



BEDFORDSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

REPORT OF BEDFORDSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY FROM ITS MEETING ON 27 APRIL 2017 TO CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL

Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority (FRA) held a meeting on 27 April 2017 at Dunstable Community Fire Station. The major issues discussed at the meeting are summarised below:

1. COMMUNICATIONS

Correspondence from the Rt Honourable Brandon Lewis, MP

Members were advised that correspondence from the Policing and Fire Services Minister had been received relating to the application of the representation model to fire and rescue authority combination schemes governing the 26 Combined Fire and Rescue Authorities in the country. The Minister had now confirmed that variation of the combination schemes would be required to enable the Police and Crime Commissioner to be granted voting rights on combined authorities.

As a general election had recently been called for 8 June 2017 with a period of purdah commencing on 3 May 2017, it was unlikely that any change would be implemented before that date.

Members were advised that this was a separate process from that set out in the Policing and Crime Act to enable the Police and Crime Commissioner to develop a business case to assume responsibility for the governance arrangements of fire and rescue services.

Visit from Police Workforce and Capability Unit

The Service had recently hosted a visit from staff from the Home Office's Police Workforce and Capability Unit. The Unit had recently been given responsibility for fire and rescue services and had visited both Bedfordshire Police and the Service Headquarters. Particular interest was expressed in the Service's LearnPro and PDRPro training management and recording systems.

Emergency Services Hubs

Positive publicity had been generated at recent events in Bedford and Ampthill highlighting partnership use of the Service's Fire Stations. Events in Bedford with the Road Victims Trust, The Police and Midlands Search and Rescue in Ampthill with Bedfordshire Police had been covered by the local press.

It was recognised that the local community in Ampthill welcomed the return of a police presence in the town.

CIPFA Innovation Award

The fire and risk indemnity company, of which the Authority was a part, had been entered into the inaugural CIPFA Public Finance Innovations Awards under the category of alternative service delivery model. The company had been shortlisted at the awards ceremony held in London on 20 April 2017.

Due to the timing of the application process, the company had not been able to submit its first year's operating accounts. The company had generated a surplus in its first year of operation and this surplus would be held in reserve rather than providing a profit to a private insurance company.

2. CORPORATE SERVICES POLICY AND CHALLENGE GROUP 14 MARCH 2017

Councillor Headley submitted the draft Minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Services Policy and Challenge Group held on 14 March 2017 and drew Members' attention to the recommendation to the Fire and Rescue Authority to adopt the updated Treasury Management Strategy Statement, the Minimum Revenue Provision Policy and Annual Investment Strategy and the Treasury Management Practices. There had been no material changes to the documents and these were agreed by the Fire and Rescue Authority.

He highlighted the discussion around the performance of IM1 (the number of mission critical services resolved within 1 hour), where the small numbers involved meant that the target had been missed as the result of one incident. This had informed the consideration of the targets for 2017/18, as the target for this indicator had been reduced from 98% to 80% using the rationale that if one incident took longer than an hour to resolve, the target would be missed.

3. AUDIT AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE 16 MARCH 2017

Councillor Chapman submitted the draft Minutes of the meeting of the Audit and Standards Committee held on 16 March 2017. The Committee had recommended that the amended financial regulations and the 2016/17 Annual Review of Effectiveness and associated Action Plan for 2017/18 be approved and had also requested that consideration be given to amending the key recording Member attendances attached as an appendix to the Review of Effectiveness to decrease the level of detail included.

Members were reminded that the key had increased in complexity as a result of a desire to account for absences at meetings, as Members of the Fire and Rescue Authority were in receipt of allowances that were based upon a prescribed number of days' work that were commensurate with their individual roles on the Authority and there had been Members in the past whose attendance was not satisfactory.

Members recognised the importance of recording absences that were the result of Member commitments with their constituent councils.

The view was also expressed that a number of Members held roles within the Authority that required them to attend briefings and meetings which were not currently being recorded in the record of attendance included in the annual Review of Effectiveness. A more accurate record would be produced if these commitments were also included.

The Fire and Rescue Authority's annual Review of Effectiveness and the associated Action Plan for 2017/18 was approved for incorporation into the Annual Governance Statement, with the key for Member attendances being amended to identify absences as being either notified (N), notified – constituent council commitment (N-C) or un-notified (U).

4. HUMAN RESOURCES POLICY AND CHALLENGE GROUP 21 MARCH 2017

Councillor Waheed submitted the draft Minutes of the meeting of the Human Resources Policy and Challenge Group held on 21 March 2017.

She advised that the new HR and payroll system, i-Trent, had been successfully implemented in February 2017. The Policy and Challenge Group had recognised the amount of hard work carried out within existing resources to enable a smooth transition to the new system.

There had been an Improvement in performance against the indicator measuring recruitment of minority ethnic staff across the whole organisation (EQ2) from the previous quarter but it was still under the target level. Work was being undertaken to raise awareness of vacancies within the Service amongst local community groups and the Service was also working with the Police to strengthen its positive action plan.

The Policy and Challenge Group had agreed the performance targets and the Corporate Health and Safety Objectives for 2017/18. It had also received an update on progress made against the 2016/17 Corporate Health and Safety Objectives and, in its review of the Corporate Risk Register, had noted that the 12 new whole time firefighters would be undertaking a Foundation Training course in June and were expected to attend stations in September 2017.

In response to a comment, it was confirmed that the Service was liaising with the Police to share lessons learnt from the implementation of i-Trent and to learn from the Police's successful recruitment campaign that had resulted in 34% of new recruits being from Black and Minority Ethnic backgrounds.

5. SERVICE DELIVERY POLICY AND CHALLENGE GROUP 23 MARCH 2017

Councillor Mingay submitted the draft Minutes of the meeting of the Service Delivery Policy and Challenge Group held on 23 March 2017.

He advised that there had been four confirmed fire fatalities during the year but that this might rise to five subject to the result of a Coroner's inquest. The Service target level for fire fatalities was fewer than three.

Performance against the indicators measuring arson was varied, with arson fires still reporting as amber, but deliberate building fires had achieved 50% better than its target. The Policy and Challenge Group had identified that this was an area that would benefit from closer collaboration with the Police.

Councillor Downing, the Authority's representative on the Joint Collaboration Working Group, advised that he had suggested the introduction of an Arson Task Force at the most recent Working Group meeting.

Arson was now listed on the Collaboration Action sheet and that it would be considered further by the Working Group.

The new Automatic Fire Alarm policy had been implemented at the beginning of the month and the Service was now not responding to calls from occupied commercial properties during office hours unless the fire has been confirmed. This was monitored daily and any impacts of the policy would be reviewed by the Policy and Challenge Group.

Councillor Mingay reported on the wide range of collaborative work in which the Service was involved. The forced entry pilot had been successful, and the Service had been the first emergency service in attendance on 63 of the 220 incidents attended. Service personnel also provide medical response within the corresponding scheme. All fire fighters were First Person on the Scene (FPoS) qualified to enable them to assist individuals in life threatening situations.

It was noted that the customer satisfaction with the Service had increased from 98% in the previous period to 99%.

6. DISPOSAL OF ASSETS UNDER THE SCHEME OF DELEGATED AUTHORITY

Members received a report setting out the assets disposed of during 2016/17 and assets due to be disposed of during 2017/18 under the Scheme of Delegation for Members' information and requesting authorisation for the disposal of two assets over the £10,000 threshold set out in the Authority's Scheme of Delegation. Income generated from the disposal of assets was placed in a reserve to purchase replacement equipment.

The Chief Executive of the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Bedfordshire requested that Bedfordshire Police be offered first refusal of assets before they were disposed of to other parties as the Force may find them of use or be able to prevent equipment being obtained by organised crime groups.

It was acknowledged that the Service was restricted in how it could dispose of its assets and that the vast majority of disposals were of equipment that was at the end of its usable life. Closer liaison with the Police on disposals could be considered.

The Fire and Rescue Authority authorised the disposal of two assets over the £10,000 threshold set out in the Authority's Scheme of Delegation.

7. INFORMATION BULLETIN

Members received the information bulletin for the period 1 January-31 March 2017 and noted that there were a number of incidents involving bariatric patients. They were advised that the Service had a special bariatric unit based in Dunstable and this provided sufficient coverage for the whole of the county.

The Chairman passed on compliments received from an ASDA regional manager relating to the conduct and professionalism displayed by the fire fighters and Officers attending the recent fire at the ASDA in Stopsley.

It was suggested that the record of member attendance be sent to leaders of the constituent councils so that they could hold the Members of their authorities to account in relation to fulfilling their duties as an appointed Members to the Fire and Rescue Authority.

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