



NOTTINGHAMSHIRE AND CITY OF NOTTINGHAM FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY

MINUTES of the meeting held at Fire and Rescue Services HQ, Bestwood Lodge, Arnold Nottingham NG5 8PD on 26 September 2014 from 10.30 am – 1.21pm

Membership

Present

Councillor Darrell Pulk (Chair)
Councillor Brian Grocock (Vice Chair)
Councillor John Allin
Councillor Chris Barnfather
Councillor John Clarke
Councillor Stephen Garner
Councillor Michael Payne
Councillor Ken Rigby
Councillor Gordon Wheeler
Councillor John Wilmott
Councillor Liz Yates
Councillor Eunice Campbell
Councillor David Smith
Councillor Timothy Spencer
Councillor Malcolm Wood

Absent

Councillor Tony Roberts
Councillor Jon Collins

The Chair welcomed Councillors, officers, members of the media and the public to the meeting and thanked them for attending.

21 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor Jon Collins.
Councillor Tony Roberts.

22 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

None.

23 CHAIRS' ANNOUNCEMENTS

- (1) the Chair announced that in the interests of transparency the meeting would be video recorded to enable the deliberations to be shared with others who are

unable to attend the meeting. This was permitted under the Authority's constitution;

- (2) the Chair advised the meeting that Councillor Ian Campbell is no longer a member of the Fire Authority. The Chair will write to Councillor Campbell to thank him for his hard work during the 18 months he served on the Authority. Councillor Campbell is replaced by Councillor Sybil Fielding and the Chair welcomed Councillor Fielding back to the Authority;
- (3) the Chair and Chief Fire Officer, along with other Chairs and Chief Fire Officers, attended the annual memorial service held in London to commemorate fire-fighters who have died in service. The events included a wreath-laying ceremony outside St Paul's Cathedral;
- (4) the Chair has attended the Local Government Association Fire Service Management Committee. Conditions of service review was discussed at the meeting and Policy and Strategy Committee would consider the matter in depth at its next meeting on 7 November.

24 CHANGES TO MEMBERSHIP

RESOLVED to note the appointment of Councillor Sybil Fielding to the Fire Authority in place of Councillor Ian Campbell and to confirm her appointment to the Human Resources Committee and the Strategic Equalities Board.

25 MINUTES

The Authority confirmed the minutes of the meeting held on 27 June 2014 as a correct record and they were signed by the Chair.

26 FINAL ACCOUNTS 2013/14

Peter Hurford, the Treasurer to the Fire and Rescue Authority, presented his report including the final accounts of the Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire Authority to the meeting for approval.

A revised balance sheet was tabled at the meeting.

Peter Hurford thanked Neil Timms, Strategic Director of Finance and Resources and the Finance Team for their hard work and diligence in preparing the final accounts.

The key messages for the Authority were;

- the good news that the external auditors were able to offer a clean audit certificate;
- the plan to use reserves to reduce revenue costs in future years;
- the fact that Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (Trading) Limited had declared a profit.

Councillor Chris Barnfather thanked Ian Pritchard, Executive Director of the trading company for his efforts in increasing the customer base over the year which had allowed the trading company to make a profit and pay a dividend.

Councillor Wood echoed these remarks and paid tribute to Neil Timms and his team for the sound financial footing the service was on despite a long period of austerity.

RESOLVED

- (1) to approve the Statement of Accounts for 2013/14 set out in Appendix A to the report;**
- (2) to note the financial results for the year for Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (Trading) Limited as attached at Appendix B of the report.**

27 EXTERNAL AUDITORS' REPORT TO THOSE CHARGED WITH GOVERNANCE 2013/14

The Treasurer introduced the joint report of himself and the Chief Fire Officer presenting the External Auditors' ISA 260 Report to Members and seeking Members' approval of the management representation letter to the External Auditors.

The report was presented by Andy Cardoza of the External Auditors who advised the meeting that the Auditors expect to issue an unqualified audit opinion by the statutory deadline of 30 September 2014, and an unqualified value for money conclusion. The audit did not identify any material errors in the financial statements and other errors identified had been corrected.

Andy Cardoza thanked the Finance Team for their work on the accounts, including the provision of good, clear working papers and a good response by officers to any queries raised by the Auditors. This was echoed by Members.

The Chair thanked the external auditors for their positive comments and asked the Strategic Director of Finance and Resources to pass the thanks onto the Finance Team.

- (1) to note the contents of the External Auditors' ISA 260 Report;**
- (2) to approve the management representation letter to the External Auditors as set out in Appendix B of the ISA 260 report.**

28 TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REPORT 2013/14

Peter Hurford, the Treasurer presented his report providing Members with an update on treasury management activity during the 2013/14 financial year.

RESOLVED to note the contents of the report.

29 OPERATIONAL COVER PROPOSALS-CONSULTATION OUTCOMES

The Chair, on behalf of the Authority, received a number of petitions from Councillor Dave Smith the Chair of the Community Safety Committee.

A representative of the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) asked the following questions of the Chair regarding this item;

Question 1

‘the Fire Brigades Union is appalled at the potential loss of further front line pumping appliances. Is this Authority completely certain that Nottinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service has exhausted ALL other means of saving money other than removing fire engines and their crews from their communities? ‘

The Chair replied as follows;

‘Since 2010 the Authority has received a £5m cut in Central government funding resulting in a reduced budget from £48m to under £43m. The Authority has already made significant reductions in all areas of the service.

The Balancing the Budget report agreed by Members in February this year identified further reductions in government funding and proposed a number of areas where further savings of £2.4m could be made. The Authority agreed that the majority of savings, £1.4m, would come from areas away from fire engines, leaving approximately £1m to be found from operational fire stations to assist in meeting that overall deficit.

The Finance and Resources Committee under the chairmanship of Councillor Wood, has robustly scrutinised all areas of spend in detail, however, due to the fact that a significant amount of the budget is related to employee costs, some 78%, it is inevitable that staff cost need to be reduced in order to meet the financial challenges. Hence reduction in both the operational fleet in tandem with other savings including none station staff costs, collaboration and partnership working are all now being considered.’

Question 2

‘the Authority has a duty to scrutinise the recommendations of service management. Therefore, is the Authority satisfied that by removing front line fire engines, that they are not making decisions that will compromise fire-fighter safety, or indeed reduce our capability to safely and effectively perform rescues at life threatening fire incidents involving 3 engines, during peak times, at any location within the county?’

The Chair replied as follows;

‘the independently validated Fire Cover Review 2010 produced by professional officers provides robust risk analysis and information regarding the decisions being considered. The fundamental factors leading to the recommendations in the report recognises the infrequency of incidents and the close proximity of other resources when required to respond to emergencies.

Attendance standards and operational procedures for dealing with life risk incidents remain unchanged. The Chief Fire Officer, as the professional advisor

to the Fire Authority, is confident that removing the number of appliances required to make the savings will not significantly affect overall operational effectiveness, or compromise fire-fighter safety.

Question 3

‘as the Fire Brigades Union in Nottinghamshire represents 97% of your fire-fighters, we are astounded and disappointed that our officials have not been consulted directly by members of this Authority, or indeed senior management with regard to these proposals.

In order to address this obvious lack of engagement, and to provide Authority members with a broader perspective of issues such as frontline cuts (amongst other issues), will this Authority, therefore, commit to developing an open framework (within the next 6 months), whereby CFA members will regularly meet with Nottinghamshire FBU officials, to discuss issues that are of importance both for the Authority and the members of Nottinghamshire Fire Brigades Union?’

The Chair replied as follows;

‘the Authority and its Officers have an ethos and track record of engaging with staff and their representatives. The proposals regarding consultation were agreed at the public meeting of the Policy and Strategy Committee on the 25th April and formally launched on 19th May. The FBU provided a written submission to ORS which has been considered within their outturn report.

I am aware that during the period of consultation Senior Officers have met both formally and informally with the trade unions.

In addition, I, on behalf of the Authority, have met with the FBU without exception, each and every time requested, this includes meeting a delegation from the FBU at Highfields.

The FBU is also afforded the opportunity to table written questions at all CFA meetings and committees on any agenda item, this is not common practice across other authorities.

You may also be aware that I have met with both local and regional officials of the FBU including a meeting with local FBU representatives last week and regional officials this week.

I have also in addition met jointly with The CFO and FBU representatives. I believe this has provided ample opportunity for the FBU to engage in the consultation process and comment fully on the proposals.’

The Chief Fire Officer, John Buckley presented his report setting out the outcomes of the consultation on the proposals to remove two appliances from operational service. The Chief Fire Officer reminded the meeting that at the meeting of the Fire Authority on 28 February 2014, a range of proposals that could achieve the required £2.4m of savings had been identified. In response to that report, the Authority agreed to consult on

proposals affecting six stations, namely Central, Collingham, Highfields, Mansfield, Stockhill, and Warsop. The Authority had also agreed that the Policy and Strategy Committee should consider and approve the consultation documentation and process. At its meeting on 25 April 2014, the Chief Fire Officer presented a report 'Consultation on the Reductions in the Operational Fleet' to the Policy and Strategy Committee. In response to the report the Committee agreed the consultation approach and tasked the Chief Fire Officer with presenting a report to this meeting identifying options for reductions in operational resources.

The consultation had been undertaken by Opinion Research Services (ORS) and Dale Hall of ORS attended the meeting and gave a presentation on the consultation outcomes.

As a result of the consultation, the Chief Fire Officer recommended to members the removal from operational service of the second appliance from Highfields and the deletion of 20 whole time posts from the establishment and the removal from operational service of the second appliance from Mansfield and the deletion of 12 retained posts from the establishment. These recommendations will realise £905,000 of the savings. The shortfall of £95,000 will be considered within the broader areas of the 'Balancing the Budget in Future Years' report of February 2014.

RESOLVED

- (1) to remove from operational service the second appliance from Highfields and the deletion of 20 whole time posts from the establishment;**
- (2) to remove from operational service the second appliance from Mansfield and the deletion of 12 retained posts from the establishment;**
- (3) to request the Chief Fire Officer to prepare a further report reviewing the impact of the decisions in resolutions (1) and (2) above in 12 months time and to present it to the Authority as soon as practicable thereafter.**

The meeting was adjourned by the Chair at 12.45 pm for a comfort break and resumed at 1.00 pm. Councillors Stephen Garner and Ken Rigby left the meeting at this point.

30 POST DELETIONS

John Buckley, the Chief Fire Officer, introduced his report recommending the deletion of three substantive posts from the support establishment as agreed by the Human Resources Committee.

RESOLVED that the vacant posts set out in the report are deleted from the establishment.

31 ANNUAL STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE 2013-14

The Chief Fire Officer presented his report presenting the Annual Statement of Assurance 2013-14 for approval.

RESOLVED to approve the Annual Statement of Assurance 2013-14

32 PAY POLICY

The Chief Fire Officer presented his report seeking the agreement of members to a Statement of Pay Policy 2014/15 in line with the requirements of the Localism Act 2011 which places a requirement on 'relevant authorities' to prepare pay statements for each financial year.

RESOLVED to agree the Statement of Pay Policy 2014/15

33 COMMITTEE OUTCOMES FOR NOTING

The Chairs of the following committees, produced reports which included the minutes of those meetings:

- (a) Finance and Resources Committee 11 July 2014;
- (b) Community Safety Committee 4 July 2014;
- (c) Human Resources Committee 11 July 2014;
- (d) Policy and Strategy 18 July 2014.

RESOLVED to note the reports and the business undertaken by the Committees.

34 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

The Committee decided to exclude the public from the meeting during consideration of the remaining agenda 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 outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information, as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act.

35 EXEMPT MINUTES

The Authority confirmed the exempt minutes of the meeting held on 27 June 2014 as a correct record and they were signed by the Chair

36 RESILIENCE PLANNING AND ARRANGEMENTS UPDATE

John Buckley, the Chief Fire Officer presented his report updating the Authority on the arrangements and plans in place for dealing with the on-going industrial dispute between the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) and the Government.

RESOLVED

- (1) to note the latest update from the Chief Fire Officer and continue to support the activities in place to maintain operational cover;**
- (2) to accept further update reports to either the full Fire Authority or Policy and Strategy Committee, as appropriate.**