

Overview and Scrutiny Management Board

Wednesday 30 January 2013

PRESENT:

Councillor Mrs Aspinall, in the Chair.

Councillor Tuffin, Vice-Chair.

Councillors Bowie, Casey, Philippa Davey, Fry (substitute for Councillor Nicholson), James, Jordan (substitute for Councillor Bowyer), Monahan and Mrs Nelder.

Apologies for absence: Councillors Bowyer, Nicholson and Wigans.

Also in attendance: Lee Howell, Chief Fire Officer, Chris Bridgeman, Councillor Mark Healy, Chairman, Councillor George Gribble, Vice-Chairman, Pete Smith, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service, Councillor Peter Smith, Deputy Leader, Councillor Gordon, appointed representative to the Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service as an outside body, Giles Perritt, Lead Officer, Gemma Pearce, Team Leader (Democratic Support) and Katey Johns, Democratic Support Officer.

The meeting started at 10 am and finished at 12.15 pm.

Note: At a future meeting, the committee will consider the accuracy of these draft minutes, so they may be subject to change. Please check the minutes of that meeting to confirm whether these minutes have been amended.

102. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest made by members in accordance with the code of conduct.

103. **CHAIR'S URGENT BUSINESS**

There were no items of Chair's urgent business.

104. **DEVON AND SOMERSET FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE DRAFT PLAN 2013/14 TO 2014/2015**

On behalf of the Board, the Chair welcomed representatives from the Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service (DSFRS) who were in attendance to present its Draft Plan for 2013/14 and 2014/15. Members heard –

- (a) the Government grant had been reduced by 10.3 per cent for 13/14 and 7.3 per cent for 14/15 equating to a reduction in funding of £5.5m;
- (b) the DSFRS had worked hard over the last few years to ensure that the impact of any cuts on public safety was minimal and that the effectiveness of their emergency response was maintained. This was

being achieved through the introduction of an integrated approach, namely that –

- stations, vehicles, crews and equipment would match local risk;
- prevention and protection activity would be targeted to those of the highest risk;
- staff would be working in a new more flexible way

(c) details of the proposed internal and external changes which it was anticipated would achieve savings totalling £6.8m –

internal

- reduce support staff by at least 5 per cent by investing in technology;
- make savings through greater efficiencies in back office support functions;
- ensure support functions effectively support new model for front line service delivery;
- continually challenge and carefully manage recruitment for the foreseeable future;
- create flexible staffing approach to provide improved efficiency, fire cover and prevention activities;

external

- roll out Light Rescue Pump vehicles
- implement changes to automatic fire alarm responses to target high risk premises only
- mobilisation of one co-responder directly from home/work
- reduce number of middle/senior managers
- invest £450k in additional prevention activity in 2013
- change crewing of three fire engines in Plymouth to 'on call' rather than whole time -
 - Plympton and Plymstock fire engines become 'on call' crewed
 - Camels Head retains one fire engine crewed by whole-time firefighters
 - Crownhill receives the fire engine moved from Camels Head having two appliances, one crewed by whole-time and one crewed by 'on call' firefighters
- crew the Aerial Ladder Platform (ALP) at Crownhill fire station with 'on call' staff
- end Yeovil fire station pilot where an additional four firefighters are provided
- change crewing arrangements of second fire appliance at Taunton from whole time to 'on call'
- change crewing arrangements of second fire appliance at

- Torquay from whole time to 'on call'
 - change crewing arrangements of fire engine at Ilfracombe from day crewed to 'on call'
- (d) that in Plymouth –
 - the proposed changes would still leave seven frontline appliances within the city boundaries
 - over 50 per cent of incidents were false alarms
 - response times varied between 10 and 13 minutes
- (e) the draft plan was now out to consultation and views on the proposals would be welcomed up to the closing date of 22 April 2013.

In response to questions raised, Members heard further that –

- (f) no stations would be closed in Plymouth nor would there be any reduction in the number of appliances serving the city;
- (g) the council's civil protection unit were invited to participate in the consultation and both services worked closely together on the 'short sermon' emergency planning exercise to ensure the necessary links were in place should a real-time event occur in the city;
- (h) it was anticipated that the proposals would have no impact on the response times to the Dockyard. The Camels Head station would have one whole time crewed appliance which would be the first to respond whilst, at the same time, the second unit would be called from either Crownhill or Greenbank. In the meantime, the Camels Head on-call team would be paged and called in to crew the second Camels Head appliance;
- (i) with regard to the proposals to change some stations from whole time to on-call crews, the nearest crewed station to the incident would be despatched in the first instance with the on-call crews being paged simultaneously. The on-call crews would then proceed to their stations, gear up, collect the appliance and proceed to the incident;
- (j) five fire fighters were required to crew an appliance and when an incident arose, where stations were covered by an on-call team, twelve members of staff would be paged simultaneously and the first five to arrive at the station would proceed to the incident;
- (k) whilst Plymouth did not currently have any on-call crews the system had been working well in other parts of Devon and in Somerset;
- (l) on-call proposals for Plymouth would require fire fighters to live no more than five minutes away from their allocated stations and be able to provide guaranteed hours of availability;

- (m) the DSFRS welcomed the opportunity to work with the council in engaging particularly hard to reach and vulnerable groups so that those most at risk could be targeted in terms of fire safety and prevention;
- (n) flooding was not a statutory responsibility for the fire service and representations had been made to central government expressing the service's concerns at its ability to respond to incidents, which were increasing in number, whilst funding was being reduced;
- (o) a new call control system would shortly be in place across Devon and Somerset, Dorset, Hampshire and Wiltshire which would be able to track an appliance's location and the location and identity of the caller;
- (p) incidents of staff sickness had been reduced from an average of 12 days per person per year to 7 days;
- (q) the capital proposals for the draft plan would be submitted for consideration to the DSFRS Resources Committee which was taking place next week.

On behalf of the Board, the Chair thanked the representatives from the DSFRS for their attendance and the comprehensive presentation on their proposals.

Having discussed the matter at some length, it was apparent that, whilst Members acknowledged the need for change in the current economic climate, they had concerns at what those changes would mean for Plymouth, particularly given that it was a hazard rich city. It was therefore agreed that an Overview and Scrutiny Management Board task and finish group is set up to look at the draft plan in more detail and that this will take place prior to closure of the consultation period in April in order that a formal response to the proposals can be submitted, witnesses to be invited to include representatives from –

- the Dockyard
- the DSFRS trade union
- Plymouth Community Homes/Plymouth Community Healthcare

105. **BUDGET AND CORPORATE PLAN SCRUTINY REPORT 2013 (TO FOLLOW)**

The Chair and Lead Officer presented for consideration the draft report arising from scrutiny of the council's budget priorities and corporate plan for 2013/14.

Agreed the report subject to the following amendments –

- (1) the addition of a bullet point to paragraph 3.7.1
 - Recruitment and retention of nursing staff
- (2) the addition of an extra paragraph 4.8 to read “about the commitment of the partner organisations to working with the Council to improve public safety”;

106. **EXEMPT BUSINESS**

There were no items of exempt business.

This page is intentionally left blank