

## CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH FIRE AUTHORITY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – MINUTES

Date: Thursday 16 July 2020

Time: 14:00 – 14.50

Place: Virtual Meeting

Present: Councillors Gardener (Vice-Chairman), Gowing, Harford, Kindersley, McGuire (Chairman) and Scutt

Officers: Jon Anderson – Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Chris Parker – Area Commander, Suzanne Rowlett– RSM, Daniel Snowden - Democratic Services Officer and Deb Thompson – Scrutiny and Assurance Manager and Matthew Warren – Deputy Chief Executive Officer

### 80. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN/WOMAN

It was proposed by Councillor Gardener and seconded by Councillor Gowing that Councillor Mac McGuire be elected as Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the municipal year 2020/21.

### 81. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN/WOMAN

It was proposed by Councillor McGuire and seconded by Councillor Gowing that Councillor Ian Gardener be elected as Vice-Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the municipal year 2020/21.

### 82. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no apologies for absence and no declarations of interest.

### 83. MINUTES – 3<sup>rd</sup> OCTOBER 2019

The minutes of the meeting held on the 3rd October 2019 were approved as a correct record, subject to the amendment of the final bullet point of minute 73, Internal Audit Strategy 2019/20 to the Institute of Internal Auditors.

## 84. INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT

The Committee received the Internal Audit Progress Report. The report was first circulated in April 2020 and since then two further pieces of work had been completed relating to General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and governance. The final Internal Audit Annual Report 2019/20 would be circulated following the meeting however it was highlighted that the overall opinion was positive with further enhancements identified for risk management, governance and internal control to ensure it remained adequate and effective.

During discussion of the report Members:

- Clarified that on page 4 of the report should have stated October and not February.
- Noted the comments of the Deputy Chief Executive regarding the system challenges relating to TRaCS and CFRMIS that required time and investment to improve the quality of the information held on the system. Working groups had been established for both systems to address the issues highlighted in the audit report. With regard to assurance, all issues highlighted in the report had been addressed.
- Clarified that following the meeting, reports would be circulated that would provide details of the Fleet Management Policies and Procedures audit.

It was resolved unanimously to:

note the contents of the report.

## 85. FIRE AUTHORITY INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT

Members received the internal audit report regarding the governance arrangements of the Fire Authority. Members noted the outcome of the audit and its findings regarding structural arrangements following the COVID-19 pandemic and how conflicts of interest were recorded and managed during a meeting.

During discussion of the report Members:

- Drew attention to page 4 of the report regarding Fire Authority meetings being required to assume the responsibilities of the Policy and Resources Committee and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for as long as the restrictions of the coronavirus pandemic were in place and questioned why this meeting was taking place. Officers explained that the situation had progressed since the start of the pandemic and legislative changes that

permitted virtual meetings now enabled the two committees to perform their functions.

- Expressed concern regarding the reports presented to the Committee and sought assurance that the Committee was operating as it should. Officers confirmed this was the case and that the two reports discussed by RSM would be circulated after the meeting for review and comment.
- Noted the recommendation regarding declarations of interest and welcomed it as a useful reminder not to overlook the basics of a meeting. What action, if any, is taken in relation to any declarations of interest would be recorded moving forward.

It was resolved to note the report.

## 86. COVID-18 FRAUD RISKS

The Committee considered a report regarding COVID-19 Fraud Risks.

During discussion Members:

- Noted that the report was generic for all RSM clients and suggested that it would have been beneficial to see what steps the Fire Authority was taking to implement controls for a further report later in the year. Officers explained that the risks highlighted were contained in the Authority strategic risk register. Cyber fraud was one of the highest risks identified and as a result continued, substantial efforts were made regarding training and security.
- Requested that a report to understand the impact and additional costs to the Fire Authority of the pandemic (to date) and how it could be mitigated in the future was undertaken. Officers confirmed that discussions regarding a Member-led review of the Fire Authority's response to the pandemic had taken place and that terms of reference would be established for approval. **ACTION:** Deb Thompson
- Commented that access to virtual meetings was essential during the pandemic and suggested that further work should be considered to ensure that a proper meetings programme be maintained in the event of the internet breaking down. **ACTION:** Democratic Services

It was resolved to note the report.

## 87. COVID-19 EMAIL SCAMS

The Committee received a report regarding emails scams arising during COVID-19.

It was resolved to note the report.

## 88. CYBER SECURITY RISKS

The Committee received a report regarding cyber security risks that highlighted the potential issues that could arise during times of uncertainty and crisis and how criminals sought to exploit them.

It was resolved to note the report.

## 89. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

Members considered the Overview and Scrutiny Committee work programme and noted the additional Member-led review of the Fire Authority's response to COVID-19.

The next scheduled meeting was due to take place on 1<sup>st</sup> October and it was confirmed that this would be a virtual meeting.

Members noted that there were currently two ongoing Member-led reviews (approach to recruitment and health and well-being), both of which had been deferred for a number of reasons outside Members control. Officers sought to widen both reviews to encompass activity during COVID-19 before bringing them back to Committee in the autumn. It was also recommended that a previous review of the Fire Authority Structure and Membership be restarted with a reporting date no later than the scheduled April 2021 meeting.

**ACTION:** Deputy Chief Executive Officer/Deb Thompson/Chairman

It was resolved to note the work programme.

CHAIRMAN

CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH FIRE AUTHORITY  
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – MINUTES

Date: Thursday 1 October 2020

Time: 14:00 – 14:40

Place: Virtual Meeting

Present: Councillors Bond, Gardener (Vice-Chairman), Gowing, Harford, Kindersley, McGuire (Chairman) and Scutt

Officers: Jon Anderson – Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Dawn Cave – Democratic Services Officer, Dan Harris – Head of Internal Audit, Chris Parker – Area Commander, Stuart Smith – Group Commander and Deb Thompson – Scrutiny and Assurance Manager

90. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor Bond joined the meeting late.

91. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

92. MINUTES – 16 JULY 2020

The minutes of the meeting held on the 16 July 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

93. INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN PERFORMANCE MEASURES

The Committee received a report on performance against the Service's Integrated Risk Management Plan performance measures.

The COVID-19 pandemic had had a considerable impact, both positive and negative, on some performance measures. Average attendance for the first pump to incidents in both urban and rural areas had improved considerably, to 7 minutes 49 seconds and 11 minutes 45 respectively. An anomaly was noted in the urban figures provided, and it was agreed that this would be checked and confirmation circulated. **Action required: ACFO.** The improvement resulted from reduced traffic during the lockdown period, and increased On-Call availability from people working at home or being furloughed. Response to all incidents within 18 minutes had increased to 95.1%, which was above the target, and was again mainly attributable to the reasons outlined above.

The numbers of primary and secondary fires had increased, and the increases were mainly domestic fires. Fortunately there had been no fire deaths, but there had been a very slight increase in fire casualties, although most of these had been minor injuries.

There had been a significant drop (54%) in the number of road traffic collisions (RTC's) due to fewer people being on the roads, and also a reduction in the number of special services attended in total.

For equality and diversity indicators, the diversity of job applicants and employees had increased in all areas over the last five years, most significantly, there was a higher rate of female applicants. However it was acknowledged that much work was still to be done in this area, especially around the diversity of operational staff.

The number of engagements with businesses had reduced over the period due to some businesses being closed or operating at a reduced level over the pandemic period.

During discussion of the report, individual Members queried:

- the “discriminative nature of fire” (paragraph 4.1 of the report). Officers confirmed that this referred to the way in which fires were more likely to affect certain groups e.g. poorer individuals or those from BAME backgrounds, and that elderly individuals involved in fire were more likely to die;
- if the reduction in RTCs was proportionate to the reduction in traffic, or whether it was the case that proportionately there were actually more RTCs, due to some individuals driving irresponsibly on empty roads? Officers were unsure whether the reduction was proportionate but agreed to follow this up. **Action required: ACFO.**

It was resolved unanimously to:

note and comment on the contents of the performance report in Appendix 1.

## 94. REVIEW OF CAMBRIDGESHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Members considered the Member-led review of health and wellbeing, presented by Councillor Harford, who had led the Review.

Councillor Harford thanked all those who had contributed to the report, especially Deb Thompson, and those who had taken part for their open and honest responses. It was reassuring that continuing commitment to

communities was at the heart of service delivery. The first recommendation was that the Service should continue to work at the action plan it had set itself, and that action plan should be reviewed appropriately to pick up relevant changes e.g. changes of personnel. Evidence from Officers indicated an outward facing service with leadership willing to share and profit from good practice in investing in people. The report also recommended that there should be a further review, as 2024 was some years away, and things could change quickly.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Harford for her comprehensive report.

During discussion of the report, individual Members:

- noted an issue with the appendices (technical issue that was explained);
- commended Councillor Harford and Deb Thompson for all their hard work and producing such a succinct report from the wide range of information collated;
- commented that it was pleasing to note that Councillor Harford concluded that the Service was authentic in its commitment to helping people, and there was no evidence of any kind of toxic culture, for which senior management should be congratulated;
- observed that whilst there were many negative effects of the pandemic it was good to see some positives.

It was resolved to note the report.

## 95. MEMBER INVOLVEMENT IN AND UPDATE ON THE CAMBRIDGESHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The Committee considered an update on the Service's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. It was noted that this had been the subject of an Authority Member Seminar recently and many of the issues had already been explored at that forum. A number of activities that had been reduced or suspended during the pandemic were slowly being reintroduced, e.g. re-crewing roaming appliances.

An inspection by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) was due week commencing 5<sup>th</sup> October, and the Chairman would be interviewed as part of the process.

The Committee Chairman advised that along with the Vice Chairman, he had had opportunity to go through the Service's self-assessment return to the Home Office recently with Area Commander Parker and Group Commander

Smith. In addition, the inspection had been discussed at the recent Member Seminar.

A Member observed that whilst most of Cambridgeshire was low to medium risk in terms of increasing COVID-19 cases, there was higher incidence in Peterborough and Cambridge City was also a potentially risky area as students returned. He suggested that it may be worth adding this point to any submission, i.e. that the Service recognises that the pandemic remains a fluid situation and there were potential risks in Peterborough and Cambridge; a Cambridgeshire Member supported these comments. **Action required:** Officers agreed to add this in to the return to HMICFRS.

The Committee Chairman thanked Officers for the report and commented that he was confident that the Inspection would go well and the verdict would be that CFRS had performed well during the pandemic.

It was resolved to note the detail within the report.

## 96. INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT

The Committee considered the Internal Audit progress report. Dan Harris, Head of Internal Audit, advised that whilst four reports had been listed as being finalised since the last Committee, the Governance Fire Authority report had actually been considered by the Committee at its previous meeting.

Two of the final reports, *Procurement – Proactive Processes* and *Risk Management* both had Reasonable Assurances, whilst the final audit report on *Fleet Management – Policies and Procedures* had an 'Advisory' opinion. In response to a Member question, it was confirmed that an 'Advisory' may be issued if a review was not complete, or was an evolving area.

The Internal Audit team was very grateful to Officers and Members that they were still able to operate remotely during the pandemic, and gave particular thanks to Officers for allowing Internal Audit colleagues to access information, and being available for virtual meetings. As a result, good progress had been made, with half of the Internal Audit programme delivered with no significant weaknesses being identified in processes.

There was a discussion on the Governance report, where concerns had been expressed relating to a declaration of interest made by a Councillor, who was a Member of the Police and Crime Panel. The Chairman commented that the Councillor has no authority or pecuniary interest in Cambridgeshire Constabulary, which was why this had not been flagged up, but had made the declaration in the interests of transparency. The Chairman commented that it would be helpful to have an assessment at the time of the meeting or subsequently if a declaration was relevant.

A Member commented that the layout of the report this year was easier to follow than previously.



It was resolved to note the report.

## 97. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

Members considered the Overview and Scrutiny Committee work programme. More detail would be added to the programme once meeting dates for 2021/22 had been agreed at the Fire Authority meeting later in the month.

There was a discussion on the likelihood of face to face meetings recommencing. One Member pointed out that it made sense to continue Committee and informal meetings virtually, in the interest of saving Member resources, although he conceded that some meetings e.g. Annual Meeting of the Fire Authority, may need to take place face to face as they were more formal. However, he felt the default option for most meetings should be virtual. The Chairman commented that this issue continued to be debated at both local and national level, and advice would emerge in due course.

It was resolved to note the work programme.

CHAIRMAN