

Environment, Communities and Fire Select Committee

21 September 2018 – 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 Jones	Mr Patel, left at 3.25pm
Mr Baldwin, left at 3.05pm	Mr McDonald	Mr Purchase, left at 1.50pm
Mrs Brunsdon, arrived at 2.15pm	Mr Oppler, left at 1.50pm	Mrs Purnell, left at 3.20pm

Apologies were received from Lt Col Barton and Mrs Bridges

Part I

20. Declarations of Interest

20.1 In accordance with the Code of Conduct, the following personal interests were declared:

- Mr Baldwin as a member of Horsham District Council in relation to Strategic Planning.
- Mrs Purnell whose partner was a fireman in relation to Fire Authority Integrated Risk Management Action Plan 2018-22 and as a member of Chichester District Council and Selsey Town Council in relation to Strategic Planning.
- Mr S Oakley as a member of Chichester District Council and Tangmere Parish Council and an appointee to Portsmouth Water Customer Challenge group in relation to Strategic Planning.

21. Part I Minutes of 4 June 2018 meeting

21.1 Resolved – that the Part I minutes of the Environment, Communities and Fire Select Committee held on 4 June 2018 be approved as a correct record, and that they be signed by the Chairman.

22. Minutes of 13 June 2018 meeting

22.1 Resolved – that the minutes of the Environment, Communities and Fire Select Committee held on 13 June 2018 be approved as a correct record, and that they be signed by the Chairman.

23. Responses to Recommendations

a) A27 Chichester Bypass Improvements: Submission to the Government's Roads Investment Strategy

23.1 The Committee noted the Cabinet Member's Response to the

Committee's Recommendations on the A27 Chichester Bypass Improvements: Submission to the Government's Roads Investment Strategy

23.2 Members made the following comments:

- Queried whether there was an update on the timetable for the RIS2 scheme and Highways England response. The Cabinet Member for Highways and Infrastructure advised that the RIS2 timetable information could be provided to the Committee. An officer further advised that the latest correspondence from Highways England confirmed that consultants had been appointed and were currently looking at cost estimates. There were currently no confirmed dates but these could be provided to the Committee when available.

b) Bus Strategy 2018-2026

23.3 The Committee noted the Cabinet Member's Response to the Committee's Recommendations on the Bus Strategy 2018-2026

c) FRS Integrated Risk Management Plan 2018-22, Annual Statement of Assurance 2017/18 and Annual Report May 2017/18

23.4 The Committee noted the Cabinet Member's Response to the Committee's Recommendations on the FRS Integrated Risk Management Plan 2018-22, Annual Statement of Assurance 2017/18 and Annual Report May 2017/18

23.5 Members made the following comments:

- Raised concerns over operational policy and the reduction of aspirational crewing of a fire engine with five crew to four crew as a standard and endorsed the suggestion that when crewing levels were reviewed the basis for reduction be looked at along with the impact of flexible crewing policy that the Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) would like to adopt. An officer advised that four person crewing had been common practice for a number of years and that all incidents were judged on a case-by-case response. The FRS will be reviewing the potential for crewing some on call vehicles/fire engines with fewer than four. This work has yet to be undertaken and the proposals will be brought to the Committee for scrutiny before any pilot or adoption of proposed new changes. All significant elements, including reduction of crew would involve a public consultation. A lot of work would be undertaken to ensure there would be no unintended consequences. *The Cabinet Member for Safer, Stronger Communities advised that if a decision is made to further reduce crew numbers then this would be subject to further consultation.*

24. Fire Authority Integrated Risk Management Action Plan 2018-22

24.1 The Committee considered a report by Executive Director Communities and Public Protection and Director of Operations and Chief

Fire Officer (copy appended to signed minutes).

24.2 Gavin Watts, Director of Operations and Chief Fire Officer and Neil Stocker, Director of Public Protection and Deputy Chief Fire Officer introduced the report which, following the Committee's recommendation at its meeting on 13 June 2018 for the publication of the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) and next steps for delivery; outlined the draft action plans developed to deliver the priorities contained within the IRMP and detailed how the actions would be delivered over the period of 2018-22; through the Fire and Rescue Service governance and programmes arrangements.

24.3 The initial stages of inspection of the WSFRS by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) was due W/C 26th November 2018, with a final report expected at the end of May 2019.

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

- Welcomed the prioritisation of action points and the concentrated efforts in the IRMP Action Plan and requested that consideration be given for the relevant unions to be included in the process of managing the plan and for representatives to have a seat on all strategic boards. An officer advised that membership of boards could be looked into and that new engagement was currently being established for representative bodies and other union colleagues. Outcomes from the Integration and Collaboration board, which included conversations with other services, could be brought to the Committee.
- Highlighted the issue of mental health and wellbeing among FRS staff. *It was agreed that the Business Planning Group (BPG) would discuss with the FRS when the most appropriate time to scrutinise any people-related matters and the broader programmes and aims would be. Also that action plans in relation to wellbeing of staff, flexible crewing arrangements, and a collaboration agenda be reviewed by the BPG regularly and brought to full Committee once a year or every 6 months.*
- Raised concerns that cuts to middle management were significant in implementing the plan, which could lead to an increase in workloads and a higher risk of stress and potential plan failure. An officer advised that no additional resource was available within the Service, meaning workloads could increase. A wellbeing strategy was being devised involving the County Council and other neighbouring forces, including an annual stress survey which had been discussed with the unions. Although middle managers were very supportive of this, it was important to work with others to ensure successful delivery.
- Raised concerns over the recruitment and retention of retained/on call fire officers and requested that a TFG be convened to look at the issue along with emergency response standard times, with preferably the first meeting to take place before the item comes back to Committee. Also that consideration be given to the

convening of a TFG potentially in year two of the Plan, regarding any proposals to introduce Co-responding. *The Cabinet Member for Safer, Stronger Communities advised that a recruitment drive was currently ongoing for retained officers.* An officer added that member support and involvement was welcomed on this issue and would also be during the review of emergency response standard times.

- Requested more detail in the action plans to include priorities and a staff improvement plan, along with inclusion and equality action plans. An officer advised that further detail was in the strategies that supported the IRMP and would be published in line with the action plan and updated on a quarterly basis, with more detail being provided to members. Project plans providing more detail could also be brought to the Committee.
- Requested the progress reports for all of the programme and governance boards to be made available to the Committee. An officer advised that minutes, plans and outcomes could be provided. *The Chairman advised the level of information would be discussed at the next BPG.*
- Noted repetitions and corrections in the document and requested that the document be updated with wording changed and reissued to the Committee. Also that the title of 'Action Plan' be reconsidered as the document largely reflected a strategy.

24.5 Mrs Purnell made the following proposal, seconded by Mr Jones which the Committee considered: -

That consideration be given for the unions to be included in the process of managing the IRMP Action Plan.

24.6 A vote was held and the proposal was carried

24.7 Resolved – That the Committee:

- 1) Request that the document be updated with wording changed and reissued to the Committee for comment.
- 2) Request that action plans around wellbeing of staff, flexible crewing arrangements, and collaboration agenda be reviewed by the BPG regularly and brought to full Committee once a year or every 6 months.
- 3) That a TFG be convened to look at the recruitment and retention of retained firefighters, along with emergency response standards & times.
- 4) That consideration be given for the unions to be included in the process of managing the IRMP Action Plan.

25. Strategic Planning

25.1 The Committee considered approaches taken to planning for new or improved infrastructure to support the delivery of housing development in the County. Evidence included the views of external service provider

Southern Water, from Paul Kent, Environment & Wastewater Strategy Manager; local planning authority Horsham District Council (HDC) from Barbara Childs, Director of Place, HDC; and the implications for the County Council as a service provider from Caroline West, Planning Policy and Infrastructure Team Manager. Mike Elkington, Head of Planning Services, gave a brief overview. Key points were:

- The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was revised this year. One of the purposes of the planning system was to identify and co-ordinate the provision of infrastructure. The system should be plan-led and such plans should be shaped by the early, proportionate and effective engagement between policy makers and infrastructure providers. A collaborative approach should be taken to assessing the quality and capacity of infrastructure, and its ability to meet forecast demands. Where deficiencies were identified, plans should set out how they will be addressed. Cross-boundary issues should be addressed through joint working between authorities under the duty to cooperate. Financial and other contributions should be expected from development but they should not undermine the deliverability of the plan.

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

- Welcomed the engagement from Southern Water, but highlighted its customer complaints record and queried whether there were any plans to build more reservoirs. Mr Kent advised that continuous improvements had been made with complaints dropping overall. There were no current plans for more reservoirs, as water utilisation hadn't yet reached that point of stress.
- Raised concerns over flooding and drainage ditches for new housing developments and queried how resilient the water supply network was in the event of temperature variations. Mr Kent advised that lessons had been learnt from the summer. If further water needed to be taken from rivers then it would be diverted from other areas.
- Queried whether Southern Water had national planning policy support to achieve its high aspirations and given existing infrastructure improvements needed, sought reassurance that this could be achieved in the current financial environment. Mr Kent advised that the current business plan as produced allowed for achievement of everything that was needed.
- Questioned how HDC could mitigate the likelihood or effect in the event housing numbers increased, as this could put pressure on the developer industry to provide the housing. Mrs Childs advised that the cumulative impact on the overall area was looked at for mitigation. Although developers couldn't be forced to build houses, there was a time limit given on planning permission. The onus was on local authorities to plan as positively and flexibly as they could with other partners. It was important to keep a regular dialogue open.

- Questioned what challenges the County Council was currently having with Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) monies and queried what implications having a NPPF-led planning process would have and whether there would be any cross border impact. Mrs West advised that the County Council was working closing with the CIL authorities in West Sussex on prioritising infrastructure projects but, as yet, WSCC has not received or spent any CIL monies. Developer contributions, CIL being one type of these, was one form of funding that was collected to fund projects in whole or part to mitigate the impacts of development. Regarding cross border impacts, liaison with other local authorities through duty to cooperate discussions continues with comments prepared on adjoining planning documents where necessary. Information was also given in respect of developers coming forward for large applications that were not part of local plans.

25.3 Resolved – That the Committee recommends that the Cabinet Member for Environment considers the challenges and whether there are any impacts on the County Council’s Strategic Planning and delivery, and any potential implications on its Capital Spending Programme.

26. Business Planning Group Report

26.1 The Committee considered a report by the Chairman of the Business Planning Group (copy appended to the signed minutes).

26.2 Resolved – That the Committee endorses the contents of the report and particularly the Committee’s Work Programme for 2018/19, revised to reflect the Business Planning Group’s (BPG’s) discussions.

27. Forward Plan of Key Decisions

27.1 The Committee considered the Forward Plan dated 11 September (copy appended to signed minutes).

27.2 Members requested that the Carillion Contract in relation to the effect on current and future Energy Storage Projects be re-examined. The Chairman agreed that this would be discussed at the BPG.

27.3 Resolved – That the Forward Plan be noted.

28. Date of Next Meeting

The Committee noted that its next scheduled meeting will take place on 14 November 2018 at 10.30am at County Hall, Chichester.

29. Exclusion of Press and Public

Resolved - That under Section 100(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part I, of Schedule 12A, of the Act by virtue of the paragraph

specified under the item and that, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption of that information outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

30. Part II Minutes of the 4 June Meeting

(Exempt, paragraph 3, Financial or business affairs of any person (including the authority))

The Committee agreed the Part II Minutes of the 4 June 2018 and gave no comment.

31. Highways Maintenance Contract Update

(Exempt, paragraph 3, Financial or business affairs of any person (including the authority))

The Committee noted the update on the Highways Contract and members gave comment.

The meeting ended at 3.45 pm

Chairman