

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

**Date:** Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2019

**Time:** 14:00 – 15:00

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

**Present:** Councillors Gardener (Vice-Chairman), Harford and McGuire (Chairman).

**Officers:** Jon Anderson – Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Daniel Harris – RSM, Shahin Ismail – Monitoring Officer, Tamsin Mirfin – Service Transformation Manager, Daniel Snowden - Democratic Services Officer, Deb Thompson – Scrutiny and Assurance Manager and Matthew Weller - BDO

**69. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Apologies were received from Councillors Gowing, Goodwin, Kindersley and Scutt.

There were no declarations of interest.

**70. MINUTES – 28<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2019**

The minutes of the meeting held on the 28<sup>th</sup> May 2019 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**71. REVIEW OF PERFORMANCE AGAINST INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN PERFORMANCE TARGETS**

The Committee received a report setting out performance against the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) targets.

During discussion of the report Members:

- Sought further information regarding fires in prisons and questioned whether it was a nationwide issue and what fire prevention work was undertaken. Officers undertook to provide national information regarding deliberate fires in prisons. Members noted the work of the Icarus programme that sought to address fire starting behaviours with prisoners. The Committee noted that fires tended to occur in spates and fires at Peterborough Prison had decreased. **ACTION [ACFO ANDERSON]**

- Requested that the data relating to killed or seriously injured in road traffic collisions be plotted on a map in order to identify where they were occurring. **ACTION [ACFO ANDERSON]**
- Questioned how the Fire Authority compared with its neighbours regarding the diversity of its workforce. Officers explained that the Authority family group was 2.5% and Cambridgeshire was 3.1%. However this was lower than the national average which was affected by large urban forces.
- Noted that 50% of applicants for vacancies in Combined Fire Control were female which indicated male balance in the role was returning.
- Requested the total number of female operational managers. **ACTION [ACFO ANDERSON]**
- Drew attention to challenging response times and questioned whether the age of appliances had affected them as this had been a factor in Northamptonshire. Officers explained that the age of the appliance fleet was not a factor having only been recently replaced. The greatest factor affecting response times was where people were unable to identify the location of the fire due to rurality. Rural responses were slower however work had been undertaken regarding strategic stations and route modelling which had reduced response times.
- Drew attention to new housing estates where parked cars could impede the progress of an appliance to an emergency and questioned whether concerns could be addressed with planners. Officers explained that the fire service was a statutory consultee on planning applications. Issues tended to occur once houses became occupied and people parked where they should not. It was an issue on older housing estates also and the fire service had leaflets to place on cars that were causing an obstruction.

It was resolved unanimously to:

note the contents of the performance report.

## **72. EXTERNAL AUDIT LETTER UPDATE**

Members received the external audit letter.

During discussion of the report Members:

- Noted the material misstatement contained on page 3 of the report related to an age discrimination case against the Government, the ruling for which was expected in 2020.
- Sought greater clarity regarding the Big Red Button software tool and the significance of the issues identified. The presenting Officer explained that

the tool provided a template set of accounts and included every possible disclosure and therefore required a significant amount of tailoring. Work was planned with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) who produced the tool in order to refine the tool further.

It was resolved to note the report.

### **73. INTERNAL AUDIT STRATEGY 2019-20**

The Committee considered the Internal Audit Strategy 2019-20 that provided an overview of the current risk profile. Section 2 of the report was highlighted which provided information on individual reviews and would flow through to the Annual Governance Statement.

During discussion Members:

- Drew attention to Appendix B of the report where it was difficult to distinguish between the colours used for Partial Assurance and Reasonable Assurance.
- Highlighted the Partial Assurance rating that was awarded to cyber security and sought further information regarding the actions taken to address the issues raised. The presenting Officer explained that since the audit in 2017/18 there had been seven actions fully implemented, two were in process and the remaining two had not yet been implemented.
- Noted the arrangements for the review process for outsourced internal auditors and further noted that the Institute of External Auditors had been commissioned to review RSM.

It was resolved to note the Internal Audit Strategy.

### **74. INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT**

The Committee received the Internal Audit Progress Report. Members noted the remaining work for the year that had been scheduled. The presenting Officer advised that he would alert Members if anything arose that would affect the year end opinion. It was anticipated that an unqualified opinion would be provided.

Members noted the progress of the annual report through the Committees of the Fire Authority. The Committee also noted that a risk report was presented to the Policy and Resources Committee that provided details of the mitigations and controls put in place.

It was resolved to note the Internal Audit Progress Report.

**75. MEMBER LED REVIEW – CAMBRIDGESHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE SAFE AND WELL VISITS**

The Committee received the Member-led review of Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service Safe and Well visits. The review had been deferred from the previous meeting of the Committee due to an ongoing review of community safety and its structure(s). The purpose of the Member-led review was to ascertain the extent of work currently undertaken by the Service and to maximise its potential to work collaboratively with other agencies.

The Committee noted that 5,250 visits had been carried out in the last 12 months and 7% of those were referred to other agencies for a more detailed assessment.

The presenting Officer drew attention to page 7 of the report that contained observation of service delivery in the St Neots area. In particular, the challenges of currency in respect of data provided by a partner agency (this had resulted in a visit being undertaken to a household where the resident had passed away). Although it presented a risk of distress and embarrassment to staff it was deemed that it was outside of the control of the Service.

Attention was drawn to the report of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) and the conclusions of the report contained at paragraph 10.

Members noted the conclusions of the Member-led review and the benefits of the Safe and Well visits that were being delivered against a background of ongoing internal review and resource pressures.

During discussion Members:

- Welcomed and praised the work of the Safe and Well visits and emphasised their importance in relation to the overall aging population.
- Requested that a comment be obtained from the Executive Director - People and Communities regarding Safe and Well visits to be included in the annual report to the full Fire Authority. **ACTION [DEB THOMPSON]**

It was resolved to consider the findings of the Review Group and note the contents of the report.

**76. MEMBER LED REVIEW – APPROACH TO RECRUITMENT**

Members were provided an update regarding the Member-led review of the approach to recruitment. The item had been deferred from the previous meeting of the Committee due to the ongoing wholetime recruitment campaign. Members were informed that in excess of 700 applications had

been received for 15 positions. The online application process had been stream-lined in order to reduce the number of steps in the application process. Work was also being undertaken to understand at what point potential candidates dropped out of the recruitment process and the reasons why. The Committee noted the range of activities that had been undertaken with regard to the approach to recruitment and the need to evaluate their impact.

It was resolved to note the update provided.

**77. TERMS OF REFERENCE – MEMBER-LED REVIEW OF BEST PRACTICE CONSULTATION WITH REPRESENTATIVE BODIES**

Members received the terms of reference for a Member-led review of best practice consultation with representative bodies. The review required the participation of two Councillors and therefore the Chairman proposed with the agreement of the Committee that a request for the second Member be circulated outside of the Committee.

It was resolved to appoint Councillor McGuire to the Member-led review.

**78. TERMS OF REFERENCE – MEMBER-LED REVIEW OF HEALTH AND WELLBEING**

Members received the terms of reference for a Member-led review of health and wellbeing. The review required the participation of two Councillors and therefore the Chairman proposed with the agreement of the Committee that a request for the second Member be circulated outside of the Committee.

It was resolved to appoint Councillor Harford to the Member-led review.

**79. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME**

Members considered the Overview and Scrutiny Committee work programme.

It was resolved to note the work programme.

**CHAIRMAN**