

MINUTES OF CORPORATE SERVICES POLICY AND CHALLENGE GROUP MEETING HELD ON 21 JUNE 2018

Present: Councillors Chapman (Chair), Downing, Headley and McVicar

ACO Z Evans, SOC C Ball, BCN D Cook, Mr J Atkinson, Mr G Chambers and Mr A Dosanjh

18-19/CS/001 Apologies

1.1 An apology for absence was received from Councillor Duckett.

18-19/CS/002 Election of Vice Chair 2018/19

RESOLVED:

That the election of Vice-chair be deferred until the next meeting.

18-19/CS/003 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary and Other Interests

3.1 There were no declarations of interests.

18-19/CS/004 Communications

4.1 The Policy and Challenge Group received the Minutes of the ICT Shared Service Governance Board held on 1 February 2018 for information.

4.2 There were no other communications.

4.3 In response to a question from the Group Mr Dosanjh confirmed that there had been problems with changes of the chosen providers staff but the Service had worked with the provider who had recruited new staff. This had caused a delay to the project but all was now running smoothly.

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the ICT Shared Service Governance Board held on 1 February 2018 be received.

18-19/CS/005 Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 29 November 2017 be confirmed and signed as a true record and the notes of the inquorate meeting held on 12 March 2018 be received.

18-19/CS/006 Terms of Reference

6.1 Members were requested to review the Policy and Challenge Group's terms of reference.

6.2 The Chair commented that there was no Corporate Services Directorate (as referred to in point 6) and all references to a Director in the Group's Terms of Reference should be replaced with reference to Corporate Services functions.

6.3 ACO Evans further commented that the Terms of Reference would need to be reviewed yearly and this to be updated in the terms of reference. The terms of reference for all groups would also need to be considered after the internal audit had been completed.

RESOLVED:

1) That the Fire and Rescue Authority be recommended to approve the following amendment to the Corporate Services Policy and Challenge Group's Terms of Reference: that all references to the Corporate Services Directorate be replaced with references to Corporate Services functions.

2) That, an annual review be added to the terms of reference and the possibility acknowledged of a further review post the current audit.

18-19/CS/007 Corporate Services Performance Monitoring Year End Report and Programmes to date

- 7.1 ACO Evans submitted the 2017/18 year-end report on the Corporate Services programme, projects to date and performance against Corporate Services performance indicators and associated targets.
- 7.2 The ACO commented on the Project Exceptions detailed under Item 2 on page 7.3 of the report. She highlighted in particular the Protection Replacement Management Information System which was Amber due to an earlier slippage in timescales but which was now running smoothly. To avoid repeatedly reporting this same issue this would now be re-set Green with a new completion date of January 2019.
- 7.3 The new Payroll system had been operational since February 2018 and was Amber due to a 10% over-spend. Phase 2 was on target for delivery in January 2019.
- 7.4 Cllr Downing commented that, at a recent Police Governance Summit, he had met consultants who specialised in assisting organisations to ensure their various IT packages worked together.
- 7.5 In response to a question Mr Chambers commented that the target of 2.5% in relation to the 'Percentage of Outstanding Debt Over 90 Days Old' related to the debt over 90 days as a percentage of total debt. The percentage had been rising as overall debt had risen as a result of a greater number of jobs becoming chargeable.
- 7.6 The ACO commented that any delays in presenting end-of-year data on gas, electric and water services would be resolved in the following year as the process became automated.

RESOLVED:

That the progress made and matters arising from the Corporate Services Programmes and Performance be acknowledged.

18-19/CS/008 New Internal Audit Reports Completed to date

- 8.1 ACO Evans introduced the audits of Risk Management and the follow-up audit, both of which had been awarded an audit opinion of reasonable assurance with 7 low level and 2 medium level recommendations to act upon.
- 8.2 In presenting the Follow up audit, SOC C Ball commented that agreed action had been on-going throughout the year to repair and maintain the fleet of vehicles, to maintain appliances and to update logbooks. The Health and Safety Policy had also been updated.

- 8.3 An original audit action relating to stocks and inventory was to be challenged as it had been found to be impractical given the fixed sizes of boxes and shelves. However the intention of the action had been acted upon and SOC Ball was satisfied that all stock was fully accounted for.
- 8.4 A risk had previously been identified where newly recruited staff had failed to sign and return a contract of employment. Established employment law recognised that a person attending work demonstrated the existence of a work contract through their behaviour. This meant that lack of documentation was not an organisational risk. Notwithstanding that, work was still being done to encourage return of signed documentation and ACO Evans was able to confirm that all pre-employment checks were satisfactorily carried out.

RESOLVED:

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

18-19/CS/009 Audit and Governance Action Plans Monitoring Report

- 9.1 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 actions from previous audits had been completed.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the issues raised in the report and the progress made to date against the action plans be acknowledged

18-19/CS/010 Treasury Management Annual Report for 2017/18

- 10.1 The Head of Finance and Treasurer (HFT) presented the Treasury Management Annual Report for 2017/18.
- 10.2 The report set out the Authority's borrowing and investment strategy, as well as the range of investments held by the Authority during the year.
- 10.3 In response to questions from the Group the HFT commented that:

- In the table on Appendix A the Capital Finance Requirement was a technical indicator and it was acceptable for the actual amount to be below the indicator.
- On the table on Appendix A the difference in the figures for Authorised Limit for External Debt and Operational Boundary for External Debt was due to payroll costs.
- In relation to paragraph 5.2 of his report, the HFT would present a report to the next meeting of this Group to explain why the “Fixed interest rate exposure” and “Variable interest rate exposure” were identical figures.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the report be noted.
- 2) That a report providing further clarification be received at the next meeting of this Group.

18-19/CS/011 Asset Management Policy and Plans – Fleet and Transport and Information and Communication Technology

11.1 The Head of Finance and Treasurer presented the covering report to the Asset Management Plans for 2018/19 to 2021/22 for Fleet and Transport and Information & Communications Technology.

Fleet & Transport

11.2 SOC C Ball introduced the updated Fleet & Transport Asset Management Plan. He highlighted the following points from the report:

- The fleet consisted of 115 items from trailers to fire engines with a total value of just under £5.5m. There were no lease costs.
- Savings of £950k had been achieved through a review of appliances.
- With new capital purchases the average life of the fleet had been reduced from 7 to 5 years, however the newer appliances, such as the 10 new rescue pumps, had a longer lifespan and the average life would rise again as the fleet aged. In general the age and standard of the fleet was good in comparison to some other services.
- Two storage tanks for red diesel were to be made operational, one at Bedford and one at Luton. Only two vehicles in the fleet could run on red diesel but they were less efficient vehicles and the fuel was 50p/litre cheaper so this initiative would generate savings.

- Looking to the future, electric vehicles and possibly hydrogen cell vehicles would reduce carbon emissions. The London FRS aimed to have no new fossil-fuelled vehicles by 2030. Electric charging points could be installed for staff but there would be tax implications. The first three electric vehicles would be vans, expected by the end of the year and having a range of around 190 miles.
- Despite having more efficient vehicles the overall carbon footprint had increased due to the greater number of jobs being undertaken by the Service, for instance in assisting the Police and Ambulance services.
- The Action Plan in section 21 of the report included a regular review of the fleet and appropriate replacement of vehicles. The average lifespan for a car was 4 years but each vehicle was assessed individually.
- Within the past 12 months hydrant vans had been supplied to the Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Services with three identical vehicles to each Service. This enabled greater efficiencies in training and procurement of equipment for the vehicles. Also in the past 12 months the sale of obsolete assets had paid for the total refurbishment of older fire engines.

11.3 In response to a question SOC Ball commented that the Service contributed to some personal lease costs. This was a benefit available to some staff as an alternative to an essential car user allowance. All such costs were reviewed on a regular basis.

Information and Communications Technology

11.4 Mr A Dosanjh highlighted the following points from the summary:

- Paragraph 9.1 listed a number of joint infrastructure projects which included upgrading the operating system to Windows 10. This was necessary as support for Windows 7 was due to end in December 2019. The upgrade would be implemented on the server and would not need to be enacted on each individual computer. Various 3rd party applications might also need upgrading to ensure compatibility with the new operating system.
- A benefit of the Microsoft Enterprise licence enabled staff to purchase the Microsoft Office suite for £10.
- Additional items in paragraph 9.2 included implementation of the Fire Safety Application Protection element and Safe and Well application element of 'Prevent and Protect'
- Included in the medium term capital plan at Item 11 was a Wi-Fi Refresh which would enable greater flexible working.

11.5 In response to a question Mr Dosanjh confirmed that the detail contained within this report was also used to benchmark performance throughout the year.

RESOLVED:

That, following due scrutiny by the Group, the updated Asset Management Plans for Fleet & Transport and Information & Communications Technology be recommended for approval by the Authority.

18-19/CS/012 Update on GDPR

12.1 [Note: this item was taken immediately after item 18-19/CS/002 Election of Vice Chair]

12.2 BCN D Cook provided an update on the work being undertaken by the Service to meet the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulations which had come into force on 25 May 2018. The main principles of data protection remained largely unchanged and there were some new requirements which included fines for breaches.

12.3 To prepare for GDPR a Management Briefing Day had been held in February 2018 and implementation was being managed through the Corporate Management Team with a programme of staff training. A project plan had been developed which included 10 recommendations and 26 further actions, 17 of which were high priority and linked to the risk register. The head of ICT had been appointed as Data Protection Officer, supported by the Business Information Manager to ensure that total responsibility did not sit in one business area.

12.4 In response to a question BCN D Cook commented that the cost of implementation of GDPR was being absorbed into the time of existing staff.

RESOLVED:

- 1) That the contents of the report be noted.
- 2) That the effort of all involved to ensure that everything necessary is carried out be acknowledged.

18-19/CS/013 Review of the Information, Communications and Technology Shared Service

13.1 Mr A Dosanjh, the Head of ICT, introduced his report which provided an update in relation to the reorganisation of the ICT Shared Service Function, highlighting the better use of resources with change in technology. Staff consultation had been carried out and all comments had been considered. Staff were now applying for the new posts in the revised structure and this would lead into a

transition stage. Some contractors would be retained to mitigate the risk of a loss of skills. The project was on target for the new structure to go live on 1 August 2018.

13.2 In response to a question the Head of ICT commented that it was an unsettling time for staff with some embracing the changes and others not with location being an issue for some staff.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received and the contents be noted.

18-19/CS/014 Corporate Risk Register

14.1 ACO Z Evans presented the report on the Corporate Risk Register.

14.2 She reported that changes had been made to the following risk ratings:

CRR08 (If we do not monitor our key external suppliers of goods and services, particularly in regard to business continuity, then we may suffer a significant and detrimental impact on our ability to deliver our full range of services including emergency response):

CRR27 (If we receive a poor budget settlement from government and reduce funding from our Local Unitary Authorities, and/or we have an adverse response from our Council Tax Precept increase consultation processes, then our ability to deliver a full range of services could be significantly affected. Potential key pressures for 2018/19 onwards may be the Firefighters pay award, the employer pension contributions and the funding of these):

CRR16 (If there is an unforeseen change of direction for the FRS (e.g. government request to do something which does not currently fall under the remit of the UK FRS), or there are changes in Government or EU policy on fire and rescue matters or other policy directly affecting the FRS then this may have an impact on our ability to deliver a full range of services due to the need to resource such changes):

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):

CRR04 (If there are a large number of staff absent from the workplace then our ability to deliver services to our communities is severely compromised and our reputation will be adversely affected):

RESOLVED:

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

18-19/CS/015 Work Programme 2018/19

15.1 Members received the Work Programme for 2018/19. It was noted that nothing on the Programme and been added or removed since the previous meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the Work Programme be agreed.

The meeting finished at 12.04pm