

CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH FIRE AUTHORITY UPDATE

TO: Cambridgeshire County Council

FROM: Chairman, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority

DATE: 25 March 2014

1. FIRE AUTHORITY BUDGET 2014/15

- 1.1 The Fire Authority has agreed a Budget for 2014/15 of £29,093,000. This reflects the Authority's acceptance of the Council Tax Freeze grant.
- 1.2 The budget has been prepared for the medium term after making a number of assumptions, which are:
- A freeze in Council Tax for 2014/15, accepting the grant of £183k;
 - A pay award will be received in 2014/15 of 1%;
 - Non pay inflation will track government inflation projections, with the exception of Utilities. This has been reflected separately at 7.7%.
- 1.3 The Authority will receive a total grant, including Council Tax freeze grant, of £12,554k. The Revenue Support Grant and Business Rate Grant represent £12,371k of this total. This is a reduction of £1,002k over the grant received in 2013/14, equivalent to 7.5%.
- 1.4 The indicative grant figure for 2015/16 is £11,332k. This is a further reduction of £1,039k or 8.4%.

2. INDUSTRIAL ACTION

- 2.1 The Fire Brigades Union (FBU) Executive Committee obtained a mandate in August 2013 to instigate periods of industrial action. Since this time strike action has occurred on nine separate occasions. On each occasion, it has been for less than a full shift in duration. Strike dates have been called at various times across a twenty four hour period and spread across weekdays and weekends. The FBU initiated a further ballot of their members for industrial action short of strike action. This ballot included FBU members within control rooms. The ballot was passed by the membership.
- 2.2 In the lead up to each strike period the Service implemented robust contingency arrangements that ensured normal attendance times to incidents were largely maintained. However, in doing so day to day services were significantly impacted as operational officers and support staff were 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, the cost of strike action after the deduction of wages from non-working staff is approximately £130,000. This figure includes lost productivity and the direct costs of implementing contingency arrangements. If the dispute continues for a prolonged period, the costs will increase proportionally and begin to negatively impact on the Service budget.

3. SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME – ACCOMMODATION REVIEW

- 3.1. As part of the wider Service Improvement Programme, the Fire Authority approved an accommodation review of a number of sites across the property portfolio; this review included its fire stations at Swaffham Bulbeck and Burwell, and sites within Huntingdon.
- 3.2. Amalgamation of Swaffham Bulbeck and Burwell Fire Stations
- 3.2.1. The Service has for many years employed an Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) process to identify and make improvements to the way operational services are delivered, and to identify opportunities to improve service delivery by re-deploying resources.
- 3.2.2. The Service has been looking for a suitable location to provide a replacement fire station for Burwell and Swaffham fire stations. In 2011 the Service was offered the opportunity, on a land swap basis, to acquire a site from Cambridgeshire County Council, adjacent to the existing Burwell fire station. The new facility will incorporate a new station and training facility on one site.
- 3.2.3. Work started on site in January and the new station and training facility is due for completion in August 2014.

4. INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN

- 4.1. The Fire Authority is required to produce an Integrated Risk Management Plan under the National Framework for Fire & Rescue Services. This document assesses all the risks in our Service area in relation to fire and other emergencies we respond to. It highlights what we will do to reduce the risks in the areas we deem are a high priority and sets targets for how we aim to improve our performance.
- 4.2. The plan was refreshed in June 2013, and following a 12 week consultation, Fire Authority approved changes to clarify differences in response standards between urban (wholetime) and rural (on-call) stations, and the target for on-call appliance availability. These changes represent more realistic and meaningful targets.

5. RESCUE VEHICLE CONSULTATION

- 5.1. As part of the Service Redesign process, which was instigated to identify how to save £4.2 million from the Service revenue budget between April 2011 and March 2015, officers identified an opportunity to reorganise the way specialist Rescue Vehicles (RVs) were crewed without significantly impacting on operational capability. It was identified that the workload of Service RVs was diminishing year on year and further analysis revealed that, owing to ongoing improvements in the provision of rescue equipment on front line appliances, the need to maintain three specialist RVs crewed on a 24/7 basis was unnecessary.
- 5.2. At a meeting of the Fire Authority in February 2013, Members agreed to the reassignment of the crewing of the Huntingdon RV from the five watch duty system to the Operational Risk and Response Team (ORRT) duty system. Following the decision, officers commenced negotiations with the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) to agree an appropriate shift system to enable the changes to be made. Negotiations to introduce a permanent duty system for the ORRT are in an advanced state and a positive approach is being taken by both the Service and FBU officials.

6. RE-ENGAGEMENT OF CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

- 6.1. At the beginning of October 2013 an open letter to the Chair of Fire Authority from the Fire Minister, Brandon Lewis, raised a number of concerns following adverse media coverage relating to the Authority's decision to agree to the re-engagement of the Chief Fire Officer.
- 6.2. In response Overview & Scrutiny committee were charged with initiating a member-led review to investigate the process followed in relation to the Chief Fire Officers re-engagement to ascertain whether this was undertaken in accordance with the Authority's Pay Policy Statement and policy on re-engagement of Officers
- 6.3. Following a thorough investigation, the report presented to Fire Authority in January, confirmed that all the Authority's policies had been followed correctly with regard to the re-engagement of the Chief Fire Officer. It also verified that these policies are in line with national guidance and those of other public sector organisations, including that of the Department of Communities and Local Government.
- 6.4. The report did recommend a number of improvements to the current Pay Policy Statement to aid transparency in the future. These were to:
 - include detail of the Authority's arrangements for re-engagement and abatement of Pension;
 - detail the approach taken to the award of other elements of senior remuneration, including details of the performance related pay scheme;
 - publish on the list of 'Common Documents' on the Fire Authority website;

- revise the Terms of Reference of the Appointments Committee to require that future decisions in relation to the appointment and starting salary of Chief Fire Officer and Directors be ratified by the full Fire Authority.

6.5. Following these findings the Authority have re-instated the option for those staff who are eligible to re-engage following retirement.

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