

CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH FIRE AUTHORITY
POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE: MINUTES

Date: 19 December 2019

Time: 3:00pm - 4:18pm

Place: Fire and Rescue Services HQ, Hinchbrooke Cottage, Brampton Road, Huntingdon.

Present: Councillors: S Bywater, D Giles, M Jamil, D Over (Vice – Chairman), K Reynolds (Chairman), T Rogers, and M Shellens.

Officers: Chris Strickland – Chief Fire Officer, Matthew Warren – Deputy Chief Executive, Deb Thompson – Scrutiny and Assurance Manager, Shahin Ismail – Monitoring Officer, John Fagg – Head of ICT and Daniel Snowden – Democratic Services Officer.

124. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence received from Councillor M Smith.

125. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Bywater, Giles and Shellens declared a non-statutory interest in minute 136 – Relocation of Huntingdon Fire Station and Training Centre as they were members of the Police and Crime Panel.

126. MINUTES OF THE POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD ON 17 OCTOBER 2019

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 October 2019 were confirmed as a correct record and were signed by the Chairman.

127. ACTION LOG

The Committee noted the action log and the following updates provided at the meeting:

- Minute No. 101 – Regarding progress in relation to the age related claim due to pension changes, Members were informed that an interim order had been made that instructed 1992 conditions should be reinstated. It was not clear what impact the ruling would have. However, central government funding would be required in order to meet the additional financial pressure.
- Minutes 118 and 119 – An email update would be provided following the meeting.

128. MINUTES OF THE FIRE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MEETING HELD ON 3 OCTOBER 2019

It was resolved to note the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 3 October 2019.

129. DRAFT MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2020 TO 2024

The Committee received the draft Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and associated Financial Plan for 2020/21 to 2023/24. Members noted that the Government spending review had been delayed and due to the general election no information had been received regarding the provisional one year settlement figures for 2020/21. It was anticipated that the details would be released mid to late January 2020. Therefore, an assumed 2% increase to Council Tax had been applied within the MTFS. Officers commented that consideration may want to be given to the public consultation on the proposals and what form that may take. Members noted the level of uncertainty regarding the proposals due to the delay to the financial settlement and the deadlines of District Council's that administer the billing.

In discussing the report:

- Members noted that public consultation was a statutory requirement. However, the consultation could be relatively light touch.
- The Committee noted that generally public consultations undertaken resulted in few responses.
- The Chairman commented that he would be inclined to undertake a roadshow at locations such as Queensgate shopping centre and engage with the public directly regarding proposals.
- A Member suggested consulting on increasing the Council Tax precept by a maximum of £5. However, it would be essential that the purpose of the proposed increase was made clear to the public.
- Officers explained that the approach to public consultation had varied over the years including roadshows and surveys. It was found that the first year of a new approach increased the number of responses and then tended to decrease in subsequent years. A mixed approach to consultation would probably be most effective. Members noted that an online survey together with a press release would be the most cost effective.
- It was proposed with the unanimous agreement of the Committee to amend recommendation c) of the report to approve the draft increase in Council Tax by up to £5 for consultation.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Approve the proposed MTFS 2020/21 to 2023/24;
- b) Note the draft financial plan that includes provisional precept estimates; and
- c) Approve the proposed draft increase in Council Tax by up to £5 for consultation.

130. EQUALITY PAY AUDIT – UPDATE ON WORK TO PROGRESS ACTIONS

The Committee considered the update on work to progress actions arising from the Equality Pay Audit.

Officers, informed the Committee that the report provided an update following the report presented at the July 2019 meeting that had highlighted a number of potential risks for the organisation. Work had been undertaken with a specialist to develop a new pay structure within the agreed cost parameters. The proposals were currently being assessed and subject to that assessment would be presented to the January 2020 meeting of the Committee.

It was resolved unanimously to:

Note the contents of the report.

131. REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING REPORT 2019-20

The Committee received a report that gave an update on revenue and capital spend as at 30 November 2019.

Officers drew attention to an under spend in IT and Communications that would be largely spent as there were a number of contracts that would be paid later in the financial year. Members noted the successful recruitment of eight firefighters that were now operational which would result in an over spend on the full-time firefighter budget at year end and therefore an operational reserve had been created to address the issue. Officers highlighted fire allowances expenditure relating to flexible duty Officers who provided cover to a number of Officers who were long term sick and the number of on-call firefighters that remained a cause for concern.

In discussing the report Members:

- Noted that regarding on-call, some expenses were allocated to the wrong area and they would be corrected.

It was resolved unanimously to:

Note the position on revenue and capital spending.

132. ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE ICT SHARED SERVICE AGREEMENT

The Committee received a report that provided the outcome of the annual review of the operation of the ICT Shared Service Agreement for the period 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019, undertaken by the Head of ICT for Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service and the ICT Shared Service Delivery Manager.

The Committee was informed that the re-structure had been successful. Some staff had left but there had been no requirement for redundancies. The transition to new ways of working had been smooth and the Key Performance Indicators were returning to previous levels. High profile projects such as upgraded infrastructure and the move to Microsoft Office 2016 had been successfully implemented.

Costs of the shared service relating to staffing had remained stable. There had been difficulties in recruiting to the server engineer role due to the level of salary being offered.

In discussing the report Members:

- Noted that a contractor had been used to cover a vacancy however it was unsustainable. A Support Engineer had moved across into the Server Engineer role and the apprenticeship scheme had been successful in growing talent.
- Noted that depending on the role, pay lagged around 10% behind the market rate. Where it could be justified pay was varied in order to attract applicants. In 2013 a report was presented to the Fire Authority that agreed a shared service vehicle that would share terms and conditions with Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS); the shared terms and conditions were not progressed by BFRS.
- Questioned why the relationship with BFRS was being persevered with. Officers explained that the relationship in most areas was successful and it was only this area where there were difficulties due to an unwieldy governance structure. To resolve the issue a single governance arrangement was recommended by an independent review that was carried out a number of years previously. CFRS members had signed up to the approach however, for unknown reasons, BFRS members had not to date been asked for their agreement.
- Commented that maintaining a relationship because it was convenient was not preferable when there were many potential partners available.
- Drew attention to the colours and ratings used within the Annual Customer Survey results as the scores appeared to be modest. Officers

explained that the scores were out of seven. The scores represented the user perception of IT services and looked at whether they were improving and not how well they were performing. Officers undertook to set benchmarks for where it was expected results should be. **ACTION**

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Consider the outcomes of the fourth annual review of the operation of the ICT Shared Service Agreement; and
- b) Note the progress and direction of travel towards achieving the aims of improved service, resilience, flexibility, cover and cost management.

133. UPDATE REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NEW MOBILISATION AND INTEGRATED CONTROL AND COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM

The Committee received a report that provided an update on the progress of the project to implement the new mobilisation and Integrated Control and Communication System (ICCS).

Members noted that the contract had been signed and work was underway to create the system specifications and manage the procurement process. It was anticipated that implementation and testing would take place through most of 2020 in order to ensure it was ready to go live. Dogsthorpe had been identified as the most suitable location to house a secondary control location, in preference to St Ives, as it provided improved resilience not least because it was in a different telephone area code.

Members noted that discussions had taken place with Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service who had implemented the same system and have sought to learn from their experience.

It was resolved unanimously to:

Note the update as at November 2019.

134. POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

No additions were made to the work programme which was noted. otedd.

135. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

It was resolved to exclude the press and public from the meeting on the grounds that the agenda contains exempt information under Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, and that it would

not be in the interest for this information to be disclosed: information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

136. RELOCATION OF HUNTINGDON FIRE STATION AND TRAINING CENTRE

The Committee received a report that identified a suitable site on which to locate a new fire station and training centre.

It was resolved to:

Agree the recommendations as set out in the exempt report.