruitment and retention that would address the issue.
- Sickness had improved significantly following a large reduction of long term sickness.

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

- Checks were undertaken at incidents of domestic fires to ensure that smoke detectors were fitted to properties. Smoke detectors continued to be fitted to properties of the elderly and vulnerable and formed part of a wider prevention strategy that included combatting slips, trips and falls and keeping warm.
- The Family Group 2 mentioned in the third bullet point of Appendix 1 related to the statistical group the Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service was placed.
- The Fire Service worked closely with the Safer Peterborough Partnership in dealing with fly tipping and fire prevention work.
- Confirmed that insurers advised that Peterborough Prison to lodge all incidents with the Fire Service. Members expressed concern regarding wider issues of inmates' ability to access flammable materials requested feedback from the planned meetings with prison management. **ACTION**
- Remedial work was continuing with Peterborough Hospital. Although the hospital was slightly behind schedule with regard to the action plan set, good progress had been made.

It was resolved to note the contents of the report.

136. MEMBER LED REVIEW – SERVICE EFFICIENCY PROGRAMME (STEP)

The Committee received terms of reference for the Service Transformation and Efficiency Programme (STEP) led by Councillor Jamil.

The objective of the review was to ascertain if the organisation had achieved the objectives it set out in the transformation funding bid to Communities and local Government (CLG) in 2014. The Service, in collaboration with its partners, was awarded £1.45m to consider alternative delivery of the STEP technology and to primarily deliver an On-Call recruitment process. Want to make it more stream lined process for recruitment.

Councillor Bywater confirmed that he would to assist with the review.

It was resolved to note the terms of reference.

137. MEMBER LED REVIEW OF DISCIPLINARY APPEALS PROCESS

The Committee considered and discussed the findings of the Member Led Review of the Disciplinary Appeals Process.

The Chairman introduced the report and explained that the review was undertaken to assure Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority that the appeals process within the existing discipline policy and procedure was open, transparent and fair. The review included the assessment of other Fire Authority's Disciplinary Appeals processes. The review was undertaken by Councillors Butcher and Jamil who received employment law advice from the Monitoring Officer Shahin Ismail.

The review found that overall the disciplinary appeals process operated well and that it was important for Members to retain involvement within the process.

Officers confirmed that in the last 3 years there had been 16 appeals, 1 of which was heard by the Fire Authority.

It was resolved unanimously to:

1. Consider the findings and recommendations of the review group
2. Present the report and recommendations to Fire Authority to inform the decision making process.

**138. CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH FIRE AUTHORITY
ANNUAL AUDIT LETTER**

Members received the Annual Audit Letter supplied by the external auditors, BDO. The audit had been positive with an unqualified opinion received on each section.

During discussion Members:

- Noted that the estimated value of the understatement of the Fire Authority's share of the pension fund liability did not represent a material concern. Officers agreed to provide information regarding the percentage of the total pension fund the £150k liability represented. **ACTION**
- Noted that there had been no change to the planned fees BDO quoted.
- Noted there had been no issues with BDO as an auditor. The Fire Authority was a relatively simple, small organisation in comparison with other organisations and officers were proactive in managing the audit process.
- Drew attention to £53k understatement of expenditure due to the incorrect calculation of depreciation associated with Fire Stations. The process for the calculation of depreciation had since been changed in response to the audit.

It was resolved to note the Annual Audit Letter.

**139. CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH FIRE AUTHORITY
INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT**

The Committee received the Internal Audit Progress Report. Members noted the delay to the planned review of the Huntingdon Hub due to the overall delay in the project. Members requested that copies of the "Little Book of Cyber Scams" be circulated to Members. **ACTION.**

Officers drew attention to the added value work detailed in the report, in particular Fire Procurement that related to how the Home Office were changing procurement processes and a new assessment and inspection programme due to begin in April 2018.

It was resolved to note the contents of the report.

140. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

Members reviewed the Committee work programme for 2016-17. Further information on the work programme would be provided at the March meeting of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee following the annual meeting of the Fire Authority Chairman and Chief Fire Officer at which areas of the Service they would like Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to scrutinise or review were agreed.

It was resolved to:

1. Note the proposed work programme for 2016-17.

141. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny would take place on Thursday 23 March 2017 at 2.00pm at Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters, Hinchingsbrooke Cottage, Huntingdon.

CHAIRMAN