

**MINUTES OF FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY
MEETING HELD ON 4 SEPTEMBER 2019**

Present: Councillors C Atkins, R Berry, J Chatterley (Chairman), K Choudhry, P Duckett, D Franks, J Gambold, M Headley, D McVicar, K Malik and Y Waheed

CFO P Fuller, DCFO A Hopkinson, ACO G Chambers, Mr J Atkinson and SOC G Jeffery

19-20/FRA/26 Apologies

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Shingler.

19-20/FRA/27 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary and Other Interests

There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary and other interests.

19-20/FRA/28 Communications

LGA Fire Commission Meeting

The Chair advised that he had accepted an invitation to attend a meeting of the LGA Fire Commission on 20 September 2019. A number of speakers would be presenting at the event, including HMI Zoe Billingham.

LGA Inclusion Champions Network

The Chair reported that he had been invited to attend the LGA's Inclusion Champions Network on behalf of the Authority. A meeting of the Network was being arranged in December 2019.

HMICFRS Event

The Service had been invited to attend an event hosted by the HMICFRS on 16 September 2019. The Chairman and Deputy Chief Fire Officer would be representing the Service.

Informal Visit from Deputy Director of Fire and Resilience

The Chief Fire Officer advised that the Service had hosted an informal visit from the Deputy Director of Fire and Resilience on 29 August 2019. A number of issues had been discussed, including the reintroduction of a cost of fire report.

Asian Fire Services Association

The Chief Fire Officer reported that, following the Service receiving an award from the Asian Fire Services Association recognising excellence in board leadership in equality, diversity and inclusion, the Service had received correspondence from the Association thanking the Service for its continued support and participation.

Change to Incident Recording System

The Chief Fire Officer had received notification of changes to the Fire and Rescue Incident Recording System. The system was being migrated to a new server location at the end of September and the letter had advised there may be some disruption to the availability of the system for a short period during the migration.

Fire Station Open Days

The Chief Fire Officer thanked Members for supporting the Station Open Days that had taken place during the summer. These had been successful and well attended.

Open Days would take place in Leighton Buzzard and Sandy during the forthcoming weekend.

19-20/FRA/29 Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 18 July 2019 be confirmed as a true record.

19-20/FRA/30 Public Participation

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).

19-20/FRA/31 Audit and Standards Committee 10 July 2019

Councillor Headley submitted the draft Minutes of the meeting of the Audit and Standards Committee held on 10 July 2019. He advised that due to national resourcing issues, Ernst & Young had been unable to complete the audit of the Statement of Accounts, and, as such, the next meeting of the Audit and Standards Committee had been postponed until October.

The Assistant Chief Officer added that there were a number of local authorities, at least 19, that had not had their audits completed by the early closure. The audit had originally been postponed until 19 August 2019 until being postponed again to 16 September 2019. He would be meeting with Neil Harris on 6 September 2019 to discuss the most recent postponement.

Councillor Headley expressed the view that the Committee should question Ernst & Young about the delay and seek reassurances that this would not affect next year's audit.

RESOLVED:

That the submitted Minutes of the meeting of the Audit and Standards Committee held on 10 July 2019 be received.

19-20/FRA/32 Q1 Performance Report

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer presented the summary of performance as at the end of the first Quarter of 2018/19. He referred to a number of changes to the performance report including the introduction of additional RAG ratings comparing the current quarter's performance to the previous year and five year average in addition to the normal comparison against target. Work was ongoing with the University of Bedfordshire to develop an interactive and self-populating performance dashboard to enable both a service and local view of performance against service delivery key performance indicators. This would also be extended to the corporate services and human resources performance indicators in due course.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer also explained what information was contained within each of the columns, including the column indicating whether an increase or decrease was positive performance.

In terms of exception reporting, the Deputy Chief Fire Officer reported on PI03b (number of primary fire injuries). Whilst this was RAG rated as red for the quarter, with 9 injuries against a target of 5.75 (a 56.5% increase), it was only 1 more injury than had been reported in Quarter 1 of 2018/19 and a 2.2% increase against the five year average. The Service had one of the lowest levels of primary fire injuries in the country, and the majority of those recorded for the quarter were minor.

An example of a stretching target was PI15 (the number of Safe and Well Visits (SWV) delivered). During 2018/19, the Service delivered 139% more SWVs than it did in 2017/18, visiting over 5000 households across Bedfordshire. For 2019/20, the Authority had set an ambitious stretch target to deliver 50% more SWVs than it did in 2018/19. At the end of Quarter 1, although RAG rated as red with 1222

visits undertaken against a target of 2015, this was an increase of 69.5% on the performance in Quarter 1 of 2018/19 and 16% higher than the five year average. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer expressed confidence that performance against the indicator would improve during the following two quarters.

The number of accidental dwelling fires, measured by PI05b, had reduced by 11.1%, with 84 recorded against a target of 94.5. This was also an improvement on the five year average. Positive performance in this area may be a result of the increased SWVs undertaken by the Service.

In relation to secondary fires, PI04b, the number of deliberate (arson) fires, was above the target level, although it was noted that these incidents were often prevalent during the summer months. Only 5 of these fires had involved a dwelling, when compared to 11 during the same quarter in 2018/19. Performance against the five year average had also improved.

The target had been slightly missed in relation to (PI18) Total Primary Fires in Non-Domestic Buildings, although there was an 18.4% reduction from the previous year's first quarter performance.

Performance against PI19 (total false alarms attended in non-domestic properties had improved with a reduction of 26.7% against the target. The Service had adopted robust call-challenge and this had resulted in the number of false alarms attended decreasing dramatically.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer also advised that the fire safety team engaged with premises management when a high number of false alarms were received.

The number of fire safety audits completed (PI16) had not reached its target due to the temporary reduced capacity in the team during the reporting period. It was anticipated that performance would improve in subsequent quarters.

The number of total incidents, total fires and total special services had all increased but the average response times had improved when compared to the previous year. A fix had been produced by the supplier of the mobilising system provider to rectify the 'ghosting issues' with the data. This had been tested extensively and would be implemented once formal approval by Essex Fire and Rescue Service had been secured.

PI-0034 (% availability of 1st On-Call pumping appliances), the availability of on-call appliances is affected by the skills base of on-call fire-fighters, as some competencies cannot be acquired until after 12-18 months of training. Therefore there can be a lag following recruitment of on-call fire fighters before availability improves.

In response to questions, the Deputy Chief Fire Officer advised that the response times related only to the Service's own appliances and that on-call availability was based on the 24/7, 365 days a year availability of appliances at on call stations.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer then reported on the Corporate Services and Human Resources performance.

FN5 (percentage of uncontested invoices paid within 30 days) had missed its target but actions had been implemented to improve performance against this indicator.

HR1 (the percentage of working time lost due to sickness), H1 (number of serious accidents per 1000 employees) and H2 (number of working days/shifts lost to accidents per 1000 employees) had all exceeded targets as a result of a small number of individual cases. Only one of these was ongoing into the second quarter.

Two training indicators, T7 (percentage of Flexible Duty Officers that have attended an Incident Command Assessment within the required frequency for their role) and T8b (percentage of Safety Critical Maintenance training programmes completed by On-Call Operational Personnel via PDR Pro within the last 12 months) had also missed their targets. T7 related to one Officer who was currently waiting for a new nomination date. T8b was 3% below target, largely due to the number of on-call fire fighters recruited in the last year. The training plan had had to be adapted to accommodate the larger numbers.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Service's performance against the delivery of the Authority's Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) at the end of quarter one 2019/20 be acknowledged.
2. That the revised reporting layout for the Service Delivery (Prevention, Protection, Response) areas of performance be acknowledged.
3. That the performance report be approved for publication on the Service website.

19-20/FRA/33 Q1 Projects and Programmes Update

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer presented the position in relation to projects and programmes as at the end of the first quarter of 2019/20. The report format had been updated and a pie chart illustrating the Service's performance against the programmes and projects had been added. This illustrated that the vast majority of projects were rated green (63%), with some amber (26%) and only 2 (7%) rated as red.

The two projects rated red were the Fleet/Asset Management System Project and the Infographics FloSafe Fire Safety Protection Replacement MIS. The Fleet Management module was being delivered on schedule but the Asset Management module had been delayed due to resourcing issues. These had now been resolved with additional support being allocated to the completion of the project.

The Fire Safety Protection Replacement MIS had been delayed due to difficulties with the current supplier as the specification had not been fully delivered. The Head of ICT and Programmes was providing robust challenge and an account meeting with the supplier had been arranged for later in the year.

In relation to the seven projects rated amber, the Deputy Chief Fire Officer reported that mobile data terminals were being rolled out and it was intended to provide hardware and software to enable the visits to be recorded electronically.

The Unified Communications Project had been slightly delayed as it was reliant on the roll-out of Xen Desktop, which itself had been delayed by technical issues.

The Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme is a national project and the current delays are outside of the Service's control.

The Replacement Mobilising System (RMS) Project was now in the procurement phase but this was behind schedule following Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue's decision to withdraw from the joint procurement. The project had been called in by the Deputy Chief Fire Officer and the Assistant Chief Officer due to the consequent delay to the planned contract award date, from December 2019 to March 2020. This was still within the timescales required to replace the mobilising system before the arrangement with Essex Fire and Rescue Service came to an end. A project review report on the RMS would be submitted to a future meeting of the Authority.

The Replacement Mobile Data Terminal Project and the PDR Pro Project would be re-baselined and were expected to return to green in the next reporting period.

Councillor Atkins referred to the app What3Words. She suggested that all Members of the Authority should download the app (this could be purchased through the app store) and requested that a link be sent out with the Minutes of the meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the progress made on Strategic Programmes and Projects be acknowledged.

19-20/FRA/34 2020/21 Revenue Budget, Capital Programme and Council Tax Setting

The Assistant Chief Officer introduced his report on the current planning arrangements for the 2020/21 Revenue Budget and Capital Programme.

The spending review announcement was expected later that day and would cover one financial year only. This made medium-term financial planning much more difficult.

The timeline for the budget setting process was set out in the report and included Member Budget Workshops on 27 November 2019 and 16 January 2020, with the Authority setting the draft budget at its meeting on 12 December 2019 and the final budget and Council Tax at its meeting on 6 February 2020.

The Service had advocated for the return of Transformation Funding at its meeting with the Deputy Director of Fire and Resilience. Officers regularly sought sources of grant funding, but many of the funds were restricted to local authorities only.

RESOLVED:

That the report and timescales within be reviewed, considered and agreed.

19-20/FRA/35 Health and Safety Annual Report 2018/19

Strategic Operational Commander Jeffery submitted the Service's Health and Safety Annual report for the year 2018/19. The extensive report set out the Service's responsibilities for health and safety and identified the team within the Service responsible for health and safety. The Service's health and safety policies were identified and information was provided on the policies and procedures that had been updated during 2018/19. Reviews of the Service's risk assessments had also been undertaken, with 4 additional risk assessments being produced during the year. The health and safety objectives for the current reporting year were listed at the end of the report.

The team was also responsible for producing safety bulletins and critical updates. Two safety updates, on vehicle marshalling and hypodermic needles, had been produced during the year.

Strategic Operational Commander Jeffery reported on the health and safety performance as measured by indicators H1, H2 and H3. The high number of shifts lost due to accidents had been the result of three long-term injuries where the members of staff concerned had been off work for 59, 39 and 36 days respectively. No trends had been identified.

The Service had been audited by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) and had been awarded a Level 5, the highest award available. The Service had improved its score against the audit from 79 in 2014 to 96.4 in 2019.

In relation to vehicle collisions, the number of collisions had increased slightly to 42 in 2018/19 from 38 in 2017/18. The majority of these were very minor accidents at low speeds and may be the result of increased reporting and the increased number of vehicle movements associated with the Service's preventative and partnership work. 8 of these related to a service vehicle being struck by another vehicle.

The Service was very proactive in reporting incidents and in engaging with local authorities in areas where there were streets down which it would be difficult for an emergency vehicle to pass through without damaging a vehicle. Some streets were leafleted to remind residents of appropriate parking to enable larger vehicles, such as fire appliances or bin lorries, to travel safely down the street.

Service personnel had a high level of fitness, as demonstrated by the 99.5% pass rate against the annual fitness test.

In response to a question, Strategic Operational Commander Jeffery confirmed that each station had a designated health and safety representative. These representatives attended the Health and Safety Consultative Group meetings to feed back any issues or concerns.

RESOLVED:

That the Health and Safety Annual Report be acknowledged.

19-20/FRA/36 Scheme of Members' Allowances

The Secretary and Monitoring Officer advised that, whilst there was no provision in Regulations to prevent a Member from receiving more than one Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA), many local authorities included such a provision in their Members' Allowances Schemes.

RESOLVED:

That the Scheme of Members' Allowances be amended to provide that a Member may be paid no more than one Special Responsibility Allowance.

19-20/FRA/37 Work Programme

Members received an updated work programme for 2019/20.

In response to a comment regarding the large number of items scheduled for the Authority's meeting in February 2020, the Assistant Chief Officer advised that some items may be brought forward to the December meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the work programme for 2019/20 be received and the 'cyclical' Agenda Items for each meeting in 2019/20 be noted.

19-20/FRA/38 HM Prison Bedford Update

RESOLVED:

That, pursuant to Sections 100A(2) and 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the discussion of the following item on the grounds that the matters to be discussed involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act (as amended).

The meeting ended at 11.46 am

