



NOTTINGHAMSHIRE AND CITY OF NOTTINGHAM FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE & CITY OF NOTTINGHAM FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY (NFRS)

**MINUTES of the meeting held at Fire and Rescue Services HQ, Bestwood
Lodge, Arnold Nottingham NG5 8PD on 16 December 2016 from 10.31 - 11.56**

Membership

Present

Councillor Darrell Pulk (Chair)
Councillor Liaqat Ali
Councillor Chris Barnfather
Councillor Eunice Campbell
Councillor John Clarke
Councillor Sybil Fielding
Councillor Brian Grocock (Vice Chair)
Councillor Patience Uloma Ifediora
Councillor Roger Jackson
Councillor Dave Liversidge
Councillor Mike Pringle
Councillor Gordon Wheeler
Councillor Malcolm Wood
Councillor Liz Yates
Councillor Jason Zadrozny

Absent

Councillor John Allin
Councillor Michael Payne
Councillor Ken Rigby

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

Wayne Bowcock	- Deputy Chief Fire Officer, NFRS
John Buckley	- Chief Fire Officer, NFRS
Tracy Crump	- Head of People and Organisational Development, NFRS
Sue Maycock	- Head of Finance, NFRS
Craig Parkin	- Assistant Chief Fire Officer, NFRS
Malcolm Townroe	- Clerk to the Fire Authority
James Welbourn	- Governance Officer

29 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor Michael Payne
Councillor Ken Rigby - personal

30 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Councillor Chris Barnfather and Councillor Malcolm Wood both declared an interest in item 37 – Trading Company as they are Board members in that company. This did not preclude them from speaking on this item.

31 MINUTES

The minutes from the meeting on 23 September 2016 were confirmed and signed by the Chair.

32 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Strategic Equalities Board

- Was held last month after HR Committee
- Conscious some Members have commitments after today's meeting
- Deferred until the rising of the Authority meeting in February

Treasury Management Training

- At the rising of the Finance Committee on 20th January
- Approximately 11am and lunch will be provided
- All Members are invited to attend as these have proved useful in the past

Pensions

- Cllr Fielding and I attended a recent firefighter pension training event to ensure we are able to comply with legislation and discharge duties of the Authority accordingly.
- I have attended the national fire pensions board meeting

LGA / CFA Conference

- Chief Fire Officer and I attended the event in October
- Minister attended and gave a speech about the need to reform
- Clear that he wants the sector to lead this Reform or Government will

Local Events

- Emergency Services Carol Service held on Tuesday night at the Minster
- Met with members of UNISON to discuss their concerns
- Met with Brigade Committee of the FBU also
- The Chief, Cllr Fielding and I are attending the Retford Station Charity Pantomime this evening.

Fire Service Management Committee

- Attended the national meeting in London
- Nominated as a representative for the National Joint Council

Service Chaplain

- The Reverend Robin Turner will be retiring as the Service Chaplain in March next year.
- With permission of the Authority I would like to invite to the February CFA meeting so that we are able to formally recognise is service and support to the organisation.

Awards Ceremony in November

- Took place at the Albert Hall in Nottingham
- Lord Lieutenant in attendance as the Queens' representative
- Recognition of 20 and 30 yrs service
- Bravery awards were presented to members of the public and staff
- Awards for engaging in the services 'values' presented to staff after nominations from their peers.

Alan Coates was nominated for a 'Lifetime Achievement Award' but was unable to attend on the evening, however he has been able to come along to the meeting and was presented with the Award.

RESOLVED to invite Reverend Robin Turner to the Authority in February to recognise his service.

33 BUDGET GUIDELINES 2017/18

Richard Jones of the Nottinghamshire Fire Brigades Union (FBU) asked a question on the Budget Guidelines 2017/18 item:

Austerity driven cuts have been identified as having a significantly detrimental effect on the way that Fire Services in England and the rest of the UK serve the public, with 10,000 frontline Firefighter jobs gone since 2010. Nationally the number of fire deaths

has increased by 15% in the last year – the single biggest percentage increase in 20 years. By the government's own admission 999 response times are at a 20 year high. The Fire Brigades Union opposes these dangerous cuts that put the public's lives, and the safety of Fire-fighters, at risk. Budget cuts have led to significant losses from frontline resources in Nottinghamshire: the loss of 6 operational fire appliances, including the removal of 2nd appliances at some stations and the closure of some retained sections has led to a reduction in operational posts. There has also been the deletion of Officer posts, and this year saw the further loss of 20 operational posts through the restructure of the Specialist Rescue Team.

As the Chancellor's autumn statement indicates, "a deterioration in the status of national public finances since the previous budget" gives "a clear message that public spending would continue to be restrained."

What reassurances can the Fire Authority give to the members of public who live in Nottinghamshire and the City of Nottingham that it will not allow these cuts, and future cuts from the government budget, to put the public's and Fire-fighter's safety at risk by further reducing frontline resources and further increasing attendance times?

The Chair responded as follows:

The Government determines the Grant for the Fire Authority with only limited flexibility to raise additional funding locally. The proposed Grant from Government means that the available resources to the Authority will reduce over the next four years which will be further affected by a general increase in costs due to inflation and other factors. The predicted deficit in real terms, i.e if the Authority were to do nothing, would mean that there would be a cash shortfall in the region of £4.2 million year on year by 2020.

You will be aware that the Authority has a legal duty to set a balanced budget, and although it is recognised that this will be challenging, the Authority, supported by the Chief Fire Officer and his team, has a proven track record of thoroughly and robustly consulting with both the public and the workforce to ensure that any changes implemented are appropriate and consider all risks. This tried and tested methodology will continue.

The Finance and Resources Committee led by the Chair continuously scrutinises the budgets within the Service to ensure that all available efficiencies are identified, and that any changes in the service delivery model are both appropriate and proportionate.

In February of this year the Fire Authority supported a range of proposals put forward by the Chief Fire Officer, and I would hope that the workforce and their representatives continues to engage fully with those proposals to ensure that any concerns are raised and can be appropriately addressed.

All stakeholders can be reassured that the Fire Authority will continue to make decisions with due regards to the needs of the communities we serve.

Sue Maycock, Head of Finance at NFRS introduced the Budget Guidelines 2017/18, highlighting the following points:

(a) there is an error under paragraph 2.12 of the report. It should read:

"In the current financial environment the options in paragraphs 2.12.1 and 2.12.3 are considered to be the most appropriate parameters within which the Finance and Resources Committee should work."

- (b) a small increase was assumed for the Council Tax base. There will be a better idea of the figure around the time of the next Finance and Resources Committee.

RESOLVED to task the Finance and Resources Committee with providing guidance to the Fire Authority in February in respect of:

the options for Council Tax limited to either a Council Tax freeze or an increase in Council Tax within the referendum limit;

the options for addressing any budget deficit to enable the Fire Authority to approve a balanced budget, as required by law.

34 TREASURY MANAGEMENT MID YEAR REVIEW 2016/17

Sue Maycock, Head of Finance at NFRS introduced the Treasury Management Mid-Year Review, providing Members with an update on treasury management activity during the first half of the 2016/17 financial year.

RESOLVED to note the contents of the report.

35 DISCRETIONS UNDER THE FIREFIGHTER PENSION SCHEMES

Sue Maycock, Head of Finance at NFRS introduced the item on Firefighter pension schemes.

The following points were highlighted:

- (a) the discretions are used on a case by case basis. NFRS will not necessarily exercise a discretion just because there is an opportunity to do so;
- (b) if an individual is unhappy with the decision made on a discretion then they can access the Independent Dispute Resolution Procedure. The decision to exercise a discretion will always be taken based on the interests of the Authority balanced against fairness to the individual.

NFRS are not always looking at these discretions from a financial point of view.

RESOLVED to approve the statement of Service policy in relation to the discretions that exist under the Fire Pension Schemes (appendix A of the report).

36 THE THOMAS REVIEW

Richard Jones of the Nottinghamshire Fire Brigades Union (FBU) asked a question on the Thomas Review:

The Fire Brigades Union is highly critical of the Thomas Review. Our fear is that the review is an attack on national bargaining arrangements, and is a prelude to further attacks on Firefighter's pay and other conditions of service.

Should this report be agreed by the Fire Authority, we request that the Fire Brigades Union, who represents 95% of operational staff in Nottinghamshire, is offered a position on the proposed working group, to allow us to raise the concerns of our membership.

The Chair responded as follows:

As you will be aware the Thomas Review was commissioned 2 years ago during the height of industrial action. The review process focused on the collection of evidence through face to face meeting with a number of stakeholders. This Authority was not visited as our invitation was declined, however we did produce a written submission which was approved by the Policy and Strategy Committee.

Although Government have made it clear they are not minded to remove the right to strike from firefighters, the Minister has commented that this is a call to action for the sector, however there is no emerging detail to clarify what this means.

Addressing your point about the FBU being allowed to raise concerns with Elected Members, I appreciate that the current officials of the FBU may be unaware of the open channel for dialogue that have been in place for many years. It is my desire that this continues as we work together with the workforce to collectively consider the issues going forward.

In November I met with the FBU Regional EC member accompanied by one of the local officials, and just a few weeks ago arrangements were made for the local officials of the FBU and I to meet to discuss current issues. It is unfortunate that this meeting was cancelled by the FBU at short notice as this would have provided an ideal opportunity to discuss the Thomas Review and any other concerns that you may have.

Yesterday, at the request of the previous FBU Brigade Secretary, the Chief Fire Officer and I met with the Brigade Committee of the FBU where very useful dialogue took place around the current challenges that the Service is facing.

Earlier this week I spoke with officials from another trade union to discuss their concerns and it was a very insightful and productive meeting. I am also aware that dialogue takes place between the FBU and other Members of the Fire Authority.

In terms of the proposed 'Task and Finish Group', The Authority needs to fully consider the implications of the Thomas Review, and should the group conclude that wider engagement is required it will be a matter for them to consider if they wish to receive any comment from workforce representatives regarding the Review.

John Buckley, Chief Fire Officer at NFRS introduced the report on the Thomas Review.

The following points were highlighted:

- (a) the majority of recommendations from the Thomas Review have already been met;
- (b) Government are not responding to this review as yet, but are saying that this is a 'call for action' for the sector;

Councillors highlighted that some expediency would be needed on any work arising from this review because of elections in May. The Chair commented that the Authority need to pick out items from the review that are relevant to them rather than the LGA or the NJC.

RESOLVED to request that Members of Policy and Strategy Committee form a Task and Finish Working Group to consider the Thomas Review and report back to the Authority.

37 TRADING COMPANY

John Buckley, Chief Fire Officer at NFRS introduced a report on the Trading Company.

Councillor Barnfather thanked the Chair and the Chief Fire Officer for the meeting on the subject of the Trading Company. He also appreciated Richard Heffer's long service to the Trading Company.

Nominations for role of Director of the Company were as follows:

Councillor Brian Grocock nominated Councillor Sybil Fielding;
Councillor Gordon Wheeler nominated Councillor Jason Zadrozny;

Members then voted.

RESOLVED to:

- (1) Nominate Councillor Sybil Fielding to the Board of Directors of the Company;**
- (2) task the Clerk to undertake a review of the governance that exists between the Authority and the Company and report back to a future meeting of the Authority on the outcomes.**

38 COMMITTEE OUTCOMES

Members noted the outcomes from the Fire Authority Committees in October and November.

The Chair wished everyone a Happy Christmas and thanked the workforce.

39 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED to exclude the public from the meeting during consideration of the remaining item 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.

40 PRINCE'S TRUST UPDATE

John Buckley, Chief Fire Officer introduced an update on the Prince's Trust.

RESOLVED to approve the recommendation contained in the report.

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