

**Minutes of the meeting of the
Resources and Fire & Rescue Overview and Scrutiny Committee
held on 28 February 2018**

Present:

Members of the Committee:

Councillors Parminder Singh Birdi (Vice-Chair), Sarah Boad, John Cooke, Andy Crump, Judy Falp, Andy Jenns, Bill Olnor, Maggie O'Rourke and Heather Timms (Chair)

Other County Councillors:

Kam Kaur - Portfolio Holder for Customer & Transformation

Howard Roberts – Portfolio Holder for Fire & Community Safety

Officers:

Helen Barnsley - Democratic Services Officer

John Betts - Head of Finance

David Carter - Joint Managing Director (Resources)

Sarah Duxbury - Head of Law and Governance & Interim Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development

Tricia Morrison - Head of Performance and Interim Head of ICT Services

Rob Moyney - Deputy Chief Fire Officer

Steve Smith - Head of Property Services

Sushma Soni - Performance & Improvement Officer (Policy Lead)

1. General

(1) Apologies

None

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

None

(3) Minutes of the meeting held on 20 December 2017

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting held on 20 December 2017 be signed as correct.

Matters Arising

There were no matters arising

2. Public Question Time

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

3. Questions to the Portfolio Holders relevant to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee

- Following a question from Councillor Sarah Boad regarding the recent announcement of the Fire Service Memorandum of Understanding between the County Council and West Midlands Fire Service, Councillor Howard Roberts, Portfolio Holder for Fire & Community Safety was able to confirm that in-depth talks had not yet started, however three initial areas had been identified –

- Control Centre
- Training
- Provision of support to Health and Social Care

Councillor Roberts was able to confirm that the talks are expected to result in a better, forward looking fire service. It was agreed that regular updates would be provided to the Committee and that this may require additional meetings to be organised.

- Following a question from Councillor Andy Jenns relating to the additional expenditure incurred on the Hawkes Point project, Steve Smith, Head of Property Services, agreed to provide the business case information to the Committee by the next meeting in July 2018.

- Councillor Maggie O'Rourke requested information relating to the staff sickness levels in the fire service. Councillor Kam Kaur, Portfolio Holder for Customer and Transformation, confirmed that the Staff and Pensions Committee received a full report on the matter. Members of the Committee were asked to note that some of the sickness levels in the fire service were as a result of injuries that had occurred outside of work and that this was a situation that could not be predicted. It was confirmed that there was no risk to any service in the county council as a result of any current sickness levels.

4. Work Programme 2017-18

The Chair proposed that the following items be added to the Committee's work programme -

- 25 April 2018
 - Update on the Library Service, current initiatives & opportunities.
 - A report on Eastern Shires Purchasing Organisation (ESPO)

- 11 July 2018
 - Update on Digital Transformation - progress with the various IT initiatives.
 - Estates Update.
 - The One Organisational Plan Outturn report.

- 19 September 2018
 - Trading and income streams. School income is the main area, the report to include the first year of Educaterers trading.

Members raised concerns about the recent introduction of the Your HR system and the issues that they had faced. Sarah Duxbury, Head of Law and Governance & Interim Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development, assured the Committee the same system was in place for Members and officers and that while some teething problems are always expected with new systems, it was important that the council moves forward with new technology. Sarah Duxbury confirmed that members had received briefings on the new system and 1-1 training sessions had been offered. She confirmed that she would look into the slowness of accessing the system which some members had been experiencing.

The discussion moved onto the importance of ensuring that those residents who are without the equipment or skills to access services online are not left behind. In view of the fact that residents are increasingly expected to access online services, the Committee raised concerns that Warwick District Council are proposing to close some One Stop Shops. It was agreed that the subject would be covered as part of the update on library services which is due to be presented to the Committee in April 2018. The digital transformation update in July 2018 will provide further information to the Committee.

Resolved

The Committee:

- 1) Agrees the updated 2017-18 Work Programme and makes any additional comments or changes, as required; and
- 2) Notes the scheduled future meeting dates.

5. One Organisational Plan Quarterly Progress Report (Quarter 3 2017/18)

Tricia Morrison, Head of Performance and Interim Head of ICT Services presented the report to the Committee and highlighted the following points –

- The report includes information relevant to the remit of this Committee relating to Quarter Three performance
- The full report was presented to Cabinet on January 25 2018

- Section Three of the report highlights the outcomes for the council
- Section Four provides information on the current financial position of the council

Following a question from Councillor Bill Olnier, Steve Smith was able to reassure the Committee that the council has no contracts with Carillion Plc and therefore the collapse of the company was not expected to have any impact on the council.

David Carter, Joint Managing Director (Resources) confirmed to the Committee that the target of 9.5 days for staff sickness had been agreed by the Staff and Pensions Committee. The target is a 5% reduction on the previous year.

Councillor Andy Crump requested that the Committee monitor the performance of the Broadband UK project. There has been £3.850 million slippage on the project and the failure to supply broadband in certain, mainly rural, parts of the county is having an impact on residents, education and the economy.

Councillor Maggie O'Rourke asked for further information relating to the response time for the fire service first and second appliances. Rob Moyney, Deputy Chief Fire Officer stated that due to the rural locations in some parts of the county there will always be occasions that the target is not met. Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service always move resources to ensure that demand is met and assured the Committee that whenever there has been a failure to meet the response target, Officers look at the reason why and find short term solutions while reviewing long term asset management. It was also confirmed to the Committee that the improved RDS staffing figures were not only as a result of a recent recruitment but also the flexibility of resource allocation across the teams.

Following a question about the 5% call abandonment rate David Carter was able to confirm that the target set by the council is more challenging than the industry standard. The information provided does not include details about the individual calls but there is a call back facility for any residents who do not want to wait in a call queue.

The Committee questioned the £3.5 million under spend in the revenue budget for the Authority as a whole, highlighted in Appendix A, but were reassured to hear that it is a very small percentage of the authority's overall budget. The council must deliver outcome and outputs within the set budgets and there is generally more concern about avoiding overspends.

In relation to Property Services, Members asked about the reasons for the forecasted slippage in capital receipts and were informed that this was due to delays in the completion of negotiations on Europa Way and Montague Road projects.

The Committee inquired about the KBM on two legal challenges, which has a red RAG rating and were informed that these had arisen as a result of two decisions by the Information Commissioner's Office and both had been addressed now.

Resolved

The Committee considers and comments on the progress of the delivery of the One Organisational Plan 2020 for the period of April-September 2017, as contained in the report

6. IRMP 2017-2020 Task and Finish Group

Rob Moyney, Deputy Chief Fire Officer presented the report to the Committee stating that the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) for WFRS had been agreed in July 2017. The Task and Finish Group had been established to comment on the progress in the implementation of the IRMP Action Plan 2017/18.

In addition, the Committee was informed that following the recent announcement of the Fire Service Memorandum of Understanding between the County Council and West Midlands Fire Service, shared ways of working together would be explored. One area in particular would be how the fire service could help support hospital to home transportation.

WFRS has also expanded the 'self and well' checks that they offer to residents. This was made possible by expanding the role of officers and being able to cover a wider area.

With reference to the pilot schemes for first responders, this has not been progressed as far as the fire service would have liked. One issue has been the requirement of West Midlands Ambulance Service for enhanced policies which have not yet been agreed. The fire service and Members expressed disappointment that there had been no progress.

Resolved

The Committee receives and notes the work undertaken by the Task and Finish Group and supports the recommendation that the Group be re-established at a time congruent with the development of the next IRMP Action Plan (2018/19).

7. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS)

Rob Moyney, Deputy Chief Fire Officer provided an update to the Committee regarding the inspection arrangements of the HMICFRS including the latest information from the Home Office. Guidance has now been received on the three main themes of the inspection process; effectiveness, efficiency and people. There will be 67 questions underpinning the three themes.

The inspection process will not include governance, although inspectors can use their discretion in this area if they feel it is necessary. Fire services will be expected to complete a self-assessment five weeks before the inspection to collate information and provide data.

Following a question from Councillor Bill Olnor, Rob Moyney confirmed that it was unlikely that the recently announced Memorandum of Understanding would be taken into account during the inspection of WFRS.

Members noted that the inspection team will include seconded fire officers from other fire services as well as an officer from the Home Office. It was also noted that £750k from the transformation fund has been set aside to manage any challenges from the inspection.

Members of the Committee requested a training session on the new inspection process in order to gain a full understanding of everything that is involved.

Resolved

The Committee receives and notes the latest information with regards to the HMICFRS inspection arrangements and the preparatory work being undertaken.

8. Urgent Matters

The Chair circulated a briefing note to the Committee regarding the level of savings made by the fire and rescue service, and any impact the savings had on corporate or support services.

9. Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next Resources and Fire & Rescue Overview and Scrutiny Committee was confirmed as 25 April 2018 at 2 p.m. in CR2, Shire Hall.

The meeting rose at 3.15pm

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Chair