

MINUTES OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 22 JUNE 2022

Present: Councillors P Duckett (Chair), J Chatterley, K Choudhry, M Headley and Y Waheed
CFO A Hopkinson, DCFO C Bigland, ACFO A Kibblewhite, Mr J Atkinson and Mr S Frank
Ms D Evans of the Local Government Association was present via Teams

22-23/EC/1 Apologies

1.1 An apology for lateness was received from Councillor Choudhury.

22-23/EC/2 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary and Other Interests

2.1 There were no declarations of interests.

22-23/EC/3 Communications

- 3.1 The Chair commented that it was his first meeting of the Executive and thanked all those who supported his nomination for the role of Chair of the Authority.
- 3.2 The Chief Fire Officer advised that the Assistant Chief Officer, Mr G Chambers, was unable to attend the meeting as he had been in Vienna to attend the International Critical Communications Awards, at which the Service's replacement mobilising system project (Command Central Control System (CRS) Cloud control system and Emergency Services Network (ESN) Connect for Multi-Disciplinary Teams (MDTs) with Motorola Solutions Inc.) had been shortlisted for a Control Room Innovation award. The achievement of being shortlisted for such a prestigious award was recognised.
- 3.3 The Chief Fire Officer reported that Members of the Corporate Management Team attended a event at St Luke's Church in Luton for residents affected by the Green Court high rise fire organised by Sarah Owen, MP, during the week commencing 13 June 2022. This had been very worthwhile as it had provided reassurance and offered engagement opportunities to affected residents and strengthened relationships with local councillors, the Luton North MP and partner organisations who also attended.

22-23/EC/4 Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 26 May 2022 be confirmed as a true record.

22-23/EC/5 Public Participation

5.1 Members noted that no questions had been received in accordance with the public participation scheme approved at the meeting of the Fire and Rescue Authority held on 5 April 2000 (Minute 99/fa/94 refers).

22-23/EC/6 Appointment of Portfolio Holders

6.1 The Chair advised that the Portfolio areas had been allocated on a first come, first served basis as follows:

- Assets & Collaboration: Councillor J Chatterley
- Data & Digital Transformation: Councillor M Headley
- Emergency Response & Resilience: Councillor P Duckett
- Prevention & Protection: Councillor Y Waheed
- Workforce & Organisational Development: Councillor K Choudhury

RESOLVED:

That the Portfolio lead areas be allocated as set out above.

22-23/EC/7 Proposals for Strategic Planning Cycle for CRMP 2023-27

7.1 The Chief Fire Officer introduced a report on the Service's proposals for developing the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) 2023-24 to 2027-28. The 4 year strategy had been delivered via annual action plans, but there was now an opportunity to adopt a different, more inclusive approach to the development of this important document and this would be discussed in greater depth at the Member Development Day to be held on 7 July 2022.

- 7.2 Mr S Frank, the Head of Strategic Support and Assurance, gave a brief presentation outlining the process of development to date and future plans. The Executive was provided with examples of questions that Members would be asked as part of this, such as what was missing from the current CRMP and what the Service could do to support Bedfordshire's economic wellbeing. Extensive engagement with stakeholders and the local community would be undertaken, all whilst ensuring that the CRMP was drafted in accordance with national guidance. The community and risk elements would be more prominently featured, as would the areas highlighted through public consultation: environmental issues, governance and engagement.
- 7.3 The developing proposals would be subject to two public surveys; the first would be launched during the River Festival weekend (23/24 July 2022) and the second in November 2022. The Service was working closely with Bedford Borough Council, as it would be undertaking a Community Safety Survey of its residents at that event. A company had been employed to assist in engaging with vulnerable groups during the second round of public surveys, to ensure that the views of these groups were captured. There would also be a step change in staff involvement in the development of the CRMP.
- 7.4 The Chief Fire Officer added that, since the adoption of the last CRMP, the National Fire Chiefs Council had developed a methodology for the development of such documents and this would guide the development of the Service's CRMP.
- 7.5 In considering the mission statement, which was "to provide outstanding fire and rescue services to help make Bedfordshire safer", the view was expressed that this undersold the Service and that its civic leadership role, unique role of trust in the community, and the expanded role of fire fighters since the last CRMP should be encompassed in some way into the statement. The social value of Service investment in supporting the East of England Ambulance Service Trust during the pandemic, which had been identified as £7 for every £1 invested, was also acknowledged.
- 7.6 Opportunities for Member involvement included two Development Days on 7 July 2022 and 22 November 2022, the Budget Workshop on 6 October 2022 and a seat for a Member of the Authority on the CRMP Reference Group. Regular updates would be provided to all Members at Authority meetings.
- 7.7 In response to comments about Members' role in the development of the CRMP, the Chief Fire Officer agreed that the CRMP was the Authority's document and that Members had a vital role in its development as they would need to take ownership of it. The discussion to be held at the first Member Development Day would be framed accordingly.
- 7.8 The Chair requested that a more detailed timeline of the development be provided to Members at the Development Day.
- 7.9 Recognising that the emergency cover review was an important part of the CRMP, the Chief Fire Officer reassured Members that further information on the review, and on the associated pilots and trials that were proposed, would be presented to Members at the next meeting of full Authority on 20 July 2022. It was also intended to provide an update on the estates strategy at that meeting,

which, depending on the progress of discussions, would either be a joint strategy with the Ambulance Service or a tri-service strategy including Bedfordshire Police.

RESOLVED:

That the contents of the report be acknowledged.

22-23/EC/8 Proposals for Member Development Programme for 2022/23

- 8.1 The Chief Fire Officer reported that the Assistant Chief Officer and the Head of Strategic Support and Assurance were in the process of populating the Member Development Programme for 2022/23.
- 8.2 It had been agreed that the following topics be considered at the forthcoming Member Development Day on 7 July 2022: the Authority's response to the Reforming the Fire Service White Paper, the Emergency Cover Review pilots and trials, Treasury Management training and an update on the independent review of governance.

RESOLVED:

That the proposals for member development be noted.

22-23/EC/9 Response to the Reforming the Fire Service White Paper

- 9.1 The Chief Fire Officer referred to a paper that had been circulated following the publication of the agenda pack. This was the Local Government Association's response to the White Paper. This had been emailed to Members for information and to aid future discussions on the development of the Authority's response.
- 9.2 Mr S Frank, the Head of Strategic Support and Assurance, advised that there were 48 questions in the White Paper, and drew Members' attention to the ones relating to pay negotiation arrangements, the enforcement of a statutory code, the creation of an oath for Service personnel, the transference of responsibility for fire and rescue services in England to a single elected individual, and specifically to Police and Crime Commissioners.
- 9.3 It was noted that, before the Member Development Day at which it would be discussed in more detail, the responses of the National Fire Chiefs Council and the Fire Leaders Association would be available as they were responding imminently.

- 9.4 Members expressed concern over the democratic accountability of a Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner, particularly in combined fire authority areas. It had not been detailed in the White Paper how this would work in practice and it could leave large areas unrepresented.
- 9.5 There was a possibility for options for other governance models to be presented and the Monitoring Officer advised that one of the options set out in the Local Government Association response (Option 2) whereby a small management committee had responsibility for the executive functions and with a larger group of Members providing scrutiny, was not dissimilar from the arrangements in place at the Authority.
- 9.6 Ms Evans advised that she was attending the LGA conference at which fire and rescue services would be discussed. She volunteered to put questions to the guest speakers on behalf of Members, especially in relation to how the proposed arrangements impacted on combined fire authorities and if alternative arrangements could be viable, and to make and provide a note of the discussion for Members information. This offer was gratefully received.
- 9.7 In response to a question, the Chief Fire Officer advised that Service responses tended to be more pragmatic in relation to the governance arrangements. The most important issue for Services was operational independence. It was noted that many of the governance arrangements in parts of the country were quite complex.
- 9.8 The importance of engaging with the constituent authorities and local MPs was emphasised. In this respect, the Chair advised that he would draft a letter to the MPs setting out the Authority's views and requesting the MPs support for these. The deadline for responses was 26 July 2022, so there was not very much time following the Member Development Day on 7 July 2022 to garner support.

RESOLVED:

That the update be received.

22-23/EC/10 Final Resourcing Options for Monitoring Officer role

- 10.1 The Chief Fire Officer reported that it had been hoped to submit a final options paper to this meeting but that this had not been possible. It was still intended to produce a report for the Authority meeting on 20 July 2022, and this would be circulated in advance to Members of the Executive for information.
- 10.2 Ms Evans stated that, following the discussion at the last meeting of the Executive, she had explored some of the options discussed relating to an expanded role for the Monitoring Officer so that this post could provide more proactive advice and could assist

internally, in areas such as human resources or the development and implementation of a tri-service estates strategy. It was estimated that this would be a 2 day a week post, which was an increase from the current contract for the Monitoring Officer. Sharing a part-time Monitoring Officer with another Fire and Rescue Authority could provide economies of scale, and there was a neighbouring authority that currently had spare capacity. This option could be fully costed for consideration.

- 10.3 One of the neighbouring fire and rescue authorities used the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner to provide its Monitoring Officer role. This option was not supported by the Executive.
- 10.4 Members asked for the following options to be costed in relation to the expanded role of 1.5-2 days per week: sharing a Monitoring Officer with a neighbouring fire and rescue authority or neighbouring local authority, and advertising directly for a part-time Monitoring Officer. It was noted that both Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire were currently recruiting to Monitoring Officer posts.
- 10.5 Ms Evans advised that she could fully cost options within the week, and following consultation with the Chief Fire Officer, these could be presented to Members the following week. It was suggested that other Authority Members receive an update on this at the Member Development Day.

RESOLVED:

That the update be received.

22-23/EC/11 Independent Review of Governance update

- 11.1 The Executive received an update on the independent review of governance following the decision made at its previous meeting to appoint the Local Government Association to lead this process.
- 11.2 Mr S Frank advised that the Peer Review team would comprise the Monitoring Officer from Cambridgeshire, a Fire and Rescue Authority Member from Kent County Council and two LGA Officers. The peer review would be improvement focused and fieldwork visits would take place in July 2022.
- 11.3 Members present agreed that the first set of dates suggested should be agreed as the majority of Members responding to date were available on those dates.

RESOLVED:

That the update be received.

22-23/EC/12 Work Programme

- 12.1 The Executive received its updated work programme, noting that this would be populated prior to the next full Authority meeting, where it would be submitted along with the work programme for the full Authority for Members' information.
- 12.2 There were no additions to the Work Programme.

RESOLVED:

That the Work Programme be received and the cyclical agenda items be noted.

The meeting ended at 11.38 am