

**Minutes of the meeting of the
Resources and Fire & Rescue Overview and Scrutiny Committee
held on 12 December 2018**

Present:

Members of the Committee:

Councillors Parminder Singh Birdi (Vice-Chair), John Cooke, Judy Falp, Pete Gilbert, Andy Jenns, Maggie O'Rourke, Bob Stevens and Heather Timms (Chair)

Other County Councillors:

Peter Butlin - Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance and Property
Andy Crump - Portfolio Holder for Fire & Community Safety
Kam Kaur – Portfolio Holder for Customer and Transformation

Officers:

Mark Allen	Group Commander (Head of Response)
Helen Barnsley	Democratic Services Officer
Vanessa Belton	Performance and Improvement Business Partner
John Betts	Assistant Director (Finance & ICT)
Kushal Birla	Assistant Director (Business & Customer Services)
David Carter	Joint Managing Director (Resources)
Craig Cusack	Assistant Director (Enabling Services)
Sarah Duxbury	Assistant Director (Governance & Policy)
Andy Hickmott	Chief Fire Officer
Mandeep Kalsi	Performance Officer
Rob Moyney	Deputy Chief Fire Officer
Rob Musekiwa	Digital by Design Lead
Chris Norton	Financial Services Manager
Karen Smith	Customer Relations Manager
Steve Smith	Assistant Director (Commissioning Support Unit)

1. General

(1) Apologies

Councillor Bill Olnor (replaced by Councillor Richard Chattaway)
Councillor Sarah Boad

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

None

(3) Minutes of the meeting held on 19 September 2018

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting held on 19 September 2018 were approved as a correct record. 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

None

4. Work Programme 2018-19

Following a question from Councillor Bob Stevens, the Committee agreed that a report regarding the progress of the broadband rollout across the county would be discussed at the next Chair and Party Spokes meeting being held on January 29, 2019.

Resolved

The Committee agreed the work programme as set out in the report.

5. One Organisational Plan Quarterly Progress Report: April to September 2018

Steve Smith, Assistant Director (Commissioning Support Unit) presented the report to the Committee. The full report was presented to Cabinet on 8 November 2018; the information presented to the Committee was relevant just to their remit.

With reference to the performance of the Warwickshire Fire & Rescue Service, Councillor Maggie O'Rourke noted the improvement in response time but asked for clarification regarding the increase in the overall number of incidents attended. Rob Moyney, Deputy Chief Fire Officer confirmed that the increase was a national trend; in particular there had been an increase of 40% in incidents over the summer (again, nationwide).

Following a question from Councillor Judy Falp with reference to fire related deaths, it was confirmed that all fire related deaths over the last 12 months are currently subject to serious case reviews meaning that some information was confidential. However, it was noted that some factors such as smoking and mobility were common factors. The serious case reviews are being carried out with partner agencies and the Committee will receive an update when appropriate.

The Committee wished it to be noted that they congratulated the whole fire service for their successful prevention work, and work with partnership agencies. All the work they do is fully appreciated.

Councillor Maggie O'Rourke commented that it was encouraging to see an increase in the staff engagement result from the staff survey; but raised concerns over the levels of staff sickness and absence.

In response it was highlighted to the Committee that sickness absence and the steps being taken to address it are considered by the Staff and Pensions Committee. Councillor Kam Kaur confirmed that there is a new occupational health provider in place and a series of actions to improve performance have been identified as outlined in the full report. The long term policy plans will be reviewed over the next six months.

Resolved

That the Committee considers and comments on the progress of the delivery of the One Organisational Plan 2020 for the period as contained in the report.

6. Warwickshire Fire & Rescue Service – Activity in Addressing the Risks Associated with Derelict Buildings

Mark Allen, Group Commander (Head of Response) presented the report on the activities carried out by WFRS in addressing the risks associated with derelict buildings. The report covers plans for the county as a whole, as well as national programmes.

There is also information on programmes specific to Rugby which has had a series of issues relating to derelict buildings. Particular mention was given to the Imperial House Public House which had a series of incidents that led to action being taken by WFRS. The action taken in Rugby was completed through shared responsibility with key stakeholders and joint agency working.

The Committee noted that since the programme started in 2017, WFRS has made progress including the demolition of derelict buildings, legal action against building owners and the implementation of better monitoring processes. Moving forward the plan is to continue with the prevention education programme, install CCTV on sites that are derelict and to create an accurate national record of incidents, costs and effects. There is also a plan in place to push the programme that has worked in Rugby throughout the rest of the county. It is hoped that the planned introduction of a stakeholder letterhead for any correspondence from the group would help highlight the work carried out so far and the plans moving forward for the programme.

It was noted that one issue that can impact the work carried out by the programme is in relation to planning. The National Planning Policy Framework guidelines allow for a three year period after permission is granted; this includes permission for demolition work. The Committee noted that the planning committee should be aware of this in considering any applications.

The Committee commented that the programme was an excellent initiative and example of agencies all working together. Councillors agreed to speak to colleagues at district and borough councils to encourage all local authority tiers to work together with the fire service.

Resolved

That the Committee consider and comment on the content of the report

7. Treasury Management Monitoring Report

Chris Norton, Financial Services Manager presented the report in respect of Treasury Management in respect of the first six months of 2018/19 to 30 September 2018.

The report concentrated on the security, liquidity and returns on investments and the risks associated as well as the performance of the pension fund

Following a question regarding the early repayment of loans, it was confirmed to the Committee that the debts are not increasing and there are high penalties for early repayment; it is not considered a worthwhile option.

Resolved

That the Committee considers and comments on Treasury Management in respect of the first six months of 2018-19 to 30 September 2018.

8. Corporate Customer Feedback Annual Report 2017-18

Karen Smith, Customer Relations Manager presented the report to the Committee and welcomed questions and comments from the Committee.

It was confirmed to the Committee that the complaints procedure is reviewed incrementally. At the moment, the "contact us" information provided to the public is being reviewed to confirm if it is still fit for purpose.

Following a question from Councillor Judy Falp it was confirmed that identifying a single common theme in the complaints received is difficult due to the wide range of services provided by the council. However, communication and managing customer expectations are themes that can be found across services and this is an area that needs to be developed.

It was noted that the council ensures that the right communication channels are in place for residents; recognising that one size does not fit all. The current digital review underway provides an opportunity to review the accessibility of the website and what could be done to make it better for users.

It was confirmed by Craig Cusack, Assistant Director (Enabling Services) that detailed customer feedback had been used in the redesign of the website. There is a Digital Standards Working Group that ensures that the council is always fully compliant with requirements.

Resolved

That the Committee considers and comments on the report.

9. Digital & Technology Strategy Update

Craig Cusack, Assistant Director (Enabling Services) presented the report to the Committee which had been approved by Cabinet at its meeting on September 13, 2018.

It was highlighted to the Committee that section two of the report concentrated on the Digital and Technology Strategy and the background and context of the programme. The programme will also include an insight review of all the data requirements for the council including the need to share with partner agencies.

With reference to the content of the webpages it was confirmed that there will be a dialogue with all the services about what they think should still be included and what the users want to see.

The programme is currently on target to launch the new website on January 23, 2019.

Following a question from the Chair relating to a link between school applications and transport requirements, it was confirmed by Rob Musekiwa, Digital by Design Lead that work is currently in progress with the schools administration team and the transport team on this issue. The proposed launch date for this service is currently September 2019.

Resolved

That the Committee considers and comments on the report.

10. Urgent Matters

None

11. Exempt Minutes of the meeting held on 19 September 2018

Resolved

That the exempt minutes of the meeting held on 19 September 2018 were approved as a correct record.

The meeting rose at 3.09p.m.

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Chair