

CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH FIRE AUTHORITY

TO: Cambridgeshire County Council

DATE: 18th October 2011

FROM: Chairman, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority

1. FIRE AUTHORITY ANNUAL REPORT 2010/11

The Fire Authority's Annual Report for 2010/11 has been published including information about the Fire Authority, its aims and objectives and performance, its spending and deployment of resources, and progress with key initiatives. A copy of the Annual Report is available on the Fire Authority's website.

The Plan restates the Authority's vision for safe communities where there are no preventable deaths or injuries from fire or other emergencies. Put simply, this means the Authority wants to reduce risk and save lives. The Authority has two main strategic aims - to be excellent at responding to and preparing for incidents, and to be excellent at the way the Authority delivers fire prevention and protection to the community. To achieve these we need to put people at the heart of everything we do, and demonstrate we provide this service in the best way to offer value for money for the taxpayer. Recent data from the Audit Commission shows that we are the lowest cost fire and rescue service in the country per head of population.

We have continued to make improvements to the Service including some that are firsts for any fire and rescue service in the country, such as accreditation of two British Standards - BS 25999 for Business Continuity and BS 18001 for Health and Safety.

This report explains what we have done to move us closer to achieving those long term aims. There is a real emphasis on working with our partners in other public sector and voluntary organisations to make people safer in their homes, at work and as they enjoy their free time. Although attending emergency incidents is always our priority, and will continue to be, we are continuously improving our programme of community safety to ensure we are helping those most at risk stay safe.

The Authority has become better at targeting those at risk. At a local level our firefighters and community safety teams are involved in some excellent community cohesion work with other agencies and engaging with local communities in different ways, including sitting on neighbourhood panels. As a result of our community safety work, there have been significant reductions in accidental dwelling fires, injuries as a result of fires in the home, fires in non-dwelling buildings and arson.

The Authority continues to introduce new technology to the Service, enhancing our operational ability. We have implemented innovative electronic breathing apparatus technology which features a new breathing apparatus computer (BAC), digital display unit (DDU) and heads up display (HUD) which is placed in the mask, which gives vital information directly to the firefighter via LED lights.

The Authority has continued to develop partnership working too, looking at how, we can work with other public services and other partners to deliver our services. This includes forming a partnership with British Oxygen Company (BOC), which supplies oxygen cylinders to residents with respiratory problems so they can continue living in their own homes

Our biggest challenge moving into 2011/12 remains finding the savings we need to make following our new settlement for the next four years. We are already a lean organisation and so in planning for these cuts the Authority has no choice but to look at some frontline areas, as this is where the majority of our budget lies. We will do all we can to ensure that the impact on our operational response is as minimal as we can make it. The project to plan and implement where we will make the cuts is a priority for the Authority over the next 12 months.

2. SERVICE REDESIGN

The latest Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) reduced the level of central government grant funding for the Authority by 12.58% by April 2013. The settlement for the following two years has yet to be announced but, based on the Government's stated intention of reducing grant funding to the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) by 25% over the CSR period, the Authority's budget is currently predicted to be £26,089,000 by April 2015.

This is subject to the following critical assumptions:

- The council tax freeze grant will continue for the duration of the current CSR (£400,000 until 2014/15), following which it will be withdrawn.
- There will be no employee pay awards in 2012, but they will recommence in 2013.
- Inflation will remain at a long term average of 2% (currently inflation is running at more than 4%, which if sustained could increase the cut by a further £1,000,000).
- Growth in the council tax base will continue in line with current predictions.
- The Fire Service grant distribution formula will remain largely unchanged when it is re-evaluated in 2013 (if not, in the worst case scenario, an additional £1,000,000 could be lost from the Authority's grant settlement), and
- From 2012/13 council tax precepts will increase by a minimum of 2.5% year on year (an increase of £1.45 per band D council tax payer, equating to a £400,000 increase in the Authority's budget).

If any of these assumptions prove to be incorrect, the Authority's financial predictions will need to be updated and the cuts programme modified accordingly.

In anticipation of a reduced CSR settlement, the Authority identified £1,600,000 of budget savings from back office and support services, which will be implemented over the next two years and create time to develop strategies to deal with the remaining £2,570,000 estimated reduction. The planning time will ensure the Authority is able to transform its services in a measured and processed way, rather than being forced to 'salami slice' parts of its structure in haste and without due consideration. It will also ensure that any reduction in staffing levels is managed in an inclusive and empathetic way.

The key objectives for the Authority in driving out the required cuts to its budget are to:

- focus on maintaining, as far as practicable, an equivalent or better level of front line operational service delivery,
- deliver the cuts within the limited time available, in order to minimise pressure on Service financial reserves, and
- as far as is possible, to minimise the impact on all staff.

To achieve the above objectives the Authority is seeking to cut as much from its support services as practicable before making any cuts to front line delivery. The caveat to this statement is that the Authority is working to ensure that support services are not cut to the point where they are unable to effectively support effective front line delivery, and are no longer legally compliant.

Lead officers have been assigned to develop implementation plans and full business cases for those potential projects to realise the required savings agreed by the Fire Authority and progress with these will be considered by the Authority in October.

Approximately 80 briefings with stations/groups/teams that may be affected by the proposals to ensure they are given accurate and up to date information. Senior Management Team (SMT) have also been visiting selected stations to give people the opportunity to talk openly and informally about the Service Redesign Project and how it is affecting them.

3. COMBINED FIRE CONTROL

The Authority have entered a new partnership with Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service to form a combined control at our headquarters in Huntingdon, which will take 999 calls and mobilise crews for both counties, improving resilience and saving money for both services. This also puts CFRS in the unique position of being the only UK fire and rescue service running another service's control.

The Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employees) [TUPE] took place on midnight on July 31, which means that all 23 control staff based in Ipswich are now CFRS employees. The agreement under Section 16 of the Fire Services Act

where each service outlined what they will provide to the Combined Control in a legally binding document was signed on July 28.

Consultation with unions and staff from both services began on August 1 to agree a staffing structure that meets the needs of the community as well as future demands for both services, which ends on September 1. Building work on the control room at SHQ has been completed on time within budget and the project remains on track to go live on October 25, when both control functions will combine to form the single control at SHQ in Huntingdon.

4. PROPERTY SCHEMES

The Fire Authority continues to progress a number of property schemes across the County.

These construction of the new Fire Station and District Office at Cambourne was completed on time and to budget in late March.

The Fire Authority vacated the Parkside Fire Station site in Cambridge, and moved to a temporary fire station at Coldhams Lane in May, and the scheme for the redevelopment of Parkside is well underway. The Authority is also progressing development of a new training facility in Cambridge, which is due for completion in April 2012

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Source Documents	Location	Contact
Fire Authority Minutes	Fire Service HQ Hinchingsbrooke Cottage Huntingdon	Matthew Warren 01480 444619 matthew.warren@cambsfire.gov.uk