



BEDFORDSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

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

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

1. COMMUNICATIONS

Community Risk Management Plan

The Chairman reminded Members that they had all been sent a draft of the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) in its refreshed format of a fold-out leaflet. Members were asked to forward any comments they had on the format to Officers before the deadline.

Statement of Assurance

The Chairman commented on a letter he had received from the Home Office requesting a copy of the Authority's Statement of Assurance.

Members were advised that the Authority had approved its Statement of Assurance and that it was available on the Authority's website. A link to the relevant page of the Authority's website would be sent to the Home Office.

LGA Conference

The Chairman reported on the LGA Fire Conference and Exhibition which he attended on 8 and 9 March 2016 in Bristol with the Chief Fire Officer, Deputy Chief Fire Officer and Assistant Chief Officer.

2. CORPORATE SERVICES POLICY AND CHALLENGE GROUP 7 MARCH 2016

Councillor Brown submitted the draft Minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Services Policy and Challenge Group held on 7 March 2016. He reported that performance had been very good against the current performance indicators and the targets for 2016/17 had been set at the meeting. The Policy and Challenge Group had also received the internal audit report of Governance that had been awarded a substantial assurance rating.

Councillor Brown reported that a paperless trial at Central Bedfordshire Council had been very successful. The number of printed pages had decreased from 689,000 to 463,900 and resulted in savings of £36,500. He suggested that the paperless trial for Authority meetings be extended slowly so that Members could receive the required equipment and training. One to one ICT training was available for Members should they require it.

It was agreed that the forecast year-end underspend of £458,000 be allocated to a joint working/collaboration earmarked reserve and the updated versions of the Treasury Management Statement, Minimum Revenue Provision Policy and Annual Investment Strategy and Treasury Management Practices were approved.

3. SERVICE DELIVERY POLICY AND CHALLENGE GROUP 10 MARCH 2016

Councillor Mingay submitted the draft Minutes of the meeting of the Service Delivery Policy and Challenge Group held on 10 March 2016. He drew Members' attention to the recent positive peer review of the Service's fire special operations team.

In relation to the further delays in the completion of the Replacement Mobilising System project, Members were advised that a meeting with the service provider, Essex Fire and Rescue Service and representatives of this Service had been rearranged and was now being held on 5 May 2016. Significant progress on the project had been made since the service provider had been held to contract by Essex Fire and Rescue Service.

A review of the Service's involvement in the project was being commissioned through the Service's internal auditors to provide assurance to Members of the Authority and DCLG, which had provided the grant funding for the project, that the Service acted responsibly throughout and could not be held accountable for the delays.

A report was being prepared for submission to the next Authority meeting seeking approval for additional funds to assure the successful completion of the project. The final cost would depend on the solution but Members noted that the original grant funding was awarded on the basis that this was a joint project with Essex Fire and Rescue Service.

Councillor Mingay reported that there had been no complaints received via the customer satisfaction process. The Policy and Challenge Group had also considered a report on complaints received on driving and parking of service vehicles from 1 April 2014 - 31 October 2015. Fifteen complaints had been received during that period of which 6 had been upheld. This was in the context of the Service responding to approximately 7000 incidents per year.

4. HUMAN RESOURCES POLICY AND CHALLENGE GROUP 15 MARCH 2016

Councillor Mingay submitted the draft Minutes of the meeting of the Human Resources Policy and Challenge Group held on 15 March 2016, which he chaired in Councillor Downing's absence.

In response to a comment on the performance against EQ2 (recruitment of Black and Minority Ethnic Staff across the whole organisation), the Assistant Chief Officer advised that the Service had a positive action plan covering the whole organisation. It was hoped that performance against the indicator would improve in the fourth quarter.

The Firefighter Pension Scheme discretions for the 1992, 2006 and 2015 Schemes and the 2006 Firefighter Compensation Scheme were approved. It was noted that the Chief Fire Officer would be managing the discretions under existing delegations.

Councillor Mingay referred to the Policy and Challenge Group's consideration of the implications of increasing the hourly rate of an employee currently receiving a salary under the forecast National Living Wage for 2020. This would require the Service to remove itself from the national pay bargaining structure for Green Book staff and would also have an impact on the pay differentials between the various spinal column points. As such, the Policy and Challenge Group had agreed that this should not be pursued.

5. AUDIT AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE 17 MARCH 2016

Councillor Headley submitted the draft Minutes of the meeting of the Audit and Standards Committee held on 17 March 2016 and drew Members' attention to the recommendations made by the Committee in relation to the replacement of the Standing Orders relating to Contracts with the consolidated Procurement Policy and Contract Procedures and the 2015/16 Review of Effectiveness and Action Plan for 2016/17.

Members agreed that the Standing Orders relating to Contracts be replaced with the consolidated Procurement Policy and Contract Procedures and approved the 2015/16 Review of Effectiveness and Action Plan for 2016/17 to be fed into the Fire Authority's Annual Governance Statement.

6. DISPOSAL OF ASSETS UNDER THE SCHEME OF DELEGATED AUTHORITY

Area Commander Ball introduced his report and advised that there were three assets; one Special Rescue Unit and two cars, which may achieve income over the £10,000 threshold set out in the scheme of delegated authority and required Member approval.

The Service had generated £4,311 from the sale of assets during the 2015/16 financial year. A number of items had been donated to the Onset Trust for use in Meru, Kenya and a rescue pump had been donated to the voluntary fire service at Old Warden.

The Chairman advised that the Onset Trust covered the cost of transporting the donated equipment to Kenya.

Members were assured that the costs of leasing versus purchasing vehicles were regularly evaluated and at the present time, and following the advice of Capita, the Authority's treasury management advisers, the Service was purchasing vehicles.

The disposal of the three assets detailed in the report which individually had the potential to achieve income over the £10,000 threshold under the scheme of delegated authority was authorised.

7. EMERGENCY SERVICES COLLABORATION

The Chief Fire Officer provided an update on the ongoing work to explore opportunities for further collaboration with other local emergency services.

A Collaboration Working Group had been set up, which was jointly chaired by the Deputy Chief Fire Officer and the Deputy Chief Constable of Bedfordshire Police. It had been agreed that it would be beneficial to have Member representation on the Group and the Authority approved the appointment of Councillor Downing to the Group due to his extensive experience and strategic role within the Police Service.

It was noted that, although Bedfordshire Police had been unsuccessful in its bid for Police Innovation Funding from the Home Office to support this work, a number of workstreams were being progressed and there were other funding streams that could be explored.

Members requested update reports following meetings of the Collaboration Working Group.

8. INFORMATION BULLETIN

Councillor Atkins expressed her gratitude to the firefighters involved in the recent rescue of three men from the roof of a building in Harpur Street, Bedford.

She also referred to an incident which had taken place in her Ward on the previous Friday and stated that she was very pleased with the way she had been kept informed of progress.

The view was expressed that the Authority should consider holding all its future meetings at Service Headquarters in Kempston and Members agreed to consider the venue for meetings of the full Authority at the Authority's next meeting.

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