

Minutes of the Meeting of the EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE of the BUCKINGHAMSHIRE AND MILTON KEYNES FIRE AUTHORITY held on WEDNESDAY 16 OCTOBER 2019 at 10.00 AM

Present: Councillors Clarke OBE (Chairman), Hopkins, Lambert, McCall and Roberts

Officers: M Osborne (Deputy Chief Fire Officer), M Hemming (Director of Finance and Assets), A Hussain (Principal Accountant) C Bell (Head of Service Development), D Norris (Head of Service Delivery), D Thexton (ICT Manager), F Pearson (Consultation and Communication Manager), K Nellist (Democratic Services Officer) and J Naylor (Station Commander Amersham and Beaconsfield)

Apologies: Councillors Marland, McLean and Teesdale
One member of the public

EX08 MINUTES

RESOLVED –

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on Wednesday 10 July 2019, be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

EX09 BUDGET MONITORING PERFORMANCE AND DEBT MANAGEMENT APRIL – SEPTEMBER 2019

The Vice Chairman introduced the report and advised Members that the report presented the provisional revenue and capital outturn position and debt management performance to 30 September 2019.

The Director of Finance and Assets thanked his team for getting the information for the report together so quickly after the end of September.

The Principal Accountant advised Members that an underspend of £161k against a budget of £30,32m was forecast. The key variations in directorate budgets compared to year-end outturn was shown in Appendix A. There was an underspend in the Corporate Management directorate which related to a restructure of the Senior Management team and the removal of the Director of People and Organisational Development post. The largest underspend was in the Delivery, Corporate Development and Planning directorate and was primarily due to on-call firefighter employment being significantly below budgeted establishment levels. Statutory Accounting and Contingency was £862k over budget and this was primarily due to the costs for all operational apprentices being within this budget and related to their employee and training costs.

The Principal Accountant advised Members that the Bank Cost Analysis graph on page 16 showed the whole-time operational

staff costs from 2015/16, with Bank payments forming a significant part of these from 2016/17. The total costs for 2019/20 for whole-time had increased due to increases in employer contributions following the government's decision to decrease the discount rate used to value underfunded public sector pension schemes.

The Principal Accountant advised Members that as per Recommendation 2, due to the current levels of underspend, the planned transfer from reserves of £444k would no longer take place in 2019/20. This transfer was planned to offset the funding shortfall originally forecast for 2019/20. Of the £444k variance, £366 was shown within Movements in Reserves and £78k within Top-up Funding.

A Member asked why there was a carry-forward of £24,485k for CCTV Cameras and then it was showing as a minus in the projected year end variance and was advised that the £24,485k was no longer needed, as costs were captured within the red fleet budget.

A Member asked why in certain places within the report it showed the Authority being below establishment levels and whether this indicated a recruitment issue for whole-time firefighters. The Member was advised that there wasn't an issue, but part of the reason was the number of firefighters that could be recruited at any one time, in terms of training. The Fire Service College's maximum was 16. The Authority was exploring having two more tranches of apprentices within the next year.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer advised Members that the Authority had also advertised for transferee firefighters from other services and there had been 26 expressions of interest.

The Head of Service Delivery advised Members that the challenge around recruiting and retaining on-call firefighters was a national issue. The Authority had initiated recently a change in the way new on-call staff were contracted. This involved staff confirming periods during the week when they would definitely be available. This was being introduced for new starters and there were around 20 staff on the new contract. The Authority was already seeing improved results for immediate turnout and for 2nd and 3rd tier availability, between 20 minutes and one hour. The Authority usually targeted on-call recruitment across the whole service, but now it was targeting on-call recruitment where it was needed most, around the Amersham and Buckingham areas as this would release some of the pressure on the use of the bank system.

RESOLVED –

1. That the latest projected outturn forecast for the Authority as at 30 September 2019 be noted.

2. That the planned transfer of £444k from reserves is not made in 2019-20.

EX10

ICT STRATEGY 2019-2024

The Vice Chairman introduced the report and advised Members that a good ICT Strategy underpins the whole vision and strategy of the organisation and reflects on the previous strategy and makes recommendations around ICT security and cyber-security and builds upon that strategy.

The ICT Manager advised Members that this ICT Strategy was different to previous versions and had been written to make it clearer and more comprehensive to read and use. The Strategy aligns and supports the Public Safety Plan/Corporate Plan 2019-2020 which was updated in March 2019 and would be reviewed again when replacement documents were released.

The ICT Manager advised Members that over the last five years there had been more issues with cyber than before. As Members may have seen recently, Wiltshire Council systems were shut down for many weeks following the novichok poisoning, not because their IT systems had been compromised, but because so many people outside the UK were trying to access their systems.

A Member asked if the Authority backed up on site or off site and was advised that back up was done to tape off site and also to the cloud. Moving forward everything was becoming more cloud based and it would eventually take over.

A Member asked what was being done to ensure the Authority's systems couldn't be hacked and was advised that there was a multi-layered approach to security using different manufacturers and different providers. The network was protected through firewalls that were intelligent and looked at the information coming in. Emails coming in presented the most risk and these were blocked if there was a link or an attachment that was not recognised.

The Head of Service Development advised Members that an exercise had taken place recently where someone had been brought in to provide penetration testing to ensure the Authority's systems were robust.

A Member asked how 'not spots' were covered when people were using mobile phones, and was advised that in order to mobilise staff, the Authority had moved away from paging which used to have a lot of 'not spots' and recently moved to an app that sits on a phone. The benefit of the app was that users would have chosen a network which had best coverage in their area. The app also worked across home based Wi-Fi, 3G, 4G and 5G.

A Member asked if the Authority was complying to GDPR as there was no mention of it in the Strategy and was the Authority still able to share data with councils and other blue light services and was advised that the Authority had recently signed up to a shared data agreement with Milton Keynes Council and it had something similar with Buckinghamshire County Council. GDPR was also factored into the acceptable use policies that sit below the ICT Strategy. There would also have been a data protection impact assessment carried out in conjunction with producing the ICT Strategy.

Members asked that for GDPR reasons, the data impact assessment be appended to the Strategy.

RESOLVED –

That the ICT Strategy 2019-2024 be approved.

EX11

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Committee noted that the date of the next Executive Committee meeting would be held on Wednesday 13 November 2019 at 10.00am.

THE CHAIRMAN CLOSED THE MEETING AT 10.34 AM