

# Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority: Minutes

Date: 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2021

Time: 3.00 – 4.25pm

Venue: Bluntisham Village Hall

Present: Cambridgeshire County Council:

Councillors: S Bywater, H Cox Condron, I Gardener, B Goodliffe, J Gowing, S Kindersley, P McDonald, M McGuire, E Murphy, K Reynolds, P Slatter, M Smith and S Taylor

Peterborough City Council:

Councillors: A Bond, M Jamil, D Over and S Warren

Officers Present: C Strickland, M Warren, S Ismail, T Mirfin, S Smith and D Cave

## 1. Election of Chair

The Monitoring Officer called for nominations for Chair.

Councillor Kindersley nominated Councillor Murphy, and this nomination was seconded by Councillor Jamil.

Councillor McGuire nominated Councillor Reynolds, and this nomination was seconded by Councillor Smith.

Following a show of hands, there were nine votes in favour of Councillor Murphy. Councillor Taylor asked for her vote for Councillor Murphy to be recorded. There were eight votes in favour of Councillor Reynolds. The Monitoring Officer announced that Councillor Murphy was therefore elected as Chair of the Fire Authority for the municipal year 2021-22.

## 2. Appointment of Vice Chair

The Chair called for nominations for Vice Chair.

Councillor Goodliffe nominated Councillor Jamil, and this was seconded by the Chair. Councillor Reynolds nominated Councillor Over, and this was seconded by Councillor McGuire.

Following a show of hands, there were nine votes in favour of Councillor Jamil. Councillor Taylor asked for her vote for Councillor Jamil to be recorded. The Chair announced the Councillor Jamil was therefore elected as Vice-Chair of the Fire Authority for the ensuring municipal year 2021-22.

It was agreed that there would be a formal vote of thanks for the outgoing Chairman at the next meeting.

### 3. Apologies for absence and declarations of Interest

There were no apologies for absence or any declarations of interest.

### 4. Minutes of the Fire Authority meeting held 11<sup>th</sup> February 2021

The minutes of the Fire Authority meeting held 11<sup>th</sup> February 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

### 5. Chair's announcements

Appended.

### 6. Review of Integrated Risk Management Plan Performance

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. It comprises four key areas for management and monitoring, specifically People, Community Safety Excellence, Operational Excellence and Value for Money. The Covid-19 pandemic had resulted in a number of new challenges and changes to the way some work was carried out.

People – staff engagement continued to be a key focus, and there was ongoing work to develop the organisational culture and to enhance staff engagement, ensuring that mechanisms were in place for staff to feedback. The pandemic had necessitated changes to the way some of this work had been delivered. The HMICFRS (Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services) staff engagement survey, which had been carried out in October 2020, scored the Fire Service above peer authorities in most areas. This finding was reaffirmed by the Service's own survey in January/February 2021, which showed that 83% of staff remained satisfied or very satisfied in their work, with 86% satisfied or very satisfied with CFRS as an employer, rising to 94% in some staff groups. The work undertaken in relation Mental Health and Wellbeing, staff development and succession planning was outlined.

Community safety excellence – this included delivery of the Fire Break programme to young people, and early intervention work such as the Jet the Dragon story book. Engagement with businesses was also a key area of community safety work, albeit most of this work had been virtual over the pandemic, but higher risk premises had continued to be audited in person. A lot of work had been undertaken on systems to effectively evaluate community engagement activities, which had been highlighted in the initial finding of the recent HMICFRS inspection. Two new Risk and Resilience Officer roles had been introduced to support community risk reduction/prevention activities.

Operational excellence – a recent review of the Day Duty Trial Agreement indicated that it had not delivered all the objectives as anticipated, however some of the positive

benefits were being worked through with staff and representatives. On call crews were being utilised to carry out Safe and Well visits, looking at how the Service can improve the experience of on call staff and maintain their interest and experience. The replacement of the new mobilising system had been the focus for the Combined Fire Control, and was progressing well despite the challenges over the lockdown period. Two new turntable ladders had been introduced, enhancing response capabilities, and progress continued to be made with the new Training Centre at St Johns in Huntingdon.

Value For Money – work has been ongoing with the national emergency service communication system, responding to work requests from the central project. Good progress had also been made on the implementation of the new mobilising system, with the new infrastructure in place at Dogsthorpe for the secondary combined fire control room. Collaboration continued with other emergency services, including opportunities to share estates, and the use of drones with Police colleagues.

Technology had moved forward dramatically over the pandemic, with more opportunities for efficient and effective ways of working, especially home working. All staff had been migrated to Microsoft 365 to improve access to information from any location, and to facilitate collaborative opportunities with partners.

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 29 seconds, and 12 minutes 11 seconds in Rural areas. There had been some changes in the demarcation between urban and rural areas. Attendance to all incidents had increased to 95.1% of incidents being responded to within 18 minutes. Regrettably, there had been five deaths in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough due to fire in the year.

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

- A Member thanked the Service for its response to the flooding incidents in his division of Duxford, and asked if the flooding had put an additional strain on the Service. The Chief Fire Officer responded that it was a pressure on the Service, but to date, the Service had been able to cope. In areas such as Duxford, there had been invaluable support from neighbouring Fire Services. The Member also thanked the Service for its response to the Duxford School Fire;
- There was a discussion on the different types of flooding, including the problems created by HCVs and speeding vehicles in flooded areas. Officers acknowledged that flooding problems could often be exacerbated by backwash from vehicles, but regrettably, this was beyond the Fire Service's control. There were, however, a lot of taking place in terms of community safety in terms of improving resilience, through activities such as safe and well visits, and flooding formed part of those discussions in communities vulnerable to flooding such as around Alconbury. Officers confirmed that global warming was currently a topic of conversation in those discussions, but ultimately the Fire Service was a response service.
- Noting that firefighters undertook a very physical job, a Member asked if there was any age criteria in relation to retirement and succession planning. The Chief Fire Officer confirmed that capability was not based on age but on physical fitness, with many firefighters working until 60, but still expected to undertake the

same physical fitness tests. A lot of measures were in place to support firefighters in maintaining their physical fitness.

- There was a query on how young people were selected for schemes such as Firebreak, i.e. whether they were identified as potential arsonists and/or vulnerable individuals? It was confirmed that they were identified by a wide range of agencies as being potential candidates for these courses.
- Noting the reference to sharing estates with other Blue Light services, a Member asked how far collaborative work was taking place with the East of England Ambulance Service. Officers explained that there was a legal requirement to collaborate with the Police, and for collaborative opportunities to be *considered* with the Ambulance Service. There had been numerous examples of where the Fire Service had worked collaboratively with the Ambulance Service e.g. at the height of the pandemic, operational staff had supported the Ambulance Service by driving ambulances. This was very demand led, and the Cambridgeshire Fire Service was small in comparison to the East of England Ambulance Service. The main area of support was co-responding. Nationally, there had been a disagreement between the Unions and Fire Services on co-responding, and technically the Service could not require firefighters to attend medical calls. However, staff had been asked to volunteer, and there were currently two stations co-responding. Whilst there was closer working in some other areas of the country, locally this was largely dependent on the appetite for collaboration by senior managers at the East of England Ambulance Service.
- Officers outlined the various opportunities that had been explored to share sites with the Police, including, Whittlesey, Dogsthorpe, Linton and Cambridge Parkside. For some of those sites, the costs had been prohibitive, or the shared site option had ultimately not been pursued. One joint site which was being progressed was St Neots, and officers were happy to share the historic papers on that issue. In terms of potential property collaborations with the Ambulance service, this was more difficult, not least in terms of the governance and priorities of the Ambulance Service. It was noted that the possibility of an additional Fire Station in the south of the county, to reduce the burden on neighbouring Royston and Baldock stations, was being considered, and there had been discussions with the Ambulance Service about a site in Melbourne.
- A Member commented favourably on the Firebreak scheme, noting that it was a great opportunity for young people to gain self-confidence and thrive.
- There was a discussion on the challenges of the commercial awareness strategy, and how that would be monitored going forward. It was noted that a log of contract efficiencies was maintained and much of the work in this area was documented in past reports. Regrettably, the opportunities to make money were limited, and success stories from other Fire Services were few and far between, once factors such as hidden costs and potential State Aid issues were taken into consideration. However, viable options would be considered, and would be brought back to Members for their consideration.
- A Member queried the two fire deaths of “persons of unknown age”. Officers confirmed that these cases had been notified by the Coroner, and had involved partner agencies, but the Fire Service had not been called to this particular incident, and the information on their ages had not been provided.

- It was confirmed that where there were fires in dwellings, properties were checked to see if they had a working smoke alarm.
- In response to a Member question, it was confirmed that whilst the Service had been quite successful in attracting increasing numbers of female firefighters, increasing diversity through attracting more BAME candidates had been more problematic, and indeed this was a problem nationally for Fire and Rescue Services.
- In response to a Member question, it was confirmed that there were trained fire investigators employed in the Service, and opportunities for joint working were progressed with the Police at a regional level.
- The Local Member for Alconbury and Kimbolton thanked the Service for its work in supporting communities in Alconbury and Alconbury Weston, when over 100 houses had flooded, many extensively, with individuals having to be rescued from their homes. The County Council as Lead Flood Authority had arranged for the Flood Mobile to visit Alconbury, and a number of measures were being put in place in to mitigate flooding issues. Officers thanked the Member, and advised that the Service did what it could, but ultimately it was a response service, and anything that residents can do to prevent or mitigate future damage to their properties was very helpful.

It was resolved unanimously to:

Note the report.

## 7. Final Revenue and Capital Budget Position 2020-21

The Fire Authority considered the final 2020-21 revenue and capital budget outturn position. Key differences between the budget and outturn position on both Revenue and Capital budgets were noted.

Members' attention was drawn to Employee costs, which was overspent, but this had been a planned position. 32 wholetime firefighters had been recruited in 2019 to enable the Service to maintain operational crewing levels, taking into account anticipated retirements. This had reduced the Wholetime Firefighter Reserve by £575,000.

The Service had undertaken rate reviews of all of its properties, resulting in a significant reduction for both current and future rateable values, and also a retrospective refund. The pandemic had resulted in underspends in fuel and energy costs, but there had been an increase in costs for PPE, laptops and equipment for home working.

A significant review of non-operational fleet was underway, which was likely to impact on future vehicle procurement and funding requirements in that area.

The final outturn position on the revenue budget, before application of carry forwards, gave a final position of £90,000 underspend, which would be transferred to the General Reserve.

In response to Member questions:

- It was confirmed that actual expenditure was less than had been originally budgeted, and carry forwards had been earmarked for specific projects. If it transpired at a later date that less capital funding was required, a revised capital programme would be presented.
- Noting that there had been considerable investment in ICT to enable staff to work from home during the pandemic, a Member asked if staff would continue to work from home, and whether there were any ongoing ICT costs to facilitate that. Officers advised that the key change had been the Office 365 upgrade, so that everything was Cloud based. Providing staff with laptops and other equipment to work from home had been an additional cost. In terms of future working patterns, a balance needed to be struck – ultimately Service need was the key driver, but flexibility would be exercised, where possible, to facilitate home working where this was the preference. Operational staff had also benefitted from homeworking e.g. training seminars.
- It was noted that the Integrated Communications Control System (ICCS) was a major project which was being implemented by a French company. This had been delayed due to the Covid-19 travel restrictions, but good progress was being made, and it was envisioned that the project would be completed by late autumn.
- Members noted that an alternative risk transfer model had been established to form a mutual insurance company between eleven Fire & Rescue Services (now 13). Effectively the Fire Services self insure, but the really significant risks were still covered by the insurance market.

It was resolved unanimously to:

1. note the revenue and capital budget outturn position;
2. approve the requested budget holder carry forwards.

## 8. Appointments to Committees, outside organisations and other bodies

Members noted the proposed appointments which had been circulated to them separately.

It was resolved to:

agree the appointments set out in the report and as reproduced as Appendix 2 to these minutes.

On a related matter, the Chair proposed to suspend Standing Orders, to enable appointments of Chairs and Vice Chairs to be agreed at this full Fire Authority meeting. She explained that the Standing Orders stated that the Chair and Vice Chairs of committees were elected by those committees at their first meetings following the annual meeting of Fire Authority. Overview and Scrutiny Committee comprised eight members, and there was a real risk of a tied vote given the political balance on that Committee. The Monitoring Officer would be bringing a comprehensive report to Fire Authority at the November meeting, with proposed revisions to the Standing Orders. However, there was an Overview & Scrutiny Committee scheduled in July which had

business to transact. Failure to elect the Chair and Vice Chair of that Committee may mean that the Committee was unable to conduct its business. Therefore the Chair proposed to suspend Standing Order 1(b), and elect the Chair and Vice Chair of Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

The Monitoring Officer advised that the options available to Members were (i) to suspend Standing Orders, as explained by the Chair, and appoint the Overview & Scrutiny Committee Chair and Vice Chair, either for the municipal year, or until the next Fire Authority meeting; or (ii) retain the status quo, which would pose a risk in terms of that Committee being unable to appoint at its first meeting. She confirmed that suspending Standing Orders should only take place if there was urgent need, and that it was for members to decide; if members felt business at Overview and Scrutiny could be stymied, then this would amount to an urgent need.

A Member commented that this was not a matter that all Members had had prior notice of, and it was departure from the way Fire Authority meetings normally operated. He expressed a preference to retain the status quo and appoint the Overview & Scrutiny Committee Chair at the first meeting. A number of other Members supported these views, commenting that there was a presumption that Members would vote in a particular way, and expressed disappointment that this was being proposed, as the Fire Authority had always been apolitical, and this was a departure from the usual collegiate approach.

Councillor Kindersley seconded the Chair's proposal. He commented that it was not unusual for Annual Meetings of the governing body to appoint Committee Chairs, and this was the practice for both Cambridgeshire County Council and Peterborough City Council. A number of Members supported this view, observing that uncertainty regarding the chairmanship of the Committee could result in instability, when the Service was facing numerous challenges.

Following a show of hands, the proposal to suspend Standing Orders was carried, by a majority.

There was a proposal by Councillor McDonald to appoint Councillor Kindersley as Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee for the municipal year, and this was seconded by Councillor Jamil. The Chair proposed that Councillor Taylor be appointed as Vice Chair of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee, and this was seconded by Councillor Kindersley. Following a show of hands, this was carried by a majority.

Chair

## Appendix – Chair’s announcements

I would like to begin by welcoming those members of the public and press, and also to both new and returning Members of the Fire Authority. I would also like to place on record our thanks to those former Members of the Fire Authority, that is Councillors Barbara Ashwood, Andy Coles, Derek Giles, Lynda Harford, Bill Hunt, Jocelyne Scutt and Mike Shellens

### Group Commander Gary Mitchley

It is with great sadness that I must report the passing of former Group Commander Gary Mitchley on 28 May 2021.

You may be aware that Gary was diagnosed with a brain tumour in 2019, just before he was due to retire from our Service. Showing his true indomitable spirit and determination, Gary fought the disease for many months and exceeded all expectations by returning to a near normal life. However a few months ago it was confirmed that his tumour had returned and he died peacefully at home with his family by his side.

Gary’s funeral was held last Friday and the funeral procession, which included the Service’s turntable ladder, started at St Neots fire station and drove by Huntingdon fire station on its way to Cambridge Crematorium. Firefighters and senior officers formed guards of honour at the three locations and colleagues gathered to say a final farewell. A book of condolence will remain open until Monday 28 June 2021. Messages will be passed on to Gary’s wife Lucy, together with photos from the two minute silence(s) held on 7 June 2021.

### HMICFRS Inspection Outcome

Returning Members will be aware that the Service was inspected in March by HMICFRS (Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services) as part of the national fire and rescue service follow up inspection programme. A debrief was received from the inspection team in April and although the debrief comprised their early findings and does not represent the final outcome (our inspectors hadn’t finished trawling through the 1200 plus pieces of evidence presented to them), our understanding is that they will find the Fire Service has made good progress since the initial inspection in 2018.

Although nothing of significant or immediate concern was raised during the debrief and whilst we wait for their findings to go through the national moderation process, be signed off and published (probably in late autumn), there were a number of areas that the Service needs to reflect on and where appropriate make changes, to continue our improvement journey over the next few years.

The Chief Officers Group will work with the Authority and everyone at CFRS to ensure the Service continues to be regarded as a progressive and high performing fire and rescue service.

### Fire and Rescue Sector Reform

Many of you will be aware that the sector is facing budget pressures against a background of increasing focus on national reform; the publication of the Home Office White Paper consultation - expected in late June or early July and the second part of the review into the Police and Crime Commissioner governance model.



Alongside that we have reached the fourth anniversary (14/06/21) of the Grenfell Tower fire; at the on-going inquiry, the recent evidence about decisions on the refurbishment being focussed more on the aesthetics of the building than the fire safety of those within it strikes at the heart of some of the problems and perceptions of fire safety.

At the same time, we continue to closely watch the evidence and findings from the Manchester Arena inquiry. Undoubtedly, both have and will continue to dominate many aspects of our work and raise further areas of learning for the sector and our emergency service partners.

### Passing of Bedfordshire Chief Fire Officer – Paul Fuller

Some of you will have heard of the passing of CFO Paul Fuller, following a short illness.

One of the longest serving Chief Fire Officers, he did outstanding charity work and campaigned doggedly on fire safety matters, he was an incredibly knowledgeable and popular CFO and will be sadly missed. On behalf of the Authority we have offered our condolences to his family.

**APPOINTMENTS TO COMMITTEES, OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS AND OTHER BODIES**  
**POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE (9 members)**

KEVIN REYNOLDS	C
DAVID OVER	C
SIMON BYWATER	C
<b>PETER MCDONALD</b>	<b>LD</b>
MANDY SMITH	C
<b>EDNA MURPHY</b>	<b>LD</b>
<b>PHILIPPA SLATTER</b>	<b>LD</b>
MOHAMMED JAMIL	L
<b>BRYONY GOODLIFFE</b>	<b>L</b>

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**(8 members not to be appointed to the Policy and Resources Committee)**

IAN GARDENER	C
MAC MCGUIRE	C
<b>SCOTT WARREN</b>	<b>C</b>
<b>SIMONE TAYLOR</b>	<b>IND</b>
JOHN GOWING	C
SEBASTIAN KINDERSLEY	LD
ANDREW BOND	LD
<b>HILARY COX CONDRON</b>	<b>L</b>

**APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE (7 members)**

KEVIN REYNOLDS	C
<b>IAN GARDENER</b>	<b>C</b>
MAC MCGUIRE	C
DAVID OVER	C
<b>EDNA MURPHY</b>	<b>LD</b>
SEBASTIAN KINDERSLEY	LD
MOHAMMED JAMIL	L

**PERFORMANCE REVIEW COMMITTEE (3 Members + 2 Substitutes)**

<b>MOHAMMED JAMIL</b>	<b>L</b>	
KEVIN REYNOLDS	C	
<b>EDNA MURPHY</b>	<b>LD</b>	
MAC MCGUIRE	C	Substitute
<b>PETER MCDONALD</b>	<b>LD</b>	<b>Substitute</b>

**APPEALS (PENSIONS) COMMITTEE (3 Members + 2 Substitutes)**

<b>BRYONY GOODLIFFE</b>	<b>L</b>	
JOHN GOWING	C	
<b>ANDREW BOND</b>	<b>LD</b>	
<b>IAN GARDENER</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>Substitute</b>
<b>SEBASTIAN KINDERSLEY</b>	<b>LD</b>	<b>Substitute</b>

**FIRE AUTHORITY DISCIPLINE COMMITTEE (3 Members + 2 Substitutes)**

<b>DAVID OVER</b>	<b>C</b>	
<b>HILARY COX CONDRON</b>	<b>L</b>	
<b>PHILIPPA SLATTER</b>	<b>LD</b>	
MAC MCGUIRE	C	Substitute
ANDREW BOND	LD	Substitute

**FIRE AUTHORITY APPEALS COMMITTEE (3 Members + 2 Substitutes)**

KEVIN REYNOLDS	C	
<b>MOHAMMED JAMIL</b>	<b>L</b>	
<b>SEBASTIAN KINDERSLEY</b>	<b>LD</b>	
MANDY SMITH	C	Substitute
<b>PETER MCDONALD</b>	<b>LD</b>	<b>Substitute</b>

## JOINT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE (7 Members + 6 Employee Representatives)

[Not subject to proportionality]

<b>Fire Authority Members (7)</b>	
SEBASTIAN KINDERSLEY	LD
<b>EDNA MURPHY</b>	<b>LD</b>
KEVIN REYNOLDS	C
<b>JOHN GOWING</b>	<b>C</b>
SIMON BYWATER	C
MAC MCGUIRE	C
<b>MOHAMMED JAMIL</b>	<b>L</b>

## LOCAL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

[Not subject to proportionality]

Greater Peterborough Partnership	MOHAMMED JAMIL	L
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## COMBINED AUTHORITY

Combined Authority	EDNA MURPHY	LD
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## MEMBER CHAMPIONS/LEAD MEMBERS

[Not subject to proportionality]

Equality and Inclusion	MANDY SMITH MOHAMMED JAMIL
Health and Safety	JOHN GOWING

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION

<b>EDNA MURPHY</b>	<b>LD</b>
<b>MOHAMMED JAMIL</b>	<b>L</b>
KEVIN REYNOLDS	C

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION FIRE SERVICE COMMISSION

<b>EDNA MURPHY</b>	<b>LD</b>
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