

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority

Minutes of the Policy and Resources Committee Meeting

Date: 23 October 2024
Time: 2.00pm – 2.55pm
Place: Fire Head Quarters, Huntingdon
Present: Councillors: S Kindersley (Chair) M Black, N Boyce, S Bywater, E Murphy, K Reynolds, P Slatter and M Smith
Officers: Matthew Warren, Jon Anderson, Ursula Bird, Stuart Smith, Tamsin Mirfin, Shahin Ismail, Deb Thompson and Tamar Oviatt-Ham.

80. Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest

Apologies were received from Councillor Jamil

There were no declarations of interest.

81. Minutes of the Policy and Resources Committee held 18 July 2024

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 July 2024 were approved as a correct record.

82. Policy and Resources Committee Action Log - October 2024

The Action Log was noted.

83. Overview and Scrutiny Committee Minutes - 25 July 2024

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 July 2024 were noted.

84. Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring Report 2024-25

Members received a report that gave an update on revenue and capital spending as of 30 September 2024.

Officers highlighted the following points in relation to the report:

- Inflation had gone down to 1.7% since the report had been written
Some of the expected cost increases had not occurred particularly in relation to fuel.

- On call firefighter expenditure was underspend but this was expected to be reduced when pay bandings came into effect in January 2025. It was not yet known what impact this would have on the budget and Service. The pay award had not yet been agreed for professional support, but LG members had agreed on a 2.5% increase with a fixed increase of £1,290. The service had budgeted for a 3% increase.
- In relation to the capital expenditure and financing, a further 7 hybrid flexi vehicles had been purchased, three more fire appliances were now in operation, including the concept vehicle.
- In relation to the property capital budget, the refurbishment of St Neots Station was underway. Tenders had recently been reviewed and an order was raised at the beginning of October that was in line with what had been estimated and the funding agreed. The Chief Fire Officer explained that there was an ongoing dialogue with Huntingdonshire District Council regarding re applying for Community Infrastructure Levy Funding (CIL).
- The Authority was still carrying debt of £5.7m. This position remained unchanged since June 2021, the last time any additional debt was taken. The Authority was holding £14.8m on deposit; in July an additional up-front pension funding of £6m was received from the Home Office in readiness for the expected pension payments relating to the Matthew's second options' exercise (On-Call back-dating pension to original start date) and McCloud pensions remedy (age discrimination case affecting both whole-time and On-Call firefighters); outgoing payments were expected from October onwards. Every July the Authority received approximately £4m from the Home Office to fund the firefighter pension scheme deficit and as such this cash was utilised during the year. A summary table of this position was shown in Appendix 3 of the report. The Chief Fire Officer stated that Members may hear criticism that the authority was not working quickly enough to deal with pension issues. He explained that currently the legislation was not in place to deal with this issue, and it was not clear when this would be resolved.
- The Authority had received an update from the external financial auditors and hoped to complete the 2023-24 accounts. An additional Policy and Resources Committee meeting had been scheduled for 28 November to review the accounts.

Individual Members raised the following points in relation to the report:

- Queried if the underspend on staffing was likely to be used in full. Officers commented that this was likely to be used due to the new pay award. It was expected that there would be a small underspend in relation to control pay as one person had moved out of the department and they would not be backfilling this role.
- Questioned in relation to full time fire fighters if there was a particular group retiring. Officers stated that a Resource Management Board had

been set up to review the establishment and retirement profile and planned ahead for six unplanned retirements a year, allowing for the establishment to be more flexible. The next recruitment drive would be in January 2025. The Chief Fire Officer stated that there were some significant concerns in relation to the new banding system and additional cost pressures and how this could impact on call cover. He explained that there would be a presentation to Fire Authority in December regarding the future vision for the Authority which would cover these areas.

- Queried the profiling of the IT budget and what it was currently covering. Officers explained that it was a difficult budget to profile correctly as generally the expenditure was annually.
- Highlighted the rates of interest to the Loan Board in appendix three of the report and the need to look at longer term cash flow.

It was resolved to note the position on revenue and capital spending.

85. Property Portfolio Update

Members considered a report that gave an update on the sale of the former Huntingdon fire station site, progress on the sale of the current St Ives site and outlined other property works.

Officers highlighted the following points in relation to the report:

- The Service continued to progress the sale of the old fire station site at Huntingdon with the support of Cheffins. The Chief Fire Officer stated that it was challenging to secure the site and there had been a lot of vandalism so it was hoped that the District Council would want to move forwards with granting planning permission. He explained that the Service was in receipt of a £25,000 non-refundable deposit and were looking to sell the houses connected to the site once the site had been sold. At present, it was expected each of the four houses would return circa £200k each, giving a total capital receipt for this lot of approximately £800k.
- The Service continued to progress the sale of the site in St Ives in collaboration with the Health Service. Working with Cheffins it would be actively marketed for sale from January 2025. The Service was looking to maximise the return and this was likely to be in the region of £1.7m dependent on market interest and planning. The Service had identified a preferred site at Unit 5 Compass Point, St Ives. Work had been carried out to ensure that the new site was in fitting with a modern facility and modelling had been carried out around support to the public, and the identified location would help to improve attendance rates as the Service would be able to grow its recruitment parameters.
- The initial meeting for the redevelopment of St Neots Fire Station had taken place, and this would be the first sustainable fire station in

Cambridgeshire. Officers had met with Huntingdonshire District Council on order to progress a new CIL funding application.

Individual Members raised the following points in relation to the report:

- Queried why the initial CIL bid for St Neots Fire Station had been refused. The Chief Fire Officer explained that there had been discussions with Huntingdonshire District Council to understand the breadth of what the fire and rescue service does in order to facilitate an improved bid. He explained that there were different guidelines in place now since the initial application and the Service was applying now under the new scheme. Councillor Bywater, the local member stated that he was happy to support the Service in discussions with the Huntingdonshire District Council. The Committee requested that the Chair of the Fire Authority write to the Leader of Huntingdonshire District Council (copying in St Neots Town Council and local County and District Members) in relation to both the St Neots and St Ives Projects in relation to support in relation to ensuring timeframes were kept to, highlighting the impacts in relation to operational pressures. **Action Required.**
- Expressed support of the proposals as set out, particularly in relation to St Ives station in Paragraph 5. The Chief Fire Officer explained that a report would come back to Committee with further details of the St Ives Project one they had been firmed up to seek formal approval. A Member commented that a consultation was currently underway on the A141 and St Ives improvements scheme. Officers stated that they hoped any improvements would help support response times.

It was resolved to note the contents of the report.

86. Fire Authority Programme Management – Monitoring Report

Members received a report updating on the Service projects as at September 2024.

Officers highlighted the following points in relation to the report:

- Replacement ICCS and Mobilising Solution, the Systel 'Go Live' on 12 September 2024 was a smooth transition for Cambridgeshire for Suffolk 'Go Live' involved more workarounds due to a number of issues. Systel were working with Suffolk to move out of their Business Continuity arrangements.
- Trauma Welfare Support (TRiM Replacement) had been a successful project and the power app continued to be tested across all areas of the Service with positive feedback so far. The Awareness package had been completed and all areas of Service now had scheduled rollout training, beginning in October 2024 with go live on 2 December 2024.

- Occupational Health System Replacement went live in August 2024 and feedback to date had been positive.
- Integrated workwear and PPE a long ongoing project, currently in the engagement phase
- TRACS training records and competency system, currently reviewing the current system and looking at what else was available. Making changes required to manage expectations of the HMRC.
- New projects that had been identified included:
 - Alerters replacement
 - Asset database and hydrant assets
 - Community and operational intelligence project – looking at data provision and flow of data. Mobile working and maintaining integrity.
 - Review of SHQ – going through programme board, to look at options
 - Operational response models
 - Performance and talent management
 - St Ives relocation
 - St Neots refurbishment

Individual Members raised the following points in relation to the report:

- Congratulated officers on the successful delivery of the replacement ICCS and Mobilising Solution.
- Queried how the hydrant mapping exercise would be carried out. Officers explained that they already had data on the location and co-ordinates of hydrants and would be looking at how faults could be reported and were looking at how the OS data could be automated. The Chief Fire Officer stated that this project would be challenging in terms of resources as there were 2.5 FTE Hydrant Engineers in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.
- Sought an update on the Firebreak programme. The Chief Fire Officer explained that a report would be brought to a future meeting. **Action Required.**

It was resolved to note the Programme Status Report, as of September 2024.

87. Policy and Resources Committee Work Programme - October 2024

The Chair stated that the East West Rail project would have an impact on response times and the Service needed to look at the potential costs of the authority from the project including journey mapping and times to arrive at

sites so that this could be shared with government. The Chief Fire Officer agreed to add a report to the work programme to address this. **Action required**

Members noted that an additional meeting would take place on 28 November 2024 to consider a combined Audit Planning Report and Audit Completion Report for 2021/22 and 2022/23.

Members noted the work programme.

Chair