

Minutes of the Meeting of the Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 12 November 2015 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillors Roy Jones (Chair), Robert Ray, Michael Stone (left at 8.20pm) and Pauline Tolson

Apologies: Councillors Garry Hague

In attendance: Councillor Cathy Kent (left at 8.20)
Adam Eckley – Acting Chief Fire Officer
Paul Hill – Essex Fire Authority
Lucy Magill, Head of Public Protection
Kenna-Victoria Martin, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Before the start of the Meeting, all present were advised that the meeting may be filmed and was being recorded, with the audio recording to be made available on the Council's website.

15. Minutes

The Minutes of the Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee, held on 8 October 2015, were approved as a correct record

16. Items of Urgent Business

No interests were declared.

17. Declaration of Interests

There were no items of urgent business.

18. Consultation on Integrated Risk Management Plan

The Acting Chief Fire Officer addressed the Committee and in doing so explained that Essex Fire Authority had written to each unitary and borough council within the county to seek their comments to their integrated risk Management plan consultation.

Members were informed that the Essex Fire Authority were planning major organisational redesign, supported by the biggest consultation exercise ever undertaken by the Service. It was stressed to the Committee that there were no plans ruled in or ruled out and a genuine commitment to consultation with all key stakeholder groups in shaping the future direction of the service was being undertaken.

It was discussed that the first stage of the consultation took place between July to September 2015; with the Service looking at its obligated integrated

risk management plan for County including Essex, Southend and Thurrock. Members were notified that the demand for emergency response was reducing with incidents down by 50% between 2004 and 2014; Wholetime pumping appliances did not attend incidents on 40% of firefighter shifts

The Acting Chief Fire Officer commented that was better to prevent an incident occurring and to be able to do more prevention they needed to re-balance their resources. He further informed Members that there had been significant reductions in incidents attended in the past 10 years. All incidents types had reduced by 50% including Road Traffic Collisions.

The Committee was then notified of the following:

- A wholetime pumping appliance cost the tax payer £1million per year, Grays currently had 2 pumping appliances;
- The Fire and Rescue Service had visited 80% of schools within the County speaking to students about the importance of fire safety;
- 10 thousand home safety checks had been undertaken by the Service and;
- There were 90 thousand homes without a working fire alarm.

Member were further informed that the second stage of the consultation would take place in January 2016 and would run for 12 weeks with discussions of specific options of change taking place. The final decision would then be made at the AGM in June 2016 and the changes would be across the County.

The Acting Chief Fire Officer then explained how certain regulations were enforced following major incidences:

- Top Storey Club Fire – Bolton – 1st May 1961, as a result of this awful tragedy the Licensing Act 1961 was brought into force, this enabled Fire Authorities to have greater powers over club premises under the act.
- Rose & Crown Hotel Fire - Saffron Walden – 26th December 1969, this fire was one of a number of hotel fires which gave added impetus to the passing of the Fire Precautions Act 1971. In 1972, hotels and boarding houses were the first premises to be designated as requiring a fire certificate under the act.
- Woolworths Manchester 8th May 1979, this fire was one of a number of fires which gave added impetus to the passing of the The Furniture and Furnishings (Fire Safety) Regulations 1988.
- The Bradford City Football Stadium Fire - 11th May 1985, the Popplewell inquiry into the disaster led to the introduction of 'The Fire Safety and Safety of Places of Sports Act 1987', new legislation to improve safety at the UK's football grounds.

Members were informed that no enquiry suggested that more firefighters arriving to the incident quicker was the answer.

During the presentation the Committee was advised that national response times had increased which had led to the decrease in fire deaths. The current response time to an incident was 9minutes; with 90% of incidents being responded to within this time.

Acting Chief Fire Officer Eckley, explained that within the service there was scope to improve however this would have to be done under financial difficulty as Essex Fire Authority were set to lose £15million from their budget. This would mean financial organisational redesign.

Members enquired as to with grant cuts and precepts if the Fire Authority would raise Council Tax. Acting Chief Fire Officer Eckley explained that Fire Authority had not increased Council Tax for 5 years, with a planning budget there may be a 1.5% raise however at the current time there had not been agreement in relation to an increase.

Following questions from the Committee the following responses were given:

- No decision had been made to remove the Area Ladder Platform from Grays Fire Station; however that being said there were 5 Area Ladder Platforms within the County which may or may not be retained or relocated;
- In relation to new software a new mobility system was in place, following an incident in January 2015 the system was taken down and the FA were speaking with the supplier;
- There was no definite answer that Orsett Fire Station would be moved, although all stations were under investigation the impact of closing a station would need to be factored into the consultation;
- No confirmation could be given at the current time to the retaining of Fire Stations. There were 34 on call stations across the County worth £100 thousand if the decision was to close this would mean a £3.5 million saving to the Service;
- Fire Break Courses were offered over the County to the most vulnerable groups, including schools and domestic violence victims. There had been 60 courses delivered to date.

Discussions led to the possibility of strike action within the service, Members were informed that the Fire Authority was currently in dispute with the Fire Union on a number of topics and as yet there were no strike dates confirmed. It was further commented that the Fire Authority were have daily talks with the Fire Union to solve disputes if possible.

The Committee were assured that if needed the Fire Authority could call on additional resources if needed.

19. Drug and Alcohol Action Team (DAAT)

The Chair of the Committee explained that he had spoken with Officers prior to the meeting and had been asked to defer the item to the January meeting.

Councillor Jones then read out a statement explaining the deferral of the item:

“Dear Cllr Jones,

Thank you for agreeing to withdraw the paper on the Thurrock Drug and Alcohol Action Team (DAAT), which was scheduled to be presented to the Committee this evening. You will remember that I explained that there were two reasons for doing so, which were;

- 1. As indicated in the committee report, the release of nationally accredited data for all DAATs is inevitably prone to significant delay. This is partly due to the time needed to see if the treatment service users have received has been effective. Consequently, the latest validated data we have been able to use is only that of Quarter 1 (April to June 2015). The deadline for publication of Quarter 2 data is 24th November 2015.*

Members may find it unhelpful to only have such old data, especially when we are hoping to demonstrate that the recent improvements in the performance of the DAAT has been continued.

- 2. The other reason is that an inspection has just been completed by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) into children’s safeguarding in Thurrock. Part of this included an examination of the records kept by the DAAT’s adult drug and alcohol treatment provider, Addaction. A small dip sample revealed some concerns about information-sharing and record keeping. As a result an extensive audit has revealed that these problems are not wide-spread and all necessary steps have since been taken by the service providers to make the require improvements.*

However, while currently not published, the CQC’s report is due any day and the Director of Public Health, Ian Wake, has therefore requested that the paper be withdrawn and re-submitted to the next meeting. Members will then be able to be briefed on the outcome of the inspection and also of the remedial action taken, as well as seeing more recent performance data.

I hope Members will find this a more acceptable process.”

20. Work Programme

Members discussed the work programme for the municipal year and the following reports were agreed:

- The Drug and Alcohol Action Team (DAAT) – 21 January 2016
- TCSP Prevent Strategy – 17 March 2016
- Update on the Consultation on Integrated Risk Management Plan (Essex Fire Authority) – 17 March 2016

The meeting finished at 8.27 pm

Approved as a true and correct record

CHAIR

DATE

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact
Democratic Services at Direct.Democracy@thurrock.gov.uk**