

**Minutes of the meeting of the
Resources and Fire & Rescue Overview and Scrutiny Committee
held on 26 September 2019**

Present:

Members of the Committee:

Councillors Parminder Singh Birdi (Vice-Chair), Sarah Boad, John Cooke, Judy Falp, Pete Gilbert, Andy Jenns, Bill Olnor, Maggie O'Rourke, Dave Reilly and Adrian Warwick (Chair)

Other County Councillors:

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

Officers:

Kieran Amos	Chief Fire Officer
Helen Barnsley	Democratic Services Officer
Vanessa Belton	Performance and Improvement Business Partner
Kushal Birla	Assistant Director (Business and Customer Services)
Craig Cusack	Assistant Director (Enabling Services)
Sarah Duxbury	Assistant Director (Governance and Policy)
Chris Norton	Strategy and Commissioning Manager
Rob Powell	Strategic Director for Resources Directorate
Mark Ryder	Strategic Director for Communities Directorate
Tim Sargeant	Head of Fire Prevention and Arson

1. General

(1) Apologies

None

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

None

(3) Minutes of the meeting held on 5 June 2019

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 5 June 2019 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

Following a question from Councillor Judy Falp it was agreed that Councillor Kam Kaur would provide a briefing note to the committee with information relating to the refreshed approach to customer experience; a report on the customer experience strategy 2020-2025 is due to be presented to Cabinet on 14 November 2019. Councillor Peter Butlin will provide information in relation to the commercial strategy how financial returns can be balanced against social and environmental priorities.

Councillor Sarah Boad thanked the Fire & Rescue Service for attending the PRIDE event in August and for embracing diversity. The decoration of the fire engine had cost £700 and would be used at more events moving forward; including one at Rugby Fire Station on October 4 2019.

In relation to the HS2 project and the upcoming Government review, Councillor Bill Olnor asked if there would be any change to the way the Fire Service would be working. Councillor Andy Crump, Portfolio Holder for Fire & Rescue and Community confirmed that the Fire Service is continuing to make plans to move forward and that effective communication with all agencies involved would be key. It was confirmed that more details would be needed for the service to put solid plans in place, but the service is responsive to the ongoing changes to the HS2 project. There are frequent tactical and strategic briefings.

Councillor Maggie O'Rourke asked for confirmation that the Fire Service was ensuring that safety issues linked to cladding on building considered materials used on houses and commercial properties and not just high-rise flats. Councillor Andy Crump confirmed that Warwickshire County Council Cabinet recently agreed a budget of £602k for fire protection work with domestic and commercial properties as well as the people living and working in them. Kieran Amos, Chief Fire Officer confirmed that while building regulations are the responsibility of district and borough councils, the Fire Service has a duty to investigate these concerns as part of its inspection programme.

4. Work Programme 2019-20

The Committee agreed to remove the standing item in relation to capital slippage from the work programme. The information is now presented as part of the OOP report.

Resolved

That the Committee agrees the updated 2019-20 Work Programme, as set out in the report and notes the scheduled future meeting dates.

5. One Organisational Plan Annual Progress Report: Period under review: April 2018 to March 2019

Rob Powell, Strategic Director for Resources Directorate presented the report to the Committee which includes information in relation to 48 key business measures; a break down of these can be found on page two of the report.

Following a question from Councillor Bill Oler in relation to the number of incidents attended by the fire service, it was agreed that Kieran Amos, Chief Fire Officer would supply a break down of the type of incidents; i.e. deliberate or accidental.

It was noted that the hot weather during the summer of 2018 had led to an increase in incidents, in comparison to previous years; this had raised a question in relation to the resilience of the fire service. Kieran Amos confirmed that there has been investment in resilience training but that one challenge remains the retention of on-call staff.

Councillor Sarah Boad raised concerns in relation to the target for the time taken for a first appliance to reach an incident. The performance of the fire service has improved recently but still falls below the set target. Kieran Amos reiterated that the retention of on-call staff and lack of availability can affect response times. The opening of a second fire station in Rugby and the work carried out by the blue light collaboration board will improve flexibility and increase resilience.

It was agreed that there is a conversation to be had in relation to emergency response times. The evidence-based targets were sufficient at the time they were set but more needs to be done to understand the work that the fire service does when they arrive at an incident and the significant effect they have.

Resolved

That the Committee considers and comments on the annual progress report for the period as contained in the report.

6. One Organisational Plan Quarterly Progress Report - Q1; April 2019 to June 2019

Sarah Duxbury, Assistant Director (Governance and Policy) presented the report to the Committee and invited questions from the Committee.

It was noted that the report refers to 22 key business measures that are relevant to the Resources and Fire & Rescue OSC.

Resolved

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

7. Treasury Management Outturn 2018/2019

Chris Norton, Strategy and Commissioning Manager presented the report to the Committee which sets out the treasury management outturn as reported to Cabinet. It was highlighted that over the last twelve months, the council has made proactive choices and changed to a mix of investments as outlined in the report.

The principles of financial management include security and maintenance of policies and objectives that the council can react to changes while remaining secure. There is continued uncertainty around Brexit, but the council has a Brexit working group to ensure the following –

- Business continuity
- Supporting communities
- Business support; including working with the LEP
- Communications

Warwickshire County Council is preparing as much as is possible for Brexit and all possible outcomes.

Resolved

That the committee considers and comments on Treasury Management outturn in respect of 2018/19.

8. Warwickshire Fire Deaths; January 2018 - December 2018

The Committee noted that the topic of the report was difficult and expressed their sympathies to all those involved.

Tim Sargeant, Head of Fire Prevention and Arson introduced the report and the sections included; recommendations, key notes & highlights and recognition & proposals.

Following a question in relation to any potential gap between identifying a need for support and the support being put in place it was confirmed that the Fire Service has access to MOSAIC which shares information between a range of agencies. The Fire Service has easy access to the system so that information can be shared quickly. It was noted that Craig Cusack, Assistant Director (Enabling Services) and Mark Ryder, Strategic Director for Communities Directorate have supported the safe sharing of information for the fire service allowing the service to move forward.

Kieran Amos confirmed that Safe and Well Checks are being completed and suggested that a review into the results of the checks would be useful; as an opportunity to investigate the background issues.

The report identified that social isolation is an issue and it was confirmed that projects are underway to reduce this. The committee noted that it was hard to identify one trend to link the fire deaths but that there was a level of

vulnerability and underlying care issues across them all. Following a discussion, the committee agreed that the fire service offer outstanding prevention work, ensuring that everything that can be in place, is in place and that residents are receiving all the help that they are entitled to.

Kieran Amos stated that there is a driver in the service to continually improve and that it is possible through partnership work, advances in technology and continuous prevention work. Councillor Andy Crump, Portfolio Holder for Fire & Rescue and Community, added that a community and multi-agency approach means that residents who need support are identified sooner.

The Committee wished it to be noted their thanks to all the officers involved for the in-depth report; recognising the outstanding work done by the fire service which is a feeling echoed by the communities they have been working with.

Resolved

The Resources and Fire and Rescue Overview and Scrutiny Committee receive and note the contents of this report

9. Update on Library Service Performance and the Delivery of Digital Services

Kushal Birla, Assistant Director (Business and Customer Services) presented the report to the Committee, providing an update regarding the performance of the libraries in Warwickshire and the Digital Services Offer. The library service is responsive to the changing needs of the communities; the good work happens as a result of internal, and external, partnerships. Library spaces are used to meet all the different needs of the communities they serve, including through work with other community groups.

The following points were highlighted –

- 1.4 million visits in 2018/19
- 4,100 visits per day in 2018/19
- 1.5 items issues in 2018/2019

Councillor John Cooke commented that the report showed the good work that is done by those who volunteer to work in the library service. Kushal Birla stated that in relation to the Housebound Library Service, volunteers were an important part of the success of this Service. Councillor Sarah Boad commented that all library services provide a service to some of the most vulnerable residents in the county. With reference to the work around social isolation, it was confirmed that the mobile libraries were key in combating this issue.

Councillor Bill Olnier noted that the service is appreciated by everyone across the county – from the young to the old. It was noted by Councillor Falp that getting men into a library is still difficult, unless they are with their children.

Following questions from the Committee, the following points were confirmed -

- The service recognises that one size does not fit all and will remain responsive to the changing needs within communities.
- Children no longer pay fines on overdue items. This decision has had a positive effect as previously, having outstanding fines prevented families from returning to a library.
- This year's Summer Reading Challenge, with a space theme – had been a great success

The Committee was asked to remember that they are a source of local intelligence that helps the service remain responsive. Members were also asked to share social media posts in relation to the library service; the Facebook account posts daily with event details and other information.

The Committee wished it to be noted their thanks to all the staff and volunteers in the Warwickshire County Council Library Service for providing an excellent service. They are a positive asset to a community.

Resolved

The Resources and Fire and Rescue Overview and Scrutiny Committee receive and note the contents of this report

10. Any Other Business

None

The next Resources and Fire & Rescue Overview and Scrutiny Meeting will be on Wednesday 18 December 2019 at 2pm, Shire Hall.

The meeting rose at 3:38p.m.

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Chair