

CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH FIRE AUTHORITY: MINUTES

Date: Thursday 7 February 2019

Time: 2:00 – 3.20pm

Present: Cambridgeshire County Council:

Councillors S Bywater, I Gardener, D Giles, S Kindersley, J Gowing, M McGuire, K Reynolds (Chairman), T Rogers, J Scutt, M Shellens and M Smith

Peterborough City Council:

Councillors M Jamil and D Over (Vice-Chairman)

Officers Present: J Anderson, C Strickland, R Hylton, M Warren, S Ismail and D Cave

72. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Harford, Bond, Nethsingha and Goodwin.

73. MINUTES OF THE FIRE AUTHORITY MEETING HELD 1ST NOVEMBER 2018

The minutes of the Fire Authority meeting held 1st November were agreed as a correct record, and signed by the Chairman.

74. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Vice Chairman advised that he had attended an event in London with other Fire Authorities, who had been very interested in Cambridgeshire Fire Service's impressive Inspection report. Issues discussed at the conference including the gender imbalance in operational roles, the culture in fire stations, and in particular the increased support required for staff suffering trauma, bullying and mental illness.

The Monitoring Officer gave an update on the Judicial Review process. She advised that the background papers that were relied on in the process of coming to a decision on the transfer of the governance of the Fire Service to the Police and Crime Commissioner had now been received from the Home Office, which comprised two lever arch files full of documents. The Fire Authority would be submitting witness evidence, including the letter from Nick Hurd, Minister of State for Police and Fire Services, congratulating Cambridgeshire Fire Service for being efficient and effective – two of the grounds for the proposed transfer - in the recent Inspection. The Fire Authority's barrister had advised that the hearing was likely to take place in June at the earliest, possibly September.

Members noted that this would be Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO) Rick Hylton's last meeting before he takes up his secondment as Deputy Chief Fire Officer in Essex. Rick would be returning to Cambridgeshire in 2020, and in the meantime Area Commander Jon Anderson would be assuming the role of ACFO. Rick thanked the Chairman for his

kind words, saying that it had been a very difficult decision, but he felt that Cambridgeshire was in a very strong position, and it was a good opportunity to experience another service, with a different governance model and fresh challenges. He thanked Members for their support.

Members were pleased to note that other Fire Authorities were keen to hear about Cambridgeshire's success in the recent Inspection, and were keen to visit the Service to see what was happening in Cambridgeshire was getting a good name due to the hard work of everyone across the Service. Regrettably, there had been less emphasis on this positive news story in the Press, with a recent radio interview focusing on the proposed 3% increase in Council Tax. 'Vox pop' interviews indicated that the public were more than happy to pay the 3% increase, and were prepared to pay quite a bit more to maintain the level of service.

Station Commander Farsh Raoufi was awarded an MBE in the New Year's Honours List. The Chairman commented that Farsh was a humble but talented individual and the honour was very well deserved. The Chairman had sent Farsh a congratulatory letter on behalf of the Fire Authority.

An awards evening was held in January, which was at no cost the tax payer.

75. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

76. MATERNITY PAY POLICY

The Fire Authority considered a report on a review of the Service's maternity pay provisions. A new policy had been considered at a meeting of the Policy & Resources Committee, where it had been widely supported. At that meeting, Committee Members had suggested that budget should be allocated for the implementation of the Policy in the 2019/20 budget.

Maternity Pay within CFRS was low compared to averages across the sector. In terms of equality and diversity, this was clearly a disincentive to attracting female staff, particularly operational staff. The issue had been raised by a female firefighter with the Assistant Chief Fire Officer, who had pointed out that she was entitled to more Sick Pay than Maternity Pay. The Policy would cost the service an additional £44K per annum, based on the average number of staff on Maternity Leave in any one year. The new policy also proposed increasing the qualifying period to increase to two years rather than the current one.

A Member queried whether it would be possible for provision to be made for less than two years' service, e.g. those staff with more than one year but less than two years' service would be entitled to six weeks' pay, which was the existing arrangement. Officers confirmed that this was feasible, and that there would not be significant additional costs. A number of Members indicated their support for this amendment to the Policy.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- 1) approve the proposed changes to contractual maternity pay with effect from 1st April 2019, subject to the conclusion of negotiations with the relevant trades unions, namely to increase contractual maternity pay from six to 18 weeks' fully pay, with an associated change in the length of continuous service required to qualify for contractual maternity pay for 18 weeks' full pay, from one year to two years by the eleventh week before the baby is due;
- 2) retain contractual maternity pay at six weeks' full pay, for those staff with more than one year but less than two years' service by the eleventh week before the baby is due;
- 3) note the additional and concurrent work to review and update broader maternity provisions and support.

77. DRAFT FIRE AUTHORITY BUDGET 2019-20

The Fire Authority considered a report on its budget requirement and precept for 2017/18 council tax.

The budget had been considered by the Policy & Resources Committee in December, and the main changes made as a result were the inclusion of the impact of the Maternity Pay Policy (£44K), and confirmation of the pension liability, associated with the changes to the Firefighter Pension Scheme SCAPE rate (£290K). The understanding was that the latter would be funded through the government's Comprehensive Spending Review in future years. Whilst the budget was robust, the Deputy Chief Executive commented that it was less certain moving forward. The proposed increase in Council Tax equated to an average of £2 per year.

Members noted:

- the Capital Programme included the purchase of two aerial appliances in 2019/20;
- a number of projects in the property portfolio were still in the development stage: a decision was imminent on the Monkswood site, and there were also sites including St Neots and St Ives that were being progressed, and Members would be updated fully as those projects moved forward. Funding for those projects would come from Reserves, which were currently very healthy;
- representative bodies had put forward their cases for a pay award, and the Budget was predicated on a 2% pay award. Any increase above 2% would represent a budgetary pressure in future years;
- the CFO acknowledged that there was a great deal of uncertainty regarding future funding, but reassured Members that senior management were very focused on the refresh of the IRMP (Integrated Risk Management Programme), and would put a priority list to that.

Arising from the report:

- a number of Members expressed concerns about the ongoing delays with the Monkswood project, pointing out that the longer such schemes sat on the shelf, the more likely key factors would change, e.g. changes to land values, build costs, etc. Officers were asked to provide an update to the next Policy & Resources Committee on progress against the Monkswood project, including the latest land values build costs, and also the viability of moving to the original site (St John's in Huntingdon);
- with regard to the imminent decision on the Monkswood Planning Application, it was noted that this had been due to be considered by Huntingdonshire District Council planning officers at a private meeting on 6th February, following two extensions. The background to those extensions were outlined. None of the feedback to date suggested that there were grounds for rejection, as the Fire Service had fulfilled all the requirements, and provided all the necessary information and assurances. Officers were asked to update Members on the latest news by the end of the week, as a number of Members were Huntingdonshire District Councillors, and may be able to assist with the process. It was agreed that the HDC Members would liaise with the Deputy Chief Executive;
- a Member asked that in the event of a disorderly Brexit, resulting in cuts to bank rates, what the impact would be on Capital funding. Officers advised that the Service was currently getting little return on its investments, so this was not a concern. On a related issue, it was noted that the Bellwin scheme (government funding awarded for exceptional events) was only triggered if costs were in excess of 0.5% of the annual budget for one incident;
- a Member asked what security procedures were in place at the Fire Station where equipment had been stolen. Officers advised that all stations have CCTV coverage at all times. The station in question had had issues in the past, so the security needed to be reviewed, especially equipment, which was what was being targeted rather than the site itself. The Chairman suggested that station security could be reviewed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. It was noted that the recent incident related to cutting equipment, and there had subsequently been an event that led to recovery of that equipment;
- a Member asked whether women and BME operational staff were getting equal opportunities to train on the new aerial appliances. Members were advised that all crew members in Cambridge and Peterborough, where the appliances were based, would be trained. The Member commented that it was vital women had equal access to training, especially as there were perceptions that women were less able in terms of physical strength. The Chief Fire Officer reassured the Member that for officers to complete their initial training, firefighters had to prove they had the physical strength to carry out their duties, so once in service, both male and female firefighters were treated equally in this regard.

It was resolved unanimously to:

1. Approve a Fire Authority budget requirement of £29,505,000;
2. Approve a recommended Fire Authority precept for Authority Tax from District Authorities and Peterborough City Authority of £20,088,000;

3. Approve an Authority Tax for each band of property, based on the number of Band D equivalent properties notified to the Fire Authority by the District Authorities and Peterborough City Authority (283,970):

| Band | Authority Tax | Band | Authority Tax |
|------|---------------|------|---------------|
| A | £47.16 | E | £86.46 |
| B | £55.02 | F | £102.18 |
| C | £62.88 | G | £117.90 |
| D | £70.74 | H | £141.48 |

4. Approve the Prudential and Treasury Indicators as set out on page 9 of the Budget Book;
5. Approve the Treasury Management Strategy Statement on pages 8 to 13 of the Budget Book;
6. Approve the Capital Programme detailed at page 6 of the Budget Book;
7. Approve the MRP Policy Statement detailed at page 14 of the Budget Book.

78. MEMBERS' ALLOWANCE SCHEME

The Fire Authority received a report which sought approval for the Fire Authority of a Members' Allowances Scheme for the next twelve months.

It was noted that the current Members' Allowances Scheme had last been updated in February 2018. At that point, it was expected that there would be clarity on the governance arrangements for the fire service, but events had moved more slowly than anticipated.

Given this, it was proposed to increase allowances by a 2% cost of living increase for a further year. If the outcome of the Judicial Review was known in the Autumn, this may need to be revisited.

It was resolved unanimously to:

Agree the allowance rates within Appendix 1 of the report, and apply them for the next twelve months.

79. DRAFT PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2019-20

Members considered a report on the Pay Policy Statement for 2019/20, in line with the duty under the Localism Act 2011 for Fire Authorities to produce Pay Policy Statements.

Officers highlighted the key changes in the document, the most significant being the inclusion of a ratio comparing the salary of the lowest paid employee compared to the highest paid.

It was resolved unanimously to:

Approve the draft Pay Policy Statement attached at Appendix 1 to the report.

80. HER MAJESTY'S INSPECTORATE OF CONSTABULARY AND FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES (HMICFRS) UPDATE AND ACTIONS REQUIRED

Members considered a report on the HMICFRS reports that were released on 20 December 2018, and the actions required and recommended for Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service (CFRS).

Along with 13 other Fire Services, Cambridgeshire was reviewed in the summer of 2018 by the newly formed HMICFRS. The Service was judged to be 'Good' against all three key areas (effectiveness, efficiency and how well the Service looked after its people), and 'Good' in all eleven supporting areas. The report identified both areas for improvement and particular areas praised by the Inspection team. Credit was due to staff for the Inspection's conclusion that the Service was well-run, effective and efficient. The Service would be inspected again in four years' time.

All Members commented favourably, and asked for their congratulations and thanks to be recorded to all Service colleagues for achieving this excellent result. It was noted that regrettably, governance was not an issue inspected, and whilst it would be in future inspection regimes, it would only be reviewed where it was apparent that governance was a problem.

A number of Members found it surprising that the government had seen it fit for the governance of the Service to be transferred to the Police & Crime Commissioner, but had judged the Service to be good in all areas, including effectiveness and efficiency. Members commented that it would be interesting to see how the Constabulary would perform in a comparable inspection.

The Chief Fire Officer highlighted the uncertainty resulting from the Service being in the first tranche of inspection, and the great results which were really a huge testament to the team, i.e. staff across the whole Service and Members. The Service had been through some very difficult times, and despite being quite small, and not cash rich, had been able to demonstrate that it was a good Service. It was notable that of the 14 Services inspected, only Cambridgeshire and Lancashire were found to be 'Good' across the whole 'People' area. The results of the Inspection would help drive improvements in the coming years, and he concluded by saying that he was proud of every member of staff that worked for the Service. The Chairman echoed these comments, and advised that it was his intention to arrange a meeting with Minister and the Home Office, to discuss the results of the Inspection and how this fitted in with the proposed transfer. He would also be contacting local MPs to ask for their support.

It was resolved unanimously to:

Note the recommendations for action from the HMICFRS report and findings for the Service.

81. MEMBER LED REVIEW CFRS – EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

Members considered a report on the outcome of a Member-led review into Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service (CFRS) employee engagement activities, which had been carried out by Councillor Gowing and former Councillor Raynes.

The Chairman thanked all involved, and highlighted the value of Member Led Reviews in identifying the real issues.

Members noted the recommendations for consideration by Members, coming out of the conclusions of the Member Led Review (Paragraph 11 of the report):

- acknowledge the support of COG to facilitate employee engagement activities;
- acknowledge the successes of the employee engagement groups and the required effort over and above their primary roles to ensure progress;
- reassure the Authority the Service is affording any employee engagement activities the necessary priority and that the direction of travel and approach being taken is appropriate.

It was resolved unanimously to note the contents of the review at Appendix 1 to the report, and in particular the recommendations at Paragraph 11 (set out above).

82. EQUALITY AND INCLUSION COMPLIANCE REPORT 2017-18 (INCLUDING THE GENDER PAY GAP)

The Fire Authority considered a report about equality progress in the year 2017-18 and the gender pay gap as at March 2018. This ensured that the Authority met the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2011 and 2017.

Members were advised that this report had been considered in depth at the Policy & Resources Committee in December, and attention was drawn to the executive summary, which set out progress against objectives, including:

- areas such as the achievement of Disability Confident accreditation;
- the roll out of the RESPECT programme, to respond to and reduce bullying, harassment and inappropriate behaviour.

The delivery to communities served was also outlined, including:

- business seminars focusing on areas most at risk, including those over 60, and those with certain vulnerabilities and disabilities;
- investment in portable misting systems. There had been two activations to date, which had saved lives and ensured properties remained habitable. It was noted that the systems cost around £1,000 each to purchase, and a demonstration film was available. Officers advised that they were using the evidence from the trial to try to encourage more landlords to install these systems for vulnerable residents;
- the role of Positive Action days, investing resources in BME events, female “have a go days” etc. The Service was also looking to do some joint work with Cameron Matthews, who was currently the FBU National Black and Ethnic Minority Officer.

Arising from the report, Members:

- discussed the disproportionately higher number of female leavers;
- noted the numbers undergoing the disciplinary process mainly resulted in informal outcomes, as the culture was to 'nip things in the bud';
- a number of Members commended the detailed report and commented that it illustrated why the Service was ahead of the game;
- a Member highlighted the need to better understand the career management process. She pointed out that it may appear to be a positive move when staff move on due to a change in job or career, but there could be underlying issues e.g. bullying. Officers acknowledged this point but commented that with voluntary resignation, it was difficult to find out the exact reasons, but there was a great deal of focus within the Service on dealing with issues such as bullying through the RESPECT programme.

It was resolved unanimously to:

Note the Equality and Inclusion Compliance Report.

83. FIRE AUTHORITY PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT – MONITORING REPORT

Fire Authority Members considered an update against the projects for 2018-19.

Members noted the main projects which had been given an overall 'amber' status:

- Replacement ICCS and Mobilising Solution (P108) – this project had been very complicated in terms of ensuring the correct specification, which had probably been underestimated at the outset;
- Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme (P089) – this was a government led initiative, and government approval of this replacement radio system had been further delayed;
- Cambridgeshire Public Services Network (P098) – a collaborative approach had been taken but there were some uncertainties around cost. This did not create any risk for the Service in terms of the network, but did mean that it was necessary to extend the current contract.

Members noted that the management team review the programme management list on a six weekly basis as management team with the Chairman.

It was resolved unanimously to note the Programme Status Report, as at December 2018, attached to the report as Appendix 1.

84. UPDATE ON NEW DUTY SYSTEM AND ROAMING APPLIANCES

The Fire Authority received an update on the first year of the new wholetime shift system and the introduction of roaming appliances.

Members were reminded that a new shift system for its wholetime stations was introduced on 1st January 2018, following successful negotiation with the FBU. This included the introduction of two new roaming appliances seven days a week and a move to 'jump crew' specialist appliances. The roaming appliances had made a considerable impact on the delivery of community safety over the course of 2018, completing a total of 3422 Safe and Well visit across rural locations within Cambridgeshire, and also 52 business engagement visits.

In total, the roaming appliances had attended 480 incidents throughout 2018, the majority being in and around Peterborough and Cambridge/South Cambridgeshire. Regrettably, the roaming appliance had not had the anticipated impact on attendance times. This could be due in part to the extremely busy summer period, where a number of fire were in unaddressable locations e.g. in fields. In addition, a number of strategic stations were not available for roaming appliances due to building works. Those works had since been completed. There had been a recent meeting with the FBU, who were very positive and felt the new shift system was working well.

In response to a Member question, officers outlined the work being undertaken to reduce false alarms. It was confirmed that these were not just attributable to automatic activations.

It was resolved unanimously to note the contents of the report.

85. INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN UPDATE

The Fire Authority considered an update of delivery against the Service's Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP). Members were reminded that a major review of the IRMP was due in 2020.

One of the key achievements in the past twelve months was the continued delivery of Firebreak courses for young people, and a Member commented favourably on the rollout of this course, which he felt was really positive for young people, not least because it gave them really positive role models.

In terms of performance, it was noted that the increase in casualties was mainly attributable to minor injuries. Work was being undertaken with the Business Analysis team to understand which demographics are being most affected, to better target education and community work in those communities.

It was resolved unanimously to note the contents of the report.

86. FIRE POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MINUTES – 20th DECEMBER 2018

Members noted the minutes of the Policy and Resources Committee meeting held 20th December 2018.

87. FIRE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MINUTES – 10TH JANUARY 2019

Members noted the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held 10th January 2019. It was noted that Councillor Scutt's apologies should have been noted at that meeting.

Chairman