

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority: Minutes

Date: 15th June 2023

Time: 2:00-3.13pm

Venue: New Shire Hall, Alconbury Weald

Present: Cambridgeshire County Council:

Councillors: S Bywater, D Dew, I Gardener, B Goodliffe, R Hathorn, S Kindersley, M McGuire, E Murphy (Chair), C Rae, P Slatter and S Taylor

Peterborough City Council:

Councillors: A Bond, M Jamil (Vice Chair) and D Over

Officers present: J Anderson, D Cave, S Ismail, C Strickland and M Warren

71. Election of Chair

The Monitoring Officer called for nominations for Chair.

Councillor Jamil nominated Councillor Murphy, and this nomination was seconded by Councillor Kindersley. There were no further nominations. Following a show of hands, the Monitoring Officer announced that Councillor Murphy was therefore unanimously elected as Chair of the Fire Authority for the municipal year 2023-24.

72. Appointment of Vice Chair

The Chair called for nominations for Vice Chair.

Councillor Murphy nominated Councillor Jamil, and this nomination was seconded by Councillor Goodliffe. There were no further nominations. Following a show of hands, the Chair announced that Councillor Jamil was therefore unanimously elected as Vice-Chair of the Fire Authority for the municipal year 2023-24.

73. Apologies for absence and declarations of Interest

Apologies for absence were presented on behalf of Councillors Reynolds, Smith and Warren.

There were no declarations of interest.

74. Minutes of the Fire Authority meeting held 10th February 2023 and Action Log

The minutes of the Fire Authority meeting held 10th February 2023 were agreed as a correct record. The Action Log was noted.

75. Chair's Announcements

Appended. Cllr McGuire supported comments about Cllr Gowing, who had been a valued Member of the Authority.

76. Review of Integrated Risk Management Plan Performance

The Fire Authority received a report on the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) for 2020-2024. The Plan covers four key areas for management and monitoring, specifically People Excellence, Community Safety Excellence, Operational Delivery and Value for Money.

The following points were drawn to Members' attention:

- the Employee Engagement Survey showed an improvement in employee engagement, with an overall engagement score of 79%;
- the large number of safe and well visits to vulnerable people. The success of the partnership with Anglian Water was also noted, which had enabled the Service to identify those individuals most at risk;
- operational excellence activities including crews of three, providing 1000 additional hours of fire cover each month;
- the increased number of fire stations carrying out co-responding support to the Ambulance service;
- Value for Money activities including the Sustainability Strategy, which aimed to reduce the Service's impact on the environment, and the objective of achieving net zero by 2030.

Members noted performance against the IRMP performance measures for 2022/23, which included five year rolling figures:

- average attendance in urban areas was well within the nine minute target, at 7 minutes 39 seconds. Rural response times slightly exceeded the 12 minute target at 12 minutes 18 seconds, due to summer spate conditions. General attendance times were within or around targets;
- the Service had was slightly below the 95% target for responding to all incidents within 18 minutes, at 94.6%, again due to the summer spate conditions;
- there had been a significant increase in the number of fires in 2022/23, again due to the summer spate in July and August 2022. Similarly primary, secondary and non-domestic fires had all increased;
- the number of business engagements were now back up to the expected level, following the reduction in the Covid years;
- sadly, there had been one fire death during the year, which was a smoking related fire;

- there had been a continued reduction in fire casualties;
- there had been an increase in the number of Road Traffic Collisions (RTCs): there had been a reduction during Covid, but figures had now increased to near pre Covid levels. Killed and Seriously Injured (KSI) figures had decreased slightly;
- Special service attendance had increased, due to factors such as the pressure on the Ambulance service and the impact of Climate Change resulting in increased flooding;
- The number of applicants for both on call service and whole time roles, including the number of female candidates;

In relation to mobilising technologies into operational service, the Chair advised that since the publication of the agenda, the Service had sadly received notice of intent to terminate the highly successful shared Control Centre arrangements with Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service. These arrangements had been in place for 13 years and saved the taxpayer approximately £12M. Suffolk intended to end the partnership and take the control system in house. However, the Chair commented that she wished Suffolk well, and the Service would continue to focus on what was right for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough residents, and Suffolk residents whilst arrangements were still in place.

The Chief Fire Officer outlined the history of the successful collaboration with Suffolk, which had delivered effective services and considerable savings, and had been recognised by HM Inspectorate. Fire and Rescue Services are risk based, responsive organisations, and the volumes and the way incidents were dealt with were outlined. It was noted that the end of this collaboration would have cost implications of around £500K pa. Members were aware that a replacement system to the existing Command and Control system, Remsdaq, had been procured by Cambridgeshire and Suffolk Fire Services from a new supplier, but this process had been delayed due to the Pandemic and subsequent issues within the company. At a recent meeting on 22/05/23 with the Suffolk Chief Fire Officer, it had been concluded that a decision would be taken in July as to whether to proceed with the new system. As a Service, it was vital that this was progressed as the existing system was not being refreshed. The logistics and likely timescales of introducing the new system whilst maintaining the joint arrangements with Suffolk in the short term were outlined. It was anticipated that the new system would be operational in Cambridgeshire by January 2024.

A Member expressed his disappointment at the withdrawal of Suffolk. He outlined the governance arrangement for Suffolk Fire Service, and urged Members to use any influence they may have with Suffolk County Council Members, where the Fire Authority was governed through the Public Protection Committee. He suggested that Members could also use their influence to make sure the both the public and Suffolk Members were aware of the impact, both financially and in terms of introducing new systems. The Chair agreed with these comments. Another Member observed that this was a very odd decision to be taking in these times of substantial financial constraints, especially as Suffolk would need to set up its own system which was a lengthy, expensive and risky undertaking. He noted the Chief Fire Officer's comments that there would continue to be a relationship with Suffolk for the foreseeable future, and every effort would be made to ensure there was a resilient, efficient and cost effective solution for them. It was noted that the Overview & Scrutiny Committee had reviewed risks relating to Integrated Command Control System (ICCS) and Mobilising Solution at its

recent meeting, and had been reassured by officers that progress with the new supplier, Systel, was now back on track, and Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service would effectively be a pathfinder in this technology. He suggested that it may be the case that there were partnership opportunities with other Fire Services in this undertaking.

A Member commented that Suffolk's decision was astounding at a time when the government actively encouraged Blue Light services to work together to achieve efficiencies, and he suggested that the Fire Authority could write to the Fire Minister, highlighting how much money the Combined Fire Control had saved. He also felt it was unusual that Suffolk's stance on the partnership arrangements could change so quickly, with no explanation as to why, and lead to inefficiencies for the residents of Suffolk, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

In response to a Member question, it was confirmed that Norfolk and Essex Fire and Rescue Services did not have and Control Room partnerships.

A Member commented that he could not understand the logic of the decision, and the Chair had cross party support on this issue. It was important that relationships were maintained with Suffolk, but Cambridgeshire and Peterborough residents were the priority in this situation. The Chair appreciated the support given, and advised she would be writing as suggested to relevant individuals. She added that everyone must play their part in maintaining relationships and engaging with Suffolk, whilst working very hard to realise the ambitious and progressive vision for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

Turning to the other items on the IRMP report, Members raised the following issues:

- A Member asked for the reason behind the increase in domestic fires, and also whether the increase in electric scooters and pedal cycles being charged at home was a cause for concern. Officers agreed to get a breakdown of primary fires to establish how many were domestic dwellings. It was noted that most of the increase in primary and secondary fires was due to spate conditions. E-scooters were a increasing risk nationally, specifically lithium ion batteries on properties. A lot of work was being undertaken from a community safety perspective to raise awareness of the risks;
- There was a discussion on RTCs/KSIs, which had dropped significantly during the pandemic. A Member asked if comparative statistics were available with other local authorities, especially those where lower speed limits had been introduced. It was noted that the Service was part of the Road Safety Partnership, and this would be raised through that forum;
- With regard to environmental issues, a Member advised that Huntingdonshire District Council were trialling HVO (hydrotreated vegetable oil) fuel for vehicles, and asked if the Fire Service were looking at this option, as HDC officers were keen to pursue partnership opportunities. Officers advised that they were interested in this area, and would be undertaking a trial in the north of the county shortly. Officers confirmed that they would be interested in any collaborative opportunities, and the Member agreed to provide officers with the details of the relevant HDC contact information.

There was a discussion on Special Services attended and the extent to which the increase related to partner organisations being unable to attend or reducing the type of

incidents they attended, and whether this was an area requiring further scrutiny. It was noted that there was no indication that Cambridgeshire Constabulary would be refusing to attend Mental Health incidents. Duty officers always made a decision on any requests from other services or agencies to attend an incident, based on whether there was an immediate danger to life. Duty officers worked together regularly to ensure consistency. An important consideration was the extent to which this work diverted resources from core services.

It was resolved unanimously to:

note the contents of the report.

77. Final Revenue and Capital Budget Position 2022-23

The Fire Authority considered the final 2022-23 revenue and capital budget outturn position. It was noted that the statutory deadline to publish the accounts on 31st May 2023 had been met, but the accounts were still draft and subject to external audit. The Deputy Chief Executive paid tribute to the Finance team for completing this work on time.

There was a £7,000 underspend at year end: whilst firefighter pay had exceeded the budget, there had been significant levels of professional staff turnover and delays in recruitment to those vacancies. The other issue was a significant increase in Business Rates income, where confirmation was awaited on whether this was a one off, as suspected.

Reserves had diminished significantly during the year, mainly as a result of funding the new Huntingdon Fire Station and Training Centre. The Capital programme was largely spent, the biggest challenge was around vehicles, where the Service was struggling to buy vehicles.

In response to a Member question on the additional Business Rates, it was confirmed it was significantly above the level of Business Rates funding usually budgeted for. The Fire Service was part of pooling arrangements with the County and District Councils, so there would be some growth in Business Rates to reflect the growing population, but this was considerably in excess of any national growth.

A Member asked if the facilities at the new Huntingdon Training Centre would be rented out to other fire services. Officers confirmed that they would probably wait at least another year to fully understand usage, and ascertain whether there was any spare capacity. It was noted that if it was rented out to other Fire Services, any profits would need to be channelled through a trading company, which was a requirement of the Fire and Rescue Services Act.

In response to a question about the disposal of the old Huntingdon Fire Station, it was noted that a response was still awaited from Huntingdonshire District Council. It was envisaged that it would be on the market in the summer, with a view to selling before the end of the financial year.

A Member asked if the same underspend in professional support staff was anticipated for the current financial year. It was confirmed that appointments had been made, but the Service was still suffering from an element of turnover, so there would probably be some underspend in the current year. It was also confirmed that senior managers paid

close attention when there were vacancies, to ensure that duties were prioritised but staff were not overworked.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- i. note the revenue and capital budget outturn position;
- ii. approve the requested budget holder carry forwards.

78. Pay Policy Statement 2023-24 – Update

Members considered an update to the Pay Policy Statement for 2023-24 that had been considered at the February Fire Authority meeting. This reflected retrospective pay rises awarded to Grey Book officers, Green Book officers, and the Chief Officer Group.

It was resolved unanimously to:

note the changes made to the current Pay Policy Statement, attached at Appendix 1, following the settlement of national pay negotiations.

79. Independent Remuneration Panel report on Members allowances

Members considered a report on the findings of the independent remuneration panel (IRP) which had reviewed the Fire Authority's scheme of allowances.

At their meeting in February 2023, Fire Authority Members had agreed to appoint a panel of three experienced independent individuals forming a panel, led by Mark Palmer. The review was based on the specific duties required of the Fire Authority's Members, and was benchmarked against other Fire Authorities and the wider sector.

The key implications of the IRP report were detailed, which included the confirmation of the one special responsibility allowance (SRA) only rule and the indexation of allowances, which would be confirmed at the Authority's annual meetings. The very modest increase to allowances was within the budget envelope allocated for Members' allowances.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- i. consider the IRP report, attached at Appendix 1 and determine whether to accept the recommendations as they stand or with amendments or alternatively to make a different scheme altogether;
- ii. confirm the date on which the new scheme will come into effect, thereby formally revoking the existing Members' Allowances Scheme with effect from that date;
- iii. authorise the Monitoring Officer to prepare a new scheme to reflect the outcome of the Authority's deliberations and take any consequential action arising from them.

80. Proposed changes to Fire Authority Constitutional documents

The Fire Authority considered a report which set out proposed changes to the Member/Officer Protocol and the Code of Corporate Governance. The changes to these documents were outlined.

A Member drew attention to paragraph 3.2.9 of the Member/Officer Protocol: *“that members will obtain agreement in advance from the Station Commander, or other senior Officer, to visit premises so as to avoid adverse impact on operational activities or planned training”*.

It was resolved unanimously:

- i. consider and approve the wording changes to both documents as indicated at Appendices 1 and 2 respectively;
- ii. approve an annual review cycle for all its constitutional documents, specifically that they are reviewed and any changes brought to the June meeting for approval as necessary

81. Appointments to Committees and Outside Bodies

Members noted that there had been one change to appointments to Committees, resulting from changes in County Council proportionality, and the appointment of Councillor Hathorn.

The following changes and additions were noted to the published document:

- Conservative appointment to Appeals (Pensions) Committee should read Cllr Bywater rather than Cllr McGuire;
- Labour Substitute to the Appeals (Pensions) Committee – Cllr M Jamil;
- Labour Substitute to the Disciplinary & Grievance Committee – Cllr B Goodliffe;
- Labour Substitute to Appeals Committee – Cllr C Rae

It was resolved unanimously to:

agree the updated schedule of appointments, with the additions detailed above.

82. Appointment of Chairs and Vice Chairs

It was proposed by Councillor Dew, seconded by Councillor Jamil and agreed to reappoint Councillor Goodliffe as Chair of the Policy and Resources Committee for the municipal year 2023-24.

It was proposed by Councillor Goodliffe, seconded by Councillor Kindersley and agreed to reappoint Councillor Jamil as Vice-Chair of the Policy and Resources Committee for the municipal year 2023-24.

It was proposed by Councillor Jamil, seconded by Councillor Goodliffe and agreed unanimously to reappoint Councillor Kindersley as Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the municipal year 2023-24.

It was proposed by Councillor Kindersley, seconded by Councillor Jamil and agreed unanimously to reappoint Councillor Taylor as Vice-Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the municipal year 2023-24.

83. Minutes of the Policy and Resources Committee held 31st January and 26th April 2023

The minutes of the Policy and Resources Committee held 31st January, and the draft minutes of the Committee meeting held 26th April 2023 were noted.

84. Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held 20th April 2023

The draft minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held 20th April 2023 were noted.

Chairs Announcements – Thursday 15 June 2023

Firstly, I would like to formally welcome Councillor Ros Hathorn who was appointed to the Authority following full Council last month; she replaces Councillor John Gowing.

I would especially like to thank John for his contributions to the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. During his six years on the Authority he has led a number of reviews that were well received and the catalyst for improvements across several areas of the Service.

Home Fire Safety Week (12 to 18 June 2023)

Today's meeting is being held in the middle of Home Fire Safety Week. The National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) is running a public awareness campaign that focusses on the main risks of fire in the home and appropriate home detection and behaviours to help mitigate these risks. The campaign also seeks to highlight how fire and rescue services use an approach which puts people at the heart of their work to reduce fires in the home. This 'person-centred approach' underpins their online home fire safety check tool and by using the tool, people can explore whether they as well as loved ones or neighbours could be at greater risk from fire. Each area has looked at specific issues which may pose greater fire risk due to the impacts of the cost of living crisis and builds on existing fire safety messaging which can be used across the entire campaign. These areas have been identified using anecdotal information from some fire services and NFCC prevention leads ahead of national data being available.

Whilst CFRS supports the NFCC with regular Officer participation and contributes to its campaigns we have always had our own commitment to keeping Cambridgeshire communities safe with targeted activities based on robust risk data. Members will see from the IRMP report, under Community Safety Excellence Delivery (Paragraph 7), that our Officers have carried out a plethora of activities under this heading amongst which were a staggering **6322** safe and well visits to vulnerable people within our communities; this clearly demonstrates our 'person-centred approach' and is a service record.

Further information can be found via [Home Safety \(cambsfire.gov.uk\)](https://www.cambsfire.gov.uk)

Polite Reminder – Ernst and Young Member Independence Returns

Thank you to those Members that have completed the questionnaire sent by a representative of Ernst and Young. This is an important document and there are currently six outstanding from Members of the Authority. If you are one of those yet to submit your return, please do it today.

Diary Date - Member Seminar

It is hoped to hold a Member seminar on 12 July 2023 covering 'hot topics'; all Members are encouraged to attend and full details will be circulated in the next few days.