



BEDFORDSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

REPORT OF BEDFORDSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY FROM ITS MEETING ON 19 OCTOBER 2016 TO CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority (FRA) held a meeting on 19 October 2016 at Dunstable Community Fire Station. The major issues discussed at the meeting are summarised below:

1. COMMUNICATIONS

New FRA Member

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Paul Duckett of Central Bedfordshire Council to his first meeting of the Fire and Rescue Authority. Councillor Duckett had been appointed by Central Bedfordshire Council to fill the vacancy arising from the resignation of Councillor Tony Brown.

Ceremonial Events

The High Sheriff and his wife had recently visited Fire and Rescue Headquarters and representatives of the Authority had attended the annual Fire Service Memorial in London.

The Chief Fire Officer, Chairman and Vice Chair had attended the Fire Commission in London on 14 October 2016.

Bedfordshire Asian Business Association (BABA) Award

The Fire Safety Department had received an award from the Bedfordshire Asian Business Association (BABA) for its fire prevention work with local Asian businesses.

Black History Month

The Service was running a number of awareness raising exercises, such as quizzes and special menus in the canteen, during Black History month. This was part of a wider equality and diversity educational programme.

2. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Kathryn Holloway, the Police and Crime Commissioner for Bedfordshire, attended the meeting and addressed the Members of the Fire and Rescue Authority.

The Commissioner emphasised her support of the large amount of collaborative work that was taking place between Bedfordshire Police and Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service, including the co-location of both services in premises currently owned by the Fire and Rescue Service.

The Commissioner suggested that, given the Government's direction of travel, it would be prudent to further strengthen the working relationship between herself and the Authority. She expressed an interest in attending meeting of the Collaboration Working Group and meetings of the Fire and Rescue Authority.

3. AUDIT AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE 7 SEPTEMBER 2016

Councillor Chapman submitted the draft Minutes of the meeting of the Human Resources Policy and Challenge Group held on 7 September 2016.

Since that meeting, the Statement of Accounts 2015/16 and the Annual Governance Statement had been externally audited and approved.

Members were asked to note the streamlined procedure for reviewing the Fire Authority's effectiveness that had been agreed at the meeting.

4. CORPORATE SERVICES POLICY AND CHALLENGE GROUP 14 SEPTEMBER 2016

Councillor Headley submitted the draft Minutes of the meeting of the Service Delivery Policy and Challenge Group held on 14 September 2016.

The Group had made recommendations relating to the introduction of standardised charges for the Service's community facilities.

It was noted that Dunstable had been built as a Community Fire Station and it was primarily this station that hosted charity and other groups. The proposed charges were based on cost-recovery and would not be used to generate income for the Service. Further information on the usage of facilities could be provided to a future meeting of the Authority.

The Chief Fire Officer reported that the lease of fire station premises by St John's Ambulance was being renegotiated separately and was not part of the proposals submitted.

The charges for use of meeting rooms as detailed in the table below were adopted:

Station	Standing Charge for each hire £	Plus hourly fee (part hour charged as one) £	Use of kitchen	Tea and coffee can be provided	Refreshments when available
Dunstable					
Small meeting Room	15	9	N	Y	85 pence per head for tea, coffee and biscuits.
Large meeting Room	20	9	N	Y	85 pence per head for tea, coffee and biscuits.
Lecture Theatre	40	9	N	Y	85 pence per head for tea, coffee and biscuits.
Luton	15	9	N	Y	85 pence per head for tea, coffee and biscuits.
Amptill	15	9	Y	N	85 pence per head for tea, coffee and biscuits.

A reduced rate for charities and local groups (first hour free) and a higher levy for businesses (50% increase to standing charge and hourly fee) was approved and the Chief Fire Officer was permitted discretion on charging under the Scheme of Delegation.

5. SERVICE DELIVERY POLICY AND CHALLENGE GROUP 15 SEPTEMBER 2016

Councillor Mingay submitted the draft Minutes of the meeting of the Service Delivery Policy and Challenge Group held on 15 September 2016.

Members received an update on the Replacement Mobilising System. Essex Fire and Rescue Service had been operating the 4i system since 21 September 2016. The 'go live' date for Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service had been delayed due to technical issues with the Integrated Command and Control System (ICCS). It was anticipated that these could be resolved by the end of the week. This would be followed by 10 days of testing, after which Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service would be able to go live with the new system.

Councillor Mingay drew Members' attention to the performance report and commented on the high level of performance that had been achieved in relation to the new, more stretching targets that had been agreed for the current performance year. The target for PI28 (Automatic Fire Detectors false alarms in non-domestic properties) had been missed and the Authority was receiving a report recommending the adoption of a new Automatic Fire Alarm Mobilising Policy to address this issue.

The similarity in competencies between Fire Investigation Officers and Police Scene of Crime Officers was discussed. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer reported that this matter was being considered by the Collaboration Working Group.

Councillor Mingay advised that the Service had recently recruited 26 firefighters. 19 of these were new recruits, 4 of whom were women.

Members were advised that Luton had had an all-female crew and that as part of the positive action campaign, an all women crew had crewed a fire appliance which visited the retained stations located in the villages of Bedfordshire.

The Service was in discussion with the Police to identify learning points from the Police's recent recruitment campaign that had resulted in a high percentage of applicants from black and minority ethnic backgrounds.

Councillor Mingay highlighted the high level of customer satisfaction with the Service. In the most recent quarterly customer survey, the Service had achieved a 99.6% satisfaction rate. The continuing high level of customer satisfaction with the Service and the hard work undertaken to achieve this was acknowledged.

6. HUMAN RESOURCES POLICY AND CHALLENGE GROUP 21 **SEPTEMBER 2016**

Councillor Waheed submitted the draft Minutes of the meeting of the Human Resources Policy and Challenge Group held on 21 September 2016.

The Group had received an update on the iTrent HR and payroll system and the annual health and safety report that detailed the management of health and safety throughout the Service.

Members had been assured during the discussions on first quarter performance that performance against the indicators measuring the percentage of wholetime staff who were women and from black and minority ethnic backgrounds would improve during the second and third quarters.

Councillor Waheed reported that the Service was taking part in MIND's national campaign against stress at work. The support provided to firefighters by the Service had been mentioned positively by firefighters at the recent station visit to Stopsley.

7. RESPONSE AND ATTENDANCE LEVELS FOR AUTOMATIC FIRE **ALARMS**

Members received a report on proposals to change the mobilising arrangements to premises where unconfirmed reports of fire had been initiated by an automatic fire alarm (AFA) system.

It had been acknowledged that performance against the indicator measuring Automatic Fire Detectors false alarms in non-domestic properties would not improve significantly unless a change in policy was adopted by the Authority.

In 2015, 1,995 AFAs were mobilised to. In 97.1% of cases, there was no fire situation. Not only did this have a significant impact on the work carried out by firefighters on a day to day basis and diverted resources from other more serious emergencies, it created unnecessary risk to fire crews and the public by increasing blue light movements, impacted on employers who released retained staff for operational duties and was an additional financial burden to the Service. The proposals were:

- No BFRS attendance will automatically be made to commercial premises during the hours where it is reasonably expected that they are occupied, unless a fire situation is confirmed.
- For commercial, (non-sleeping) premises, during the hours where it is reasonably expected that they are unoccupied, unless a fire situation is confirmed, a reduced attendance will be mobilised.
- Those premises considered a sleeping or heritage risk receive an attendance 24/7 and that attendance is a minimum of two pumps.

Members were assured that these proposals did not affect mobilisations to domestic or high risk premises or in circumstances when fire situations had been confirmed.

These proposals were approved as Members recognised the need for the Service to change its mobilising arrangements to Automatic Fire Alarms.

Members were advised that support and assistance were offered to 'repeat offenders' in premises where the alarm systems were not managed as well as would be expected.

The Service would be running a publicity campaign to inform businesses and members of the public of the change in policy prior to the proposals being implemented.

8. INFORMATION BULLETIN

Members considered the Information Bulletin.

The Chief Fire Officer reassured Members that the Service had not installed any defibrillators of the make that had been the subject of recent news articles.

Reference was made to the recent water death in Bedford, the road traffic collision on a guided busway in Luton and the sample of co-responding incidents when the Service had assisted the Ambulance Service.

It was agreed that extracts of the Information Bulletin be appended to the narrative report submitted after every Authority meeting to the constituent authorities. Members supported this on the proviso that it was made clear that the information bulletin contained only a sample of the incidents attended by the Service.

**COUNCILLOR McVICAR
CHAIRMAN OF BEDFORDSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**