

**Minutes of the meeting of the
Resources and Fire & Rescue Overview and Scrutiny Committee
held on 14 December 2016**

Present:

Members of the Committee

Councillors John Appleton, Nicola Davies, Neil Dirveiks, Peter Fowler, Brian Hawkes, Keith Kondakor, Phillip Morris-Jones, Chris Saint and Matt Western (Chair)

Other County Councillors

John Horner - Portfolio Holder for Community Safety

Officers

Elizabeth Abbott, Business Partner, Planning, Performance & Improvement

Helen Barnsley, Democratic Services Officer

John Betts, Head of Finance

Barnaby Briggs, Area Commander

David Carter, Strategic Director, Resources Group

Tonino Ciuffini, Head of Information Assets

Mathew Dawson, Treasury & Pension Fund Manager

Sue Evans, Head of HR & Organisational Development

Tejay de Kretser, Business Development and Improvement Manager

Tricia Morrison, Head of Performance

Rob Moyney, Deputy Chief Fire Officer

1. General

(1) Apologies

Councillor Bernard Kirton

(2) Members' Disclosures of Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

None

(3) Minutes of the meetings held on 15 September 2016

The Committee agreed that the minutes of the meetings held on 15 September 2016 be signed as a correct record.

Matters Arising

Item 8 – Warwickshire Forum – It was agreed that David Carter would circulate an update to Members regarding the bid for One Public Estate that was due to be submitted by December 2016.

2. Public Question Time

There were no public questions received or presented at the meeting.

3. Questions to Cabinet Portfolio Holders

There were no questions presented to Cabinet Portfolio Holders at the meeting.

4. Work Programme 2016/17

With regards to Business Rates it was agreed that a further update is expected, including Government guidance, in time for the next meeting of the Committee in February 2017. It was agreed that a full report to the Committee would be appropriate after the County Council elections in May 2017. Members agreed to add the item to the Work Programme 2016/17.

Members requested further information on fires that are started deliberately in the County. It was agreed that this is a very important subject and members need to fully understand the actions that are being taken by the Fire Service. Rob Moyney agreed to present the information to members at the meeting in February 2017.

Resolved

The Committee agrees the updated 2016-17 Work Programme and notes the scheduled future meeting dates.

5. One Organisational Plan Quarterly Progress Report: April - September 2016

It was confirmed that the report was the mid-year quarterly report and had been presented to Cabinet on 10 November 2016. All OSC groups had been able to give feedback on the report which now shows trend and comparison information.

With regards to broadband coverage across Warwickshire, Tonino Ciuffini confirmed that the project was on target and that there is a close working partnership with the District and Borough Councils. The project team is aware of the gaps in broadband coverage and can provide information on the plans.

Members requested that mobile phone coverage is reviewed by the Committee as this is just as important to communities as broadband coverage and can lead to issues where there is no coverage at all. Members felt that mobile phone operators should visit the idea of sharing masts in rural areas to provide cover although it was noted that the industry is currently resistant to this idea.

With regards to the Call Abandonment information on page eight of the report, it was confirmed that further details about when calls are lost would be provided to the committee; including times and days for lost calls. Tejay de Kretser confirmed that performance information and trend details were both used in demand management planning. Full details regarding current vacancies will be provided to members who noted that to fully train a new member of staff can take up to six months.

With regards to long term sickness in Warwickshire County Council Sue Evans confirmed that there was concern about the level reported and that steps were being taken to address this. An amended sickness policy was introduced in November 2016 and this is to be circulated to members.

Clarification was given to members regarding Retained Duty System (RDS) Fire Officers – there is limited availability for new officers as for the majority the Fire Service is a secondary employer. The requirement to be within five minutes of the fire station has been problematic since employment areas across the County have changed and many residents travel to primary employment. Following a request

from members, information regarding which areas are in need of RDS officers will be circulated. Information regarding the number of fire officers injured while on duty was also requested and will be circulated to members. Members also requested information regarding Key and Non-Key fire stations in relation to second appliances.

Following a discussion regarding the variance between actual and planned quarterly milestones, it was confirmed that temporary resource issues had led to some of the problems. It was also acknowledged that improvement is needed on milestone management; although it was noted that 90% of project milestones are met.

Members requested more details about the seven projects associated with the Resources OSC that have missed key milestones, including the timescales involved. It was noted that officers are hoping to have a standardised approach to milestone management by April 2017.

Following a question regarding reported underspends, members received confirmation that they had been reserved for spending in the next financial year. Heads of Service will produce an outturn report at the end of the current financial year for Cabinet to approve.

Resolved

The Committee notes the key messages set out in the report and requests that further reports and briefing notes be prepared as set out in the minutes.

6. Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service Procurement Activity Report

Members were informed that a recent procurement activity carried out on behalf of the Home Office was the creation of a 'basket of goods' culminating in a very detailed spend analysis of fire sector procurement. Outcomes will be published in February 2017.

Members were also informed that a foreign ownership report has also been completed as part of the Home Office's focus on procurement.

It was noted that procurement is shared across Warwickshire County Council where possible unless an item is sector specific. There is also a National project looking into the use of local suppliers.

Resolved

The Committee notes the content of the report.

7. Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service draft IRMP Report

It was confirmed to members that WFRS has a duty to produce an IRMP. The key sections are the assessment of risks and subsequent control measures, the Community Risk Profile (which includes information about all aspects of community risk) and the 2017/18 draft Action Plan.

Following a question from members it was confirmed that vulnerable residents are identified through the MOSAIC system and the EXETER system (which is linked to GP surgeries). Knowledge is also provided through local fire officers. Officers were informed by members that the Western Electrical supply company also holds a list of vulnerable residents and took on board the suggestion that this could be another link for WFRS to use.

With regards to arson incidents across the County, it was confirmed that a presentation would be given to the Committee in February 2017 but that there are a number of initiatives already in place, including working with the police on anti-social behaviour, the placement of an arson officer in a Justice Centre in Nuneaton and Fire officers on bikes who are able to engage with the young people and local communities.

With regards to flood rescue capability, members were reassured that there is a boat unit based in Rugby and that key front line appliances have water rescue equipment on them.

Members requested clarification regarding cross border rescue services and if there was any reliance on neighbouring locations. Officers confirmed that information was shared daily with cross-border services to ensure maximum coverage; and that there were limited costs involved with cross-border incidents.

Following a discussion regarding the HS2 project, members were reassured that WFRS was working to identify a solution regarding its emergency response arrangements resulting from HS2 traffic movements, in particular around the Kenilworth and Stoneleigh areas. In addition WFRS are assessing the implications from other risks specific to Warwickshire such as tunnel rescue and rescues from height as there is no current capability for this in Warwickshire. Officers are also taking into account the service requirements during the construction phase of HS2.

Resolved

The Committee notes the content of the report

8. Warwickshire County Council Staff Survey Results

Sue Evans confirmed to the Committee that the staff survey was carried out every 18 months, with additional pulse surveys in-between. Warwickshire County Council's results are always in the top quartile and to have a staff engagement rate of 70% is enviable across the sector. Sue Evans confirmed that despite the positive results, staff sickness levels were a concern and were being investigated.

The report also noted that the appraisal system needs to be reviewed as results suggested the not many staff find them useful and more short term feedback is required (rather than annual feedback). David Carter confirmed that he has received a proposal for a revised process that would be engaging, motivating and useful. It was noted that some low motivation could be attributed to the current uncertainty across the organisation.

It was also confirmed that the detailed responses (e.g. gender, part-time/full-time) were also available and will be provided to the Committee along with the exact total figure of responses.

Resolved

The Committee notes the content of the report.

9. Treasury Management Monitoring

Mathew Dawson confirmed to the Committee that the level of cash currently held by Warwickshire County Council was approximately the same as in March 2016, the end of the last financial year.

Members noted that there was even less direct lending to Building Societies and that the majority of funds were now held in Same Day Money Funds. There is no additional money in property or social funds for this financial year.

Resolved

The Committee notes the content of the report.

10. Verbal update regarding Business Rates

John Betts provided a verbal update for the committee who noted that the results from the Government consultation had not been released as expected. Once the results are available they will be presented to the Committee.

Warwickshire County Council will lobby for Cost Drivers and is working with other Councils on this matter.

Members were reassured to note that they will be kept up to date with all developments regarding business rates.

11. Urgent Matters

None

Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next Resources and Fire & Rescue Overview and Scrutiny Committee was confirmed as 22 February 2017 at 2 p.m. in CR2, Shire Hall.

The meeting rose at 16.23.

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Chair