

CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH FIRE AUTHORITY - MINUTES

Date: Thursday 14 February 2008

Time: 14:30 – 15:40

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

Present: Cambridgeshire County Council
Councillors: B Boddington, R Butcher, C Carter, S Giles, G Harper,
D Harty, S Kindersley, L W McGuire, R Moss – Eccardt, L Oliver,
R Pegram, M Smith and H Williams

Peterborough City Council
Councillors: G Murphy and D Raines,

Officers

Present: M Brown, S Mason, G Stagg, G Taylor and M Warren.

49. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors M Collins and J Goodwin

50. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 13 DECEMBER 2007

The minutes of the Fire Authority meeting held on 13 December 2007 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

51. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no Chairman's announcements at this meeting.

52. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest under the Code of Conduct.

53. MEDIUM TERM FIRE AUTHORITY PLAN

The Authority received a report on the proposed Medium Term Fire Authority Plan which detailed the Authority's vision, medium term objectives and corporate priorities for 2008/09.

The Plan proposed that the Authority's vision remain unchanged but that it be summarised under the headline "Reducing Risks – Saving Lives".

The Plan included the following objectives:

- Enhancing Community safety - Proactively working with all sectors of the community to reduce fire related risks.
- Operational Excellence – Providing the highest standards of front line delivery and support services.
- Effective Use of Resources – Managing our resources and overall performance to ensure Service objectives are met.

The Plan included priorities for 2008/09 relating to:

- Training and development
- Implementation of the training strategy
- Review of resources
- Parkside development
- Firelink/FiReControl
- Premises Risk Information Database
- Geographical Information System
- Environmental Strategy
- Performance Management
- Performance Appraisals
- Equality

Members discussed aspects of the Plan, including:

- The absence of reference to the significant growth taking place in the county. Members were advised that the Service's infrastructure was addressed within the Asset Management Plan whilst the Emergency Response Strategy included an assessment of the impact of development on the Service's ability to respond to emergency incidents. It was also suggested that the Authority as well as seeking Section 106 developer contributions towards the cost of developing fire cover should also be influencing master planning policies relating to housing densities, water supplies and road layouts. The Chief Fire Officer was content with the Service's current capacity to respond to emergencies but that this would be kept under review. The use of S106 contributions to offset the cost of installing sprinklers in affordable housing could be an appropriate means of addressing the risks associated with these properties.
- Reference to the new Local Area Agreements (LAA). Members were advised that the Service was now represented on the LAA Partnership Boards covering Cambridgeshire and Peterborough although performance indicators relating to fire were not included in the local priorities being set. The Service's activities were being cross matched against the LAA objectives to identify how the Service could contribute to their achievement.

- The Child whispering pilot had been funded to March 2008 and would be rolled out to local education authorities in 2008/09.

The Fire Authority agreed unanimously that the Fire Authority Plan for 2008/09 be approved.

54. SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2008/09

The Authority considered a report on the draft Service Improvement Plan for 2007/08. Members noted that the National Framework for 2004-08 envisaged that the Authority's Integrated Risk Management Plan would become a strategic document covering a number of years setting out the context and long term objectives, and would be underpinned by annual Service Improvement Plans setting out activities to be undertaken in pursuit of those objectives.

The draft Service Improvement Plan for 2008/09 had been subject to a 12 week consultation period and the Plan had been amended in response to the comments submitted. The Plan included the following proposals:

1. To explore, in conjunction with wholetime personnel and representative bodies, the feasibility of the introduction of a new Heavy Rescue Vehicle whilst maintaining the resilience and timeliness of specialist rescue support across the service area, including cross border working.
2. To enhance and expand the current training regime for Incident Commanders and Incident Support Staff to improve the management of emergencies and satisfy the needs of national response frameworks.
3. The introduction of a 'mobile' team of three qualified Fire Safety Officers for a period of three years to undertake a proportion of the 'non-localised' fire safety workload (complaints, investigations, prosecutions, etc) in order to allow district-based fire safety teams deal with specific local issues.
4. To explore, in conjunction with retained personnel and representative bodies, the feasibility of improved usage of retained personnel employed at Strategic Response Stations and the provision of alternative support engines where appropriate.
5. To work with our operational firefighters and their representative bodies to examine
 - (a) shift systems for wholetime shift, day crewed and flexible duty staff
 - (b) deployment options available for the outcomes of proposals 1 and 4
 - (c) work routines for wholetime shift and day crewed staff

in order to resource as many of the other proposals in this plan from within the existing workforce and budget.

Members discussed aspects of the Plan, including

- Reviewing the method of providing standby crews at fires and other incidents after the emergency phase had passed.
- The review of the contractual arrangements between the Authority and the Peterborough Volunteer Fire Brigade. The Chief Fire Officer advised that a team was currently negotiating this and agreement was expected to be concluded by the end of 2008/09.
- The objective of the proposals to increase the “utility” of Swaffham Bulbeck, Burwell Fire and other Retained Duty Stations was to make better use of the resources available. As an example, the Chief Fire Officer advised that this could include the training of RDS staff to undertake boat crew duties which would then avoid the cover provided by a full time station being diminished when such crews were required.
- The outcome of the Government review of the response to flooding was awaited with interest and would require consideration of the command structures involved and the type of equipment required to respond to flooding.
- The reference to the national vision of “Excellence” as measured by the Comprehensive Performance Assessment and whether this coincided with the local vision of what constituted excellence.

The Authority agreed unanimously:

- (i) that the outcome of the 12 week consultation period on the content of the draft Service Improvement Plan 2008/09 be noted , including the slight amendments to the wording of 2 of the proposals.
- (ii) that the revised Service Improvement Plan 2008/09 as set out in Appendix 1 to the report be approved

54. FIRE AUTHORITY BUDGET 2008/09

The Authority received a report and Budget booklet on the Authority's draft 2008/09 revenue and capital estimates, including precept and Council Tax calculations. A copy of the Chief Financial Officer's Statement was tabled.

Members were advised:

- that consultation had taken place on the Authority's Budget for 2008/09 based on Council Tax increase options of 3.5%, 4%, and 4.5%. Two responses had been received, one favouring a 3.5% increase and the other a 4% increase.

- the Authority's Final Revenue Support Grant (RSG) Settlement for 2008/09 had been confirmed unchanged from the Provisional RSG announced in December 2007.
- the Authority had been advised of an increase in the Tax base which would increase the income received from Council Tax payers. A small deficit of £12,000 on the Council Tax Collection Fund had also been advised.
- the Budget proposed for 2008/09 was the same as that considered by the Authority in December although the increase in the tax base meant that the increase in the Council Tax could be reduced from 4% to 3.9%.
- the proposed budget would provide some increased resources to address the priorities identified in the Fire Authority Plan as set out on Page 12 of the Budget booklet.

Members noted:

- the Budget would allow a temporary Youth Worker post to be made permanent and for an additional post to undertake work relating to the Retained Duty System including liaison with employers of potential RDS staff.
- on-going work was taking place to review the security of CFRS premises and equipment. Members noted the recent theft of specialist heavy cutting equipment from Gamlingay Fire Station

The Authority agreed unanimously:

1. That approval be given to a Fire Authority budget requirement of £27,960,000.
2. That approval be given to a recommended Fire Authority precept for Council Tax from District Councils and Peterborough City Council of £14,575,262.
3. That approval be given to a Council Tax for each band of property, based on the number band D equivalent properties notified to the Fire Authority by the District Council and Peterborough City Council (267,692):

Band	Council Tax	Band	Council Tax
A	36.30	E	66.55
B	42.35	F	78.65
C	48.40	G	90.75
D	54.45	H	108.90

4. That approval be given to the prudential indicators as set out on page 8 of the Budget Booklet attached as Appendix 1 to the signed copy of the minutes.

5. That approval be given to the Treasury Management Strategy Statement on pages 7 to 9.
6. That approval be given to the capital programme detailed at page 6.

55. APPOINTMENT TO COMMITTEES AND OUTSIDE BODIES

No changes in appointments to Committees and Outside Bodies were required at this meeting.

56. REPORT OF THE POLICY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE – 24 JANUARY 2008

Members received a report on the meeting of the Policy and Finance Committee held on the 24 January 2008 which included information reports on:

- Single Equality Scheme 2008 -2011 and Corporate Equality Plan
- Consultation Response to National Fire and Rescue Equality and Diversity Strategy 2008-2018
- Consultation Response to Draft National Framework for the Fire and Rescue Service 2008 – 2011
- Consultation Response on Establishing a Centre of Excellence for the Fire Service
- Firecontrol Project – Transition Governance, Roles and Responsibilities
- Update on the New Performance Framework
- Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring 2007/08
- Human Resources Data – April to December 2007

Arising from the report on Human Resources Data – April to December 2007, Members noted :

- that the reduction in the numbers of Retained Duty Staff was due primarily to Service led actions challenging the availability of RDS staff, including those on career breaks.
- the decision of the Employment Appeal Tribunal relating to the status of RDS staff had been deferred until Easter 2008.
- there were concerns that the National Point of Entry Selection Tests were reducing the availability of RDS staff which by the nature of the role, had to be drawn from a limited pool of potential applicants living and working close to retained fire stations. There was no age restriction on applicants but a fitness test was applied. There were also concerns nationally about the willingness of employers to release staff for retained duties.
- there were concerns about the high level of sickness amongst whole time staff and actions were being taken to seek to address this.

57. REPORT OF THE COMMUNITY SAFETY COMMITTEE – 9 JANUARY 2008

Members received a report on the meeting of the Community Safety Committee held on 9 January 2008 which included an information report on the Functional Strategies for the Operational Support Directorate.

Members noted that it was proposed that members of the Fire Authority would be appointed to act as Lead member champions on each of the steering groups responsible for the development and delivery of the strategies relating to the Community Risk Reduction Group, the Operations Support Group, and the Training Support Group.

58. REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE – 10 JANUARY 2008.

Members received a report on the meeting of the Scrutiny & Performance Committee held on 10 January 2008 which included information reports on:

- Annual Audit Letter 2006/07 And Audit Plan 2007/08
- Implementation Of 2006/07 Internal Audit Findings - Update Report
- Fire Authority Performance Update 2007/08 – Fire Authority Plan

Members discussed the increase in the number of Road Traffic Collisions (RTCs) and whether the increase in the number of foreign registered heavy good vehicles, including left hand drive vehicles and non-English speaking drivers, was a contributory factor. The Chief Fire Officer advised that the new Incident Reporting System would provide more information about incidents and allow a more sophisticated identification and analysis of relevant factors. This may have an impact on how the Service and the Road Safety Partnership responded to reducing the incidence of RTCs.

CHAIRMAN