

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority

Organisational Assessment

Dated 9 December 2009



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of local public services

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority

Overall, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority performs adequately

Managing performance	2 out of 4
Use of resources	2 out of 4
Managing finances	2 out of 4
Governing the business	2 out of 4
Managing resources	2 out of 4

Description of scores:

1. An organisation that does not meet minimum requirements, Performs Poorly
2. An organisation that meets only minimum requirements, Performs Adequately
3. An organisation that exceeds minimum requirements, Performs Well
4. An organisation that significantly exceeds minimum requirements, Performs Excellently

Summary

Overall Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority performs adequately. This is because it manages its performance and uses its resources adequately.

The Authority knows what it needs to do to make people safer. The Authority is improving safety in most areas. In 2008/09 the overall number of primary and accidental fires slightly decreased and deliberate primary fires and injuries arising from fires significantly decreased. The Authority's financial position is sound, supported by adequate financial management and reporting arrangements. The Authority is low cost and in 2007/08 expenditure per resident was amongst the lowest in the country. Progress is being made on equality and diversity. But, there is still work to do in important areas. Deliberate secondary fires slightly increased and fires in business premises increased by just under 6 per cent on the previous year. There is no overall Integrated Risk Management Plan.

The Authority scores 2 out of 4 for managing its performance. This is because it is delivering its priority services adequately and it has the money, time and staff to improve.

The Authority knows what it needs to do to make people safer. It has two aims which are 'operational excellence' and 'community safety excellence'. Expected end results have been identified. These are the Authority's priorities. There is no overall Integrated Risk Management Plan but the Authority is currently looking at risk to include in a plan which it intends to have ready in early 2010. Other key documents have informed the vision, aims and end

result activities.

Aims are based on an understanding of residents' needs. The Authority is improving safety in most areas. In 2008/09 the overall number of primary and accidental fires slightly decreased and deliberate primary fires and injuries arising from fires significantly decreased. More home fire safety checks were carried out and more smoke detectors fitted. But there is still work to be done in important areas. Deliberate secondary fires slightly increased and fires in business premises increased by just under 6 per cent on the previous year. Deaths from accidental house fires increased by one.

Responses to incidents and safety are improving. Steady progress is being made on delivering the National Fire and Rescue Framework 2008/11 requirements.

The Authority is steadily improving its leadership, resources and capability. Leadership is clear and effective. There is a positive track record in managing change. Improvement plans are in place but some are in need of updating.

There is a strong emphasis on staff health and safety. Training and development is providing the skills and expertise needed to deliver better services to residents.

Progress is being made on equality and diversity. The Authority has reached level three of the Local Government Equality Standard which will help it to work towards achievement of the Fire and Rescue Equality and Diversity Strategy 2008/18.

The Authority scores 2 out of 4 for use of resources. This is because it is using its resources adequately. The Authority's financial position is sound, supported by adequate financial management and reporting arrangements. The Authority is low cost. In 2007/08 spending per resident was amongst the lowest in the country, with some recognised areas of good performance. There is some understanding of costs by the Authority. But this is not consistent. Efficiency savings have been made.

About Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire Authority covers the county of Cambridgeshire and unitary authority of Peterborough in the east of England. The area is mainly rural in character, although a large share of Peterborough's population is concentrated in the urban areas in and around the city centre. Peterborough has a younger population than the county, although the older population is expected to grow the most in both areas over the next twenty years. The black and minority ethnic population is low overall in Cambridgeshire, whereas Peterborough has a greater ethnic population than the regional and national average, and has one of the highest proportions of migrant workers in the country outside of London. The area as a whole has been designated as a 'Growth Area' by the government and is expected to develop around 180,000 new homes between 2001 and 2016. Cambridgeshire is relatively prosperous whereas Peterborough has higher

than average levels of people living in poverty. There are also differences in unemployment rates, with Peterborough suffering from higher rates than the county when compared regionally and nationally. There are inequalities in terms of health in the area, with people in the county generally healthier than the England average, but residents of Peterborough are less healthy.

The Authority contributes to achieving priorities and targets in both Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. These have been agreed between the local bodies and the government. The Authority has 28 end result activities in its service planning framework 2009/10 which are its priorities.

Organisational assessment

Meeting community needs

The Authority knows what it needs to do to make people safer. It has a vision for what it wants to achieve to make people safer. Its vision links to two aims of 'operational excellence' and 'community safety excellence'. These are supported by community focus and effective use of resources. Expected end results and activities are identified. These are the Authority's priorities. Although there is no overall Integrated Risk Management Plan, other key documents have informed the vision, aims and end result activities.

The Authority's aims are based on an understanding of residents' needs. Consultation with interested groups including local residents took place through various methods on the draft Service Improvement Plan 2009/10. But, feedback was limited. Other ways of working with local people have had more success. This includes a fire fighter working with travellers, meeting with the east of England Faith Agency to explore how best to consult, attending Peterborough's neighbourhood panels and crews talking to the public in shopping centres to find out what is important to them. An important area identified is anti-social behaviour; part of the Authority's vision of contributing effectively to community safety.

Public satisfaction rates are not known. There has been limited work on monitoring and maintaining good public satisfaction rates. But the Authority takes consulting and working with communities seriously and is recruiting an officer to improve this.

The Authority is helping to make the community safer. In 2008/09 the overall number of primary and accidental fires slightly decreased and deliberate primary fires and injuries arising from fires significantly decreased. Calls to the fire service reduced by over 5 per cent. However, there is still work to be done in important areas. Deliberate secondary fires slightly increased and fires in business premises increased by just under 6 per cent on the previous year. Deaths from accidental dwelling fires increased to three which was one more than 2007/08. Three targets set by the Authority in 2008/09 to reduce fires were not achieved.

Community safety work is helping to prevent fires. Home fire safety checks, targeted on those most at risk, increased by just under 26 per cent on the previous year and fire inspections increased by over 2 per cent. The joint Wisbech young fire fighter scheme with the Youth Inclusion Support Panel

reports that 84 per cent of youngsters so far involved in the programme have not gone onto re-offend. From the 33 cases that took part in the fire setter scheme parents of 26 have reported no more fire setting.

The Authority is targeting its community safety work to where need is greatest. Analysis on the location of fires shows that six of the 'top ten' wards with the highest number of fires are located in Peterborough. Community safety work was targeted in these wards in 2007/08 and 2008/09. This resulted in reduced fires in two wards.

Community safety work is making the area safer for residents. Working with the Huntingdonshire Community Safety Partnership and installing hidden cameras in an area led to convictions. Police estimated that this led to a 75 per cent reduction in anti-social behaviour during the following four months. Fixed cameras are now installed in the area. There have been similar successes working in Peterborough with a 35 per cent drop in secondary fires in Dogsthorpe.

The Authority works well with partners and contributes to delivering better results in Peterborough and Cambridgeshire. For example, the Deputy Chief Fire Officer is an active member of the Peterborough Local Strategic Partnership (known as the Greater Peterborough Partnership) which is a partnership of different organisations in the area including councils, police and health services. He also chairs the Safer Peterborough Partnership. Partners recognise and clearly understand how the Authority contributes to wider community results. But there is little evidence that the Authority is reviewing its contribution to partnerships to make sure resources are being used effectively.

The Authority is helping to save lives on roads. Working with the police and other partners road traffic collisions reduced by 17 per cent, casualties by 19 per cent, deaths by 32 per cent and rescues by 14 per cent in 2008/09. Drivers caught speeding can have a £60 fine or attend the fire and police education programme.

The Authority is working with partners to make vulnerable people safer. Fire fighters advise Housing Association staff on how to spot homes at risk of a fire. Funding provided for Homeshield, a project for older people co-ordinated by Age Concern, will set up a referral system to the Authority. This will identify older people who may benefit from a home fire safety check.

Improving the way we work

Investment in equipment is improving responses to incidents and safety for both the public and fire fighters. Two combined aerial rescue pumps ensure crews have safe systems for working at height. Investment has been made into road traffic collision cutting equipment. Better property information helps fire crews. This gives details of the type of property before they arrive, enabling them to tackle incidents more effectively.

The Authority achieved most planned tasks in 2008/9. This included delivery of stage one of the retained duty service review, progress on Fire Control and Fire Link and planning for the designing and building of the Cambourne Fire Station.

Early implementation of an electronic incident recording system is providing managers with information to improve services. The Integrated Personal Development System improves the way staff are recruited, trained and developed.

Improvements to risk recording are being made. Risk information is gathered manually. Improvements are planned for September 2009 when a new system will be available. This will be paper based on the appliances but electronically generated. This will improve quality of risk information.

The Authority is not reducing fires in business premises. Fires in business premises increased by just under 6 per cent in 2008/09. The Fire Protection Team who deals with enforcement to protect premises is being restructured. Priorities and work plans will be reviewed. The Fire Safety (Non-domestic Premises) Strategy 2008/11 is being reviewed with a new version due in October 2009. The 2008/09 risk based audit programme for inspecting premises has been rolled forward for 2009/10 as it has not changed.

Slow progress has been made on additional support plans for emergencies. The Authority has self assessed itself as 'compliant' or 'ongoing' on most of the good practice indicators. Plans to get emergency cover are being prepared as part of a project to improve service delivery which is due to finish in 2012. The Authority takes action to make sure it can provide an emergency response at all times. A pandemic influenza operational plan shows how stations will be staffed with reducing staff numbers. The Authority works well with the Local Resilience Forum. This is the forum that brings together the emergency services, local authorities, National Health Service and other agencies required to respond to any major emergency.

Some learning from incidents takes place. Reviews following incidents improve services. Greater use is to be made of internal newsletters to share learning with staff and identify actions taken.

Managing resources effectively

The Authority's financial position is sound, supported by adequate financial management and reporting arrangements. The Authority performs well in identifying local community needs. A new service and financial plan shows how money and resources will be allocated over the next few years to help it deliver its aims.

The Authority is low cost and in 2007/08 spending for each resident was amongst the lowest in the country, with some recognised areas of good performance. But, evidence to demonstrate full understanding of why this happens has not been fully shown in all areas. Whilst efficiency savings have been delivered, significant results have yet to be achieved to improve value for money across the Authority. A review of the way fire fighters work is being carried out to make better use of staff time.

Developing our people and culture to deliver future improvements

The Authority is steadily improving its leadership, resources and capability. Leadership is clear and effective. The councillors' committee structure is being reviewed and scrutiny strengthened. Officers are clear about priorities.

The Authority manages change well and delivering improvements to services. The Service Improvement Plan 2009/10 contains the vision, aims and proposals for improvement. Detailed work has taken place to describe what each aim means to the Authority. Clear results for 2009/10 onwards are identified. Projects and risks are well managed.

Improvement plans are in place but some are in need of updating. Plans to integrate the Service Improvement Plan 2009/10 into a single improvement plan with a full set of objectives did not happen. Internal plans are clear, contain targets and link to the Service Improvement Plan 2009/10. But the Partnership Strategy is out of date and it is not clear how the Workforce Development Strategy 2009/12 will be delivered.

There is a strong emphasis on staff health and safety. The Health and Safety Committee meets quarterly. Minutes from meetings are clearly written and identify actions and person responsible. Following a water rescue incident an external study on dangerous rescues was conducted. The Authority ensures that staff work safely and effectively.

The Authority is investing in its staff. Two health and safety specialists have been recruited. The Authority is working to deliver increased availability and use of fire fighter skills through a review of retained fire fighters. This includes better training, support, and new systems. Better information and workforce planning is now in place. Improved management of sickness absence has led to sickness reducing to 7.4 days per whole time employee, but is this is slightly above the Authority target of seven days.

Leadership and management development are taken seriously. Manager seminars are held twice a year to look at improving services. Councillors are trained to fulfil their roles. Incident command training has taken place with Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service and crews have had training on flooding and water rescue.

Progress is being made on equality and diversity. Plans are in place for improvement to 2011. Good progress is being made on the action plan. The Authority has reached level three of the Local Government Equality Standard which will help to work towards achievement of the Fire and Rescue Equality and Diversity Strategy 2008/18.

The Authority is influencing and delivering its contribution to the Regional Management Board. The Board ensures fire and rescue services work together to provide better services for local communities. There is a new plan to help achieve this. The Authority is leading on a project to improve the sharing of information.

CAA looks at how well local public services, working together, are meeting the needs of the people they serve. It's a joint assessment made by a group of independent watchdogs about the performance of local public services, and how likely they are to meet local priorities. From 9 December you will find the results of Comprehensive Area Assessment on the Oneplace website - <http://oneplace.direct.gov.uk/>

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