



BEDFORDSHIRE AND LUTON COMBINED FIRE AUTHORITY

REPORT OF THE BEDFORDSHIRE AND LUTON COMBINED FIRE AUTHORITY FROM ITS MEETING ON 9 SEPTEMBER 2010 TO CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

MEETINGS

Bedfordshire and Luton Combined Fire Authority (CFA) held a meeting on 9 September 2010 at Dunstable Community Fire Station. The major issues discussed at the meeting are summarised below:

1. COMMUNICATIONS

Shuttleworth Airfield Volunteer Fire Service

Following their meeting on 16 April 2010, the Fire Authority had received a letter of thanks from the Shuttleworth Airfield Volunteer Fire Service for their donation of two L4Ps.

2. PROPOSED (NATIONAL) STRATEGIC REVIEW OF THE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

CFO Fuller referred to the Fire Minister's stated intention to engage with a wide cross section of partners to conduct a collaborative strategic review of the fire and rescue service.

The scope and terms of reference for the Review – known as Fire Futures - were currently being discussed but, once an initial steer had been agreed, officials would be seeking to engage rapidly with the fire and rescue sector to agree the scope of the Review and the workstreams to be pursued. Key stakeholders would influence this scoping work, which was to be reported to the Fire Minister in November 2010.

It was anticipated that the Review would look at a range of short, medium and long-term issues in a wide range of areas including, amongst others:

- The current role and remit of the Fire and Rescue Service and possible future delivery models,
- The respective roles of central and local partners and how the sector could support and drive the localism agenda,
- Costs of the Service and opportunities to further improve efficiency and value for money.

Fire Futures had been structured into four workstreams, to be chaired and supported by volunteers from across the Sector.

1. the role of the fire and rescue service and how it might be better delivered,
2. efficiency, effectiveness and productivity,
3. localism and accountability,
4. national interest.

3. REPLACEMENT OF THE SERVICE'S MOBILISING SYSTEM

Due to delays in developing the main IT system, the proposed Service cut-over to the East of England Regional Control Centre had been delayed to May 2012.

Members had previously been informed that the Service's current mobilising system was thirteen years old and beyond the normal life of systems of its type.

Whilst the Service's mobilising system continued to function, Members were aware of the problems surrounding the FiReControl Project and the need for fire and rescue services to make contingency arrangements if the project was to be further delayed or cancelled. Additionally, it was vital for fire and rescue services to make the necessary commitment early enough to gain the benefit of migration to a new mobilising system as well as avoiding high levels of resource being required in the event of a rapid migration being required.

The hardware for the Service's current mobilising system and further supplies were no longer available and further supplies were no longer available and the long-term survivability of the system was not secure.

In the light of this Members agreed that the Service's mobilising system should be replaced from the £200,000 held in the Fire Authority's financial reserves which had been previously ear-marked for such purposes.

It was also agreed that the Chair should write, on behalf of the Fire Authority, to the Fire Minister to seek New Burdens funding for the replacement system as this expenditure was now falling on the Fire Authority due to the continuing delays in the FiReControl project.

4. NATIONAL FRAMEWORK 2008 - 2011

CFO Fuller informed Members of the Government's intention not to enforce specific sections of the Fire and Rescue National Framework 2008-2011.

Although the 2008-2011 Framework was to remain in force, the Fire Minister would no longer expect to enforce the following aspects of the Framework:

- Regional Management Boards
- Equality and Diversity
- Workforce Development
- Asset Management

These aspects would still need to be addressed by fire and rescue authorities and over the coming months officers would be reviewing the necessary strategies and policies for recommendation to the appropriate Policy and Challenge Group.

5. STANDARDS COMMITTEE

The Government had announced that the proposed Localism Bill was to include proposals to 'abolish the Standards Board regime'. The precise scope of the proposals was not yet known and until legislation had been enacted the Standards Committee was to continue to perform its statutory roles of promoting high standards of ethical conduct and dealing with complaints that the Code of Conduct had been breached.

The Committee was also exploring all aspects of joint arrangements, and had authorised officers to continue discussions (subject to the contents of the Decentralisation and Localism Bill), and report further to the next meeting.

6. AUDIT COMMITTEE

Members agreed in principle to the publication of an Annual Review of the Fire Authority's Effectiveness and Record of Member Attendance from 2010/11 with a view to considering a more detailed system at its meeting on 10 December 2010.

7. OUTCOMES OF CRMP CONSULTATION 2010-13

Members received a summary of the outcomes of the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) consultation.

In the light of the consultation, Members considered recommendations on service delivery; strategic change; equality, diversity and recruitment; environment and expenditure for inclusion in the 2010-13 CRMP.

8. REVENUE BUDGET AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING – 2010/11

On 5 February 2010 the Fire Authority approved its 2010/11 Revenue Budget of £28,498,725. It had previously endorsed the proposal that a regular monitoring report should be submitted to each of its meetings.

The Treasurer presented the third such report for 2010/11.

9. 2011/12 REVENUE BUDGET

On 30 June 2010 the Fire Authority approved a Revenue Budget Strategy for 2011/12, proposing a nil increase in Band D Council Tax and key dates for the budget setting process.

Members' Budget Workshops were to be held on 10 December 2010 and 12 January 2011, with the Fire Authority budget setting meeting being held on 10 February 2011.

Arrangements for the response to the Communities and Local Government (CLG) Local Referendums to Veto Excessive Council Tax Increases Consultation on the Government's proposals to repeal the existing capping powers and introduce the provision for Council Tax referendums were also agreed.

10. DISPOSAL OF FIRE APPLIANCES

On 16 April 2010, the Fire Authority had agreed a priority for the future disposal of redundant fire appliances and equipment.

It was agreed that three redundant rescue pumps be donated to the Onset Trust with two redundant multi role vehicles being donated to the International Fire and Rescue Association

11. FORMULA GRANT DISTRIBUTION CONSULTATION

Arrangements for the response to the Government a consultation paper on options for changes to grant distribution formulae from 2011-12 were agreed.

12. INFORMATION BULLETIN

The Combined Fire Authority received a Bulletin containing information on various matters relating to the Fire and Rescue Service, including incidents of note and compliments.

Amongst the items reported were:

A couple from Bedford sent thanks via the Web:

.....'Just a note to say I'd like to pass on both mine and my husband's thanks at the most efficient way a fire in our garage was dealt with

The officers that attended were efficient, most pleasant and a credit to the Fire Service.

Their prompt actions probably saved any further loss in the garage not to mention cars blowing up!.....

A grandparent of a Firebreak 2 student expressed thanks to the instructors who have worked so hard with their grandson over the week and her excitement and honour at being invited to the pass out parade.

The Firebreak instructors also received thanks from the **Project Turnaround Officer:**

.....'Firebreak is an excellent course for young people to learn team work and the consequences of anti-social behaviour. I really enjoyed seeing the interactions between the instructors and young people.'.....

A letter of thanks was received from **a child from Maulden:**

.....'Just wanted to thank you very much for helping my mummy out of the car on Thursday 6 May. I was frightened for her. Thank you again for looking after us both!'.....

Emergency Response and Planning/FESS Co-ordinator Bedfordshire expressed thanks:

.....'Many many thanks for the excellent Fire Ground Safety Course you took for us last Saturday. The pace and content of the course was perfect and the feedback from my volunteer crews in Beds, Herts and Essex has been phenomenal.

You both saw on Saturday over 30 dedicated people who volunteer and give up their time to carry out this vital and caring work and my request to you and the Fire Service is please spread the message to your crews and staff about the service we provide.'.....

Director of Casa Soarelui (Sunshine House Hospice), Romania wrote to express thanks:

.....'I wish to bring to your attention the fantastic work of the above firefighters who gave one week of their holiday to come out to our hospice in Romania. The reason for this trip was to strip one half of the roof on the building which was leaking badly.

Our work in the hospice started with HIV/AIDS children who now live with their families and they take their anti viral drugs which enables them to lead a normal life. We now take adult cancer patients from 18 years upwards. Many of the patients are very young and come into the hospice to die with love and dignity.

Thanks to all those people who have given their time to make this project a success.

A resident from Flitwick sent an expression of thanks:

.....'I had to call the fire service out to a chimney fire at my property. I am writing this card to thank very much the team leader and the crew who came out to me. They dealt with the situation in a very caring and professional manner as I am sure you all do wherever you have to go.'.....

**COUNCILLOR J STREET
EXECUTIVE MEMBER OF THE COMBINED FIRE AUTHORITY**