



BEDFORDSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

REPORT OF BEDFORDSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY FROM ITS MEETING ON 11 DECEMBER 2014 TO LUTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority (FRA) held a meeting on 11 December 2014 at Service Headquarters, Kempston. The major issues discussed at the meeting are summarised below:

1. COMMUNICATIONS

Industrial Action

A 24 hour period of strike action had taken place from 09.00 on 9 December to 09.00 on 10 December 2014. There was also a mandate continuing to the end of the year for action short of strike.

Members were advised that the FBU leadership was meeting on 12 December 2014 and notification may be received following that meeting on strike dates to be called during the Christmas period.

Chair's Announcements

The Fire Service had sponsored the Keeping Luton Safe Award at the Luton's Best Awards, which was won by Aldwyck Housing Association's Next Generation Project.

Confirmation had been received from Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Penny Mordaunt MP, that all three of the Service's bids for Transformation Funding had been successful.

Members were reminded of the Christingle Service to be held at Woburn Parish Church at 7pm on 16 December 2014.

2. CORPORATE SERVICES POLICY AND CHALLENGE GROUP 2 DECEMBER 2014

Members received the Minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Services Policy and Challenge Group held on 2 December 2014 and the report of the Policy and Challenge Group's review 'An Investigation into Delivery Models including Collaborative Working, Shared Services and Outsourcing'.

The review of delivery models had been a year-long piece of work undertaken by the Policy and Challenge Group, during which evidence had been received in relation to the Service's current arrangements and external examples of joint working and best practice. It had resulted in a recommendation to agree that the Service should continue to investigate alternative delivery models on a case by case basis using the lessons learnt through the review.

The trial of 'paperless' meetings was ongoing.

3. SERVICE DELIVERY POLICY AND CHALLENGE GROUP 4 DECEMBER 2014

Members received the Minutes of the meeting of the Service Delivery Policy and Challenge Group held on 4 December 2014.

It was noted that there had been a spike in incidents of accidental dwelling fires in certain areas of Bedford and Luton. Specific targeting had been put in place and it was anticipated that performance would improve in the current quarter.

4. DRAFT COMMUNITY RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN 2015-19

The Chief Fire Officer introduced the latest draft Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP), which was currently in the process of being refreshed.

Members were reminded that, following discussion at the Members' Budget Workshop, it had been agreed that Public Forums would not be held this year on the proposals included in the CRMP. Consultation would be undertaken primarily through an online portal and postal survey.

Questions for the consultation were discussed. The final wording of the questions would be submitted to the Chief Fire Officer and the Members, through the Chair, for approval.

The draft Community Risk Management Plan 2015-10 was approved for public consultation and the associated consultation arrangements were agreed.

5. DRAFT 2015-16 REVENUE BUDGET AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME

Members received the draft 2015-16 Revenue Budget and Capital Programme.

The Head of Finance and Treasurer reported on in-year increase in business rates income and the Council Tax taxbase. It was anticipated that approximately £67,500 more in business rates would be collected in 2015/16. An increase in the Council Tax taxbase would result in increased Council Tax revenue of £360,000 in 2015/16. This would reduce the call on the Transformational Earmarked Reserve.

A draft revenue budget requirement of £28.415 million, with a council tax increase of 1.99% and a draft Capital Programme of £1.518 million was approved for further consultation.

6. MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES SCHEME 2015/16

A Members' Allowances Scheme from 1 April 2015 was considered, updated and included as part of the consideration of the Budget for 2015/16.

(Note: All Members disclosed a non-pecuniary interest in this item.)

7. CALENDAR OF MEETINGS

The submitted calendar of dates for meetings of the Fire and Rescue Authority and its associated Committees and Groups for the forthcoming year (2015/16) was approved.

8. FRA SECRETARY/MONITORING OFFICER

Following notification of the current Secretary and Monitoring Officer, Mr Roger Wansbrough, to retire, Members were presented with a range of options to fill the role and Members' views were sought on which options should be explored.

External appointment was selected as the preferred option to fill the role of Secretary and Monitoring Officer. Officers were also asked to continue investigating sharing with a neighbouring authority in the event that the post cannot be successfully filled via external appointment.

9. INFORMATION BULLETIN

The Service's resilience arrangements had been implemented during the recent strike period (9-10 December 2014) and 8-9 rescue pumps were available over the 24 hour strike period. Both Aerial Platforms, one rescue boat and one water carrier had also been available. These had been operated by retained staff and non-striking Officers and firefighters mobilised from Bedford, Leighton Buzzard and Luton Fire Stations. Over the strike period, a total of thirty-two calls had been received. Seventeen of these had been mobilised to, including four property fires, three road traffic collisions and one lock-out.

Members expressed their appreciation of the work undertaken by the resilience crews.

In relation to Automatic Fire Alarms (AFAs), Members were advised that the Service had worked hard to drive down the number of mobilisations to AFAs, and this number had decreased significantly over the past 18 months.

The increasing problem of derelict buildings being used as squatters' accommodation and the resultant fire risk was discussed.

**COUNCILLOR SALEEM
MEMBER OF BEDFORDSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**