

MINUTES OF CORPORATE SERVICES POLICY AND CHALLENGE GROUP MEETING HELD ON 14 SEPTEMBER 2016

Present: Councillors M Headley (Chair), F Chapman, D McVicar, M Riaz and Y Waheed

CFO P Fuller, ACO Z Evans, Mr G Chambers, Mrs A Ashwood,
SOC T Rogers and AC C Ball

16-17/CS/15 Apologies

There were no apologies.

16-17/CS/16 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary and Other Interests

There were no declarations of interests.

16-17/CS/17 Communications

Members received the Minutes of the meeting of the ICT Shared Services Governance Board held on 6 June 2016.

ACO Evans reported on the CFOA Conference held on 12 September 2016 which had been attended by the Fire Services Minister. The Minister's speech had emphasised that Government wished to see the pace of transformation increase. Legislation was being passed to enable the title of Police and Crime Commissioners to include reference to Fire and Rescue Services where it was appropriate to do so. It was also likely that an inspection regime would be introduced in the spring of 2017 for implementation by 2018. This may be part of the HMIC but other options were being considered.

CFO Fuller added that there had been a subtle change in the language relating to the introduction of a single employer model for Police and Fire and Rescue Services and this would now be subject to the development of a "strong" business case. It appeared that there was now more of a focus on transformation, change and collaboration.

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting of the ICT Shared Services Governance Board held on 6 June 2016 be received.

16-17/CS/18 Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 9 June 2016 be confirmed and signed as a true record.

16-17/CS/19 Corporate Services Performance 2016/17 Quarter 1 and Programmes to date

ACO Evans submitted the performance report for Quarter 1 of 2016/17 and gave an update on the programmes within the Group's remit. She advised that there were no active workstreams under the Shared Services project as all opportunities for collaboration were currently reported directly to the full Fire and Rescue Authority.

The Business Systems Improvement, Business Process Improvement and Telephony System Replacement (Unified Comms) projects were all green and the Information Security Management Systems project had now been completed.

In response to a question, ACO Evans reported that the “new technical architecture” would be replacing IBM technology at the end of a five-year contract. The cost arising from the renegotiations of the contract of approx. £80,000 per year for each authority was prohibitive so the Authority was transitioning to an alternative based on Open Source technology as part of a move away from high-cost technology and towards cloud-based solutions.

Mrs A Ashwood, the Head of Strategic Support, confirmed that the Authority would be utilising a blend of products which met the Government’s digital strategy.

ACO Evans reported on the delay to the Virtual Desktop Infrastructure project that had been caused by a problem in the Server Area Network. The total delay to the project would be 7 weeks and the project was now scheduled for completion in December 2016. If the extension to the project was agreed, the project would be reported green at the next meeting against the new timescale.

In relation to the performance indicators, the Group was advised that all the ICT and Fleet and Workshops indicators were reporting on green for the quarter.

Mr G Chambers, the Head of Finance and Treasurer, gave an update on FNP6 (percentage of outstanding debt over 90 days old), which had missed its target for the quarter. He reported that the total debt outstanding at the end of June 2016 was £20,852.35, with £5,584.14 or (26.78%) being over 90 days old. Two of these debts related to a flooded culvert and were being progressed through the small claims court.

The Head of Finance and Treasurer suggested that, in order to be consistent with the indicators measuring overdue invoices, all debts that were being contested should be removed from the indicator and reported by exception as required.

RESOLVED:

1. That the progress made on Corporate Services Programmes and Performance be acknowledged.
2. That the seven week delay to the Virtual Desktop Infrastructure be noted.
3. That indicator FNP6 be amended so that only debts that are not in dispute are included in the percentage, with any notable outstanding contestable debt reported by exception to the Policy and Challenge Group.

16-17/CS/20 Audit and Governance Action Plan Monitoring Report

ACO Evans introduced the report on progress made to date against current action plans arising from internal and external audit reports and from the Fire Authority’s 2014/15 Annual Governance Statement.

No extensions had been requested and all the actions were either in progress or completed, some subject to follow up audit.

RESOLVED:

That the progress made to date against the action plans be acknowledged.

16-17/CS/21 Revenue Budget and Capital Programme Monitoring 2016/17

Mr G Chambers, the Head of Finance and Treasurer, submitted the forecast year-end budget monitoring position as at 31 July 2016. He reported that the current forecast non-salary underspend was £15,000 with a forecast salary underspend of £114,000 as a result of a reduced firefighters pay award.

The £40,000 overspend under the Head of Community Safety related to lower than anticipated income from Luton Borough Council to support the rogue landlords scheme. It transpired that Luton Borough

Council had not budgeted any financial support for this scheme for the current financial year although it had done in 2015/16 and would do so again in 2017/18 following discussions about the future of the scheme.

The Head of Finance and Treasurer advised that the extension and redesign of the BA Technician and Technical Technician workshop in the Capital Programme was being reconsidered and it was likely that this would reduce in scope.

RESOLVED:

That the forecast outturn for the revenue budget and the Capital Programme be received.

16-17/CS/22 2017/18 Revenue Budget and Capital Programme (Planning Arrangements)

Mr G Chambers, the Head of Finance and Treasurer, presented his report on the current planning arrangements for the 2017/18 Revenue Budget and Capital Programme and submitted a proposed timetable for agreement. The culmination of the programme was the setting of the budget at the Authority's meeting on 9 February 2017.

RESOLVED:

That the report and timescales within be agreed.

16-17/CS/23 Community Facilities Charges at Stations

Mr G Chambers, the Head of Finance and Treasurer, introduced his report setting out the Authority's current position on charging for the use of Authority premises and seeking agreement for the approach going forward. A comparison of charges levied by similar facilities in the Bedford and Luton Borough areas was provided in the report for Members' information.

Members were assured that the introduction of charging was to recover the costs associated with the use of facilities and that charities and local groups would pay the standard rate of a £15 standing charge (with the standing charge for the larger rooms at Dunstable Community Fire Station being higher) with an additional £9 hourly charge. It was proposed that corporate and business users be charged an increased rate. It was also proposed that discretion on charging could be delegated to Officers under the Service's Scheme of Delegation.

It was noted that these charges would not apply to full time use and access of stations with current partners such as the Ambulance Service, Police and St John's Ambulance. These were subject to individual negotiations.

Concern was expressed about the impact of an increase in charges and the uncertainty about the charging policy on the many local, charitable groups that used the Service's facilities, particularly those at Dunstable Community Fire Station. It was suggested that some discretion in charging could be made for regular charitable users, with the possibility of an annual fee being agreed for regular use of the Service's facilities. This would allow those groups to be able to plan and budget for the room hire.

The Head of Finance and Treasurer assured Members that a detailed policy and procedures would be developed and that the Service would continue to operate a pragmatic charging policy. He reported that the VAT implications were still being assessed.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Fire and Rescue Authority be recommended to adopt the charges for use of meeting rooms as detailed in Table 1 of the report.
2. That the Fire and Rescue Authority approve a reduced rate for charities and local groups (first hour free) and a higher levy for businesses (50% increase to standing charge and hourly fee).
2. That the Fire and Rescue Authority be recommended to permit discretion on charging to the Chief Fire Officer under the Scheme of Delegation.

16-17/CS/24 Annual Review of the Operation of ICT Shared Service Agreement

Mrs A Ashwood, Head of Strategic Support, submitted the annual review of the operation of the ICT Shared Service for the year ending 31 March 2016. The initial five year agreement had commenced on 31 October 2013 on which date the Shared Service Governance Board was established. This Board was co-Chaired by ACO Evans and the Deputy Chief Executive of Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service.

This was the second annual review of the Shared Service. The actions arising from the first review were to consider alternative governance arrangements for the Service, to agree a combined project plan and five year strategy, to continue to support the IT Project Management role and to undertake a customer satisfaction survey.

A customer satisfaction survey was undertaken on 4 September 2015 and the results were reported to the Group at its meeting on 26 November 2015. There were plans to undertake another survey following the completion of the VDI project in December 2016.

The review of alternative governance arrangements was not being progressed at this time.

Arising from the second annual review, it was noted that there had been significant improvements made against all five of the shared service objectives. This included the improvement of the 24/7/365 cover that was provided by the team to support both of the Services and to the resilience of the systems.

The Head of Strategic Support highlighted the 29% improvement to responding to incidents within the time set out in the Service Level Agreement and the 36% improvement in fix times as examples of the significant improvements that had been made following the introduction of the shared service. The development of an asset network and joint contracts and procurement, such as VDI, were also significant achievements.

Improvements were still required to the operation of the Service Desk, particularly in relation to the prioritisation of non-critical incidents, and these would be progressed during the year.

A watching brief was being kept on the developments arising from changes to EU legislation on data protection for employees from other countries within the EU.

An independent review of cloud readiness was also being jointly commissioned and both Fire and Rescue Services had agreed to continue to support the shared ICT Project Manager post.

In response to questions, the Head of Strategic Support confirmed that both Services wished to continue with the ICT Shared Service at this point in time.

ACO Evans advised that the Group would be kept fully informed of any significant changes proposed through the review leading up to the decision of whether to continue, and on what basis, the ICT Shared Service after the initial five-year period.

In response to a question about the threat arising from malware, the Head of Strategic Support acknowledged that this was a constant challenge. In addition to the security package purchased from Virgin Media, the Service also had additional security and robust monitoring systems in place to defend itself from attacks.

It was noted that, as part of the VDI project, additional information on cyber security awareness was being presented to all staff. It was recognised that the shared service arrangements strengthened the Service's defence against malware threats.

The Chair suggested that the Members of the Group may benefit from seeing the new VDI in action when it had been rolled out across the Service.

RESOLVED:

That the outcomes of the second annual review of the operation of the ICT Shared Service Agreement be acknowledged and the progress in achieving the aims of improved resilience, flexibility, cover, quality and customer focus be noted.

16-17/CS/25 Corporate Risk Register

ACO Evans presented the report on the Corporate Risk Register.

Members noted that a new risk around the threats arising from malware had been introduced as CRR45 (Exchanges of information such as email, web browsing, removable media, social media, exposes the Service to malicious code and content (malware). There is a risk that malware could seriously damage the confidentiality, integrity and availability of our Service's information and ICT resulting in disruption to the delivery of our Services, unauthorised export of sensitive information, material financial loss and legal or regulatory sanctions) and the measures to mitigate against that risk had been discussed under the previous item.

RESOLVED:

That the development of the Service's Corporate Risk Register in relation to Corporate Services be noted and approved.

16-17/CS/26 Work Programme 2016/17

Members received the Group's Work Programme for 2016/17.

RESOLVED:

That the Work programme be agreed.

The meeting ended at 11.08 am