

CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH FIRE AUTHORITY - MINUTES

Date: Thursday 14 December 2006

Time: 14:30 – 15:55

Place: Fire & Rescue Service Headquarters, Hinchingsbrooke Cottage,
Brampton Road, Huntingdon

Present: Cambridgeshire County Council
Councillors: B Boddington, R Butcher, C Carter, G Harper, D Harty,
S Giles, G Heathcock, S Kindersley, L McGuire (Chairman), L Oliver,
R Pegram, M Smith, H Williams

Peterborough City Council
Councillors: M Collins, G Murphy, D Raines

Officers

Present: Tom Carroll, Lawrie Booth, Martin Scott, Graham Stagg, Matthew Warren, Geoff Taylor, Michael Brown.

29. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor M Fazal.

30. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 19th OCTOBER 2006

The minutes of the Fire Authority meeting held on 19th October 2006 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

31. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman reported that he and other members of the Authority had attended the Chief Fire Officers Association Conference held at Telford in November.

The Chairman also advised members that the Regional Management Board (RMB) had recently held a workshop to discuss the arrangements for the establishment of a company which would be responsible for running the proposed Regional Control Centre. Proposals for the establishment of the company would be submitted to the RMB in January and would be recommended that the company's board comprise members from each of the constituent fire and rescue authorities. Further advice was being sought on arrangements for the voting powers to be proportionate to the size of the appointing fire authority.

32. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made by members under the Code of Conduct.

33. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

The Fire Authority unanimously agreed

That the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it 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 public interest for this information to be disclosed as it contains commercially sensitive information.

34. DEVELOPING AN EMERGENCY RESPONSE STRATEGY FOR CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH FIRE AUTHORITY

The Committee received a report updating it on the work with the consultants ORH and the intended strategic direction for the future provision of the emergency response service in the Authority's area.

The Emergency Response Model had been used to measure and validate potential changes in service delivery and had identified a number of potential changes to the current pattern of delivery as well as issues requiring further investigation. Proposed changes would be included in the draft Integrated Risk Management Strategy which would be submitted to the next meeting of the Authority for approval and issue for consultation.

Members noted that the Community Safety and Policy and Finance Committees had considered the report and endorsed the recommendations.

The Committee noted the following during the discussion of the recommendations:

- developer contributions under the Section 106 for fire cover for the new Cambourne development had been agreed in 1994 and it would be difficult to re-negotiate the agreement.
- the Chief Fire Officer advised that sprinklers would be the preferred fire suppression measure at Northstowe and there may be a case for the Fire Authority to subsidise the installation of the more costly approved sprinkler system in view of the long-term savings in revenue costs of providing cover by a fire station. However, it was acknowledged that there were still a number of obstacles to be overcome with regard to the use of residential sprinkler systems across large scale developments.
- further investigations into the cover in Gamlingay were required in the context of cover provided by fire stations in Bedfordshire. Councillor Kindersley asked to be involved in the more detailed investigations.

- fire stations at both Huntingdon and St Neots were well located but that relocation to a new site and sale to a developer at the right price would provide the opportunity for new facilities to be provided.
- no change in status at Ely and Wisbech was proposed but further research was proposed on the hours worked by day-related staff with the aim of ensuring that optimum use was made of their available hours.
- further work was required into options for providing cover from the stations at Burwell and Swaffham Bulbeck.
- the Peterborough Volunteer Fire Brigade (PVFB) station was well located but suffered from low availability. Renewal of the Authority's contract with PVFB provided an opportunity to look at other options.
- a review of rest provision would result in improved response times.
- the rural parts of the County would continue to rely on cover by retained firefighters and the continuation of the review of the Retained Duty system would seek to improve delivery.
- the Authority would be consulted on any changes proposed by other Fire Authorities which might impact on the cover available to locations within Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

The Authority resolved unanimously to approve the inclusion of the following recommendations within the draft Integrated Risk Management Plan for 2007/08:

South Cambridgeshire

- a) that the Authority commits to building a community safety station at Cambourne, maintaining Papworth as the centre for the response service unless the risk profile changes, or financial constraints demand otherwise.
- b) that the Authority engages with the Developer at Northstowe to ensure the provision of residential sprinkler systems as the risk control measure of first choice. Failing this it is recommended that a single appliance retained fire station be provided. It is also recommended that Cottenham remains open in its present format.
- c) that the Authority engages ORH to undertake further modelling, in partnership with Bedfordshire, to determine future arrangements for cover in Gamlingay.

Cambridge

- d) that if planning permission is granted for Parkside, the Authority explores the provision of stand-by facilities at nodes 856 and/or 1036 to operate at key periods of the day.
- e) that if planning permission is refused for Parkside, the Authority explores the future potential of premises at Parkside and nodes 856 and/or 1036.

Huntingdonshire

- f) that the Authority continues to explore the potential to move or improve Huntingdon fire station either independently or in partnership.
- g) that the Authority continues to explore the potential to move or improve St. Neots fire station either independently or in partnership.
- h) that the Authority undertakes further research with regard to the hours worked by day related staff with the aim of ensuring that optimum use is made of their available hours.

Fenland

- i) that the Authority undertakes further research with regard to the hours worked by day related staff with the aim of ensuring that optimum use is made of their available hours.
- j) that the Authority keeps the contribution to emergency cover made by Manea fire station under review.

East Cambridgeshire

- k) that the Authority undertakes further research with regard to the hours worked by day related staff with the aim of ensuring that optimum use is made of their available hours.
- l) that the Authority reviews further the options for a single location operational response for the Swaffham Bulbeck and Burwell area.
- m) that the Authority defers any decision on the extension at Ely until arrangements are in hand for any combination of districts, and accommodation requirements have been fully considered.

Peterborough

- n) that the Authority investigates the most cost effective method of introducing a much improved response from the Peterborough Volunteer Fire Brigade (PVFB) station.
- o) that the Authority seeks to achieve new contractual arrangements with Peterborough Volunteer Fire Brigade (PVFB) that secures improved response from the PVFB site.

Rest

- p) that the Authority makes the necessary arrangements to ensure firefighters are awake and alert for the duration of their working time.

Retained Duty System

- q) that the Authority continues to implement the recommendations of the retained review.

The meeting reconvened in public session

35. FINANCIAL ESTIMATES 2006/07

The Authority received a report and Budget booklet on the Authority's draft 2007/08 revenue and capital estimates, including precept and indicative Council Tax calculations.

Members noted:

- the Authority set a Band D Council Tax of £50.40 for 2006/07, a 4.5% increase over the rate set in 2005/06.
- the Government expectation that Fire authorities do not set excessive increases in 2006/07 and 2007/08.
- the Revenue Support Grant (RSG) for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority was set at £12.444m for 2007/08, which represented an increase of 4% over the adjusted 2006/07 grant of £11.971m.
- for every 0.75% increase in Council Tax an additional £97k would be added to the Budget.
- the anticipated cost of inflation between 2006/07 and 2007/08 was £674K, an average of 2.7%
- details of cost pressures on the Authority's budget of £179K arising from the earlier implementation of the departmental restructuring and the revenue costs arising from capital spending.
- estimated efficiency savings in 2007/08 through lower insurance premiums, implementation of a standard fleet of vehicles, improved procurement and efficiencies from partnership working.
- a proposed capital budget for 2007/08 of £1.517m based on the approved Asset Management Plan.

The Authority discussed the range of Council Tax increases on which to consult the local community having regard to the immediate and longer term financial pressures on the Authority, projected income, and the financial impact on Council taxpayers.

The Authority supported the proposals for consultation on the proposed Budget and Precept for 2007/08 through a press release, information on the website and direct consultation with relevant bodies, parish councils and businesses.

The Authority agreed to consultation on the Authority's Budget for 2007/08 be based on Council Tax increase options of 4%, 4.5% and 5%.

36. ALTERNATIVE RISK FINANCING

The Authority received a report on progress with investigations into the possible establishment of a Fire and Rescue Authorities Mutual Insurance Company (the Mutual) to provide insurance to participating fire authorities.

The Committee noted:

- the drivers behind the proposal and the anticipated benefits.
- participation by 20 fire authorities in the development of the proposals.
- the proposed structure and operation of the mutual insurance company.
- the capitalisation of the company through contributions and financial guarantees from member authorities, and that the amounts required would reduce if further authorities participated.
- a thorough risk assessment had been undertaken on the proposals.
- legal advice on the proposal.
- the Mutual would provide for the self insurance of risk up to a certain level and exposure above that level would be re-insured through the insurance market.
- the financial evaluation with estimated savings in insurance premiums of £70k against current projected costs.
- there had been no increase in the Authority's insurance premiums for 2007/08 which suggested that there was an awareness within the industry that previous premiums had not been competitive.

The Treasurer to the Authority advised that the proposed Board of the Company need not be the Finance Directors of participating Fire Authorities and could include Fire Authority members with knowledge or experience of the insurance industry. The Chairman expressed a wish to see member representation on the Board of the Company.

The Fire Authority unanimously

- (i) agreed in principle to participate in establishing the Mutual for the reasons set out in this report;
- (ii) agreed that, subject to the Treasurer, Director of Resources and Legal Advisor being satisfied with the detailed contractual and governance arrangements for participating in the proposed Mutual and subject to reporting back to the Policy and Finance Committee, the Authority becomes a full member of the company and authorises the Chief Fire Officer in consultation with the Chairman of the Fire Authority and the above Officers to take all necessary steps to achieve this;
- (iii) agreed that, subject to recommendation (b) above, the Authority purchases its corporate property, liability, motor insurance and other miscellaneous insurance requirements for a minimum period of one year through the Mutual with effect from 1 April 2008, but that in the event that the Mutual is unable to assume risk by that date the Chief

Fire Officer be authorised to arrange interim insurance cover as required;

- (iv) agrees in principle to participate in capitalising the company by way of an initial cash contribution of £12k and an additional financial guarantee of no more than £127k and authorises the Chief Fire Officer to take all necessary steps to achieve this;
- (v) agrees to waive the usual standing orders relating to contracts in view of the fact that the procurement in this case is being pursued through Firebuy; and
- (vi) agrees that a further update on progress of reports be submitted to the Policy and Finance Committee in due course.

37. UPDATE ON DUAL APPLIANCES

The Authority received a report on work undertaken to investigate the potential use of dual appliances by the Service and the evaluation of potential appliances.

The Authority noted:

- a review team, including input from members, health and safety, the Fire Brigades Union and users, had identified two dual use appliances which met the needs of the service (Magirus Multistar and John Dennis/Verma). Recent test drives had indicated that chassis would be able to access required sites in the County.
- the capital cost of the vehicle compared favourably with the cost of turntable ladders and would reduce the requirement on the pumping appliance replacement programme.
- the purchase of 2 appliances to be based at Cambridge and Stanground would provide an enhanced rescue capability.
- proposed crewing arrangements would result in a potential revenue cost but better shift management and further improvements in the rescue capability of front line pumping appliances may offset this. In the medium term it was expected that the use of the appliances would be cost neutral.

The Authority agreed unanimously to:

- (i) note the work undertaken to date.
- (ii) endorse the continuation of the investigative work.
- (iii) authorise the Chief Fire Officer, in consultation with the Chairman of the Fire Authority, to enter into such contracts as necessary to secure the use of two dual appliances.

38. STANDARDS COMMITTEE – 28th NOVEMBER 2006

The Authority received a report of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on 28th November 2006 and noted:

- the current position in relation to member conduct.
- a proposal to amend the Members' Code of Conduct to refer to both genders.
- the introduction of guidance on the acceptance of gifts and hospitality by members.
- a proposal that a sub-committee of the Standards Committee be appointed to undertake hearings into complaints against members.

The Authority agreed unanimously:

- (i) that the revised Code of Conduct referring to both genders be adopted as set out in Appendix 1 to the report.
- (ii) that a Sub-Committee of the Standards Committee be established to conduct hearings into alleged breaches of the Code of Conduct and that the necessary changes to Standing Orders as to Meetings be approved as set out in Appendix 2 to the report.

39. APPOINTMENTS TO COMMITTEES AND OUTSIDE BODIES

The Authority considered a request for the appointment of a member of the Fire Authority to the South Cambridgeshire Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP). Members noted that Councillor Oliver currently served on the CDRP as a County Council representative and that the Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service was represented at Officer level. The Chairman advised that the Authority should seek representation from the Fire Authority on all of the CDRPs in the County.

The Fire Authority agreed unanimously that Councillor M Smith be appointed to represent the Fire Authority on the South Cambridgeshire Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership

40. COMMUNITY SAFETY COMMITTEE – 11TH NOVEMBER 2006

The Authority received a report of the meeting of the Community Safety Committee held on 11th November 2006 and noted information on:

- The impact of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety Order) 2005.
- Work undertaken by the Arson Task Force and other arson reduction initiatives.
- A collaborative exercise with Bedfordshire and Luton Fire and Rescue Service for the recruitment of wholetime firefighters.

41. SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE – 14TH NOVEMBER 2006

The Authority received a report of the meeting of the Scrutiny and Performance Committee held on 14th November 2006 and noted information on:

- Arrangements for the tendering of the appointment of new internal auditors to the Authority and that Councillor Pegram had been appointed to the interview panel which comprised member and officer representatives of the 3 Fire Authorities involved in the procurement.
- The outcome of the Non-appliance Transport Review and the introduction of a standard fleet across the service for all non-appliance vehicles.
- The Fire Authority's performance relating to its strategic priorities and performance indicators for the period April to October 2006. Members noted that it was hoped that the appointment of a Fire Signals Manager would bring about a reduction in the number of false alarms caused by automatic fire detection equipment in non-domestic properties (BV 149(i)). It was noted that the County had a comparatively higher number of non-domestic properties with automatic fire detection equipment and it was suggested that an alternative indicator be developed to relate the number of false alarms to the number of equipped properties.

42. POLICY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE – 28TH NOVEMBER 2006

The Authority received a report of the meeting of the Policy and Finance Committee held on 28th November 2006 and noted information on:

- The introduction of a medium term financial strategy covering the period from 2007/08 to 2011/12.
- A review of the Authority's Strategic Risk Register for 2006/07 and the addition of 2 new risks, namely Failure to plan for a Pandemic, and Failure to proceed with major property schemes.
- The outcome of a High Court case which had ruled that the co-responding role was not part of a firefighter's contractual duty and that the Authority had supported the cost of an appeal.
- The schedule of meetings of the Authority for 2006/07 and 2007/08
- Revenue and capital budget monitoring 2006/07 which indicated that the revenue budget was underspent by 7.3% at the end of August 2006.
- Statistics and trends concerning employees of the service for the period from April to the End of October 2006.

43. CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR MESSAGES

The Chairman of the Fire Authority expressed the best wishes for Christmas and the New Year to all staff on behalf of the Fire Authority. The Chief Fire Officer thanked members for their continuing support.

CHAIRMAN