

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority

Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting

Date: 15 January 2025

Time: 2.00 p.m. – 3.22 p.m.

Venue: Fire Service HQ

Present: Councillors C Rae (Chair), S Taylor (Vice-Chair), A Bond, I Gardener, J Gowing and R Hathorn.

105. Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest

Apologies were received from Councillors Fitzgerald and Dew.

There were no declarations of interest.

106. Minutes – 9 October 2024 and Action Log

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 October 2024 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

The Action Log was noted.

107. Community Risk Management Plan 2024-29 Performance Measures

The Committee received a report on the Service's performance against the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) performance measures.

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

- questioned if arson was a concern to the Service as there had been three incidents in the Member's division recently. Members learnt that when the cause of a fire was uncertain the necessary work was undertaken to find the cause. Officers agreed to discuss this with the community safety team to ensure the causes of fires were understood as well as possible – **action required.**
- asked if new cars decreased the number of people killed in road traffic collisions (RTCs). Members learnt that education regarding road safety contributed to the numbers decreasing along with the reduction in speed limits. There was no data from which any conclusions could be drawn as to the impact on safety of newer vehicles. Officers agreed to ask Vision Zero for further information – **action required.**
- questioned if there was further information regarding traffic accidents between Ellington and the county boundary on the A14. Members noted that the Service had

not seen a trend, however that did not mean accidents had not been attended by other emergency services. Members learnt there was a desire to create a heat map to try and identify hotspots on major roads, but the information would be provided by Vision Zero.

- queried if on-call fire fighters being moved to other sites at the weekends had increased availability to attend fires. Officers agreed to review the data and inform Members, however there had been a positive uptake from the on-call team – **action required.**
- questioned what approaches had been taken to increase House Fire Safety Visits (HFSV). Members learnt that colleagues worked with families and care providers to help provide support. Referrals could be made to MASH so the right support could be provided. Members noted that letters were sent to houses to notify residents that the visit would take place.
- learnt that when a DBS check does not come back clear, risk assessments would be undertaken which would consider factors such as the age when offended and any offending trends. There would then be a discussion with the individual and further options would be discussed. This would all be verified by the Head of Safeguarding. The Deputy Chief Executive stated that there had been very few issues so far.
- questioned how crews could refill their water bottles when out. Members learnt there were a few options being considered and highlighted that, although there would always some need for plastic, these would help reduce the use of single use plastic.
- noted that there were concerns from the unions when the crews of three were first introduced and questioned if there had been any feedback or concerns. Members learnt that there had been positive responses from crew members. There had been no feedback or comments from unions or other representative bodies. The ambition was to have crews of four in the future. Having looked at the data, there were benefits of crews of three and this had been adopted by other fire services.
- learnt that the control room was using the Systel system. The project team were preparing for the split from Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS). The Deputy Chief Executive stated they were recruiting temporary positions in the control room. It was noted that SFRS stated they would have their own standalone fire control centre in April 2025.

It was resolved unanimously to:

Note the contents of the performance report in Appendix 1 which covered the first two quarters of the year 2024/25 (1 April to 30 September 2024).

108. Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority Internal Audit Progress Report

The Committee received an internal audit report which provided an update on the progress against the audit plan. One final report had been issued for Key Financial Controls – Treasury Management and had received substantial assurance. The

Management of IT Assets report was in draft which was a joint review with Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS). The Follow Up report was in progress which looked at the implementation of previous actions.

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

109. Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority Internal Audit Strategy 2025/26

The Committee received the proposed audit strategy for 2025/26. The presenting officer stated that there was an error on page 33 of the agenda pack; the total audit fee should state £41,054.

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

- learnt that every year a different area of key financial controls was audited.
- confirmed that Asset and Fleet Management would be audited this financial year, 2024/25.
- sought clarification on the new management checks listed on page 41 of the agenda pack. Members were informed that these were risk areas and therefore would be included in audits.
- questioned if the reorganisation of Local Government should be included as an audit area. Members learnt that the auditors were already aware of this, and the audit plan could be changed if there were signs of progress which should be considered.

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

110. Update on Culture Related Work at Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service (CFRS)

The Committee received an update report on culture related work at CFRS following His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) report titled 'Standards of Behaviour – The Handling of Misconduct in Fire and Rescue Services' which made 15 recommendations to all Fire and Rescue Services. Attention was drawn to the establishment of the Professional Standards Board.

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

- questioned Recommendation 13b 'Fire and Rescue Authorities and Chief Fire Officers should make sure all Service Managers and Members of Fire and Rescue Authorities who hear appeals receive appropriate training. Chief Fire Officers should make sure services have a consistent approach to hearing appeals.' What training would be given to Members and how frequently. Members learnt that this was a generic recommendation but would not apply in CFRS as appeals were heard by the Chief Fire Officer. Training was due to be delivered to relevant staff involved in investigation and hearings within the next year.

- queried Recommendation 2 'Chief Fire Officers should make sure a policy for probationary staff is in place. The policy should make clear that services can immediately dismiss probationers who fail to meet the required standards of behaviours set out in the Core Code of Ethics and the Code of Ethics Fire Standard.' CFRS already had a policy, and work was being undertaken with the Monitoring Officer to update and streamline the process. The Monitoring Officer informed Members that the recommendations were sent to all fire and rescue services so some recommendations would be more relevant than others and CFRS already had a probation policy.
- learnt that the Professional Standards Board would meet on a six-weekly basis.
- sought further clarification on Recommendation 3b 'Chief Fire Officers should also make sure firefighters who are promoted are posted to a different watch or station, including when the promotion is temporary for two months or more. If this isn't possible, Chief Fire Officers should show how the risks of reinforcing a negative culture have been addressed.' Members learnt that this could negatively impact the culture and could deter people from promotion opportunities. The Service believe it was better to resolve any negative cultural issues on a Watch, rather than move individuals. Members learnt there was already a transfer process in place which would ensure that appropriate moves to different stations occurred.

Having scrutinised and noted the Service's approach to issues of culture, it was resolved unanimously to:

- 1) Agree to receive a six-monthly report (to this Committee) reporting on issues of misconduct with analysis of any trends, outcomes and learning opportunities. This would supplement the annual culture report and would provide Member level oversight and scrutiny as recommended by HMICFRS.
- 2) Agree that Councillor Taylor would be the culture lead Member from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee who the Professional Standards Board would liaise with relating to culture.

111. Member-Led Review – TRiM Replacement (Trauma Welfare Support Provision)

The Committee received a report which presented the findings of a Member-led review into the provision of trauma welfare and support within CFRS.

Members learnt that the previous TRiM system was introduced in 2016 as a result of the introduction of co-responding. Following feedback in July 2022, there was a lack of engagement with TRiM. There were a number of shortfalls with the process which meant it was no longer fit for purpose.

The new process was peer support supplied by Professor Stephen Regel who provided training. The new process meant that after a critical incident, the officer in charge would have a debrief meeting with those involved. If necessary, a second meeting would take

place a few days later facilitated by a trained person, called a diffuser, who understood the trauma process. Attention was drawn to the importance of training and education for trauma response. An app had been introduced which enabled people to register when they had been involved in an incident. The app would allow the person to say when and where they could be contacted regarding the incident.

The Service recognised the concern that this option was delivered by a single person, therefore there was a single point of failure. Professor Regel was undertaking work to establish the Centre for Trauma, Resilience and Growth.

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

- were grateful for the update as TRiM was previously thought to be an effective system so welcomed the scrutiny.
- highlighted the importance of the debrief meeting.

Having reviewed and commented on the overall review, attached at Appendix 1, it was agreed unanimously to:

Agree the conclusions at paragraph 8.2 to 8.4 inclusive and agree that a follow up review would be undertaken by Members, commencing in December 2025, to evaluate the new provision.

112. Member-Led Reviews Update

The Committee received a verbal update on 'Employee Recruitment and Retention (On-Call)'.

Members had already had a meeting with relevant officers and had scheduled a subsequent meeting. A report would be brought to the March meeting.

It was unanimously resolved to note the update.

113. Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme

Members learnt that the EY external audit report, which was due to be presented at the meeting, would be presented at the February Fire Authority meeting.

The Committee noted its work programme.

Chair