

Environment, Communities and Fire Select Committee

30 January 2019 – At a meeting of the Environment, Communities and Fire Select Committee held at 10.30 am at County Hall, Chichester.

Present: Mr Barrett-Miles (Chairman)

Mr S J Oakley
Mr Baldwin
Lt Col Barton

Mr Jones
Mr McDonald
Mr Oppler

Mr Patel
Mrs Purnell

Apologies were received from Mrs Bridges, Mrs Brunsdon and Mr Purchase

Also in attendance: Mrs Kennard

Part I

63. Declarations of Interest

63.1 No interests were declared.

64. Minutes of the last meeting of the Committee

64.1 Resolved –The Committee noted that the minutes of the meeting held on 14 January 2019 were in preparation and would be submitted to the next meeting for approval.

65. Future Fire Service Mobilising Arrangements for West Sussex

65.1 The Committee considered a report by Executive Director Communities and Public Protection and Director of Public Protection (copy appended to signed minutes).

65.2 Gavin Watts, Director of Operations and Chief Fire Officer, Neil Stocker, Director of Public Protection and Deputy Chief Fire Officer and Jon Lacey, Area Manager for Risk and Improvements introduced the report which detailed the new proposals for West Sussex's future Fire Service Mobilising arrangements.

65.3 *The Cabinet Member for Safer, Stronger Communities thanked the Committee for scrutinising the proposals and added that although the County Council valued its current relationship with East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service (ESFRS), other options for broader collaboration had been explored in order to future-proof effective operations. The mobilisation system that Surrey Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) currently had in place was fully deployed, had been tried and tested and proven to deliver.*

65.4 Nicola Bulbeck, Executive Director Communities and Public Protection, added that entering into partnership with SFRS was considered a positive step and was a good opportunity to deliver a safe and sound mobilising system to ensure public safety. The IT system currently in use

by SFRS was efficient, secure and resilient and the wider IT strategy planned for West Sussex Fire and Rescue (WSFRS) would allow for savings to be made whilst opening up future collaboration opportunities and better service deliveries.

65.5 Mr Stocker added that in 2018, options for WSFRS future mobilisation had been explored, starting from an initial twenty options and then narrowed down to five for further investigation. It had been important to find a system that was proven and compliant with new government technology and would ensure provision of best value for money for residents.

65.6 After exploration with other neighbouring authorities, SFRS was found to have provided a clear collaborative opportunity. Its state of the art technology, utilisation of CCTV footage and highways cameras would ensure further partnership working with other local authorities. One of the findings from the recent inspection of WSFRS by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) noted that the ability to have up-to date data for both public and officer safety was an area of concern.

65.7 The Committee made comments including those that follow. It:

- Welcomed the positive report but questioned how strong the relationship with SFRS currently was in terms of close partnership working and whether the proposals had affected the relationship with East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service (ESFRS). Mr Stocker advised that WSFRS had worked with SFRS on cross-border operations for some time so the relationship was already strong. Mr Watts added that cross-border collaborations already occurred on a number of issues with both SFRS and ESFRS, so the relationships weren't just based on mobilisation. Combining fleet functions or joint investigations were some of the other areas of current partnership working. *The Cabinet Member for Safer, Stronger Communities added that the County Council had a strong relationship with both and wouldn't want to jeopardise that.*
- Queried the future of the current Control Centre used in partnership with ESFRS and questioned the role of WSFRS in future Control Centre governance, operations and performance with SFRS. Mr Watts advised that there were currently a number of discussions taking place with legal advisors and negotiators over future operations of the ESFRS Control Centre, but that assurance had been given by the leadership of the County Council that it could continue to stay and operate in the current building. There were no anticipated issues and WSFRS would continue to work with and support them, as was the case with current cross border collaboration. Mr Stocker added that once a S16 agreement had been entered into with SFRS, a quarterly Strategy Board would be established, jointly Chaired by the SFRS Chief Fire Officer and the WSFRS Deputy Chief Fire Officer. An Operations Board will also be established on a monthly basis to discuss day to day running of the control room and performance. WSFRS would continue to set its performance measures and maintain performance standards and the

proposed way forward would also include a review of staff welfare, finance and collaborative opportunities. Progress reports on the project could be brought back to the Committee when required.

- Queried the resilience and expertise in place for effective IT delivery and data merging with SFRS. Mr Stocker advised that due diligence had been followed during the process of exploration and that the 'Vision DS' IT system currently used by SFRS, having been tried and tested, was considered to be efficient and effective. Mr Lacey also advised that part of the Business Case included looking at delivery of IT, resilience and back-up options. Mrs Bulbeck added that the scale, capacity and knowledge of the County Council's IT service were an essential part of taking this collaboration forward.
- Queried SFRS's ability to upscale its Control Centre if needed, whether it had a full and tested disaster recovery plan and whether costs to WSFRS for the project were considered to be justified. Mr Stocker advised that the Control Centre had the ability to expand if required and the disaster recovery plan would be part of the S16 agreement and would be tried and tested by both parties prior to the change taking effect. The costs for the project were considered fair for the overall effectiveness of the system, but these would be subject to challenge each year and would be brought to the Business Planning Group (BPG) where necessary to ensure transparency.
- Questioned whether any further training regarding deployment would be needed for crews. Mr Stocker advised that WSFRS had a similar deployment system already in place but there would be a degree of training needed. The SFRS system involved the use of satellite links, with regularly updated information, so the current paper-based systems in use by WSFRS could be replaced. Moving forward, it was considered to be of operational benefit as well as decreasing costs.
- Queried the 'backstop' position in the event delivery of the new system would not be in place by the termination of the current Section 16 agreement in February 2020. Mr Stocker advised that a maintenance contract for the current WSFRS system had been secured, which could enable continuity if needed. No issues were envisaged with the delivery, but viable contingencies were in place if needed.

65.8 Resolved – That the Committee:

Supports the proposals, with a request that progress reports on the project be brought back to the Committee or Business Planning Group as and when necessary.

66. Forward Plan of Key Decisions

66.1 The Committee considered the Forward Plan dated 18 January 2019 (copy appended to signed minutes).

66.2 Resolved – That the Forward Plan be noted.

67. Date of Next Meeting

The Committee noted that its next scheduled meeting will take place on 13 March 2019 at 10.30am at County Hall, Chichester.

The meeting ended at 11.45 am

Chairman