

A meeting of the Cabinet and Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee held at Kensington Town Hall, Hornton Street, London W8 7NX at 6.30pm on 19 October 2015

## **PRESENT**

### **Members of the Committee**

Councillor Pat Mason (Chairman)  
Councillor James Husband (Vice-Chairman)  
Councillor Adrian Berrill-Cox  
Councillor Barbara Campbell  
Councillor Emma Dent Coad  
Councillor David Lindsay  
Councillor Andrew Lomas  
Councillor Will Pascall  
Councillor Andrew Rinker

### **Others in attendance**

Rob Davies (Borough Fire Brigade Commander)  
Ed Garcez (Tri-Borough Chief Information Officer)  
Nicholas Holgate (Town Clerk)  
Sue Loynes (Electoral Services Manager)  
Tony Redpath (Director of Strategy and Local Services)  
Martyn Carver (Principal Governance Manager)

## **A G E N D A**

### **A1 APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Moylan.

### **A2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no such declarations.

### **A3 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 September were confirmed as a correct record and were signed by the Chairman.

**Matters arising:** Referring to page 3 and the incident at the Stanley Ward by-election count, Cllr Pascall clarified that he thought the police had done an excellent job and was merely suggesting they might wish to revisit how many officers were on duty in future.

Referring to the Scrutiny Work Programme on pages 3 and 4, the Chairman said that he would talk to Cllr Marshall, Chairman of the Housing

and Property Scrutiny Committee, about the interest in a scrutiny of housing targets. No new scrutiny sub-group would be set up until the Procurement Scrutiny Working Group had finished its report. Mr Holgate added that there would be an update on Managed Services to the next meeting of the Committee.

**Action by: Mr Holgate**

#### **A4 LONDON FIRE BRIGADE**

The Borough Fire Commander, Rob Davies, attended the meeting at the Committee's request. The Chairman welcomed him to the meeting and drew attention to some questions that Committee members had submitted in advance. These included the possible affects on the Borough of the Mayor of London's expected £11 million reduction to the London Fire Brigade budget, how this could affect fire response times, whether the retained Chelsea fire tender would be returned, and the provision of incident call-out figures for the last two decades. He added that the Council had previously taken a keen interest in reviews of the fire service, that included making submissions on our concerns to the London Fire Commissioner, and had agreed motions at Council in 2012 and 2013.

Mr Davies circulated some statistics, a copy of which is included with the minutes. He advised that his responsibilities covered three fire stations and 160 firefighters. The London Fire Safety Plan implemented in September 2013 saw a closure of ten fire stations and a reduction of 14 appliances. The Mayor of London was now planning an £11m reduction to the London Fire Brigade budget in 2016/17. This could be met by a reduction in 13 appliances across London. Risk modelling would identify which appliances will be reduced; none had been targeted at the moment.

Mr Davies advised that emergency calls were now being streamlined to drive down response times. The new system would find the nearest appliance regardless of station boundaries. The Chairman asked if a situation could arise where an appliance, already on the way to a call, was diverted to another (more urgent) incident. Mr Davies replied that this would not happen. He added that there were no plans to reduce fire cover in RBKC.

Following a question by Cllr Pascall, Mr Davies said that previous reductions to the service had not affected response times by the first and second appliances. The impact of reductions had been mitigated by improved training, better vehicle fleet and better call-handling. Cllr Dent Coad said that the average figures looked good but there were increases in response times at ward level. In Queen's Gate, for instance, attendance times for the third appliance was up by six minutes. Royal Hospital Ward showed a seven minute increase for the third appliance. Mr Davies replied that attendance times for third appliances were not included in measurements.

These were strategically placed across London. Should a third appliance be needed at an incident, the first and second appliances would be able to prepare for the rescue unit's arrival so time would not be wasted.

Cllr Dent Coad drew attention to the amount of new development in the south of the Borough and asked if this was taken into account in planning fire service cover. Mr Davies said that such developments and any consequent population increases were taken into account. For this review, the LFB's risk model would be re-run and consultation carried out before any changes were proposed.

Cllr Lomas asked what was being done to reduce the need for call-outs. Mr Davies said that fire prevention was being targeted through education. He spent 12% of his time on this, currently focusing on sheltered housing and residential property. There was more scope to improve education.

Cllr Lindsay noticed in the statistics tabled by Mr Davies that there had been a marked reduction in the number of call-outs for lift releases. Mr Davies said that this could be explained by the fact that companies were now charged for the LFB to attend such call-outs. This would have encouraged them to address improved maintenance of their lifts.

The Chairman commented that cuts could not continue to be made without response times going up. Mr Davies agreed, adding that whilst technological improvements and modelling helped to streamline the service, there was a limit to the reductions which could be made before the service was adversely affected.

The Chairman invited Mr Stephenson, a Fire Brigade Union representative and Fire-Fighter at Chelsea Fire Station, to address the Committee. Mr Stephenson expressed concerns about the Crossrail Station proposed for Chelsea and also about the possible loss of the fire appliance at Chelsea Fire Station. The station's ground (i.e. the area it serves) had doubled in size since the closure of Westminster and Knightsbridge stations as part of the previous review. The number of appliances had halved, so the service was stretched. He added that Chelsea currently failed to meet its attendance times on one-third of its calls. Mr Davies said that there were no plans to close Chelsea Fire Station. If the Crossrail station went ahead, an alternative site for the fire station had been identified about 500 yards away. It might also be possible to share the current site with the Crossrail station.

The Chairman asked whether there had been a redefinition of the term 'fire death'. He said that during the consultation on the London Safety Plan 2013-2016, Councillors questioned why fire deaths were apparently going down when the number of fires and call-out incidents was fairly static. Fire-Fighters, said the Chairman, told residents at consultation meetings that

only deaths at the fire were now counted, but a fire victim who was taken to hospital and died there was not. Mr Davies said there had been a change, although it was a matter for the coroner to judge. If someone died from smoke inhalation following a fire it was still counted as a fire death. He added that it had been four years since the last fire death in Chelsea.

Cllr Lomas asked if there were any specific initiatives to keep call-outs down. Mr Davies referred to his earlier comments about fire prevention education, targeted particularly at those in sheltered accommodation. He was also targeting arson. There has been incidents where loose refuse and mopeds had been set alight.

Cllr Pascall asked about joint working with the London Ambulance Service (LAS) on medical incidents and whether this might affect the LFB's ability to meet targets. Mr Davies said the brigade was looking into co-responding with the LAS. There may be a trial of cardiac call-outs to help the ambulance service. He added that the LFB would not withdraw from any of its fire service responsibilities; it currently had excess capacity. It was noted that fire appliances had carried defibrillators for several years. All fire staff were trained in their use.

The Chairman asked when the formal consultation on the £11m cuts would taken place. Mr Davies said there would be a report to the Mayor on 23 November 2015. No decisions had yet been taken. Consultation on LSP6 would take place next year.

The Chairman, on behalf of the Committee, thanked Mr Davies for attending and asked him to return in six months or when the consultation document had been published.

## **A5 INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND COMMUNICATIONS PROCUREMENT (considered with Report B1)**

Mr Garcez introduced the paper and explained that this was a four-year pan-London Framework Agreement to deliver information technology and communications services (data networks, telephony services and unified communications) to a single supplier. There was no requirement on the Council to use it but there was an option to do so. No payments would be made to the supplier if the Council did not use the framework contract. There was therefore some risk to the supplier.

Referring to the deliberations of the Procurement Scrutiny Working Group the Chairman commented that one recommendation would be to involve scrutiny at an earlier stage in the key decision process. Mr Holgate said that this key decision had been on the Forward Plan for some time but the Committee had not taken an interest in it up to now.

The report was received and noted.

#### **A6 UPDATE ON INDIVIDUAL ELECTOR REGISTRATION**

Mr Redpath drew attention to the report which had been circulated. The Chairman expressed concern about the comment in the report that there were around 10,000 'unconfirmed electors'. [REDACTED] Loynes said that two pieces of evidence were needed to be able to transfer someone to the new register or remove them from the existing register. It may be that some of these people had moved off but the Council was as yet unable to take them off the register. Such 'evidence' could include a passport, bills or a driving licence. Mr Redpath added that changes would be made to the register up to 30 November and a new register would be published on 1 December. At that point the 'old' register would be closed down. Remaining unconfirmed electors would not be transferred across to the new register. They would each be notified that they were no longer registered to vote, and given instructions as to how to re-register.

The Chairman asked officers to confirm that voters could register after 1 December. Mr Redpath confirmed that voters could register up to 18 April for the May election.

Cllr Dent Coad asked whether the campaign in Borough libraries to draw attention to electoral registration had been successful. Mr Redpath said it had taken a lot of staff resources for relatively few additions to the register. However, it had raised the profile of registration.

The report was received and noted.

#### **A7 TRI-BOROUGH UPDATE (STANDING ITEM)**

No matters were raised.

#### **A8 CABINET AGENDA FOR 22 OCTOBER**

Referring to **Report A4 on repairs to the Belvedere Restaurant** in Holland Park, Cllr Dent Coad asked whether the Council was obliged to spend the capital sums proposed. Mr Holgate subsequently confirmed his reply given at the meeting that the Council was obliged to repair and maintain the building. It was not in this case an obligation of the tenant.

The other reports on the Cabinet agenda were noted.

#### **A9 FORWARD PLAN - AS AT 9 OCTOBER**

Referring to Medium Term Planning – Budget and Service Prospects (KD04638), Cllr Lomas asked when Councillors might expect a paper on changes to business rates. Mr Holgate commented that the Council could

not expect any windfall gain following the Government's recent announcement that councils will be able to keep the proceeds from business rates raised in their area. Budgeting would be dominated by the need to address the Spending Review. The Government was yet to work out the details of changes to business rates so any paper may be many months away.

The forward plan was received and noted.

## **A10 OTHER URGENT ITEMS**

No other matters were discussed.

### **EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC FROM THE MEETING:**

There were no matters requiring the exclusion of the press and public from the meeting.

The meeting ended at 8.15pm.

Chairman