

HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**COMMUNITY SAFETY AND WASTE MANAGEMENT
CABINET PANEL
TUESDAY, 7 FEBRUARY 2017 AT 10.00AM**

Agenda Item
No.

10

**HERTFORDSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE 2016 FIRE PEER
CHALLENGE REPORT**

Report of the Director of Community Protection and Chief Fire Officer

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Executive Member Richard Thake

1. Purpose of report

1.1 To present Panel with the “Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service Fire Peer Challenge (11-14 October 2016) Final Report”, attached at Appendix A, which highlights the key findings of the Peer Challenge which Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service (HFRS) hosted on the 11th to the 14th October 2016.

2. Summary

2.1 The Peer Challenge report reflects extremely positively on the work of the Service and the wider Community Protection Directorate (CPD), which it states is subject to “*sound financial planning and governance*”. The report further reflects that HFRS’ “*...influence, impact and outcomes ... in the county far outweigh...*” it’s spend of approximately five percent of Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) budget and that it is also “*contributing well to the County Council’s efficiency requirements*”.

2.2 The report also references that HFRS “*punches above its weight in making a positive difference to people’s lives and well-being*”. This view was further evidenced by the Peer Challenge team lead, Chief Fire Officer Dave Curry, of Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service who remarked that Hertfordshire had yielded more examples of notable practice than any other that he had been involved in. These included:

- The formation of the Advocacy Group which the team considered a demonstration of “*true community engagement... ensuring the Service understands and is integrated with the communities it serves*”.

- The team felt that there is clear evidence that the “*bold move*” to introduce the Joint Protective Services (JPS) department “*adds enormous value to community outcomes*” and that this “*innovative*” approach should be considered by other County Council Fire Services around the Country.
 - The team were of the opinion that other fire and rescue services could learn from HFRS’ approach to the planning and implementation of ‘Safe and Well’ visits by operational fire crews.
 - The way in which JPS is able to contribute to the Regulators forum as a consequence of the fact that HFRS chairs the Better Business for All partnership for Hertfordshire County. Thereby ensuring that the Service and the CPD supports economic growth and the removal of regulatory burdens for businesses in Hertfordshire.
- 2.3 The report does identify areas where there may be opportunities for improvement, in particular in relation to the adequacy of ICT provision, the need to strengthen succession planning arrangements, and the approach to capital investment in the estate.
- 2.4 The CPD Strategic Leadership Group (SLG) has begun work to develop a Peer Challenge action plan designed to address the ‘areas for improvement’ and recommendations contained in the report and these will be managed at SLG level.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 The Panel are asked to note the key findings contained in the report, attached at Appendix A, and to endorse publication of this very positive report.

4. Background

- 4.1 Fire and Rescue Peer Challenge, which has been developed by the Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA) in partnership with the Local Government Association (LGA), aims to help Fire and Rescue Authorities strengthen local accountability and evaluate and improve services.
- 4.2 A key part of the review process was the open and honest Self-Assessment report, attached at Appendix B, that HFRS produced and published in September 2016.
- 4.3 The Fire and Rescue Peer Challenge which HFRS hosted between the 11th October and the 14th October 2016 was based on the HFRS

2016 Self- Assessment (see appendix B) and over 176 supporting reference documents.

- 4.4 In addition to reviewing the Self- Assessment, the Fire Peer Challenge focused on organisational effectiveness and ability to improve, thrive and innovate in challenging times. During the visit the Peer Challenge team met a broad cross-section of staff within Fire and Rescue, the Joint Protective Services (JPS) department, elected members and representatives of partner organisations via a timetable of interviews, focus groups and visits (42 meetings over the 3 days during which time the team met over 140 people).

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 None related directly to this report. Any financial implications that may arise as a consequence of actions identified in the Peer Challenge action plan will be considered by CPD SLG as appropriate.

6. Equality Impact Assessment

- 6.1 There are no equality impacts associated with this report.

Background Documents

Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service Fire Peer Challenge (11-14 October 2016) Final Report, attached at Appendix A.
Self-Assessment report, attached at Appendix B.