



Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the Meeting Held on 16 March 2023
at 10 am at County Hall Norwich

Present:

Cllr Steve Morphew (Chair)

Cllr Lana Hempsall

Cllr Carl Annison

Cllr Phillip Duigan

Cllr Barry Duffin

Cllr Mark Kiddle-Morris

Cllr Keith Kiddie

Cllr Brian Long

Cllr Jamie Osborn

Cllr R Savage (sub for Cllr Richard Price)

Cllr Brian Watkins

Parent Governor

Giles Hankinson

Also, present (who took a part in the meeting):

Cllr Margaret Dewsbury

Cllr Andrew Jamieson

Ceri Sumner

Scott Norman

Kat Hulatt

Peter Randall

Tim Shaw

Cabinet Member Communities& Partnerships

Cabinet Member for Finance

Director Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service / Chief Fire Officer

Deputy Chief Fire Officer

Head of Legal Services

Democratic Support and Scrutiny Manager

Committee Officer

1 Apologies for Absence

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Cllr Lesley Bambridge, Cllr Ed Maxfield, Cllr Richard Price, Cllr Ricard Price, Ms Helen Bates (Church Representative) and Mr Paul Dunning (Church Representative).

2 Minutes

- 2.1 The minutes of the previous meetings held on 15 February 2023 were confirmed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

3. Declarations of Interest

3.1 There were no declarations of interest.

4. Public Question Time

4.1 There were no public questions.

5. Local Member Issues/Questions

5.1 There were no local member issues/questions.

6 Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service Community Risk Management Plan 2023/26

7.1 The annexed report (6) was received.

7.2 The Scrutiny Committee received a report that provided members with a copy of the draft Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service Community Risk Management Plan 2023/26 and associated Cabinet papers. The plan formed part of the Norfolk County Council Policy Framework, which required a scrutiny process to take place in accordance with part 11B of the NCC constitution.

7.3 During discussion of the report with Cllr Margaret Dewsbury (Cabinet Member for Communities& Partnerships), Ceri Sumner (Director Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service / Chief Fire Officer) and Scott Norman (Deputy Chief Fire Officer) the following key points were noted:

- It was noted that the draft Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service Community Risk Management Plan 2023/26 had been amended following the outcome of public consultation. The main changes were in relation to proposals 5 and 7 on pages 19 and 20 of the agenda.
- Proposal 5 related to the response by the Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service to the summer heatwave conditions and the steps that were taken to keep local communities and firefights safe during these difficult conditions.
- In reply to questions, it was pointed out that the Thetford Technical Rescue Unit (TRU) was relocated to Great Yarmouth in order to better align this specialist water capability to the location of greatest risk. There were four TRU units spread throughout the county, one of which was located in the King's Lynn area. The latest data showed that the TRU at Thetford was not as well utilized as those located elsewhere in the county and that the greatest risk was in the Great Yarmouth area.
- The storage of lithium-ion batteries was an emerging issue of concern not only for the Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service but also for partner organisations involved in planning for large scale battery storage sites. The Risk Management Plan referred to how the Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service approach to data collection and risk profile about the storage of lithium-ion batteries would be developed over a three- year period in collaboration with partner organisations.
- There had been significant improvements around the approach taken to fire prevention activities since the publication of the latest HMI report. Both whole time stations and on call stations were doing more to help vulnerable people

to protect themselves. Approximately £240,000 of investment from the County Council had enabled the Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service to increase its resource within the prevention teams and the amount of time that firefighters spent on fire prevention activity.

- Community risk profiles had been put in place to enable the Service to target the most vulnerable people. The Service had won an award earlier this year for the work that was done with the Adult Education Service in providing fire safety information for people within refugee/ asylum communities who did not have English as their first language. This was part of an increased focus within the Service towards providing safeguarding work; with new policies and training in place to help firefighters to identify vulnerable individuals and refer them to partner organisations who were best placed to support their needs.
- The Committee was pleased to hear that the Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service had a Community Interest Company that provided training and advice for businesses and care home on fire safety issues. The Community Interest Company helped to provide funding for smoke alarms for those who were unable to provide smoke alarms for themselves.
- Councillors said that one of the biggest risks for the Service identified in the report was the impact of climate change. Important issues for the future would be how the County Council's collection of high-level data on climate change got integrated into the Risk Management Plan, what dealing with climate change meant for the resourcing of the Service and how dealing with fires resulting from climate change got linked with data on social vulnerability.
- In reply to questions, it was pointed out the fire crews in the southern district had detailed plans in place for dealing with fires in the Thetford Forest Area.
- A significant level of support was available to help staff to cope with wellbeing and mental health issues that arose from having to deal with tragic incidents. Details about the level of support available from public health experts, the Fire Chiefs Council, a firefighters charity and research on academic best practice could be shared with Members of Scrutiny Committee at a later date.
- The Norfolk Urban Fire and Rescue Team had worked with the military to deal with an unexploded World War 2 bomb at Gt Yarmouth as part of a multi-agency response to help with the evacuation and provide technical advice. An incident review was currently taking place which the Chair asked officers to make available to all Councillors in due course.
- The Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service boundaries were based on minimum response times from fire stations and were not aligned to either District or health service boundaries.
- The national review of on-call firefighting had not yet been completed. This would take account of changes in workforce patterns.
- The detailed work of the roaming fire appliance was explained to members.
- It was suggested that future such reports should include a table of contents and a glossary of terms.

- Steps were being taken to encourage and support new entrants to the Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service through such activities as fire service open days. It was suggested that local County Councillors should be informed when such activities were being planned.
- Members spoke about the difficulties that fire crews could experience in accessing homes via estate roads that were blocked by parked cars. This was a problem that was not particular to the Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service.

7.4 The Committee RESOLVED

1. **To note the proposed Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service Community Risk Management Plan 2023/26, providing the comments listed above.**
2. **Ask officers to produce a report to the Leader and Cabinet Member on behalf of the committee in accordance with section 11b of the Norfolk County Council Constitution (Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules), providing feedback and recommendations where appropriate.**

The meeting concluded at 1.15 pm

Chair