



BEDFORDSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

REPORT OF BEDFORDSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY FROM ITS MEETING ON 26 APRIL 2018 FOR CONSTITUENT AUTHORITIES

Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority (FRA) held a meeting on 26 April 2018 at Dunstable Community Fire Station. The major issues discussed at the meeting are summarised below:

1. COMMUNICATIONS

Local Government Association (LGA) Membership

A letter had been received from the LGA setting out the major areas of work in the fire and rescue sector during the previous year and requesting the renewal of membership.

Deputy Chief Fire Officer

Andy Hopkinson from County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service had been appointed as Deputy Chief Fire Officer after an extensive selection process and would commence in post on 1 May 2018.

The Chair, on behalf of the Authority, thanked Assistant Chief Fire Officer Evans for his contribution to the Service since he had acted up in the post from August 2017. She particularly highlighted the support he offered her as Chair and the Service Delivery Policy and Challenge Group as lead Officer to that Group during that time.

HMRC issue on use of Pool Cars by Response Officers

Following national discussions, it had been agreed that there would be no additional tax charged for the use of cars for operational response. Therefore, provision that had been made to cover the tax liabilities for affected staff for the current tax year would no longer be required. Changes to the tax regulations would not be implemented until 2019 at the earliest.

Fire at Bedfordshire Growers in Biggleswade

The Chief Fire Officer reported on the large incident that had taken place on 19 April 2018. Over 75 Service personnel had been mobilised to the incident, with crews drafted in from Cambridgeshire. Specific reference was made to the assistance provided by the Rapid Relief Team of the Plymouth Brethren.

The Chair advised that she had sent her thanks, on behalf of the Authority, to all the staff involved in the incident. She highlighted the efforts of the Control staff, who had been mobilising to simultaneous incidents, including a fire at the Village Hall in Sandy and assistance to the Police search for two 8 year old children missing in Bedford.

Installation of New High Sheriff

Assistant Chief Fire Officer Evans had represented the Fire and Rescue Authority at the High Sheriff's installation ceremony.

Live Water Rescue Demonstration

A live water rescue had taken place at Wixams on 13 April 2018 as part of the National Fire Chiefs Council's Drowning Prevention and Water Safety Week. Part of the demonstration was to teach members of the public to throw devices into the water rather than to enter the water themselves in a rescue attempt.

2. CORPORATE SERVICES POLICY AND CHALLENGE GROUP 12 MARCH 2018

Councillor Headley submitted the draft Minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Services Policy and Challenge Group held on 12 March 2018. The meeting had been inquorate and recommendations to approve the Treasury Management documents and the Asset Management Strategy were being forwarded directly to the Authority.

Two of the minor changes that had been made to the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Treasury Management Practices were the addition of consideration of inter-authority lending and clarification of the role of the Policy and Challenge Group, in that it was not a decision making body and could only make recommendations to full Authority.

The Authority adopted the updated Treasury Management Strategy Statement, Minimum Revenue Provision Policy and Annual Investment Strategy and Treasury Management Practices.

The Authority approved the Asset Management Strategy, which would be reviewed every three years, with the individual Asset Management Plans being reviewed annually.

3. SERVICE DELIVERY POLICY AND CHALLENGE GROUP 15 MARCH 2018

Councillor Mingay submitted the draft Minutes of the meeting of the Service Delivery Policy and Challenge Group held on 15 March 2018.

He highlighted the following:

- The Service, as part of national collaborative project with 27 other Fire and Rescue Services, had procured new Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for its fire fighters and this would be delivered in 2019. "Show and tell" sessions were being arranged to demonstrate the new PPE that would be lighter, safer and available in a wider variety of shapes and sizes.

- There had been a significant increase in deliberate fires during the year. This was largely the result of a large spike in the first quarter of the year of an increase in vehicle fires related to criminal activity.
- An evaluation of the effecting entry pilot had been completed. The Service had been called for assistance 527 times and attended 375 incidents. On 82 occasions the Service had been first on the scene and Service crews had provided or assisted with the provision of medical care in 79 cases.
- During the period between 1 October and 31 December 2017, 100% of 121 respondents were very (113) or fairly satisfied (8) with the Service.
- The Service would continue to support Hazard Alley; however due to the costs of admission and transport, this would be limited to promotion rather than through sending groups of children to the facility.

In light of the recent chemical attack in Salisbury, the Service had reviewed its arrangements and ability to respond to chemical attacks, including the Mass Casualty Decontamination Unit. The arrangements had received a high level of internal and external assurance.

Reference was made to an article in Bedford Today on 20 April 2018 about the significant increase in arson incidents. It was not known if the Service had been contacted prior to its publication.

4. AUDIT AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE 6 DECEMBER 2017

Councillor Chapman submitted the draft Minutes of the meeting of the Audit and Standards Committee held on 28 March 2018.

The Committee had recommended the approval of a revised Code of Conduct and the 2017/18 Review of Effectiveness and associated action plan for incorporation into the Annual Governance Statement.

The revised Code of Conduct was approved.

The 2017/18 Review of Effectiveness and associated action plan was approved and would be incorporated into the Authority's Annual Governance Statement.

5. HUMAN RESOURCES POLICY AND CHALLENGE GROUP – 29 MARCH 2018

Councillor Waheed submitted the draft Minutes of the meeting of the Human Resources Policy and Challenge Group held on 29 March 2018 and highlighted the following:

- Good progress had been made against all projects.
- New performance targets had been set for 2018/19.
- The Authority was required to have a Pension Board with its associated framework. The internal audit of the Pension Board had resulted in an opinion of substantial assurance.
- The Group had reviewed progress against the Corporate Health and Safety Objectives for 2017/18 and agreed new objectives for 2018/19.
- A RoSPA Audit would be undertaken in 2018 as it had been four years since the last RoSPA Audit, which had resulted in the Service being awarded Level 4 out of 5.

- The Group had received a presentation on the Service's Functional Fitness Testing and Drill Ground Assessment. This was based on a system of testing supported by the Fire Brigades Union, FireFit, University of Bath and the Chief Fire Officers Association.

The Authority was advised that the case involving the transitional pension arrangements had been referred back to the Employment Tribunal. The legal costs of this action were being split between all affected Fire and Rescue Services.

A 1% pay increase had been awarded to fire fighters. Initially a 2% pay offer had been made with ongoing discussion regarding the broadening of role for a FF with a stage 2 increase of 3%, subject to the Government providing funding. The Fire Brigades Union national conference would be held in June and it was likely that the pay dispute would be discussed at that time.

6. DRAFT COMMUNITY RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Authority received a report providing an update on the production of a new Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP). An initial draft had originally been presented to a meeting of the Service Delivery Policy and Challenge Group in June 2017; however, a number of significant developments had occurred since then including the implementation of a new Fire and Rescue Service Framework, the commencement of an intelligence led response project, the award of funding for a feasibility study into a joint Headquarters with Bedfordshire Police and the introduction of a new inspection regime.

As a result of these developments, the CRMP would be revisited to ensure that it was fit for purpose and that it took the changing context into account and more accurately reflect future delivery of fire and rescue services in Bedfordshire.

In response to a comment on the engagement of the Ambulance Service in blue light collaboration projects, both the Chief Fire Officer and the Assistant Chief Fire Officer confirmed that the engagement of the Ambulance Service had increased and it had become a more active partner in the Collaboration Working Group.

In terms of risk, Councillor Downing expressed the view that more work should be undertaken at a Community Safety Partnership level to prioritise arson as an issue affecting the communities of Bedfordshire.

He also reported on the work of Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group in looking to further develop primary care in order to reduce the demand for emergency and acute services.

The contents of the report were received and the strategic direction outlined in the report regarding the development of a new Community Risk Management Plan was supported.

7. DISPOSAL OF ASSETS UNDER THE SCHEME OF DELEGATED AUTHORITY

The Authority received the annual report on the disposal of obsolete vehicles and equipment assets and detailed the assets that could achieve values over the threshold of £10,000 for Officer delegation.

Rescue pumps and equipment that had been donated by the Service to Kenya in the past had been successfully introduced and feedback had been received that demonstrated that the donated equipment had been effective in both rescuing individuals and preventing damage to property.

It was noted that assets were assessed to determine if the life of those assets could be extended prior to disposal. Ancillary vehicles were regularly kept in service after the proposed date of disposal and a number of factors, such as residual value and ongoing maintenance costs, were considered prior to the disposal of any vehicle.

The Service was purchasing three electric vehicles to provide courier services between the Service's properties. As the vehicles had a range of approximately 150 miles, they would be able to complete their rounds and be charged overnight, so would not require additional charging points to be installed.

The Authority authorised the disposal of the 12 assets detailed in the report which individually have the potential to achieve income over the £10,000 threshold allowed under the scheme of delegated authority be authorised.

8. FIREFIGHTER PENSIONS ADMINISTRATION

The Authority considered a report seeking approval to continue with the existing firefighter pension administration services from London Pensions Fund Authority (LPFA) through a discharge agreement under section 104 of the Local Government Act 1972.

The current pension administrator, LPFA, had merged with Lancashire County Council (LCC) to create a joint venture structure for the administration of pension funds. This was a not for profit organisation and any surplus was reinvested or returned to customers through a rebate mechanism. It was proposed that the Service enter into a discharge agreement with LCC for the continuation of the pension fund administration for a fee of £36,000 per annum. A discharge agreement was similar to a shared service agreement and negated the requirement for a full procurement exercise.

In entering into an agreement with LCC, the Service would retain the skills, experience and expertise of its current pension administrators. Kent Fire and Rescue Service had recently entered into a discharge agreement with LCC.

The Service had received extensive legal advice from LGSS Law in the development of the agreement.

It was noted that the Local Government Pensions Scheme (LGPS) was still administered by Bedford Borough Council.

The Authority agreed to the discharge of firefighter pension administration functions to Lancashire County Council under section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972.

The Head of Human Resources was authorised to enter into any necessary agreements to effect this change and for the Authority's seal to be affixed to any documents required to give effect to this decision.

9. BLUE LIGHT COLLABORATION

The Authority received an update on the current status of 'Blue Light' collaboration workstreams.

Assistant Chief Constable Philip Wells had been nominated as the Senior Responsible Officer for the Joint Headquarters. Members and staff had been involved in meetings with the consultant undertaking the feasibility study as part of the scoping exercise. Governance arrangements were currently being considered.

Evaluations on the co-location of Ampthill and Leighton Buzzard Fire Stations had been undertaken. Additional female toilets were required at Leighton Buzzard as the current facilities were not adequate for the current gender profile of staff at the Station. Investigations into how this could be resolved, given the age and footprint of the building, were progressing. Sites were available for access by Police staff on a 24/7 basis.

Bury Park Community Centre had been made available for collaborative use from 5 April 2018.

An evaluation of the missing vulnerable person searches had resulted in the Memorandum of Understanding being rewritten.

The evaluation report of the effecting entry pilot had been presented at the Blue Light Collaboration Programme Board and it had been recognised that this had been successful and led to lives being saved and damage to property being reduced as the Service had been able to provide a quicker response. Work was in progress to identify better arrangements for making premises secure following forced entry, including consideration of this being undertaken by fire crews themselves.

In relation to the purchase of a drone, Bedfordshire Police had purchased drones due to urgent operational need and the Service was now considering collaborative opportunities with Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service.

Control staff now had access to Bedfordshire Police's STORM incident monitoring system which enabled them to access real time incident monitoring and risk management information.

Discussions had commenced regarding the sharing of a specialist GDPR Officer. Improvements had been made to the cross service data sharing arrangements and process enhancements to share Bedfordshire Police risk flags with the Community Safety team and the frequency of arson reporting by Bedfordshire Police to the Service is to be increased to expedite fire investigations.

Members expressed concern about the delay of the procurement of a drone, as it could have been used at the incident in Biggleswade.

The procurement of the drone had been delayed as the bids received through the tendering exercise had been too expensive. Whilst recognising that any drone procured would need

to be compatible with national asset capability requirement, Hertfordshire's experience had led to consideration of a lower specification drone.

The increasing amount of collaboration work was recognised and Officers were thanked for their efforts in driving this forward.

10. INFORMATION BULLETIN

Members received the information bulletin for the period 1 January – 31 March 2018.

Councillor Mingay referred to a fatality resulting from a road traffic collision and requested that the number of road traffic collision fatalities be reported to the Service Delivery Policy and Challenge Group for information.

The Authority was advised that this information could be provided, but the Service was not always notified if an individual rescued by the Service later passed away so the information may not be accurate.

As it was the last meeting of the Municipal Year, the Chair thanked all Members for their hard work on behalf of the Authority and the people of Bedfordshire during the year. She noted that Luton Borough Council appointed its Authority representatives on an annual basis.

She also thanked Officers and support staff for their assistance and made particular reference to the support she had received from Councillor Downing in his role as Vice-Chair.