

Minutes of a meeting of the CFA - Corporate Governance Committee held at County Hall, Glenfield on Wednesday, 20 January 2021.

PRESENT

Cllr. K. Bool (in the Chair)

Cllr. S. Barton

Mr. I. E. G. Bentley CC

Mr. J. G. Coxon CC

Cllr. L. Fonseca

Mr. J. Kaufman CC

Mr. W. Liquorish JP CC

Ms. Betty Newton CC

Cllr. A. Thalukdar

In attendance

Callum Faint, Chief Fire and Rescue Officer

Lauren Haslam, Monitoring Officer

Alison Greenhill, Treasurer

Leanne McMahon, Service Liaison lead, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services

Mick Grewcock, Assistant Chief Fire and Rescue Officer

Paul Weston, Assistant Chief Fire and Rescue Officer

Colin Sharpe, Deputy Director of Finance, Leicester City Council

Anna Poole, Democratic Services Officer

101. Apologies for absence.

Apologies were received from Mr. D. Harrison CC.

102. Declarations of interest.

The Chairman invited members who wished to do so to declare an interest in respect of items on the agenda.

No declarations were made.

103. Urgent items.

There were no urgent items.

104. Chair's Announcements.

The Chairman announced that Assistant Chief Fire Officer Richard Hall would retire at the end of January. He commended Richard for his energy, efforts and work over a long and distinguished career and wished him well for his retirement. The Committee and the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer echoed the comments made.

He also highlighted that, over the festive period, there had been two incidents of note that were attended by officers. One at a property fire in Evington where sadly, despite huge efforts from crews and East Midlands Ambulance Service, a person died; and the other, a large workshop/garage fire in the Belgrave area of the city, which saw 10 fire engines and a number of officers and special vehicles including the Aerial Ladder Platform attend. He

commended the exceptional firefighting tactics employed which prevented further spread of the fire.

105. Minutes of the previous meeting.

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 November 2020 were taken as read, confirmed and signed.

106. Performance Monitoring April - November 2020.

The Committee considered a report of the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer which presented an update on the performance of the Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service (LFRS) for the period April – November 2020. A copy of the report, marked ‘Agenda Item 6’, is filed with these minutes.

Members were informed that the performance figures had been influenced positively by Covid-19 which showed that all incidents had reduced during the pandemic. However, the number of incidents under “Special Services – Assisting other Agencies” (KCI 1.4 (b)) had increased as the FRS had the legal powers to force entry to property on behalf of other agencies, often resulting in them being exposed to traumatic incidents. As a result, an additional Key Corporate Indicator had been added to the performance report – KCI 2.5 “Number of TRiM” – to monitor the number of staff accessing the Trauma Risk Management support in place to address the effect of these incidents on the crew’s mental health.

Members were reminded that the method of recording response times had been amended in response to feedback from the public, as part of the Integrated Risk Management Plan. This was now recorded from the time when the call was received to when the crew arrived at the incident. The Chief Fire and Rescue Officer said that this improvement demonstrated the high level of service provided to communities. Sustainable changes had been made to processes to bring about the improvement which would continue to have a positive impact on attendance times.

Additionally, members were informed that:

- i. The provision of Home Safety Checks had continued throughout the pandemic, delivered in person in a Covid-compliant way or by phone/zoom;
- ii. Staff availability had increased as the number of long-term sickness cases had been resolved/progressed to ensure that staff were available; this was a positive position compared to other FRS nationally; and
- iii. Regarding appliance availability at Billesdon and Uppingham; the data detailed when either was available which demonstrated clearly the continuing availability.

In response to questions the following issues were raised:

- i. A number of firefighters had volunteered to assist the East Midlands Ambulance Service throughout the pandemic to transport patients; the Committee asked that their appreciation be passed on to the staff involved.
- ii. A targeted approach via local social media pages for specific areas, and also working through the local Councillor, would be used to attract applicants to the On-call recruitment, which opens on 1 February 2021. Members suggested that local

promotional printed material also be used. An update on the On-call review project would be provided to the next meeting of the Committee/CFA.

- iii. The requirement on Fire Protection moving forward was expected to increase following the outcome of the Grenfell enquiry. It was likely that the laws around fire protection would change increasing the inspecting role of FRS. Officers were considering an increase in the number of Inspecting Officers within the Fire Protection Team, as part of the request to the CFA at its meeting in February to increase the establishment level. Plans were in place to use some of the grant funding received from the Government to address the outcomes of the Grenfell enquiry.
- iv. The pandemic had changed the way in which Home Fire Safety Checks were completed and presented a significant challenge in how the Service engaged with communities. Checks were mostly being carried out either by phone or virtually. However, some people were at such a high risk of fire that face-to-face checks were necessary. A risk assessment of the safety of this approach was made on a case by case basis, balancing the risk to staff with the need to ensure the safety of the people concerned from the risk of fire. Staff were supplied with full PPE; Members were assured that ensuring everyone's safety was paramount.
- v. The increase in secondary fires from April to May was likely due to a reduction in public compliance with the lockdown measures and, due to the good weather, an increase in the number of BBQ-related incidents.
- vi. Availability of on-call appliances had been positively affected by Covid as people being furloughed from their primary employment were able to give more time to the FRS. However, their increased availability had masked, to some degree, the shortage of on-call firefighters overall, something which reflected the national position. It was hoped that the continuing increase in people working from home would present opportunity to recruit on-call firefighters in the future, although such recruitment remained a challenge.
- vii. There were no Action Plans and enforcement notices issued under KCI 5 (b) - Fire protection and enforcement during April – June due to the impact of Covid-19 and the temporary closure of businesses, which prevented inspection.
- viii. The call handling time detailed in chart 6 in the report was higher for those stations in rural areas as often the location of the call made it challenging to identify a specific location, for example, when reporting a fire in a field. This increased the time taken to handle the call.

It was moved by Councillor Bool and seconded by Mrs. Betty Newton that the performance of the Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service for the period April to November 2020 be noted.

RESOLVED:

That the performance of the Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service for the period April to November 2020 be noted.

107. Service Development Programme and 'Our Plan 2020-24' Update.

The Committee considered a report of the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer concerning progress made since November 2020 in delivering projects within the Service Development Programme and the tasks included in Appendix A of Our Plan 2020-24. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 7', is filed with these minutes.

Members were informed that the Emergency Services Network, a Government-led project to replace the national infrastructure for secure radio communications, was delayed due to significant technical and timescale issues, which also affected the police, ambulance and coastguard services. Expected completion was now in 2025, which was beyond the term of the current contract for the mobilising system, presenting an opportunity to review the contract and future provision to ensure the Service was ready and compliant for the introduction of ESN.

The Chief Fire and Rescue Officer explained that he had delayed the High Reach Appliance replacement project slightly to ensure that a comprehensive risk analysis had been conducted prior to committing the expenditure, which was a significant investment for the Service.

In response to questions, the following points were raised:

- i. A new Virtual Reality van was being developed to replace the VR car, which would contain a number of seats positioned on pneumatic activators. This meant the users were visually, audibly and emotionally immersed in the incident. The purchase of the vehicle had also been delayed by Covid-19.
- ii. A new member of staff would be appointed to the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Team to physically deliver training to officers, to support the virtual training already delivered; and this would also be made available to members.
- iii. There were four suppliers of the Aerial Ladder Platform, with many options available for the final kit including a choice of chassis, of aerial packages that could be added to it, and a number of different sized vehicles. The procurement process was relatively short as a framework process was already in place.
- iv. A response was awaited from the Minister of Fire and the Home Secretary regarding a request from FRS to have firefighters placed on the Covid-19 vaccination priority list; representations had also been made to the Local Resilience Forum for the allocation of unused vaccines at short notice to firefighters.
- v. The lateral flow test was used as a health indicator by the Service, especially by those staff seconded to EMAS who took such a test twice weekly in line with other NHS workers. Whilst it was recognised that the PCR test was a more reliable test, the increased use of the lateral flow test reduced the error rate and gave a good indication of health in the Service. Additionally, as there was a wait of a few days for the results of the PCR test, this would mean that firefighters would need to self-isolate which would affect service delivery and was more of an issue for on-call staff who had primary employment. It was necessary to balance officer safety with the need for continued service delivery. The use of such tests was being discussed at national level by the employers and the Fire Brigade Union.

- vi. Community Educators, employed to carry out Home Fire Safety Checks, were non-operational or professional support staff, whose sole duty was to engage with the community to raise awareness and safety.
- vii. The new PPE would be delivered in March/April 2021 as planned with the new service badge included on the helmets. The Service was well stocked with PPE currently although supply chains were closely monitored.

It was moved by Councillor Bool and seconded by Councillor Fonseca that the progress made since November 2020 in the delivery of projects within the Service Development Programme and the tasks that are included in Our Plan 2020-24, be noted.

RESOLVED:

That the progress made since November 2020 in the delivery of projects within the Service Development Programme and the tasks that are included in Our Plan 2020-24, be noted.

108. After the Incident Survey April - November 2020.

The Committee considered a report of the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer which presented the responses received to the After the Incident Survey undertaken between April and November 2020. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 8', is filed with these minutes.

It was moved by Councillor Bool and seconded by Mrs Newton CC that the satisfaction summary statistics and the customer feedback received in the After the Incident Surveys undertaken during April to November 2020, be noted.

RESOLVED:

That the satisfaction summary statistics and the customer feedback received in the After the Incident Surveys undertaken during April to November 2020, be noted.

109. Date of next meeting.

The next meeting of the Corporate Governance Committee will be held on Wednesday 10 March 2021 at 2:00pm via Microsoft Teams.

2.00 - 3.26 pm
20 January 2021

CHAIRMAN