

For Publication

**Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority
Corporate Services Policy and Challenge Group
29 November 2017
Item No 4**

MINUTES OF CORPORATE SERVICES POLICY AND CHALLENGE GROUP MEETING HELD ON 13 SEPTEMBER 2017

Present: Councillors Chapman, Duckett, Headley (Chair), McVicar and Waheed

CFO P Fuller, ACO Z Evans, AC D Cook, SC J Gell, Mr J Atkinson, Mr G Chambers and Mr A Dosanjh

17-18/CS/018 Apologies

It was noted that SOC C Ball was unable to attend the meeting as he had a clash of diary commitments.

17-18/CS/019 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary and Other Interests

There were no declarations of interests.

17-18/CS/020 Communications

The Policy and Challenge Group received the Minutes of the ICT Shared Service Governance Board held on 9 May 2017 for information.

There were no other communications.

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the ICT Shared Service Governance Board held on 9 May 2017 be received.

17-18/CS/021 Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 21 June 2017 be confirmed and signed as a true record.

17-18/CS/022 Revenue Budget and Capital Programme Monitoring 2017/18

Mr G Chambers, the Head of Finance and Treasurer, submitted the forecast year-end budget position as at 31 July 2017. The total forecast overspend at 31 July 2017 was £29,000.

There was currently a forecast non-salary underspend of £6,000, largely due to the receipt of unbudgeted income from Luton Borough Council to support community safety initiatives. Members may recall the Authority did not receive a budgeted £11k from Luton Borough Council last year.

There was also a forecast salary overspend of £35,000. This consisted of an underspend of £100,000 on the Retained Duty System, a £100,000 overspend on agency staff to support the ICT Shared Service and a £35,000 overspend on non-uniform due to a planned efficiency not being achieved as a result of the ongoing necessity for the post.

Mr G Chambers, the Head of Finance and Treasurer, reported that all projects in the Capital Programme were RAG rated Green.

Members commented on the difficulties in recruiting ICT professionals which was leading to the increased spend on agency staff. There were added complications with recruiting as the Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire staff were on different pay grades and had different terms and conditions of service.

Mr A Dosanjh, the Head of ICT and Improvement, advised that a review of the Shared Service would be undertaken which would lead to a restructure to enable the Services to introduce new working practices and redeploy staff more flexibly to create efficiencies within the Team.

It was noted that many local authorities had introduced a market rate supplement for posts that were historically difficult to recruit to. This could be considered by the Service for project and database management staff, as it may be more cost effective than employing agency staff to temporarily fill vacancies.

RESOLVED:

That the forecast outturn for revenue and capital be noted.

17-18/CS/023 2018/19 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 2018/19 Revenue Budget and Capital Programme.

The process was similar to that followed in previous years, with internal review and scrutiny of budgets undertaken prior to the proposals being submitted to Members at the Budget Workshops, the first of which was 21 November 2017.

The main change to the budget would be the pay awards for Grey Book staff. These had not yet been finalised. More information on the impact of the awards should be available in the autumn.

RESOLVED:

That the report and timescales within be agreed.

17-18/CS/024 Corporate Services Performance 2017/18 Quarter 1 Report and Programmes to Date

ACO Evans submitted the 2017/18 first quarter report on the Corporate Services programme, projects to date and performance against Corporate Services performance indicators and associated targets. A number of the projects were reporting as Amber.

Work on enhancements to the Community Safety Activities application had been deferred, as the Business Improvement Team had been fully deployed on iTrent during the last period. It was anticipated that this would improve to Green for the next reporting period.

The HR Payroll Systems and Services project was also reporting as Amber and it was likely that the project would conclude with an Amber rating as the project costs had overrun.

The VDI project was reporting as Amber as the remaining 10% of users had not yet been migrated to VDI due to the complexities involved in migrating users who needed access to other systems, such as Control, Finance and Payroll. The successful recruitment to system engineer posts would hopefully resolve this issue. Overall, the introduction of VDI had been incredibly successful and feedback from service users was very positive.

The status of the Training Centre Administration project was also rated as Amber.

ACO Evans then reported on the performance information for the reporting period. All of the ICT indicators were reporting as Green.

She advised that the Chair had identified an error in the original performance report and indicator WS1a (Grade A defect response time (within 1 hour)) was Amber and not Green as indicated within the report. There was not an exception report available for this indicator at present.

The Chair requested that an exception report be circulated to Members of the Group as soon as it was available.

In relation to WS2a (Grade A defect response time (within 2 hours)), which was also rated as Amber, performance had been affected by two incidents. One occurred over the Bank Holiday weekend and one involved a defective seat that could not be repaired immediately.

FNP6 (percentage of debt over 90 days old) was reporting as Red for the period. The Head of Finance and Treasurer advised that £5,573 was outstanding at the end of the reporting period. However, there had been a downward trend and the outstanding figure at the end of August 2017 was £810. The majority of outstanding debt related to special services that were chargeable. Those charges in dispute were removed from reporting against this indicator and the debts reported were all being chased for payment. The Service pursued outstanding debt using a variety of methods, including small claims court and attachment of earnings.

The property indicators were all reporting as Green. These were year-end figures for 2016-17.

It was suggested that an indicator measuring the use of diesel be reported to the Group for information.

The Chair commented that this could be considered at the annual target-setting meeting.

RESOLVED:

1. That the progress made on Corporate Services Programmes and Performance be acknowledged.
2. That an exception report for WS1a be circulated to Members of the Group as soon as it is available.
3. That consideration be given to the inclusion of an indicator on diesel usage at the Group's annual target setting meeting in March 2018.

17-18/CS/025 New Internal Audit Reports Completed to date

ACO Evans introduced the audit of Procurement- Tendering that had been completed by the internal auditors, RSM, in August 2017. RSM's audit opinion had been one of substantial assurance. The two low priority actions set out in the action plan had already been completed.

RESOLVED:

That the internal audit report be received and the associated management comments/actions which will be added to the Audit and Governance Action Plan Monitoring report be endorsed.

17-18/CS/026 Audit and Governance Action Plans Monitoring Report

ACO Evans introduced her report on progress made to date against current action plans arising from internal and external audit reports. No extensions had been requested and all the actions from previous audits had been completed with the exception of one that was still in progress.

RESOLVED:

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

17-18/CS/027 Third Annual Review 2016 to 2017 of the ICT Shared Service

Mr A Dosanjh, Head of ICT and Infrastructure, reported on the outcome of the annual review of the operation of the ICT Shared Service Agreement.

Following the introduction of the Shared Service Agreement, there had been increasing rates of customer satisfaction. However, there were challenges to achieve further improvements in the Service and there was a risk that general maintenance, upgrades of software, security patches and replacement of equipment were being de-prioritised due to the demands from business led projects.

The migration to VDI had also been a huge success with the number of faults reported decreasing significantly.

In response to a question, ACO Evans advised that there were localised rates of pay and terms of conditions for Green Book staff. This resulted in the differences in terms and conditions. This situation was not unique and was common under such shared service or collaboration models.

Members were reminded that consideration had previously been given to other possible operating models. It was acknowledged there were also a number of disadvantages with other options which need to be weighed up. A different operating model was not being pursued at this time.

The view was expressed that an assumption was made that internal resource would always be available to support project work but that this was not always the case. The resource required, both internal and external, should be fully costed prior to the commencement of a project.

In relation to the difficulties in recruiting permanent staff and the high level of agency spend, a Member suggested that market rate supplements may be more cost effective than continuing with the high level of spend on agency staff.

ACO Evans reported that the introduction of market rate supplements could have far-reaching impacts across an organisation. She added that the Service had recently been successful in recruiting to three posts in the Shared Service. The current structural review would also take into account issues with recruitment.

In response to a question from the Chair, ACO Evans advised that a report on the restructure of the ICT Shared Service would be reported to the Group in due course and that any recruitment issues could be highlighted to Members at that time.

RESOLVED:

1. That the outcomes of the third annual review of the operation of the ICT Shared Service Agreement be considered and the progress in achieving the aims of improved resilience, flexibility, cover, quality and customer focus and the need to review the structure and capacity of the function be noted.
2. That the Group receive a report on the restructure of the ICT Shared Service at an appropriate future meeting and that any relevant issues in relation to the recruitment and retention of staff be addressed within that report.

17-18/CS/028 Investment in the Service's Servers and Other IT Infrastructure

Mr A Dosanjh, Head of ICT and Improvement, introduced his report explaining the capital investment in the ICT technical estate contained within the Service's Medium Term Capital Programme.

The server hardware renewal related to the Storage Area Network (SAN) and other hardware servers that had reached their end of their replacement in 2015. Replacement of the servers was planned for 2018/19.

The replacement of the risk information mobile data terminals had been deferred to 2018/19 to align with the Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme (EMSCP), a national programme to replace the Airwaves emergency services communication network, for the mobilising mobile data terminals. However, the replacement of the risk information mobile data terminals was being brought forward as there were a number of defects being reported in relation to these mobile data terminals.

SC J Gell reported that the risk information mobile data terminals were ruggedized laptop terminals which were used at incidents to enable crews to access risk information in the appliance and on the incident ground. These were fitted to 22 rescue pumps and the rural water tenders throughout the Service. In addition to risk information, the terminals also allowed the Officer in charge to access the GIS maps and tactical operational guidance. An example of this was the ability of the terminal to access floor plans and entry codes for high rise premises. It also had the facility to provide chemical data and a vehicle recovery system for Officers attending

road traffic collisions. The terminals could be used in their cradle in the appliances but could also be taken off the cradles and onto the incident ground.

Future technological developments were expected in this area within the next few years and the Service was currently involved in a regional group considering the next developments, such as enabling legislative fire safety work and safe and well checks to be completed on the terminals. Whilst there were small savings arising from economies of scale, the real benefit was closer working arrangements with neighbouring and regional Fire and Rescue Services.

The Head of ICT and Improvement explained that the primary core switch replacement related to where the cables which distributed the external line connection to all the internal switches.

The secondary network switch replacement was to install switches at Bedford and Luton Fire Stations which host the Northern Area Office and Southern Area Office respectively. The additional switch would increase resilience as there would be a switch for each of the two external network connections going to those premises so that, in the event of a failure, the network connection could be accessed via the second switch.

The network structured cabling replacement would allow for older cabling to be replaced with cabling with a high bandwidth and this would enable a faster throughput.

SC J Gell, Response Support, gave a presentation on the mobilising mobile data terminals. These worked as part of the Resque 4i mobilising system across the secure Airwaves emergency services communication network.

The mobilising mobile data terminals were for use solely in the appliances as a result of Code of Connectivity restrictions.

The presentation included slides of the screens on which Control and the fire crews could communicate with data over the Airwaves network. The mobilising system identified the nearest available appliance to the incident and this appliance was then contacted by Control to mobilise to the incident.

Information available to the fire crews on the terminal included GPS, mapping scales, a search capability, measuring facility and an automatic vehicle location system (this was updated with real-time locations approximately every 20 seconds).

There was currently no risk information stored on these terminals but there was the facility for this to be added in the future. There was also the facility to send incident and operational messages over the Airwaves network.

The ability to communicate by voice was still available. Sending data messages over the Airwaves system allowed responses to be time and date stamped when multiple appliances were called to an incident. This enabled various crews to report simultaneously rather than waiting for a gap as was the previous situation when mobilisation was undertaken via voice only.

Feedback from fire crews was that the new system was very easy to use.

The Group noted that the mobilising mobile data terminals were due for renewal and this was also being programmed to align with the ESMCP.

Members all agreed that it was useful to see the practical application of equipment which fell within the ICT capital programme and Members passed on their thanks to Jason Gell for his useful presentation.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received.

17-18/CS/029 Corporate Risk Register

AC D Cook presented his report on the Corporate Risk Register.

He reported that there had been no changes to the risk ratings. A number of risks on the Corporate Services Risk Register had been updated as follows:

CRR29 (if we do not communicate well, both internal and external to the Service, then we will suffer from poor staff morale, miss the opportunity to promote ourselves and the excellent work that we do and potentially impact upon our ability to deliver a full range of services:): the contract for an improved website was being finalised with the preferred supplier.

CRR05 (If we are unable to provide adequate asset management and tracking facilities then we may cause serious injuries to our staff due to a lack of safety testing. We may also incur unnecessary significant costs and be in breach of health and safety legislation): market research was currently being carried out and a revised proposal would be submitted to the Service's Corporate Management Team.

CRR15 (If we do not properly manage the work issues that can potentially be caused by collaboration or shared services including: 1. Redundancy 2. Relocation 3. Cost of work for the convergence of procedures 4. Use of inexperienced staff familiar with FRS operations 5. Increase in staff numbers and associated cost; then there will be a negative cultural impact upon the service and the projects may fail): the mobile data terminals had now gone live as part of the Resque 4i mobilising system and all resilience benefits required by the Home Office had been completed with the exception of "automatic fail over".

RESOLVED:

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

17-18/CS/030 Work Programme 2017/18

Members considered the Work Programme for 2017/18. The next meeting of the Group would be held on 29 November 2017.

RESOLVED:

That the Work Programme for 2017/18 be received.

The meeting finished at 11.32am.