



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE RISK MANAGEMENT BOARD held on Tuesday, 15 October 2019 at Fire Conference Room, Clemonds Hey, Winsford at 10.00 am

PRESENT:

Members:

Councillor S Nelson
Councillor S Parker

Auditor:

Anne-Marie Harrop, Mersey Internal Audit Agency

Officers:

Mark Cashin (Chair), Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive
Allan Rainford, Treasurer
Neil Griffiths, Head of Service Delivery
Louise Willis, Performance, Planning and Risk Manger
Chris Astall, Performance, Planning and Risk Officer
Charlotte Whale, Executive Support Assistant
Emilie Salkeld, Governance Officer

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from:

Director of Governance and Commissioning, Andrew Leadbetter
Head of Finance, Wendy Bebbington
Group Manager, Neil McElroy

2 NOTES FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The notes from the previous meeting on 19th March 2019 were presented to the Risk Management Board and the following action was noted:-

The Chair requested that the action to update the Board on mitigating fire risks in heritage buildings be changed to a presentation instead of a report.

3 REVIEW OF STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER

The Chair welcomed the Board to its first meeting for 2019-20. The Board discussed the need for bespoke training around the Service's approach to analysing and monitoring risks. It was decided that both Members would receive risk training to be organised by the Performance, Planning and Risk team before the next Board meeting.

ACTION: That

- [1] the Performance, Planning and Risk team organise a risk management training session for Councillors Stef Nelson and Stuart Parker.**

The Board discussed the Strategic Risk Register provided by Planning and Performance. The following observations were made:

376 – Fire in Iconic Heritage Buildings

The Chair informed the Board that the Service were liaising with Cheshire West and Chester Borough Council to create a new post for a heritage protection officer to assist with mitigating the fire risk in heritage buildings. He stated that a further update would be presented to the Board as a presentation at the next meeting in March 2020.

807 – Competing Demands on Resource and Achieving MTFP Targets

The Treasurer informed the Board that the implementation of proposed changes to the business rates retention system, originally due to take effect from April 2020, had been delayed until April 2021.

He also reported that the Government had proposed that increase in the Council Tax precept be limited to 2%.

889 – Lack of Commitment from housing providers to fit sprinklers

The Chair updated the Board on the current status of sprinklers in houses across Cheshire. A Member of the Board requested that the first meeting of the Sprinkler group for 2019-20 be arranged for in the near future.

ACTION: That

- [1] the Head of Protection arrange the first meeting of the Sprinkler Group for 2019-20.**

995 – Fire Pensions – Increase in employer’s contributions to firefighter pensions

The Treasurer informed the Board that a decision on whether the Government would fund the increased firefighter pension contribution would be made by December 2019.

997 – Brexit

The Board were assured that the Service was prepared for Brexit to take place on 31st October, given the current economic climate and uncertainty.

1000 – Inability to Sustain Sufficient Level of experienced Operational Staff

The Chair informed the Board that operational staffing figures would be available

once the workforce planning update had been submitted to the Staffing Committee meeting on 23rd October 2019. The Head of Service Delivery stated that the risk could potentially be de-escalated.

1004 – ESMCP – Ongoing Maintenance

The Board were reminded that the Service had no control over the ESMCP project as it was led by the Government. The project had been delayed several times and the Service would keep reporting the national progress.

1006 – Extension of Payroll Contract – Kier

The risk was declared closed and further discussion was held during item 6.

1008 – McCloud/Sergeant Judgment – Pension Case

The Chair informed the Board that a remedy hearing was to be held on 18th December 2019. He also stated that the police officer and judge remedy hearings were being held before the firefighter case which would give some indication of the likely outcome of the case.

4 OPERATIONAL AND CORPORATE SERVICES RISK MAP

The Planning, Performance and Risk Officer introduced the report which presented a high level overview of the Service's organisational risk profile mapped by each department.

The Chair gave the opportunity for the Board to request a Deep Dive report for the next meeting or to raise a risk for the risk register. He suggested that, due to the outcomes of the Staff Survey, Blue Light Collaboration should be included as a strategic risk.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the Operational and Corporate Services Risk Map be noted.

ACTION: That

[1] the Performance, Planning and Risk team include Blue Light Collaboration as a risk on the Strategic Risk Register, with the Director of Governance and Commissioning as the risk owner.

5 ASSURANCE OPTIONS REPORT

The Planning, Performance and Risk Officer introduced a report which presented alternative benchmarking options for the Board to discuss.

At the last Risk Management Board meeting, the Board decided to no longer commission further ALARM benchmarking exercises due to the small number of fire and rescue services participating in the exercises which made a worthwhile

comparison difficult. The Performance, Planning and Risk team were tasked to find alternative options to maintain the delivery of effective benchmarking.

The Performance, Planning and Risk Officer presented five alternative benchmarking options to the Board for consideration. She noted that all options contained within the report were recommended by MIAA to be completed annually.

The Board questioned the effectiveness of the first option if there were low responses from other fire and rescue services. The Performance, Planning and Risk Manager assured the Board that Cheshire Constabulary ran a similar questionnaire among other police forces and found their response rate was satisfactory. Anne-Marie Harrop, from Mersey Internal Audit Agency, also stated that answers alone to the questionnaire would not satisfy audit recommendations. Peter Hayes, Project Manager, suggested including follow up questions to the questionnaire for further detail and to satisfy audit recommendations.

The Chair suggested that the Performance, Planning and Risk team make contact with the Cleveland Benchmarking Group and request for a benchmarking item to be submitted to the National Fire Chief Council group.

The Chair referred to the Internal Auditor's previous recommendation that the Service contact St Helen's Council for information on their partnership work. Due to being unable to attach this information from St Helen's. He requested that the Internal Auditor share another example of good partnership work with the Service.

The Board assessed all options and decided that the Performance, Planning and Risk team should action all five options.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the Performance, Planning and Risk team should action all five options contained within the Assurance Options Report.**

ACTION: That

- [1] Anne-Marie Harrop to share an example of good practise for partnership work; and**
- [2] the Governance Officer to include the Annual Benchmarking Report on the Performance and Overview Committee forward plan.**

6 RISK REGISTER DEEP DIVE - PAYROLL ARRANGEMENTS

Peter Hayes, Project Manager, introduced a report which detailed the corporate risk involving the Service's payroll arrangements. The report provided assurance that the risk had been managed robustly and actions taken had resulted in the risk being closed.

The Board queried whether finding a new payroll provider had a financial impact

upon the Service. Members were assured that the payroll and project team worked thoroughly to find a new provider and found that, as a result of using a new system, the annual cost had reduced.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the Risk Register Deep Dive – Payroll Arrangements report be noted.

7 ON CALL AVAILABILITY

The Head of Service Delivery delivered a presentation to the Board regarding the availability of On Call firefighters and their recruitment which had been raised as a departmental risk. He explained how the Service had taken action to increase the availability of On Call firefighters through the recruitment of On Call station managers and strategic targeting.

A Member queried the impact of social media advertising on the recruitment of On Call firefighters. The Head of Service Delivery explained how, through the use of social media sites such as Facebook, they could specifically advertise to people who lived within five minutes of a fire station. He also explained that the cost of social media advertising was extremely low in comparison to other advertising methods.

Another Member queried whether the Service effectively used station open days for recruitment and which career fairs the Service attended. The Chair assured Members that there was an element of recruitment within the station open days and that the Service would consider exploring career and recruitment fairs other than those the Service already attended.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the On Call Availability presentation be noted.

8 BUSINESS CONTINUITY POSITION STATEMENT

The Governance Officer provided a verbal update on behalf of Group Manager, Neil McElroy, which informed the Board of the position on business continuity against the recommendations made by Internal Audit.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the verbal update on the Business Continuity Position Statement be noted.

9 WORK PROGRAMME 2019-20

The Board discussed the proposed work programme for 2019-20 and it was suggested that a Heritage Presentation Deep Dive be included at the next Risk Management Board meeting on 17th March 2020.

A Member requested that a further update on the position of On-Call Firefighter

recruitment be presented during a Risk Management Board meeting within the next municipal year.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the work programme for 2019-20 be approved, subject to the addition of the Heritage Presentation Deep Dive.**