



MINUTES OF THE POLICY COMMITTEE held on Wednesday 27 November 2013 at Fire Service Headquarters, Winsford at 10 a.m.

PRESENT: Councillors J Joyce (Chair), D Brickhill, P Carey, L Jones, J Leather, G Merry, S Nelson, B Rudd, C Thorley and D Topping.

PART 1 – MATTERS CONSIDERED IN PUBLIC

1 PROCEDURAL MATTERS

A APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

B DECLARATION OF MEMBERS INTERESTS

There were no declarations of Members interests.

C MINUTES OF THE POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING

RESOLVED: That

[1] the Minutes of the meeting of the Policy Committee held on 19 June 2013 be confirmed as a correct record.

Members noted the meeting of the Policy Committee scheduled for Wednesday 11 September 2013 was cancelled.

D MINUTES OF THE CLOSURE OF ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

RESOLVED: That

[1] the Minutes of the meeting of the Closure of Accounts Committee held on 19 June 2013 be confirmed as a correct record.

E NOTES OF THE RISK MANAGEMENT BOARD

RESOLVED: That

[1] the notes of the meeting of the Risk Management Board held on 9 July 2013 be received, for information.

F NOTES OF THE RISK MANAGEMENT BOARD

RESOLVED: That

[1] the notes of the meeting of the Risk Management Board held on 3 October 2013 be received, for information.

2 ANNUAL REFRESH OF CORPORATE RISK MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK 2013

The Head of Planning, Performance and Communications introduced this report which highlighted the proposed changes to the Service's Corporate Risk Management Framework for approval by Members.

He provided Members with some background to the Framework which was originally documented during 2006 and provided risk management guidance and tools to all levels of the organisation in the identification and assessment of risks. He advised that the Service's Framework was refreshed on an annual basis to ensure continued relevance.

The Head of Planning, Performance and Communications explained that the Framework was extensively reviewed in 2012 and it had been agreed that a light touch approach would be taken in 2013. He advised that the Authority's internal auditors had undertaken a risk management compliance audit in June 2013 and had recommended that guidance about control testing and its effectiveness were included within the Framework.

He summarised the other two minor proposed changes which were in relation to the inclusion of the responsibilities of the Senior Risk Information Owner and changes to the thematic risk registers.

Members discussed the report and queried whether there should be a reference to risk management training being provided for Authority Members. It was noted that this was included in the Members training programme.

Members thanked officers for a very comprehensive report and acknowledged the excellent work that had been carried out and the commitment to risk management by the Service.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the refreshed Corporate Risk Management Framework 2013 be approved.

3 CORPORATE EQUALITIES AND INCLUSION STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

The Head of Planning, Performance and Communications presented this report to Members. He explained that the report sought Members approval for a new Corporate Equality and Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan, attached as appendices to the report.

He provided some background to the Authority's approach to equality and diversity following the Equality Standard for Local Government being updated to the Equality Framework for Local Government in April 2009. He explained that a bespoke version of the Framework had been introduced for the Fire and Rescue Service and the Service had achieved the 'Excellence' standard of this bespoke Framework in September 2011.

The Head of Planning, Performance and Communication explained that this was the Service's third Corporate Equalities strategy and highlighted that for the first time the idea of inclusion had formally been added to the strategy. He summarised the significant progress the Service had made in embedding the equality and diversity agenda across the organisation both externally within communities and internally within the organisation.

The Head of Planning, Performance and Communications advised Members that re-accreditation to the Equality Framework was due in 2014 and to work towards this the strategy detailed the Framework headline priorities and expectations with the resultant Action Plan identifying any gaps in performance and any issues to be addressed. He explained that the Action Plan, attached as Appendix 2 to the report, set out a timetable of proposals and initiatives and the work that needed to be undertaken to complete the Action Plan would be regularly monitored by the Service's Equality Task Group. A progress report would be presented to the Authority's Performance and Overview Committee on a six monthly basis.

Members discussed the report and the progress made over the past six years and the commitment shown by officers. They commented that it was important that the Service continued to monitor equality and diversity on a regular basis as the legislation was constantly changing.

Members also commented on the excellent training session that they had recently attended which had been delivered by the Equality and Diversity Officer.

The Chair commented that the work carried out by officers over the last few years had been excellent and they should be congratulated. He commented that if Members identified any equality and diversity issues they should be brought to officers attention so that they could be addressed. The Chair also acknowledged the Member Champions contribution.

The Chief Fire Officer added his thanks to officers and Member Champions for their commitment to the Service's progress in making equality and diversity an integral part of the Service's day to day activities.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the draft Corporate Equalities and Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan 2014-16 be approved.

4 REVIEW OF INSURANCE PROVISION

The Head of Finance provided Members with some background as to how the Service currently procured its insurance arrangements. He reminded Members that the Authority was a member of the Fire and Rescue Insurance Consortium (FRIC) which included a group of nine Fire and Rescue Authorities who jointly procured insurance. He explained that a procurement exercise had recently been completed and insurance cover agreed with Zurich Insurance. This would commence from November 2013, for a period of one year with the option of a further year.

He explained that the Consortium had recently met to discuss arrangements going forward and was considering whether to create a pooled arrangement for dealing with some insurance claims in order to drive down the cost of insurance arrangements and to attempt to more directly derive the benefits of improved risk management. He explained that if a pooled arrangement was pursued a separate legal entity would be required to hold and manage the pool. This might be a mutual. Insurance would continue to be held for claims above certain limits.

Members discussed the proposal and agreed that this looked to be the right direction for further consideration and seemed a logical approach if savings could be achieved. They queried whether any additional types of risk would need to be included within the insurance policies. The Head of Finance confirmed that the major risks were recognised within the core business but that if the Service moved in other directions this would need to be reconsidered.

A Member asked how the 'self insurance' claims would be dealt with and the Head of Finance confirmed that they would be handled by a claims handling company on behalf of the Consortium.

Members agreed that the Service should continue in its discussions with FRIC in relation to the proposed future approach to the provision of insurance and that a paper should be submitted for approval to Members in due course.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the verbal update in relation to the review of insurance provision be noted; and**
- [2] a report be submitted to Policy Committee or Fire Authority for consideration and approval**

5 COMMUNITY SAFETY – LEAD AGENCY

The Chief Fire Officer provided some background to this report, following the Cheshire Sub-Regional Leaders' Board approval of plans to collaborate and transform services with regard to community safety. He confirmed that the sub-region had received confirmation of Government funding of £420k to

support the implementation of this collaboration, following the submission of a comprehensive bid. He explained the report sought Members approval for the Service to take the lead agency role for this collaboration and also provided an overview of the collaboration, risk, benefits and implications for the Fire Authority.

The Chief Fire Officer referred Members to the Appendix attached to the report which provided a copy of the full bid submitted to the Government. He also drew Members attention to the five priority areas of focus detailed within the bid and summarised within the report. These areas were: system change, anti social behaviour, domestic abuse, offender management and alcohol. He explained that each of the four constituent authorities and the Constabulary/Probation within Cheshire had been allocated as lead to one of these five work streams.

He summarised the benefits of the programme and for the Service taking the lead agency role. He also highlighted the risks involved although the £420k funding had a limited number of conditions, which, as the lead agency, the Service would have to meet.

Members discussed the report and queried whether the role of programme manager would be on a fixed term contract and Chief Fire Officer confirmed that this would be the case.

A Member asked whether a similar approach with this collaboration was being taken to that of Altogether Better, and queried how that local authority initiative would fit with this sub regional collaboration. The Chief Fire Officer responded that the comprehensive bid included work carried out by local authorities and the lessons learned from these collaborations.

A Member queried how savings would be realised and asked for assurance that, as the lead agency, the costs to the Service were manageable. The Chief Fire Officer assured Members that there would be no financial cost to the Service and that there was a long term potential for savings of working collaboratively and joining partnerships together across Cheshire.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the scope and progress of the sub-regional Community Safety collaboration be noted; and**
- [2] approval be given for Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service to take on the role of lead agency for the sub regional Community Safety collaboration, to receive the funding and secure delivery of the programme, having noted the risks, benefits and implications.**

PART 2 – BUSINESS TO BE DISCUSSED IN PRIVATE

NONE