



BEDFORDSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

REPORT OF BEDFORDSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY FROM ITS MEETING ON 24 OCTOBER 2014 TO CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority (FRA) held a meeting on 24 October 2014 at Dunstable Community Fire Station. The major issues discussed at the meeting are summarised below:

1. COMMUNICATIONS

Industrial Action

There may be notification of further strike dates following confirmation from the Fire Services Minister that no additional changes would be made to the current proposals which would be laid before Parliament shortly.

Transformation Fund

The Authority had been successful in all three of its bids to the Transformation Fund. The first bid, which was a single Authority bid, was £308,000 to progress the review of the Retained Duty System. Two partnership bids had also been successful: £220,000 towards the set up costs for an insurance pool involving a number of Fire and Rescue Services and £1.45 million to contribute towards the STEP IT project with Cambridgeshire and Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Services.

Chair's Communications

The Lord Lieutenant had written to the Chief Fire Officer following her visit to Dunstable Community Fire Station on 15 October 2014. This had included a presentation on the Service's youth engagement and development work.

Members were advised that the following individuals had been awarded certificates of commendation at the annual awards evening on 21 October 2014:

- Crew Commander Mark Woodworth (Kempston) was honoured for "outstanding professionalism" in rescuing a member of the public from the River Great Ouse on 27 December 2013;
- Crew Commander Matthew Blanchard and Firefighter Duncan Muirhead (Bedford) were honoured for their "extremely brave and selfless act" in rescuing a member of the public from the River Great Ouse on 8 January 2014;

- Firefighter Greg Magill (Biggleswade) was honoured for displaying outstanding professionalism when assisting the victim of a serious assault in 29 May 2014; and
- Mr George Mercantonio, a member of the public, was honoured for his efforts in helping to rescue three young children and their mother when their house in Arlesey was on fire on 10 November 2013.

2. CORPORATE SERVICES POLICY AND CHALLENGE GROUP 9 SEPTEMBER 2014

Members received the Minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Services Policy and Challenge Group held on 9 September 2014.

The meeting had been conducted as a 'paperless' meeting and the Policy and Challenge Group would be holding one more 'paperless' meeting before deciding if any recommendations should be made to adopt the practice more widely across the Authority's meetings.

3. SERVICE DELIVERY POLICY AND CHALLENGE GROUP 11 SEPTEMBER 2014

Members received the Minutes of the meeting of the Service Delivery Policy and Challenge Group held on 11 September 2014.

The exceptional customer satisfaction survey results were recognised, as was the importance of promoting the high level of public satisfaction with the Service more widely through the three constituent unitary authorities.

4. HUMAN RESOURCES POLICY AND CHALLENGE GROUP 18 SEPTEMBER 2014

Members received the Minutes of the meeting of the Human Resources Policy and Challenge Group held on 18 September 2014.

5. AUDIT AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE 25 SEPTEMBER 2014

Members received the Minutes of the meeting of the Audit and Standards Committee held on 25 September 2014.

It had been suggested at the meeting that methods to increase public involvement and engagement with the Authority should be captured during the annual review of the Authority's effectiveness.

6. REVENUE BUDGET AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING 2014/15 AS AT 31 AUGUST 2014

Members received the latest budget monitoring position as at 31 August 2014. The forecast non-salary overspend under the Head of Strategic Support had increased to £120,000 as the result of the Firelink radio communications grant being lower than anticipated. There was also an £160,000 underspend under the Head of Finance

and Treasurer relating to the injury pensions and prices contingency not being called on to the estimated extent. Both the IT and injury pensions budgets would be realigned during the 2015/16 budget process.

The costs of the industrial action were being captured separately and to date, strike related net expenditure was approximately £120,000.

7. PREVENTION OF FUTURE DEATHS REPORT (FORMERLY RULE 43)

Members were advised of the changes to the Coroner's Reporting of Prevention of Future Deaths Reports, formerly Rule 43 reports. The Coroner now had a duty, rather than a discretionary power, to issue the reports to report the circumstances of a death to a person or organisation whom it was believed had the power to take appropriate action to prevent future deaths of a similar nature occurring.

8. OPENNESS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT BODIES REGULATIONS 2014

Members received a report on the introduction of the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014 and the implications for the Fire and Rescue Authority. The Regulations enabled members of the public to film, audio-record, photograph and use social media at public meetings of local authorities, as well as to report on meetings using these methods. The Regulations also required decision making Officers to produce a written record of specified decisions on request. This would not apply to confidential or exempt decisions where the public interest test for publication had not been met.

Consideration would need to be given on how the Authority could protect children, vulnerable adults and other members of the public who actively objected to being filmed during a meeting.

9. NATIONAL JOINT COUNCIL FOR BRIGADE MANAGERS PAY SETTLEMENT 2014

The National Joint Council for Brigade Managers of Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services' collective pay settlement for 2014 was approved. This related to Gold Book employees only. Members also agreed to commission a full review to align the Principal Officer Salary Policy in January 2015.

(Note: The Chief Fire Officer and the Deputy Chief Fire Officer were not present for the discussion of the above item).

10. INTERNAL DISPUTE RESOLUTION PROCEDURE

Arising from a late item of urgent business relating to the internal dispute resolution procedure as set out in Firefighters Pension Circular (FPC) 1/2009, the Fire and Rescue Authority adopted a two-stage process whereby disputes were considered at Stage One by the Chief Fire Officer or his nominated senior manager and at Stage Two by elected Members of the Fire and Rescue Authority. The Executive was delegated responsibility for undertaking stage two of the internal dispute resolution procedure and the minimum number of Members present was set at three Members.

The Chair had agreed to the submission of the report as a late item of urgent business given the likelihood of a dispute requiring the process to be implemented prior to the next meeting of the Fire and Rescue Authority.

11. INFORMATION BULLETIN

Members noted that there was a risk of fire when solar panels using photovoltaic technology were installed incorrectly. These types of fires were very dangerous for firefighters as the electricity supply could not be isolated.

In relation to animal rescues, Members were advised that resources mobilised to these events were to protect the safety of the firefighters enacting the rescue, as well as the animal being rescued. The protection of life, human or animal, was an important part of the Fire and Rescue Service's role. The Service had a dedicated Animal Rescue Team as the risk of being killed or seriously injured by a large animal, such as a horse or cow, during a rescue operation was significant.

The rescue of an animal by the Service prevented others from attempting to rescue the animals themselves which may place more people at risk.

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