



**NOTTINGHAMSHIRE AND CITY OF NOTTINGHAM
FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**

**NOTTINGHAMSHIRE & CITY OF NOTTINGHAM FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY -
POLICY & STRATEGY COMMITTEE**

**MINUTES of the meeting held at Fire and Rescue Services HQ, Bestwood Lodge,
Arnold Nottingham NG5 8PD on 13 November 2015 from 14.02 - 15.38**

Membership

Present

Councillor Darrell Pulk (Chair)
Councillor Brian Grocock
Councillor Chris Barnfather
Councillor Gordon Wheeler
Councillor Yvonne Woodhead
Councillor Malcolm Wood

Absent

Councillor Jon Collins, Substituted
by Councillor Malcolm Wood

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

John Buckley	- Chief Fire Officer
Malcolm Townroe	- Clerk and Monitoring Officer to the Authority
Neil Timms	- Treasurer to the Authority
Catherine Ziane-Pryor	- Governance Officer

14 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor Jon Collins (Other City Council Business) Councillor Malcolm Wood substituted.

15 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

John Buckley, Chief Fire Officer, declared a personal interest in agenda item 9, minute 22), Principal Officer Pay Review, and withdrew from the meeting during the item.

16 MINUTES

The Committee confirmed the minutes of the meeting held on 18 September 2015 as a true record and they were signed by the Chair.

17 CONSULTATION RESPONSE ON 'ENABLING WORKING BETWEEN EMERGENCY SERVICES'

John Buckley, Chief Fire Officer, presented the report which provided the consultation document and response to the Government consultation regarding 'Enabling Close Working Between the Emergency Services'. Due to the time constraints of the consultation period the Chair, Vice Chair and Lead Opposition Spokesperson had worked together to compile the response which was submitted on behalf of the Authority.

Members of the Committee commented:

- (a) the response was also presented to the City Council which endorsed it and commented that it was well prepared;
- (b) whilst Nottinghamshire's consultation response has focused on delivery of service, other responses focused on the financial implications;
- (c) devolution and regionalisation may impact on the future provision of services;
- (d) meetings have been held with staff based at headquarters, where the response has received positive feedback;
- (e) staff had also been encouraged to also put their own views forward.

Resolved to ratify the response to Government, on behalf of the Authority, regarding the consultation 'Enabling Closer Working Between The Emergency Services.'

18 OPERATIONAL ASSESSMENT PEER REVIEW REPORT

John Buckley, Chief Fire Officer, presented the report which provides the outcome of the peer review operation assessment which had taken place in June 2015.

The assessment outlined which areas had been considered at the request of the Service. This included:

- (a) Community Risk Management;
- (b) Prevention;
- (c) Protection;
- (d) Preparedness;
- (e) Health and Safety and Welfare;
- (f) Training and Development;
- (g) Leadership;
- (h) Organisational Development and Readiness.

Overall the outcome of the independent and objective review was generally seen as positive and will be published. It is noted that the final document was not received in time to be processed and submitted to the last full authority meeting.

Members commented as follows:

- (a) all officers and staff should be pleased with the report and find it useful as the Service continues to develop;
- (b) there is only a passing reference to member involvement in the review although members took time to speak with the reviewers;
- (c) the findings are interesting and where minor concerns have been expressed these should be explored, including ethos in groups and compartmentalisation;

John Buckley responded that some of the areas identified for improvement had already been identified by management and were in the process of being addressed. This included a more joined up approach to communication with workshops scheduled to align and address some of the issues.

Councillors were reassured that managers had identified and were addressing all issues identified in the review and that no unexpected issues were presented.

RESOLVED

- (1) to formally receive the operational assessment report from the peer assessment team;**
- (2) to task the Chief Fire Officer to utilise the observations within the report to contribute towards any key decisions going forward.**

19 FEES AND CHARGES

John Buckley, Chief Fire Officer, presented the report proposing that the scale of charges in relation to Special Service calls and the use of service facilities are revised.

It is noted that there has been no variation in charges for several years and that regular reviews are required.

Charges can only be made to the value of the cost of providing the service and cannot incorporate profit. When called, the Service will always attend.

Room hire needs to be charged at an appropriate rate relevant to users.

Where Special Services are repeatedly requested in preference to businesses carrying out maintenance and repair work, such as to lifts, charges could be considered, in line with other Fire and Rescue Services which charge businesses as a deterrent after a set number of call-outs. However, further careful consideration is required prior to any significant changes.

Councillors commented as follows:

- (a) the perception of citizens is that this is a free service and contributes to the Service's credibility. If charges are to be made, this may negatively impact on reputation, particularly if citizens perception is that they will be charged by the Service for attending;

- (b) further financial information is required regarding attendance cost for special services, and the range of users and market rates for room hire;
- (c) with regard to room hire charges, venues need to compete against each other to maintain their premises, if the Fire and Rescue Service make virtually no charge, this can jeopardise the facilities of other community organisations as they will not receive bookings and income. Room bookings should be charged at the going market rates to ensure that other community facility providers which hire out rooms are not undermined;
- (d) it is a valid point that whilst the Service does not charge for animal rescue, farms are businesses and public funded service is being provided for free;
- (e) charging is wrong as citizens pay council tax;
- (f) it is disturbing that businesses which choose not to maintain their equipment, such as lifts, rely on the Service to rescue their clients when the lifts break down, on the basis that the Fire and Rescue Service is free and responds immediately, in preference to a paid for maintenance service. Maybe, as with roadside recovery, a charge could be made after a certain number of incidents. This would encourage businesses to take maintenance more seriously;
- (g) in no way would the Service want to deter citizens from calling on it when in need;
- (h) caution should be exercised given that in one instance a council started to charge for environmental services regarding rat problems, where the citizens did not want to be charged for the service, they did not report issues and the rat population expanded out of control. It is vital that citizens are not led to believe that they will be charged for fire and rescue services;
- (i) if charges were to be made to repeat negligent offenders, a charging process would be required and a method of funds recovery. However, to pursue the issue further could have more substantial financial implications.

RESOLVED

- (1) to support the proposed new charges for Special Services, as set out in Appendix B, and refer these onto the full Fire Authority for approval;**
- (2) to support the proposal to recover the costs of attending Special Service incidents within the framework as follows and refer these onto the full Fire Authority for approval;**
 - (i) consider approval of charges for the containment and clearance of debris, spillages, discharges or leaks from a vehicle, storage tank or pipe would be made where the owner can be readily identified. With regards to vehicles following road traffic collisions, charging would only be considered after the conclusion of the emergency phase, and where the services provided go beyond that normally encountered from a collision – eg: clearance of a large load or tanker discharge;**

- (ii) charges for the provision or removal of water would relate to flooding in premises that has been caused by a lack of appropriate maintenance or mistakes on the part of contractors. For example, these could include insurable risks such as burst pipes and leaking roofs. Charges would not be made for flooding caused by inclement weather or other natural disasters;**
- (iii) charges for effecting entry to a premise would apply in circumstances that would be best facilitated by a locksmith. They would not apply when the incident involves a vulnerable person – eg: elderly person or child, or where there is the potential for a fire, or other emergency to occur;**
- (iv) charges for the removal of a dangerous structure would only apply where there is no risk to life, property or public infrastructure;**
- (v) no charge will be made for rescuing animals;**
- (vi) no charge will be made for lifting incapacitated persons;**
- (3) to support the proposed new charges for the hire of rooms, as set out in Appendix C and refer these onto the full Fire Authority for approval;**
- (4) to support the proposal to extend charging for the use of facilities to all Service premises and refer this onto the full Fire Authority for approval;**
- (5) to approve the proposal to fully review fees and charges every three years, and to amend fees and charges to reflect inflationary changes in the interim years.**

20 LIVING WAGE FOR SUPPLIERS

John Buckley, Chief Fire Officer, presented the report which seeks approval to apply to become an Accredited Living Wage Employer.

In 2013 the Service implemented the living wage for its own staff and now proposes to require that all contractors providing services to Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue, ensure that the staff providing that service received at least the living wage, which is £7.85 per hour, while the minimum wage (for 25 year olds) is £7.20 per hour. Implementing this requirement would qualify the Service to become an Accredited Living Wage Employer.

Conservative Councillors commented that whilst the wages of Service employees is the business of the Service, which should quite rightly pay a living wage, it is not for the Service to dictate to businesses how much they should pay their employees. Implementing the living wage would not necessarily be easy for smaller employers and the Service should focus on its core business.

The Chair responded that the proposal follows the ethos of the Service in that implementing the living wage for its own staff was the right thing to do, and this should be extended to other people who provide services to the organisation.

It is noted that Councillors Chris Barnfather and Gordon Wheeler voted against the recommendation. However all other Councillors in attendance voted in favour.

RESOLVED to pursue the accreditation as a Living Wage Employer through the implementation of the requirement for providers of service contracts to pay their staff the living wage through tendering processes as and when they are renewed.

21 INFORMATION SHARING AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE AND THE NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE (ENGLAND)

John Buckley, Chief Fire Officer, presented the report which informs members of the information sharing agreement between NHS England and the Fire and Rescue Service nationally.

The agreement involves sharing information such as name and date of birth, gender and address of citizens aged over 65 years old, who may be considered vulnerable and at greater risk should a fire occur, with the following objectives;

- (i) to reduce deaths and injuries as a result of fire;
- (ii) to reduce human misery and impact on the NHS;
- (iii) improving health and well-being by working closely with health and social care.

Members welcomed the initiative.

RESOLVED to note the report.

22 PRINCIPAL OFFICER PAY REVIEW

Prior to the Committee considering this item, John Buckley, Chief Fire Officer, withdrew from the meeting and was invited to return once the recommendation had been made.

Malcolm Townroe, Clerk and Monitoring Officer to the Authority, presented the report which provided the outcomes of the Principal Officer Pay Review which is undertaken every two years.

It is noted that the Chief Fire Officer was appointed at 90% of the pay scale, which would rise in stages to 100% during a three-year period.

Councillors questions and comments were responded to as follows:

- (a) the requirements of the post have not changed since the last review;
- (b) all current pay scales have been built into the budget, including incremental payments;
- (c) not all Local Authorities have provision for incremental payments;

- (d) it should be noted that some of the Fire and Rescue Authorities within the family group at appendix B, are significantly smaller than this Authority.

RESOLVED to recommend to the full Fire Authority, to maintain the existing pay arrangements for the Chief Fire Officer including the previously agreed phasing of incremental progression as detailed on appointment.

23 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED to exclude the public from the meeting during consideration of the remaining items in accordance with section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 on the basis that, having regard to all the circumstances, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information, as defined in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A to the Act.

24 TRI-SERVICE CONTROL UPDATE

John Buckley, Chief Fire Officer, updated the Committee on the progress of the Tri-Service Control.

RESOLVED to note the report.