

CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH FIRE AUTHORITY POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE: MINUTES

Date: 23 July 2020

Time: 2pm – 3.10pm

Place: Virtual Meeting - Zoom

Present: Councillors: B Ashwood, S Bywater, W Hunt, M Jamil, D Over (Vice – Chairman), K Reynolds (Chairman), M Shellens and M Smith.

Officers: Chris Strickland – Chief Fire Officer, Jon Anderson – Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Matthew Warren – Deputy Chief Executive, Deb Thompson – Scrutiny and Assurance Manager, Shahin Ismail – Monitoring Officer, Rachel Brittain – Director BDO, Matthew Weller – Manager (Public Sector Assurance) BDO, Tamar Oviatt-Ham – Democratic Services Officer Cambridgeshire County Council

137. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies received from Councillor Giles.

138. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Shellens and Bywater notified the Committee that they sat on the Police and Crime Commissioner Panel.

139. POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MINUTES - 19 DECEMBER 2019

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 December 2019 were confirmed as a correct record and were signed by the Chairman.

140. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MINUTES - OCTOBER 2019

It was resolved to note the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 3 October 2019.

141. ACTION LOG

Members noted:

- The Deputy Chief Executive gave an update on action 101 in relation to age related discrimination in relation to pensions. He explained that the Government had tried to appeal the decision and that they had issued a consultation on how they planned to move forward with the changes. He

explained that the consultation was open until the end of October and that it was anticipated that the changes would not be introduced until 2022. He clarified that the action was therefore complete and that when the implementation plan was clear he would report back to Committee.

- The Deputy Chief Executive explained that action 75 in relation to a paper on cashflow would be brought to the next full Fire Authority meeting in October.

142. REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2020-21

The Committee received a report that provided an update on revenue and Capital spending as at 30 June 2020.

Members noted:

- That it was early days in relation to spend for the first quarter.
- There had been a lot of spend in relation to COVID and the authority had received a grant of £750,000 from the government for COVID related spend.
- The top up payment for the LGPS pensions scheme had gone out ahead of time but this was not a concern, just a timing issue.
- There would be future conversations in terms of the savings that could be made from investing in technology to allow virtual meetings.
- 5.5 in the report showed as an overspend in relation to PPE which the COVID grant would be allocated against.
- 5.7 in the report highlighted the impact of COVID-19 on council tax and business rate collection. The early estimates ranged from 5% reductions in council tax to possibly 20% in business rates. The authority was working with collecting authorities to understand the position and further information would be presented to the Authority later in the year.

Arising from the report:

- Members discussed whether some of the budget lines that had not been spent due to COVID could be reallocated in order to adapt to new ways of working. The Deputy Chief Executive explained that the authority had started to look at how the money could potentially be reinvested in particular in relation to IT equipment for remote working including video conferencing facilities in fire stations. He explained that they would need to review spend in relation to the Comprehensive Spending Review and efficiencies as a whole and that this would be reported in the next update to Committee.

- A Member queried why in appendix 1 under other government grants it showed a red figure of 119%. The Deputy Chief Executive explained that this was an error and should have been highlighted in green to show the COVID Grant coming through from Government.
- A Member queried whether there had been any increases in building fires during the pandemic. The Assistant Chief Fire Officer explained that they had seen a slight increase in residential fires during this period and no increase at present in non-residential fires but that this was under constant review.
- Members discussed the reserves that had been set aside for the new training centre and sought reassurance that this would be spent in the near future. The Deputy Chief Executive explained that the property projects were beginning to start up again and that the project had started to get back on track.

It was resolved unanimously to note the position on revenue and capital spending.

143. STRATEGIC RISK AND OPPORTUNITY MANAGEMENT REGISTER – MONITORING REPORT

The Committee considered a report that provided an updated strategic risk report, as at July 2020, that highlighted risks that were considered above the risk appetite of the Authority.

Members noted:

- The red risks highlighted in the report included the Coronavirus recovery Process, Cyber threats, the training centre, staffing and the ESMCP project.

Arising from the report:

- Members queried the staffing concerns risk and the mitigations in place. The Deputy Chief Executive explained that there were some concerns in relation to staff turnover but that the authority had already started new recruitment processes to mitigate the risk.
- Members discussed the Cyber security risk and queried what mitigating actions had been put in place. The Deputy Chief Executive explained that this was a challenge for all organisations. He explained that the authority had put in place the Information Security Standard as one of the mitigating factors. The Chief Fire Officer reiterated that the authority regularly reviewed its risks and that individual Chief Officers had assigned risks which they reviewed on a regular basis.

It was resolved unanimously

to review and note the strategic risk report and the risk distribution scoring matrix at Appendix 1.

144. FIRE AUTHORITY PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT – MONITORING REPORT

The Committee considered a report on the update to Fire Authority Projects for 2020-21.

Members noted:

- The authority's document management system was moving over to sharepoint and there had been a number of difficulties with the move that were being dealt with. The Committee would be kept up to date on progress
- New equipment was due to be delivered for the replacement control system and the equipment would be relocated to Dogsthorpe Fire station. Cambridgeshire were the first authority to do all of the testing remotely and there had been positive feedback from the testing. The Deputy Chief Executive commented that it was a very complex project and that the team had been doing a great job to ensure that the project was kept on track.

It was resolved unanimously:

to note the Programme Status Report, as at June 2020, attached at Appendix 1.

145. AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT

The Committee received an audit progress report for the year ending 31 March 2020.

Members noted:

- The original timetable for the audit had been revised due to COVID with the statement of accounts deadline moving to 31 August 2020 and the audit completion report would be going to the Fire Authority meeting on 22 October 2020.
- A good portion of the work on the audit had been completed but that the auditors were still awaiting the final set of financial statements and the pension fund assurances were due from another auditor later in the summer.

- In relation to the control environment two recommendations had been rolled forward from the last report which included one instance when a generic user id had been used and were a number of declaration forms had not been completed from all Members and Officers. The Deputy Chief Executive explained that he would raise with Finance colleagues why the generic ID had not been deleted. **ACTION.** The Chairman explained that he would remind all Members of the Fire Authority to complete declaration forms were required. **ACTION**

It was resolved unanimously to note the progress in relation to the Audit Progress report for the year ending 31 March 2020.

146. WORK PROGRAMME

Members noted that the Policy and Resource Committee meeting had been cancelled on 22 October 2020 as there would be a Fire Authority meeting the same day were all business for the meeting would be taken to.

The Deputy Chief Executive explained that it was likely that the announcement for next year's grant was likely to be delayed until Christmas Eve so the budget report for the December meeting would be a draft report with any changes being flagged in early January. He also explained that above inflation increases in pay were unlikely and would not be the norm going forwards. The Chief Fire Officer explained that they had budgeted for a 2% increase but if there was any further increase then there would be a question over how this would be funded. He stated that if the increase was 3% then they would need to find £200,000 on an ongoing basis. He explained that if any further discussions were needed on this he would hold a members seminar to discuss the issues further.

147. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Members noted that the next meeting would be held on 17 December 2020.