

CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH FIRE AUTHORITY UPDATE

TO: Cambridgeshire County Council

FROM: Chairman, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority

DATE: 24 March 2015

1. FIRE AUTHORITY BUDGET 2015/16

1.1 The Fire Authority agreed a Budget for 2015/16 of £28,634,000. This reflects the Authority's acceptance of the Council Tax Freeze grant. The Council Tax rate will be kept at its current level of £64.26 per annum for a Band D property.

1.2 The budget was prepared for the medium term after making a number of assumptions, which were:

- A freeze in Council Tax for 2015/16, accepting the grant of £185k;
- A pay award for support employees of 2.2%, that in part relates to 2015/16;
- Non pay inflation will be 1.5%. This primarily relates to significant long-term contracts having to be renewed through 2015/16.

1.3 The Authority will receive a total grant, including Council Tax freeze grant, of £11,633k. The Revenue Support Grant and Business Rate Grant represent £11,448k of this total. This is a reduction of £1,108k over the grant received in 2014/15, equivalent to 8.8%.

2. INDUSTRIAL ACTION

2.1 Since the National Fire Brigades Union (FBU) Executive obtained a mandate in August 2013, sixty three periods of strike action over thirty three separate strike dates have been called. The strikes have varied in times and length across weekdays and weekends.

2.2 The Service continues to implement robust contingency arrangements that ensure normal attendance times to incidents can be largely maintained. However, in doing so day to day services continue to be significantly impacted as operational and support officers are re-directed from their normal duties to support and deliver front line operations.

2.3 The Fire Authority recognises the right of employees to take part in lawful industrial action and in this instance it is relevant that the dispute is between the FBU and the Government, not the local employers.

- 2.4 To date, strike action has cost the Fire Authority £506,703. These costs are associated with expenditure for officers having to work extra hours. In addition, there are costs associated with lost productivity related to those staff not being able to do their day job whilst providing operational cover.
- 2.5 In August 2014, the Fire Authority Overview and Scrutiny Committee undertook a member-led review into the Service's business continuity arrangements for industrial action. The conclusion of this review found that the business continuity arrangements the Service have established ensure that the Authority can continue to exercise their functions in the event of an emergency so far as is reasonably practicable, as required under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.

3. TACTICAL DELIVERY GROUP (TDG) SHIFT SYSTEM

- 3.1 In response to shifting demand for resources, officers have been seeking to introduce a flexible full time operational day shift that will enable the Service to re-assign underused full time operational staff to provide improved operational response and community safety services.
- 3.2 In August 2014, Service management and FBU local officials held conciliation meetings supported by officials within the National Joint Council (NJC) which resulted in a mutually agreed outcome.
- 3.3 On January 1st 2015 the Tactical Delivery Group (TDG) was formed with 10 posts that were previously used to crew the rescue vehicle at Huntingdon Fire Station on a 24/7 basis. The rescue vehicle is now covered by the TDG during peak hours and the On-Call Firefighters at Huntingdon on evenings and weekends.
- 3.4 The TDG has been set up to deliver risk reduction activities in our harder to reach communities and to have a positive impact on On-Call appliance availability at certain strategic On-Call stations.

4. PRIMARY AUTHORITY SCHEME (PAS)

- 4.1. Following a review into regulatory inspection and enforcement activities undertaken by Sir Phillip Hampton in 2004, introduction of the Regulatory Enforcement and Sanctions Act 2008 facilitated the introduction of Primary Authority Schemes. PAS allow the development of nationally recognised schemes whereby a regulator works closely with a regulated business through a formal agreement to provide businesses with a consistent approach to regulation and support across all of their premises nationally.
- 4.2. As a result of the extension of PAS to include the Fire Safety Order (FSO), the opportunity now exists for businesses whose premises fall within the scope of the FSO to approach fire and rescue services to become their Primary Authority and assist them to comply with their statutory duties.

- 4.3. The Service has been in discussion with two housing associations with a view towards developing PAS arrangements, which could provide significant opportunities for Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service (CFRS) to assist in improving the approach to safety in residential and domestic accommodation by developing PAS with Registered Social Landlords.
- 4.4. The fundamentals of PAS with regard to better regulation also provide further opportunities for CFRS to look towards co-location of fire protection officers with other regulatory agencies such as environmental health, trading standards and health and safety of which many will have been delivering under PAS for a number of years.

5. PEER ASSESSMENTS

5.1. Operational Peer Assessment

- 5.1.1. The National Framework for Fire and Rescue Services (England) places the expectation that fire and rescue services will undertake an Operational Assessment (OpA) once every three years.
- 5.1.2. The Op A process is a national process that operates on the principles of peer review and acts as an assessment of the current ability and future capability of the Service to deliver services to the communities it serves. The assessment focuses on a number of pre-determined areas such as Risk Management, Prevention, Protection and Operational Response, together with cross cutting themes such as leadership and governance.
- 5.1.3. In addition the Service asked the peer team to consider five strategic areas namely:
- Organisational Capacity;
 - Organisational Culture;
 - Community Risk Management;
 - On-Call; and
 - Call Management and Incident Support.
- 5.1.4 Overall the peer team found the Service to be a self-aware organisation that had a sound understanding of its areas for improvement, with confidence in its ability to make these improvements and respond to future challenges. Leadership of the organisation at both political and officer level was found to be effective and was coupled with a professional approach of staff towards change.

5.2 Equality Peer Challenge

5.2.1 The equality peer challenge was undertaken in November 2014.

5.2.2 In a similar vein to the findings of the Op A, the equality peer team reached the conclusion that CFRS has made significant progress since it was last peer reviewed against the Equality Framework in 2009 and that, with some further work in a number of key areas, the Service should be able to achieve the Excellent award.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Source Document	Location	Contact
Fire Authority Minutes 2013/14	Fire Service HQ Hinchingsbrooke Cottage Huntingdon	Michelle Rowe 01223 699180 Michelle.rowe@cambridgeshire.gov.uk