

Fire Overview and Scrutiny Committee Minutes

Date: Thursday 20 April 2023

Time: 14:00 – 15:05

Venue: Fire Service Headquarters

Present: Councillors Gardener, Gowing, Kindersley (Chair), McGuire, Rae, Taylor and Warren

54. Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest

No apologies were received. There were no declarations of interest.

55. Minutes – 19 January 2023 and Action Log

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 January 2023 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair. The action log was noted.

56. Integrated Risk Management Plan Performance Measures

The committee received a report which reviewed the authority's progress between 1 April and 31 December 2022 with regard to incidents and workforce diversity. In the most recent quarter, the total number of fires had reduced and there had been no fire deaths reported. There had been an overall increase in attendance time to primary fires and secondary fires, as impacted by spate conditions. The service also reported an increase in road traffic collisions, those killed or seriously injured, and special service support incidents. Applicant diversity data remained similar due to a low level of recruitment.

A verbal update was given on the mobilisation of crews of three. Since commencing this year, the authority had provided an additional thousand hours coverage, responding to 58 calls. The Assistant Chief Fire Officer was pleased with the launch and had identified no complications thus far.

During discussion, members:

- Clarified that the 'removal of objects from people' included any actions by the fire service that removed items from a person's body.
- Requested circulation of a written update on the progress of crews of three. **Action.**
- Established that it was difficult to determine an underlying cause behind the reduction in fires. This was due to the low number of fires occurring from which data could be extracted and variations in multiple determinants such as weather conditions and school holidays.
- Acknowledge that, although infrequent, older and alone individuals were more vulnerable to death by fire.

It was resolved unanimously to:

Note the contents of the performance report in Appendix 1 which covered the first three quarters of the year, 1 April to 31 December 2022 and make comment as appropriate.

57. Programme Management Monitoring Report

The committee received an update on progress against the corporate projects for 2022/23.

Review of the Integrated Command Control System (ICCS) and Mobilising Solution: SYSTEL had entered into a voluntary administration arrangement, which may have terminated by June, because the company was now in a profitable position. As Northern Ireland and Scotland were no longer contracted with SYSTEL, additional resource was available for continuing contracts, including Cambridgeshire. Release was anticipated in May, following which officers would train with the system prior to the potential onset of spate conditions in the summer months. The SYSTEL system would evaluate pump crew capabilities to ensure availability of appropriate skillsets. As SYSTEL would be leading the Direct Communication Server (DCS) roll out, the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Service would be the first in the country to use the system. This would improve the authority's market.

Review of Operations: The project board was considering recategorisation of the most serious calls into five levels, giving life risk greatest weighting. This would ensure improved utilisation of on-call assets and greater flexibility for mobilisation. The review had also highlighted the advantage of focussing on crew capabilities to ensure deployed pumps were manned with the required specialised skillsets.

Incident Command Review and Review of Specialist Equipment: The service was in discussion with the representative body with regard to the Incident Command Review and proposed increase in specialist equipment. Spate conditions had resulted in the requirement for additional 4x4 capacity.

On-call Initiatives: The service was looking to strengthen response by improving on-call area availability.

During discussion, members clarified that the authority was in dialogue with CISTEL to ensure their financial situation was maintained.

It was resolved unanimously to:

Note the Programme Status Report, as of March 2023, attached at Appendix 1.

58. Grenfell Disaster Action Plan and Related Works - Update

The committee received the Grenfell Disaster Action Plan, written in accordance with the Building Safety Bill and Fire Safety Act. Forty-three national recommendations had

been made following the disaster. In response to His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) recommendations to improve communication from the control room to fire ground, the service had thus far utilised the £55,000 grant on electronic evacuation boards as well as smoke hoods. This would be monitored quarterly, alongside six monthly updates to the Home Office.

During discussion, members:

- Clarified that, within Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, 20 buildings had been categorised as in-scope (24+ storey) buildings. These buildings were safety monitored and additional planning applications for in-scope buildings would be reviewed by a multidisciplinary fire safety team in compliance with the Building Safety Act. The Fire Authority was a statutory consultee for new in-scope planning applications and, if the application was made through the local authority, the Fire Authority was likely to be aware of the proposal prior to determination and therefore able to make recommendations earlier. If approved inspectors were used, the Fire Authority may be informed later on in the building process.
- Established that the Fire Authority had published its perspective on the use of sprinkler systems in schools, which in some instances may include buildings over 18 metres tall.
- Understood that complex interior buildings would not be reviewed by the multidisciplinary fire safety team, but that a risk-based inspection programme was in place to ensure these buildings were known and met fire inspection orders. The Area Commander for Operational Response invited councillors to contact them should they have concerns about a specific building.
- Recognised that a review of medium-rise building risk had taken place.

It was resolved unanimously to:

Note the information within the report and specifically the works completed and underway to improve processes outlined at Paragraph 7.

59. Internal Audit Strategy

The committee received a report from Internal Audit which presented the proposed internal audit plan for 2023/24. The proposed audits for the year were in relation to the medium-term financial planning process, implementation of a new finance system, estate utilisation, procurement, and staff health and safety and contaminants. This would be the first review of contaminants and therefore it would be measured against best practice in other organisations where available. Review of the Integrated Command Control System (ICCS) and Mobilising Solution would be delayed, following the progress scheduled in Minute 57, Programme Management Monitoring Report.

During discussion, members learned that the Fire Brigades Union had conducted national research with regard to contaminants. Thus far, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority had contamination protection policy and procedure in

place, which initial discussions indicated was unlike other authorities. The authority would next focus on ensuring culture aligned with this updated practice.

It was resolved to:

Note the Internal Audit Strategy for 2023/24.

60. Internal Audit Progress Report

The committee received the Internal Audit Progress Report which marked the progress of the Integrated Risk Management Planning Framework and governance against the Internal Audit Action Plan. These had both had positive outcomes – the Integrated Risk Management Framework had substantial assurance and no medium actions, while governance had received reasonable assurance with one medium action regarding key documentation being updated in line with the current Code of Corporate Governance. Since the last meeting and following delays with ICCS and Mobilisation System, it had been agreed to include an audit of recruitment in the current year rather than ICCS and Mobilising System.

It was resolved to:

Note the Internal Audit Progress Report.

61. Community Engagement Forum - Update

The Community Engagement Forum had been launched at the end of 2022. Since then, it had grown to over 200 members. These members responded to questions set by the Media and Communication Team which would inform the Community Risk Management Plan.

The officer was enthusiastic about the level of community support – he had anticipated the forum would have a hundred members, but now hoped numbers could reach a thousand. Growing the forum to ensure it was representative of the community the Fire Service served was a key objective of the team and this could occur through targeted advertising.

During discussion, members:

- Learned the forum responded to surveys and could provide additional information to the question responses in order that other thoughts and feelings were also expressed. In future, separate events may be organised in local communities to address localised issues, but no topic had yet been determined.
- Noted that, alongside contacting parish councils, social media - such as community Facebook groups and NextDoor – were used to ensure widespread interest, including in rural areas. Members offered to reiterate the opportunity to belong to the forum to parish councils.

It was resolved to:

Note the contents of the report and make comment as appropriate.

62. Culture Related Work

Ensuring a good workplace culture had been a strategic focus of the service for the past ten years and would continue to be for the next five years through the Community Risk Management Plan. Therefore, the engagement survey and last inspection indicated that the Fire Authority had a positive workplace culture, particularly in relation to other authorities. However, officers recognised further work could and would be done, with work on the Community Risk Management Plan commencing in May and additional necessary work being actioned following receipt of the final HMICFRS inspection report in four and a half months' time.

During discussion, members:

- Complimented the dynamic service approach to ensuring a good workplace culture.
- Established that the Inclusion Network could be attended by all colleagues and would be used to canvas views, assist with Equality Impact Assessments, and address all diversity topics. The Inclusion Steering Group was attended by senior managers, leaders of the Fire Service's diversity inclusion groups and Councillors Smith and Jamil. Inviting members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to the steering group as additional independent panel members would offer an alternative view. Therefore, all members asked to be invited to Equality and Diversity Steering Group meetings in order that those available could attend. Action.
- Suggested that progress for culture related work was seen six monthly and potentially as a future scrutiny item. Action.

It was resolved to:

- a) Note the work undertaken and make comment as they deem appropriate,
- b) Agree representation at quarterly Inclusion Steering Group meetings.

63. Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme

The committee resolved unanimously to note its work programme, pending the inclusion of the Annual Internal Audit Report, Staffing Action and Finish Group Update and, potentially Workplace Culture to the July agenda. Action.

Chair