

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority

Minutes of the Policy and Resources Committee Meeting

Date: 22 January 2025
Time: 2.00pm - 3.04 pm
Place: New Shire Hall
Present: Councillors: S Kindersley (Chair) M Black, N Boyce, S Bywater, E Murphy, K Reynolds and P Slatter and M Smith
Officers: Matthew Warren, Jon Anderson, Ursula Bird, Stuart Smith, Tamsin Mirfin, Shahin Ismail, Vicky Best, Tamar Oviatt-Ham and Sophie Rankine

95. Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest

No apologies for absence or declarations of interest.

96. Minutes of the Policy and Resources Committee held 28 November 2024

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 November 2024 were approved as a correct record.

97. Action Log

The action log was noted.

98. Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service - Community Safety Activities Update

Members received an update on the breadth of community safety activities currently being undertaken by the Service and an outline of new options for approval.

Officers highlighted the following points in relation to the report:

- The Service had delivered over 7,000 safe and well visits in the year to date and could evidence a yearly increase over the past five years.

- The Service had recently delivered courses for young people identified through serious violence duty practitioners. These had been well received and had a significant impact on reoffending rates.
- The Service sat on a number of partnership boards including the National Fire Chiefs Council Regional Prevention Committee, National Fire Chiefs Council Fire Kills Group, Water Safety Partnership (Chair) and Vision Zero (Tactical and Strategic Board).
- A number of proposals had been identified to be taken forward including:
 - o The current safe and well visits were being replaced by home fire safety visits (HFSVs) which were a standard approach to home fire safety outlined by the NFCC Person Centred Framework Community
 - o Education activities were recommencing in schools with a ward-based system and crews responsible for one particular area.
 - o Serious Violence Duty Groups. Officers were currently working out what this would look like.
 - o An Enhanced Fire Break Model was being trailed in South Cambridgeshire.
 - o Fire-P, intervention for adult fire setters before release from prison
 - o Extending the Community Wellbeing Officer trial.

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

- Queried how the catchment areas for fire stations would work in relation to community education activities. Officers explained that this would be reviewed on a geographical basis. A Community Education Board would agree quarterly objectives based on incident trends and specific calendar risks. In addition to schools' education, the Service was exploring options to further support serious violence duty through attending diversionary groups and delivering a suitable training provision.
- Sought further detail on the progress of activities proposed in relation to adult fire setters. Officers explained that Fire-P was an intervention scheme for adult fire setters. The Service had two trained members of staff and were in the early stages of communications with partners (police, probation and prison service) around how the scheme could be embedded within prisons prior to release therefore reducing the risk of arson in the community. Officers explained that they were in discussions to extend the trial with EEAST for a further 12 months to fully understand the costs and benefits to both organisations. The Chief Fire Officer commented that EEAST had recently appointed a new Chief Executive, and discussions had been slower than anticipated.
- Welcomed the links with the Community Safety Partnerships (CSP's) across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.
- Highlighted the good work of the Firebreak programme. A Member queried if it would be possible for someone that had undertaken the

programme, to apply to be a firefighter in the future. The Chief Fire Officer explained that that the young people that were engaged with the programme faced many barriers as many were not engaged with education and qualifications were required in order to apply to the Service. He explained that it was a fine balance and that recruitment requirements needed to be looked at as a whole in terms of the barriers faced without underselling the professionalism of the Service.

- A Member commented that he was supporting a project within Peterborough schools for all year 9 students bringing together the Fire and Rescue Service, Police and Air Ambulance to run workshops for schools every two months on a wide range of topics.
- Queried whether the Fire and Rescue Service were picking up community safety work that other services should be carrying out and whether there was a sense of what the boundaries were in terms of the work undertaken by the Service. Officers explained that they had to constantly review the priorities and focus of their community safety activities, and this was also linked to available funding. The Service had recently lost the funding for a role in the Road Safety Partnership.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- Provide views and comments on the community safety activities including future options
- Approve progression of the future options

99. Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring Report 2024/25 (Including Mid-Year Treasury Management Review)

Members received an update on revenue and capital spending and a mid-year Treasury Management review as of 31 December 2024.

Officers highlighted the following points in relation to the report:

- The budget for full-time firefighters continued to be overspent in the third quarter, but the variance had reduced as expected as other firefighters had retired and sickness levels had reduced. A slight increase in costs was expected over the next couple of months relating to a further intake of new recruits.
- The operational On-Call firefighter expenditure remained underspent. The Service were yet to see the impact of the new pay bandings on budgets, and this would be better understood by the end of this financial year and would be closely monitored and reviewed.
- The premises underspend continues to be due to gas and electricity costs being significantly less than those budgeted. The overspend relating to the business rates on the old Huntingdon site would remain

as the completion of the sale was still pending; it was hoped this will complete by the end of this financial year. The underspend in property maintenance was not expected at the end of the year.

- A mid-year Treasury Management review had been prepared in compliance with CIPFA's Code of Practice on Treasury Management. It provided Members with, amongst other information, an economic update for the first half of the 2024/25 financial year. Borrowing rates had remained higher than investment rates and there were no immediate plans for external borrowing. The long-term forecast was that the Bank of England rate would reduce, and it currently fluctuated between 2 and 2.5%.
- The pay negotiation process for 2025 was about to commence and would not be concluded until after the budget is set. Bandings were a significant pressure on the overall budget that had to be covered.

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

- Queried if the staffing levels in the control room had been reviewed pending the joint arrangements with Suffolk coming to an end. Officers explained that currently the control room was understaffed due to sickness levels, so some temporary contracts had been put in place. The Service wanted to avoid any redundancies after the end of the joint arrangements and a restructure of the control room would take place following the departure of Suffolk. A Member queried if Suffolk were still contributing to the costs of the Control Centre. The Chief Fire Officer explained that they were paying 50% of the costs and that he was still struggling to get a direct response in terms of when they would be leaving.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- Note the position on revenue and capital spending,
- Review and provide comment on the mid-year Treasury Management review

100. Strategic Risk and Opportunity Management Register – Monitoring Report

Members received an updated strategic risk report, as of January 2025, highlighting those risks that were considered above the risk appetite of the Authority. Officers explained that report format had been changed so that risks were now grouped into themes to make the register easier to navigate.

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

- Queried if any thought had been given on the potential financial impact on the authority in relation to local government reorganisation. Officers stated that this was an emerging risk and would be reflected in the register going forwards.

- Questioned if Artificial Intelligence would have an impact on the production of data and patterns that could be used going forwards. Officers explained that the shared service team were looking into this further. The Chief Fire Officer also commented that there would be a confidential report to the Fire Authority on Cyber Security later in the year.
- Queried if the Service had reviewed the Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service Risk Register to see if they also had a risk in relation to the termination of the fire control collaboration. The Chief Fire Officer explained that he would continue to pursue an update in relation to when they would be leaving the control centre.
- Questioned if the Service was engaging with Parish Councils to ensure that Fire Safety Information was disseminated particularly in rural areas where there were increasingly aging populations. Officers explained that the Community Safety and Wellbeing Officers engaged with Parish Councils to disseminate information.

It was resolved unanimously to:

review and provide comments on the strategic risk register

101. Policy and Resources Committee Work Programme

The Chief Fire Officer stated that the next meeting was due to be held on 3 April 2025. As this would be in the pre-election period he would discuss with the Chair and Officers to review if there was anything critical that needed to go to the meeting or if it could be cancelled. **Action Required.**

Chair