

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority: Minutes

Date: 20th June 2024

Time: 2.15-3.30pm

Venue: New Shire Hall, Alconbury Weald

Present: Cambridgeshire County Council:

Councillors: M Black, I Gardener, J Gowing, R Hathorn, S Kindersley, E Murphy (Chair), C Rae, P Slatter, M Smith and S Taylor

Peterborough City Council:

Councillors: A Bond, N Boyce, W Fitzgerald and M Jamil (Vice Chair)

Officers present: J Anderson, S Ismail, T Oviatt-Ham, C Strickland and M Warren

113. Election of Chair

The Monitoring Officer called for nominations for Chair. Councillor Jamil nominated Councillor Murphy, and this nomination was seconded by Councillor Kindersley. There were no further nominations. Following a show of hands, the Monitoring Officer announced that Councillor Murphy was therefore elected as Chair of the Fire Authority for the municipal year 2024-25.

114. Appointment of Vice Chair

The Chair called for nominations for Vice Chair. Councillor Murphy nominated Councillor Jamil, and this nomination was seconded by Councillor Black. There were no further nominations. Following a show of hands, the Chair announced that Councillor Jamil was therefore elected as Vice-Chair of the Fire Authority for the municipal year 2024-25.

115. Apologies for absence and declarations of Interest

Apologies were presented on behalf of Councillors Bywater, Dew and Reynolds.

116. Chair's Announcements

See Appendix 1 to these minutes.

The Chair welcomed Councillors Black and Boyce, who had replaced Councillors Goodliffe and Warren. The Chair thanked Councillors Goodliffe and Warren for their contributions to the Fire Authority during their tenure.

117. Public Question

The Fire Authority received a Public Question from Mr Parsons, on behalf of a group of leaseholders of Parkside Place.

Mr Parsons explained how the Parkside fire station in Cambridge was part of the estate developed at Parkside Place by Grosvenor Development Ltd in 2012-13, and the site included private apartments, affordable housing and a retail unit. The development received S106 approval in a deed signed by Cambridge City Council, Cambridgeshire County Council, the Fire Authority and Grosvenor, in which Grosvenor undertook liability to ensure that the service charges would not increase above RPI.

In a lease dated 27th June 2013 between Grosvenor and the Fire Authority, the Authority appears to have relieved Grosvenor of that liability. This had cost the Fire Authority over £50,000 in excess of RPI in subsidising the affordable housing units up to June 2024, which ultimately was met by the taxpayer through the Fire Service precept.

Questions (provided in writing):

1. Why did the Fire Authority relieve Grosvenor of its contractual obligations in regard to the RPI surcharge ?
2. When the Fire Authority relieved Grosvenor of its liability for the RPI surcharge did it breach the S106 Deed?
3. Did the Fire Authority obtain the agreement of the other signatories to the S106 deed?
4. Did the Fire Authority knowingly understand it was thereby understating the publicly declared level of subsidy for affordable housing ?
5. How can a public body knowingly risk public funds with a bet against inflation?

It was confirmed that a full written response would be provided within ten working days, and officers also indicated that they were willing to meet with leaseholders to discuss this matter.

118. Minutes of the Fire Authority meeting held 15th February 2024 and Action Log

Members considered the minutes of the meeting held 15th February, and the Action Log.

With regard to action 108 (lithium ion batteries) on the Action Log, a Member noted that officers had agreed to provide a written update to Members. Action required. Noting the comment that a *"It was agreed that a letter from the Fire Authority would*

be helpful", relating to the lack of a national record regarding lithium ion battery fires, a Member asked if that letter had been sent? It was confirmed that this would be picked up in the written update to Members. Action required.

The minutes of the Fire Authority meeting held 15th February 2024 were agreed as a correct record. The Action Log was noted.

120. Annual Review of Performance – Integrated Risk Management Plan 2020-2024

The Fire Authority received a report on the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) 2020-2024. The IRMP is a public facing document covering a four year period, setting out progress on delivery of the action plan. The report presented focused on 2023-24. It comprised four key areas for management and monitoring, specifically People Excellence, Community Safety Excellence, Operational Excellence and Value for Money delivery.

People Excellence: the third HMICFRS (Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services) inspection had taken place, and the Service was graded "Good" for promoting values and culture, and promoting fairness and diversity. The service values and behaviours were also refreshed, in consultation with colleagues. A Psychological Wellbeing Practitioner had been appointed, providing counselling within the Service.

Community Safety Excellence: Working in collaboration with fire and rescue services across the region and with EEAST, two community welfare officers had been appointed. These posts were hosted within the Service, and their primary role was responding to falls in the community, but they also undertook other community safety activities supporting vulnerable people.

Operational excellence: there had been a lot of work around realigning and focusing on best outcomes within available operational resources, including having two extra on-call appliances available to provide better response times in rural areas.

Value For Money: HMICFRS graded the Service as "outstanding" in the Inspection.

Members noted the section of the report dealing with Performance Measures, including response times. The average attendance time for the first pump in urban areas had reduced to 7 minutes 48 seconds, and also improved in Rural areas to 12 minutes 4 seconds. The latter improvement in particular had been impacted by the introduction 18 months ago of crews of three, increasing availability across the board and a quicker response. Attendance to all incidents had increased to 95.6% of incidents being responded to within 18 minutes. There had been a significant in the reduction of total fires, which may be attributable to the wetter weather, and reduction in spate conditions. Sadly, there had been ten fire deaths in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough in 2023-24.

It was noted that there had been some demographic changes to those impacted, from vulnerable elderly to a wider age group, with more fires attributable to electricity/lithium ion battery fires. A publicity campaign on these issues was planned. There had also been an increase in fire casualties: whilst attending fewer fires, some fires, especially relating to lithium ion batteries, tended to be more severe.

Members noted progress on Diversity issues, and noted those Diversity areas requiring further attention.

Members commented favourably on the report generally, and raised the following issues:

A Member advised that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee regularly received IRMP updates, and the issue of lithium ion batteries and special services attended had been discussed frequently at that Committee, especially with regard to the Police no longer responding to calls relating to Mental Health issues. Officers confirmed that generally, the Service was responding to more incidents relating to other Blue Light services, and there had been more issues around individuals in mental health crises.

A Member queried how staff accessed the psychological wellbeing practitioner. It was confirmed that the practitioner was employed directly by the Service, and staff could contact them directly.

Noting the collaboration with other services, including the two Community Welfare Officers, a Member asked it would be useful to have data on how many incidents those two officers had attended, and if could support more incidents. Officers agree to provide that data and more generally the impact of those officers. **Action required.**

Noting the collaboration with Integrated Care Services and Adult Social Care, a Member asked how vulnerable individuals were identified, and whether this included those with English as a Second Language or with declining language abilities. The Member also asked if the Service provided training for live-in carers. Officers advised that the most vulnerable would be dealt with by the Service's specialist Community Safety officers. In terms of training for live-in carers, officers agreed to report back to the Member, but one challenge was the turnover of the individuals working in that sector. **Action required.**

A Member asked about the work with the road and water safety partnerships, and the dedicated community road safety officer role hosted by the Service but funded by the Police and Crime Commissioner. If that funding was withdrawn, a decision would need to be taken on whether to continue funding that post in-house.

On attendance times, a Member asked if there was a risk that the "first appliance" attending could not deal with the incident, due to lack of equipment or skills? Officers advised that there would be certain occasions where special services were required, but most incidents could be resolved by the first crew. Attendance times were a focus

because the earlier there was an intervention, the better the outcome. There were regular reports on incidents involving crews of three and outcomes were recorded.

With regard to Fire casualties, it was confirmed this data was recorded by the Service itself. The Community Safety team try to identify patterns and trends and put in place interventions where appropriate.

A Member queried why there were many calls relating to Storm Babet, particularly in Suffolk. It was noted that this storm had caused much damage and there were many calls for assistance.

There was a lengthy debate on fire safety with regard to lithium ion batteries, which can overheat and catch fire quickly when damaged, which could lead to rapid and severe fires, often resulting in explosions. A Member suggested that going forward, it would be helpful to identify lithium ion battery fires in performance statistics, broken down by District if possible. A recent incident where a lithium ion battery had been dropped and caused a fire later was noted. Officers advised that this was an emerging risk and even lithium ion batteries in mobile phones and smoke detectors could result in fires. The advice on lithium ion batteries was quite complex and detailed, but ultimately the advice to the public was not to attempt to tackle lithium ion battery fires, but to evacuate the building/area.

There was a discussion on open water work with schools, and making the most of collaborative opportunities. It was confirmed that there were campaigns on water safety, and the "Safety Zone" programme involved a collaboration with partners which included water safety.

It was resolved unanimously to:

note the contents of the report.

121. Final Revenue and Capital Budget position 2023-24

The Fire Authority considered the final 2023-24 revenue and capital budget outturn position. The draft accounts had been published by the 31/05/24 deadline.

There was a small overspend (£30K) for the year, but generally resources had been managed well. The proposed carry forwards, relating to projects started within the year, were also lower than usual, at £316K, which was less than 1% of the total budget.

Reserves had increased slightly owing to the increased Business Rates receipt from the St Neots upgrade. Property Development reserves had been used for new training centre. The sale of the former fire station site in Huntingdon was due to complete imminently.

There had been significant investment in vehicles in 2023-24, following delays due to supply chain issues over recent years.

A Member asked how the receipt from the Huntingdon site sale would be used. Officers advised that it would initially be allocated to Reserves, but was likely to be used for Estates purposes ultimately.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- i. note the revenue and capital budget outturn position (Appendix 1),
- ii. approve the requested budget holder carry forwards (Appendix 2),
- iii. note the contents of the Annual Treasury Management Report (Appendix 3).

122. Draft Pay Policy Statement 2024-25

Members considered a report on the Pay Policy Statement for 2024-25. There was an annual requirement under the Localism Act 2011 for Fire Authorities to produce Pay Policy Statements.

In addition to meeting the relevant legal requirements, the Statement clearly sets out the Authority's position, highlighting the comparison between its remuneration for Principal Officers and comparing the lowest paid and median employees. The difference between lowest and median employees had reduced. The data provided did not reflect the most recent Grey Book and Green Book pay agreements, the latter still being unknown.

In response to a question on how Cambridgeshire compares to other Fire Services, it was confirmed that it was middling, having previously been towards the top end. Members were reminded that when the current Chief Fire Officer took up post in 2016, the salary for that post reduced by £30,000, and subsequent increases had been proportionate. It was confirmed that the statement was prepared by the Service's Scrutiny and Assurance Manager.

Noting that rates of pay were set nationally, a Member asked how the Service's pay rates differed? It was confirmed that from a uniformed perspective, officers of Area Commander grade and below were nationally agreed, but there was some flexibility with Green Book posts (Administrative and Clerical grades), which were benchmarked against peers such as the the County Council.

It was resolved unanimously to approve the draft Pay Policy Statement 2024/25, attached at Appendix 1, for publication.

(Matthew Warren withdrew from the meeting)

123. Recommendation for appointment of Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive

Members considered a recommendation from the Appointments Committee for the appointment of the next Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive Officer.

The Chair outlined the robust and broad approach taken to recruiting for this role. Several appointable candidates were identified, and there had been engagement with staff, the senior team and the Appointments Committee. The Appointments Committee comprised Councillors Murphy, Jamil, Bywater and Kindersley, assisted by Stephen Moir, the County Council's Chief Executive. The Committee unanimously agreed to recommend the appointment of Matthew Warren. The Chair had received supportive comments from those Members who were absent, namely Councillors Reynolds, Bywater and Dew.

Councillor Kindersley paid tribute to all those involved in the lengthy and detailed process, the Appointments Committee was only at the end of that process. Particular thanks were paid to the way the process was managed by the Assistant Director of People, Christine Doody, and all colleagues involved in the process. The Chair supported those comments.

A Member asked what the process would be to appoint to Matthew's current role? It was confirmed that Matthew would start in his new role with effect from 01/07/24, and he had plans on how to manage the subsequent transition.

The Chief Fire Officer, Chris Strickland, commented that he had not taken part in the appointment process, but was very pleased with the recommendation. Over recent years, despite budgetary challenges, the Service was nationally recognised because of its culture and prudent management. Matthew had been instrumental in bringing about those improvements in culture and performance and he was confident that this process would continue.

It was resolved unanimously to:

approve the appointment of Matthew Warren as the next Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive Officer as recommended unanimously by the Appointments Committee.

Matthew Warren rejoined the meeting.

Matthew thanked Members, and commented that it had been a tough process, he was very excited and grateful for the opportunity. He added that he had been working with Chris Strickland for many years, and regarded Chris as a great colleague, and felt that they had achieved great things.

124. Appointments to Committees and Outside Bodies

Members considered an updated appointments schedule. Members noted that there had been one change to appointments to Committees, resulting from changes in County Council proportionality, and the appointment of Councillors Black and Boyce.

It was resolved unanimously to:

agree the updated schedule of appointments.

125. Appointment of Chairs and Vice Chairs

It was proposed by Councillor Murphy, seconded by Councillor Jamil and agreed to appoint Councillor Kindersley as Chair of the Policy and Resources Committee for the municipal year 2024-25.

It was proposed by Councillor Kindersley, seconded by Councillor Murphy and agreed to reappoint Councillor Jamil as Vice-Chair of the Policy and Resources Committee for the municipal year 2024-25.

It was proposed by Councillor Jamil, seconded by Councillor Kindersley and agreed unanimously to appoint Councillor Rae as Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the municipal year 2024-25.

It was proposed by Councillor Jamil, seconded by Councillor Murphy and agreed to reappoint Councillor Taylor as Vice-Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the municipal year 2024-25.

126. Minutes of the Policy and Resources Committee held 22 January 2024

The draft minutes of the Policy and Resources Committee held 22nd January 2024 were noted.

127. Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held 22 April 2024

The draft minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held 22nd April 2024 were noted.

Chair

CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS – THURSDAY 20 JUNE 2024

Our annual meeting coincides with a busy time for us all before a significant event in a couple of weeks, so I have purposely kept my announcements short.

Firstly, I would formally like to welcome Councillors Black and Boyce to the Fire Authority and thank both Councillors Goodliffe and Warren for their contributions to our work during their tenure.

Secondly, while there is a formal decision item on the agenda today about the appointment of our new Head of Paid Service, it is likely that this will be the last Authority meeting attended by our Chief Fire Officer, Chris Strickland, before he retires. I would therefore like to put on record how enormously grateful we are his service. Chris has been an exemplary public servant, always driving improvement and innovation, focusing on staff wellbeing and excellence, all the while modelling the right behaviours for our Service. We have been the beneficiaries in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, where he has truly made his mark. Members please note that we will have an opportunity to mark the occasion on the 25th June.

Thirdly, I would like to say how much fun it has been to see so many 'throw back' photos, interesting articles and competitions on our internal and external media channels celebrating our golden anniversary year. I must echo the Chief's recent comments that as Chair of the Authority (and I am sure I speak for all Authority Members) I am also extremely proud to be here celebrating half a century of serving the communities of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. All our people join the Service as they have a strong desire to help others and collectively we are honoured to have been doing so for 50 years.

I would like to also mention that **Peterborough Volunteer Fire Brigade**, having been formed by a group of businessmen in 1884, is 140 this year! It remains the only volunteer fire service in the country and will be celebrating its unique history of service to the city and residents of Peterborough with an event this weekend and an open day in July. If anyone would like more information on the Brigade or its celebrations, please contact Station Commander Anthony Gould via 01480 444500.

Finally, a couple of diary dates

14 July - Golden anniversary family BBQ at Hinchingsbrooke Cottage with food, entertainment, music and vintage appliances (bring your own drink). This is a ticket only event so please let an Officer know if you wish to attend as soon as possible.

3 August – Ely Pride at Jubilee Gardens, Ely (the Service intends to be there with an appliance and crew and welcome as many colleagues as possible from across the whole organisation to come along).

Further Announcements (not to be read out)

**FIREBREAK PASS OUT PARADE
LETTER OF THANKS FROM CITY OF PETERBOROUGH MAYOR**

In March, we received a 'thank you' letter from Councillor Nick Sandford, then the Mayor of the City of Peterborough, after he attended the celebratory pass out parade at the end of a Fire Break course at Stanground Fire Station on 23 February 2024.

As some of you may know, Fire Break is a particularly important intervention activity being a five-day intensive course for young people that aims to promote a culture of safety, teamwork

and citizenship by teaching a range of vital life skills whilst undertaking the various disciplines of the fire service. Workshops and activities help grow student confidence and self-esteem as well as reduce risky choices by raising awareness of the consequences of actions. For those not familiar with this excellent intervention activity, further information is available via this link [Find out more about the Firebreak scheme here.](#)

COMMUNITY RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN

As you will see on the agenda today (Item 6) we have our annual review of performance against our Integrated, now termed Community, Risk Management Plan. For those not familiar with either document ...

The beginning of April brought not only a new financial year but also the start of our Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) which will see us through until 2029. As you will be aware our CRMP is the most important document we have as it is our plan for the next five years, setting out what actions we will take to address different risks and opportunities. But as the last few years have certainly demonstrated, we cannot plan ahead too far as we just do not know what is around the corner. When putting our last IRMP together, we did not know we would face a global pandemic followed by a leap in inflation and a cost-of-living crisis; our plans must remain flexible to enable us to deal with the unpredicted. The CRMP sets out our overall intentions, and sitting behind it is a detailed action plan that prioritises how we use our limited resources to ensure we maintain focus on the most important things that need to be done. The action plan is what heads of group will use to prioritise work for their teams. Our CRMP includes the areas for improvement highlighted in our HMICFRS report, so we can make sure required progress is made. It also includes the actions we need to take having considered the detail of various recent national reports that make recommendations for all fire and rescue services. The Authority and its Committees look forward to reviewing performance against the new plan over the coming months and years.

Our new CRMP document is available on our website.

<https://www.cambsfire.gov.uk/about-us/our-community-risk-management-plan/>

INFORMATION SECURITY AUDIT

In April we hosted an ISO 27001:2022 audit for Information Security. The standard has recently changed, so a lot of work was recently undertaken to ensure the Service maintained its accreditation. The audit took place over five days and consisted of remote meetings and site visits covering both technical and physical aspects of information security procedures, as well as staff awareness of information security practices and policies. I am pleased to say we passed the audit and received recertification with **no** nonconformities (NCF) and just three opportunities for improvement.

A huge thank you to Danielle, our Information Governance Manager and colleagues in ICT, whose commitment and assistance despite heavy workloads is reflected in this result. I would also like to thank the wider Service for its assistance with all aspects of Information Security. In an age where it is critically important how we deal with and protect not just our own data and information but that of our partners and stakeholders this was a true team effort and a great result we should all be proud of. The full report can be found [here](#)