

Fire & Rescue Service Scrutiny Committee

18 June 2021 – At a meeting of the Fire & Rescue Service Scrutiny Committee held at 11.30 am at County Hall, Chichester, PO19 1RQ.

Present: Cllr Boram (Chairman)

Cllr Pendleton, Cllr Charles, Cllr Dunn, Cllr Milne, Cllr Richardson and Cllr Oxlade

Apologies were received from Cllr Turley

Also in attendance: Cllr Crow

1. Committee Membership

1.1 Resolved – that the Committee notes its membership.

2. Election of Chairman and Vice Chairman

(a) Election of Chairman

2.1 Cllr Boram was proposed by Cllr Pendleton and seconded by Cllr Dunn for the position of Committee Chairman for the year. There were no other nominations.

2.2 Resolved – that Cllr Boram is elected as Committee Chairman for the year.

(b) Election of Vice Chairman

2.3 Cllr Pendleton was proposed by Cllr Boram and seconded by Cllr Richardson for the position of Committee Vice Chairman for the year. There were no other nominations.

2.4 Resolved – that Cllr Pendleton is elected as Committee Vice Chairman for the year.

3. Declarations of Interest

3.1 No declarations of interest were declared.

4. Terms of Reference

4.1 Resolved – that the Committee notes its terms of reference.

5. Minutes of the last meeting of the Committee

5.1 Resolved – that the Committee agrees the minutes of the meeting held on 26 March 2021.

6. Fire and Rescue Service Strategic Performance Report Quarter 4

2020-21

6.1 The Committee considered a report by the Chief Fire Officer (copy appended to the signed minutes) which was introduced by the Cabinet Member for Community Support, Fire and Rescue, the Chief Fire Officer and the Deputy Fire Officer. A summary of committee members' questions and comments is below: -

- There is a programme to increase visits to high risk establishments as well as reminding everyone not to overlook fire safety due to the distraction of the pandemic
- Although availability of retained fire fighters was better at the start of the pandemic, it is still helping with response times
- County crewing and the service delivery centre were also helping response times
- Retained liaison officers were assisting the recruitment, training and retention of retained fire fighters
- There was no correlation between the number of prevention visits and the number of serious injuries or deaths
- If there were technical problems at the Joint Control Centre (JCC) in Surrey or there were too many 999 calls coming in at once to be answered, the Merseyside control centre would help out and relay information back via the Airwave system
- Technology at the JCC was being developed to take into account best practice
- A lot of work on policies and procedures with businesses had led to large reductions in the number of false alarms as had premises being closed during the pandemic and the use of 999i which sends pictures to the JCC of the location
- An increase in programme management skills helped the management of time and to minimise staff burn out
- Staff had been asked about help during the pandemic with issues such as child care and shielding. Adjustments to working conditions had been made where required

6.2 Resolved – that: -

- Democratic Services works with the Fire and Rescue Service and the Chairman to scope a potential Task and Finish Group on retained firefighters including timescales
- The Fire and Rescue Service works on a positive communications campaign concerning the potential risk of thatched rooves
- The Fire and Rescue Service ensures that the larger strategic risks are added to the Performance and Assurance report considered by the Committee at each meeting
- The Fire and Rescue Service provides the Committee with comparable indicators to other fire and rescue services on an annual basis

7. Priority Programme Update

7.1 The Committee considered a report by the Chief Fire Officer (copy appended to the signed minutes) which was introduced by the Cabinet Member for Community Support, Fire and Rescue and the

Chief Fire Officer. A summary of committee members' questions and comments is below: -

- Different aspects of the new IT system were installed at different times in different departments but was now fully implemented
- The service took on 18 apprentices last year and was taking on nine more this year
- The service also worked with the Children, Young People and Learning department to see how it could help children looked after
- The service was using diversity champions to help breakdown the stereotypical view of a fire fighter and help recruit the best staff
- Staff surveys and a shadow board helped get staff voices heard

7.2 Resolved – that the Fire and Rescue Service ensures that the next report to the Committee shows an indication of progress against targets.

8. West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service Cause of Concern Revisit and Appendix - Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services Cause of Concern Revisit Letter

8.1 The Committee considered a report by the Chief Fire Officer (copy appended to the signed minutes) which was introduced by the Cabinet Member for Community Support, Fire and Rescue. A summary of committee members' questions and comments is below: -

- The Council had invested £5.1m in the Fire & Rescue Service over three years and was making better use of its resources than before
- The Cabinet Member for Community Support, Fire and Rescue committed to fight for additional resources for the service if they were needed
- No reductions to the service's budget were planned

8.2 Resolved – that Committee welcomes the letter from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services.

9. Work Programme Planning and Possible Items for Future Scrutiny

(a) Work Programme

9.1 The Committee considered its work programme and made the following suggestions for items to be added to the work programme, some of which were suggested by the previous Committee: -

- The Statement of Assurance & Annual Report
- A task & finish group on retained fire fighters
- The Integrated Risk Management Plan
- Recruitment diversity
- Update on Joint Fire Control Centre (January 2022)
- Inspection Preparedness Report (when appropriate)

9.2 Resolved – that Democratic Services ensures that the additional items recommended by the previous Committee are added to the Work Programme.

10. Date of Next Meeting

10.1 The next meeting of the Committee will take place on 1 October 2021.

The meeting ended at 1.22 pm

Chairman