

CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH FIRE AUTHORITY: MINUTES

Date: Thursday 7th November 2019

Time: 2.00 – 2.40pm

Present: Cambridgeshire County Council:

Councillors: S Bywater, I Gardener, J Gowing, S Kindersley, M McGuire, K Reynolds (Chairman), T Rogers, J Scutt, M Shellens and M Smith

Peterborough City Council:

Councillors: M Jamil and D Over (Vice-Chairman)

Officers Present: M Warren, S Ismail, J Anderson and D Cave

Also present:

113. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ashwood, Bond, Giles, Goodwin and Harford.

114. MINUTES OF THE FIRE AUTHORITY MEETINGS HELD 20TH JUNE AND 30TH JULY 2019

The minutes of the Fire Authority meetings held 20th June and 30th July were agreed as a correct record, and signed by the Chairman.

115. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman advised that the Chief Fire Officer was unable to attend the meeting as he was attending the passing-out parade for new CFRS recruits.

With regard to the Grenfell Tower Inquiry, the Chairman advised the Fire Authority had set up a group to consider the recommendations made in the Phase One Report, and would make any necessary changes to policy and procedures. In the weeks following the Grenfell Tower fire, CFRS had visited all of the high rise premises in the county and ratified the risk information. The Fire Survival Guidance was also updated to ensure that it was relevant and targeted to individual premises.

The Chairman reported on the tragic death of Firefighter Josh Gardener from West Wales Fire and Rescue Service who sadly lost his life on 17 September 2019 during a training exercise. A representative of CFRS attended his funeral. This tragic event underlined the risks taken by firefighters on a daily basis. The Chairman commented that he took very personally any unwarranted criticism directed at operational staff across the country.

A collaborative Community Safety role focusing on delivering road safety initiatives was being developed with the Police. This role would also be involved with water safety and children and young people safety initiatives. The effectiveness of the post would be reviewed after six months.

The Fire Service had also been working with Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service for a number of years, with a view to procuring a state of the art mobilising/radio system. The procurement exercise had been completed and Systel, a French company with a proven track record in this field, had been selected. The system is expected to be implemented next year.

In September, the Service hosted a visit from the Shanghai Municipal Civil Defence Office, who were keen to visit and learn from a fire and rescue service that was “performing to a high standard”. Delegates spent time at Huntingdon fire station.

The Chairman commented that it was regrettable that the Fire HQ car park was not being used in the manner it should, but it was anticipated that a car park barrier would be erected shortly, to prevent parking by individuals who were not staff or visitors to Fire HQ.

A Member commented on the Grenfell Phase One Report. Whilst acknowledging that nothing was ever perfect, and that lessons could always be learned, he expressed his confidence in Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service, and in particular, the front line officers who had to deal with extraordinary situations on a daily basis. The Chairman and other Fire Authority Members endorsed these comments, and it was agreed that a message would be sent to all staff. Members were surprised and disappointed by the level of criticism aimed at front line firefighters in the Grenfell Phase One Report.

116. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

117. FIRE AUTHORITY COLLABORATION OVERVIEW AND UPDATE REPORT

The Fire Authority considered an update on the Service’s many collaboration activities, and how these were being monitored and reviewed. All collaborations were reviewed to ensure that they were still meeting the Service’s business needs, providing value for money and risk mitigation or opportunity realisation, and demonstrated the effective use of resources. It was noted that the Collaboration Register was updated regularly.

Fire Authority Members noted some of the report highlights, including the use of Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service’s Fire Behaviour Training facility, as the Hot Fire site at Marshalls was no longer available.

In discussion, individual Members raised the following points:

- suggested offering facilities for mobile NHS units such as the Mammogram unit. Officers agreed to look in to this. **Action required;**
- requested an update on the Red Cross Fire Victim Support Memorandum of Understanding. **Action required;**

- noted that the RAF and USAF resources referred to in the Register related to specialist equipment owned by these Forces e.g. specialist water carrier. It was agreed that the Register would be updated to reflect this information. **Action required;**
- noted the inclusion of the prospective Police site at Monkswood for a training facility. It was confirmed that this was a collaboration that was being worked towards, and there had been a volume of correspondence between the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) and the Chairman on this issue. The Chairman advised Members he would be copying his latest letter to them. The Chairman regretted that the PCC appeared to be moving the goalposts. It was therefore imperative that a “Plan B” was identified and implemented to provide the much needed facility for staff. The Grenfell Tower incident had highlighted the importance of having fit for purpose training facilities, and the current facilities were lacking; and it would be difficult to demonstrate that the requisite facilities were in place if the Service was challenged.

It was resolved unanimously to:

Note the collaboration update, as at October 2019, within the report and attached at Appendix 1 to the report.

118. EQUALITY AND INCLUSION COMPLIANCE REPORT 2018/19 (INCORPORATING GENDER PAY GAP)

The Fire Authority considered a report about equality progress in the year 2018-19 and the gender pay gap as at March 2019. This ensured that the Authority met the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities) Regulations 2011 and 2017.

Members were advised that this report had been considered in depth at the Policy and Resources Committee on 17 October 2019, where a number of changes were made. Attention was drawn to the executive summary, which set out progress against objectives, including:

- *Improved attendance of all business communities in Cambridgeshire at fire safety business seminars.* Limited English language skills had proved to be a barrier previously, and it was pleasing to note that there had been an increase in attendance by Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups;
- *Ensuring Safe and Well Visit data analysed to understand BAME engagement –* visits were aimed at those most vulnerable to being injured or killed in fire, including older people who have a disability, impaired mobility or who were vulnerable in some other way. Members noted the ways in which these clients were identified;
- *Improving staff skills in engaging with different communities –* this covered all aspects of community safety work including dementia awareness, mental health wellbeing, vulnerable residents. This would now be included as part of induction training for all new firefighters and part of the ongoing training for wholetime operational personnel;

- *Improving workforce diversity* – duty operational crews had increased attendance at community events that provided opportunity to engage with communities under-represented in the CFRS workforce e.g. PRIDE, celebrating LGBTQ+ communities;
- *Taking action to understand and reduce the gender pay gap* – a specific piece of work had been commissioned to look at Gender Pay Gap. This would be reported back to the Policy and Resources Committee in December.

In response to a query about the Safe and Well visits, it was noted that 95% of those visits were targeted. The issue with BAME communities was that individuals were often not registered with Doctors or social services, so the issue was more about access to services rather than language barriers. The data on those individuals was provided by Social Services, and work was also ongoing within those communities to obtain direct referrals.

A Member suggested that the RESPECT programme should shift the onus from the individuals who were at the receiving end of inappropriate behaviour, and instead focus on addressing those behind the offensive behaviour. Whilst agreeing that the issue was ultimately with the perpetrators, Officers explained that the RESPECT agenda was intended to create a climate where individuals felt comfortable and safe coming forward with their concerns. The approach was two-pronged, with the 'One Team' behaviours programme focused on stopping the conduct before it happened. However, it was agreed that the Councillor's comments would be taken into consideration when the policy was next reviewed.

It was noted that Alison Scott had recently retired. Alison had been a key player in much of CFRS's Equality and Inclusion work over many years. Fire Authority Members placed on record their thanks to Alison.

It was resolved to:

Note the Equality and Inclusion Compliance Report 2018/19.

119. INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN 2020/24

The Fire Authority considered an update of delivery against the Service's Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP). The IRMP process reviews performance data and assesses the likelihood of fires and other related emergencies occurring.

Despite a steady increase in population, the incident rate had reduced considerably over ten years, although the numbers had marginally increased over the last five years, suggesting that a plateau had been reached. The decrease was due to actively managing demand through fire prevention and protection work, together with targeted initiatives. However, over the past few years there had been major spikes in operational activity over the summer months, mainly attributable to hotter and drier spells of weather.

The Comprehensive Spending Review for the next four years had been delayed to 2020 while government concentrates on Brexit, and a single year settlement was anticipated for 2020/21, with an unknown picture thereafter.

A Member commented favourably on the report. He highlighted that Fenland had the highest populations of travellers in the country, and South Cambridgeshire the second highest.

It was resolved unanimously to note the contents of the report.

120. FIRE AUTHORITY PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT – MONITORING REPORT

Fire Authority Members considered an update against key projects and activities for 2019/20.

Members noted the following highlights:

- Migration from old Document Management System to new system (Project P124), which was a major undertaking;
- The new Mobilising Solution (P108) which was also a very complex project. It was expected that this would be implemented in the new year;
- Asset Management Software (P073) implementation;
- Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme (ESMCP) (P089) – this project was dependent on the Full Business Case being approved by government;
- VDI Upgrade Shared Service Project (P109) – this was resolved within six weeks, and had been very successful;
- There had been an update regarding the On-Call project at a Member Seminar in the morning. It was agreed that the slides of that seminar would be circulated to all Members. **Action required.**

It was resolved unanimously to note the Programme Status Report, as at September 2019, attached to the report as Appendix 1.

121. APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT PERSONS

Members considered a report on the recruitment of two Independent Persons. It was noted that the Fire Authority rarely needed to call upon the Independent Persons, but it was a good measure to have in place.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Extend the current appointment of Gillian Holmes as Independent Person to 7 November 2022; and
- b) Appoint Grant Osbourn as an Independent Person to 7 November 2022.

122. PROPOSED DATES OF FIRE AUTHORITY MEETINGS

Members received a report proposing a schedule of Fire Authority meeting dates for 2020/21.

Since the agenda was published, it had come to light that two meetings needed to be rescheduled: Joint Consultative Committee (20/09/2020) and Policy and Resources Committee (08/04/2021). **Action required.**

On a related issue, it was noted that the Policy and Resources Committee had moved to 3pm on 19th December 2019, as County Council meetings had had to be rearranged, due to the General Election.

It was resolved unanimously to agree the schedule of meetings for 2020/21.

123. APPOINTMENTS TO COMMITTEES, OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS AND OTHER BODIES

There were no appointments to be made.

124. FIRE POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MINUTES – 18TH JULY 2019

Members noted the minutes of the Policy and Resources Committee meeting held 18th July 2019.

125. FIRE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MINUTES – 3RD OCTOBER 2019

Members noted the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held 3rd October 2019.

It was noted that two Overview and Scrutiny Committee Councillors were sought to serve on two Member Led Reviews (items 77 and 78 of the minutes). Those interested should contact Deb Thompson to discuss.

Chairman