

CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH FIRE AUTHORITY
POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE: MINUTES

Date: 20th December 2018
Time: 10.30 am – 11.40 am
Place: Fire and Rescue Services HQ, Hinchingsbrooke Cottage, Brampton Road, Huntingdon.
Present: Councillors: S Bywater, M Jamil, L Nethsingha, D Over, T Rogers and M Smith

81. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence received from Councillors D Giles, K Reynolds (Chairman) and M Shellens.

82. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

83. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 4th OCTOBER 2018

The minutes of the meeting held on 4th October 2018 were confirmed as a correct record and were signed by the Chairman.

84. POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MINUTES ACTION LOG

The action log was noted.

85. MINUTES OF 11th OCTOBER OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The minutes for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held 11th October were noted.

86. DRAFT FIRE AUTHORITY BUDGET 2019/20

Members received a report on the draft budget and precept for 2019/20. Members were advised that this had been circulated as a late item, as the government's draft Settlement had not been announced until 13th December. The settlement was slightly lower than anticipated, but only by around £50-60K. The budget was based on an increase in Council Tax of just below 3%.

Officers highlighted the following key points in budget:

- There were a small number of new posts within the budget, including a new post supporting the maintenance of the community risk database and a new ICT Shared Service structure, including a database analyst and a dedicated ICT project manager. These posts would be jointly funded between Cambridgeshire and Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Services;
- There was uncertainty around the pension scheme resulting from changes to the SCAPE (superannuation contributions adjusted for past experience) rate, as the government anticipated a funding gap for pensions in future years, which would need to be funded by either the employer or employees, but because this related specifically to the old scheme and current pensioners, the onus was on the employer. The government would fund 90% of the employer costs in the first year (2019/20) so the residual funding gap was around £300,000-£400,000. Those figures would need to be funded from reserves. It was unclear how the entire shortfall would be funded in future years, although the government would review this as part of the next CSR process. Officers were aware, from a similar experience with the Constabulary, that the actual rate was lower than originally anticipated, so this figure was very much a worst case scenario. Government had indicated that Fire Services should use their reserves to fund this;
- Savings and efficiencies had been identified where possible, but the scope to reduce budgets in this way was now limited. The Council tax uplift was basically funding the pay award only.

Arising from the report:

- A Member asked if Reserves were in a healthy position. Officers confirmed that there was a specific Pension reserve of £900K. It may be necessary to revisit the Reserve Strategy;
- In response to a question on the Community Risk Database, it was noted that this identified all risks the Service was aware of within communities. The issue was that it had not been maintained as well as it could have been;
- A Member asked what the long-term situation was with Reserves, i.e. what was the bottom limit, given they may be called upon more frequently going forward? Officers advised that the General Reserve should stand at between 4-6% of net revenue budget. It was above that threshold at the moment, but would be reducing to nearer 4% over the coming years, at which point it would be necessary to top up that General Reserve. This

would be covered in one of the report to the Committee in January, when there was more certainty on the pension funding gap;

- It was noted that the Property Reserve was quite substantial (£8.5M), and it was likely that less than £8.5M would be required. So in terms of *total* Reserves, the Fire Service was in a very healthy position;
- In response to a Member question, it was confirmed that the smaller vehicles were frequently replaced after more than four years, depending on mileage and the Fleet Manager's assessment of their viability. It was also noted that tests were taking place to see if Peugeots were more cost effective than the predominantly Volkswagen fleet. With regard to dual fuel vehicles, costs were currently prohibitive, but it was likely that ultimately some of the fleet would be hybrid;
- It was noted that rents had increased significantly, mainly due to the revaluation of Dogsthorpe Fire Station, but this revaluation was being challenged;
- Communications and Mutual Protection (Insurance) had reduced mainly due to CCTV cameras being installed on appliances;
- There was significant inflation (13%) on petrol, oil and tyres;
- One aerial appliance replacement was planned for 2019/20, but it was likely that an appliance ordered in the current year would not be delivered until 2019/20, as it was taking longer than anticipated to get the specification right. It was therefore likely that the Committee would be asked to agree to an adjustment to carry this purchase forward to the 2019/20 financial year;
- It was noted that page 8 of the report gave the numbers of vehicles, whilst page 9 gave the costs, and that the table on page 9 should be headed "life replacement of the vehicle".

It was resolved unanimously to:

endorse the draft budget and approve that the Service consults on the proposed precept increase.

87. EQUALITY AND INCLUSION COMPLIANCE REPORT 2017/18 (INCORPORATING GENDER PAY GAP)

The Committee considered a report about equality progress in the year 217/18, including the gender pay gap as at March 2018. Production of the report met the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2011 and 2017.

Members noted:

- priorities within the organisation included securing, keeping and maintaining a more diverse workforce, and also improving the culture within the organisation, especially with respect to bullying and harassment;
- In terms of securing a more diverse workforce, data over the last five years indicated a slow but steady increase in women staff, including 6.5% of operational staff, which compared well with other Fire & Rescue Services nationally;
- securing a more diverse workforce in terms of ethnicity was proving more of a challenge, but Members noted many positive actions being taken;
- all women who had taken Maternity Leave had returned, and there was improved guidance on flexible working, especially for operational staff, ensuring women were supported at various stages of their working lives. It was confirmed that male staff were well supported;
- a lot of work had been undertaken to identify pockets of unacceptable behaviour with respect to bullying, harassment and inappropriate behaviour. The background and operation of the RESPECT programme that had been implemented were outlined;
- in terms of communities accessing services, it was noted that there had been little change. Engagement with BME communities was absolutely key, as was improving monitoring in this area;
- the Gender Pay Gap i.e. the difference between the average man's and the average woman's salary had reduced slightly. However, this was a global figure which did not reveal much behind the crucial detail;

The Committee congratulated those involved in producing an excellent report.

Responding to the report:

- a Member commented the analysis over five years was really helpful, as it helped to show trends;

- whilst Members were pleased to note the increase in staff identifying as LGB (Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual), officers advised that this masked an underlying issue, in that the majority of staff in that category identified themselves as Lesbian or Bisexual, there were still few staff identifying themselves as Gay;
- Members discussed the extent to which flexible working was offered to parents;
- Members noted the ways in which bullying, harassment and inappropriate behaviour manifested – not just by a manager to a junior member of staff, but also between junior staff to more senior staff, and between peers. This issue was being tackled in all areas, not just operational roles. It was hoped that the RESPECT champions would offer staff a route to discuss their concerns. The Chief Fire Officer stressed that whilst the Fire Service was making good progress in this area, it was not complacent, and he would not tolerate these behaviours within the organisation. The ultimate focus was for all staff to feel engaged and comfortable about reporting such behaviours.

It was resolved unanimously to:

agree the Equality and Inclusion Compliance Report April 2017 – September 2018 and recommend its contents to the Fire Authority.

88. CAMBRIDGESHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE MATERNITY PAY POLICY

The Committee considered a report on work undertaken to review the Service's maternity pay provisions, which included proposed revisions to the contractual maternity pay. This work was in line with the strategic objective built in to the IRMP about maintaining a diverse workforce.

Although 100% of staff on Maternity Leave in the previous year had returned, longer term the picture was less positive: over the last seven years, 25% of staff who had taken Maternity Leave had not been retained longer term. This related not just to pay, but also how staff who took Maternity Leave were treated within the organisation.

Maternity Pay within CFRS was low compared to averages across the sector. Benchmarking indicated that the market leaders provided 45 weeks full pay, whilst the average was around 18-26 weeks. The Police currently offered six weeks, the same as CFRS, but this was currently being reviewed.

Significant work had been undertaken modelling the cost of increasing contractual maternity pay provision, based on a number of different assumptions, to identify what was affordable to CFRS as an organisation.

Consideration was given not only to ensuring that any policy was affordable now, but also going forward. The proposal was to increase contractual maternity pay from 6 to 18 weeks' full pay. Whilst this sounded quite dramatic, it very much moved the Service from being at the lower end to average provision. Alongside the proposal to increase to 18 weeks' fully pay, it was also proposed to increase the qualifying time from one year's continuous service before the baby was born, to two years. This would help balance the impact of the increased maternity pay. The plan was to introduce the revised scheme in April 2019.

Officers confirmed that additional resources to pay for the increased maternity pay had not been built in to the budget. The plan was to use reserves in the first year, to enable officers to assess how it would cost over the first year. The estimate at this stage was about £46,000.

Arising from the report:

- A Member welcomed the proposal but commented that he would like to see it built in to the budget, even if it had to be resourced from reserves. Officers agreed to take this forward and include in the revised budget that would be presented to the January Committee meeting. **Action required – M Warren;**
- It was noted that the average age of female recruits was in their 20s;
- It was acknowledged that costs would increase depending on the seniority of staff, but it was vital to attract more senior female staff, as women were underrepresented in senior roles.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- approve the proposed changes to the contractual maternity pay in order to enable formal consultation to commence. Namely, to increase from six to 18 weeks full pay with effect from April 2019, with an associated change in the length of continuous service required to qualify for contractual maternity pay, from one year to two years by the eleventh week before the baby is due.
- note the additional and concurrent work to review and update broader maternity provisions and support.

89. STRATEGIC RISK AND OPPORTUNITY MANAGEMENT REGISTER – MONITORING REPORT

The Committee received a strategic risk report as at November 2018, that highlighted risks considered above the risk appetite of the Authority. Officers confirmed that R094 in relation to Cyber Attacks remained high but that significant work had been undertaken over the last 12 months to increase security including an annual penetration test to determine the vulnerabilities in

the system. Patching was carried out on a regular basis. Additional cyber security tools such as email filtering, logging and vulnerability scanning had been implemented. A series of presentations had also been given to staff to raise user awareness of threats.

Officers highlighted the continued delay in the ESMCP Project and that the risk sat largely outside the control of the authority. Engagement and monitoring of the project was ongoing and it had been agreed that the risk had been realised and should be regarded as an issue.

Arising from the report:

- Members welcomed the significant work undertaken in relation to cyber security and noted the ongoing issues in relation to ESMCP.

It was resolved unanimously to:

Review and note the strategic risk report and the risk distribution.

90. ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE OPERATION OF THE ICT SHARED SERVICE

The Committee considered a report on the outcome of the annual review of the operation of the ICT Shared Service Agreement (Schedule 4) for the period 1st April 2017 to 31st March 2018, undertaken by the Head of ICT for Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service (CFRS) and the ICT Shared Service Delivery Manager.

A substantial review of the existing structure had taken place in the reporting period. The review examined the structure, capacity required, skills and facilities to ensure they adequately met the needs of both services. The new structure had been implemented during the summer of 2018.

Arising from the report:

- A Member commented favourably on the Mobile Data Terminal (MDT) technology which had been successfully implemented. These provided real time information and were particularly useful in rural areas.
- A Member queried the skill set of the posts in the new structure. Officers confirmed that individuals in the new posts had the correct skills sets required for the roles and that there would no longer be a reliance on agency workers.
- It was acknowledged that the performance in relation to the annual customer survey results had decreased but that this had been due to the uncertainty in relation to the new structure. Officers confirmed that

they had already seen an increase in confidence of the Service since the new structure had been implemented.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- Consider the outcomes of this fourth annual review of the operation of the ICT Shared Service Agreement.
- Note the progress in achieving the aims of improved resilience, flexibility, cover, quality and customer focus.
- Note the need to review the structure and capacity of the function.

91. POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

No additions were made to the work programme. The work programme was noted.

92. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Members noted that the next meeting was scheduled for 31 January 2019. The meeting closed at 11.40 am.

Chairman