



BEDFORDSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

REPORT OF BEDFORDSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY FROM ITS MEETING ON 22 JULY 2014 TO LUTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority (FRA) held a meeting on 22 July 2014 at Dunstable Community Fire Station. The major issues discussed at the meeting are summarised below:

1. COMMUNICATIONS

Fire Brigades Union: Trade Dispute

Members received an update on the latest round of strike action and a summary of strike action that had taken place during the month of July 2014. There had been 16 periods of strike action in July 2014 to date, with one 9 hour strike and 15 two hour strikes. This had resulted in a total of 39 hours of strike action during the month.

During the periods of strike action, 8 or 9 rescue pumps had been available for emergency response, with the Aerial Ladder Platform also being available on occasion. 33 emergency calls had been received, 20 of which required an emergency response by the Service.

Members discussed a letter circulated to Chief Fire Officers and Chairs of Fire and Rescue Authorities setting out the Government's latest position and confirming that the Government would not negotiate with the FBU whilst it was on strike. It also advised on the closure of the consultation period on changes to the Fire Fighters Pension Scheme and that fire fighters would be able to retire at the age of 55 with an actuarially reduced pension if they were not willing or able to maintain an appropriate level of fitness. This was the position as it had been in June 2013.

2. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Members agreed that a review be undertaken to identify the reasons for the low levels of attendance and public participation at Fire and Rescue Authority meetings. The use of social media and possible changes to the times and locations of meetings would be considered.

Councillors McVicar and Mingay were appointed to the review group to represent Members of the Fire and Rescue Authority.

3. CORPORATE SERVICES POLICY AND CHALLENGE GROUP 24 JUNE 2014

Members received the Minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Services Policy and Challenge Group held on 24 June 2014. It was agreed that there would be a quorum of 3 Members from at least two constituent authorities for future meetings.

4. SERVICE DELIVERY POLICY AND CHALLENGE GROUP 25 JUNE 2014

Members received the Minutes of the meeting of the Service Delivery Policy and Challenge Group held on 25 June 2014. It was agreed that there would be a quorum of 3 Members from at least two constituent authorities for future meetings.

Members discussed the appropriateness of reporting of incidents where Officers had acted outside of Standard Operating Procedures. Concern was expressed that the Fire and Rescue Authority should fully consider whether it would place itself in any legal difficulties or be more vulnerable to legal action by presenting this information in a public domain. Members agreed that the Service Delivery Policy and Challenge Group should continue to receive this information.

The procedures used by this Authority had been identified as exemplar practice in new national guidance.

5. HUMAN RESOURCES POLICY AND CHALLENGE GROUP 2 JULY 2014

Members received the Minutes of the meeting of the Human Resources Policy and Challenge Group held on 2 July 2014. It was agreed that there would be a quorum of 3 Members from at least two constituent authorities for future meetings.

Members adopted the proposed Local Government Pension Scheme Discretions and agreed that delegated authority to exercise the proposed discretions where relevant be granted to a newly created Service Panel of officers set out in the report.

6. AUDIT AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE 26 JUNE 2014

Members received the Minutes of the meeting of the Audit and Standards Committee held on 26 June 2014. A recommendation had been made to the Fire and Rescue Authority relating to the submission of the Annual Overarching Performance Report Year End 2013/14 to the full Fire and Rescue Authority.

Members were reminded to seek advice prior to meetings if they believed they had an interest to disclose.

7. REVENUE BUDGET AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME

Members were presented with the latest budget monitoring position as at 30 June 2014. A £100,000 overspend, excluding salary budgets, was currently forecast relating to items under the Head of Strategic Support. This, along, with a £309,000 forecast underspend on salaries, resulted in a total forecast underspend of £209,000.

The forecast overspend was due to the anticipated costs of the Cambridgeshire Public Service Network exceeding the budgeted amount by £50,000 and a £50,000 overspend in the computer software budget. The budget for computer software would be amended in future budgets.

A reduction had been made to the Capital Programme as defibrillators were now being treated as revenue expenditure as the majority of defibrillators were donated to Parish Councils after purchase and were not held longer than a year so did not meet the definition of capital expenditure.

Members were advised that all costs and savings associated with the strike action were being allocated to a specific cost code so that this could be monitored.

8. ANNUAL OVERARCHING PERFORMANCE REPORT YEAR END 2013/14

Following its consideration at the Audit and Standards Committee meeting on 26 June 2014, Members received an overarching performance report for year end 2013/14 that was aligned to the Service's strategic objectives and strategies.

It was agreed that the Overarching Performance Report be presented annually at the full Fire and Rescue Authority meetings and that the report be published on the internet.

9. THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY CODE 2014

Members received a report advising them of the forthcoming requirements for the Authority under the Transparency Code 2014. The Transparency Code set out the minimum data that local authorities should be publishing, as well as the frequency and method of publication.

Members approved the publication of information in line with the requirements of the Local Government Transparency Code 2014.

10. SERVICE OPERATIONAL COMMAND

Members considered a proposal from the Chief Fire Officer to change the way in which Service Operational Command was provided within Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service. The proposal would result in an annual saving of around £70,000.

Members agreed to a reduction in the Operational Principal Officer Team by one Assistant Chief Fire Officer and that the responsibility level of the five Area Commanders be increased to provide Service Operational Command cover from 1 August 2014, with management changes and post re-designation being managed by the Chief Fire Officer between now and late September.

Members were advised that the additional responsibility of Service Operational Command for the Area Commanders is remunerated by a salary increase to reflect the increase in operational responsibility and consequent reduction in rota days and the Service's Pay Statement is updated accordingly.

A restructure would be required to re-distribute the Assistant Chief Fire Officer responsibilities as determined by the Chief Fire Officer through existing delegation.

(Note: Assistant Chief Fire Officer Fothergill was not present for the discussion of this item.)

COUNCILLOR SALEEM
MEMBER OF BEDFORDSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY