



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

**MINUTES of the meeting held at Fire and Rescue Services HQ, Bestwood Lodge,
Arnold Nottingham NG5 8PD on 15 December 2017 from 10.30 am - 12.54 pm**

Adjournments took place 10:34am-10:45am and 11:48am-11:53am

Membership

Present

Councillor Brian Grocock (Chair)
Councillor Michael Payne (Vice Chair) (minutes 36-46)
Councillor Liaqat Ali
Councillor Andrew Brown
Councillor Eunice Campbell
Councillor Sybil Fielding
Councillor Patience Uloma Ifediora
Councillor John Longdon
Councillor Jackie Morris
Councillor Francis Purdue-Horan
Councillor Mike Quigley MBE (minutes 36- part of 46)
Councillor Parry Tsimbiridis (minutes 36-46)
Councillor Jonathan Wheeler
Councillor Malcolm Wood
Councillor Jason Zadrozny (minutes 37-46)

Absent

Councillor John Clarke
Councillor Vaughan Hopewell
Councillor Phil Rostance

Also in attendance

Nottinghamshire Police and Crime Commissioner, Paddy Tipping

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

John Buckley - Chief Fire Officer, NFRS (minutes 32-39, 41-46)
Wayne Bowcock - Deputy Chief Fire Officer, NFRS (minutes 32-39, 41-45)
Craig Parkin - Assistant Chief Fire Officer, NFRS (minutes 41-45 Only)
Malcolm Townroe - Clerk and Monitoring Officer to the Fire Authority
Theresa Channell - Interim Treasurer
Becky Smeathers - Head of Finance (minutes 32-44)
Tracy Crump - Head of People and Organisational Development
Catherine Ziane-Pryor - Governance Officer

32 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor John Clarke – Other County Council Business
Councillor Phil Rostance – Personal
Councillor Vaughan Hopewell - Health

33 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

John Buckley, Chief Fire Officer, declared a personal interest in agenda item 8, Principal Officer Pay Review (minute 40) in so far as the outcome directly affected him.

Wayne Bowcock, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, declared a personal interest in agenda item 8, Principal Officer Pay Review (minute 40) in so far as the outcome directly affected him, and also agenda item 14, Outcomes of Disciplinary Panel Hearing (minute 46), in so far as he has been involved in the process.

Both John Buckley and Wayne Bowcock informed the Authority that they would leave the room prior to the Authority's consideration of the items for which they have declared interests.

In the interest of transparency, although not in attendance at the time of this item, on arrival at the meeting, Councillors Michael Payne, Mike Quigley and Parry Tsimbirdis informed the Authority of their involvement relating to agenda item 14, Outcomes of Disciplinary Panel Hearing (minute 46), and declared non-prejudicial interests which did not preclude them from speaking or voting on the item. Due to his involvement, Councillor Quigley felt it appropriate to withdraw from the meeting prior to the presentation of the submission within that item. Councillor Payne did not take part in the vote.

34 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 September 2017 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

35 ADJOURNMENT

Resolved to adjourn the meeting for 15 minutes, until 10:45am, to enable members attending a separate meeting to conclude business.

36 CHAIRS' ANNOUNCEMENTS

Following a report to the HR Committee, the Authority has signed up to the 'Dying to Work' pledge regarding support for staff with a terminal illness.

Zoe Billingham, responsible for Fire and Rescue of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS), met with the Chief Fire Officer and Chair of the Authority to discuss the new inspection regime for the Service. Further information is included within the report in this agenda.

When the Policing and Crime Act came into force it was recognised that the Fire Service Act would need to be amended to enable Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) to be formally represented on Combined Fire Authorities. The Home Office has now launched a

consultation document to make those amendments, a copy of which will be circulated to members, who are encouraged to respond.

The Fire Brigades Union (FBU) has accepted an interim pay rise of 1% this year, however, discussions continue as both sides of the National Joint Council (NJC) want this increased. Support staff have been offered a 2% pay raise for each of the next two years with those on lower grades receiving more to meet the national living wage target for 2020. This will be factored into the future budgets and adds to the financial pressures on the Authority as each 1% equates to approximately £300,000.

The Home Office is undertaking a 'basket of goods' exercise and has requested procurement data on the cost of facilities management and services. The intention is to publish a league table as was done previously to highlight the difference between services. The Head of Procurement and Resources will respond on behalf of the Authority and a report will be provided to the Finance and Resources Committee in due course.

The consultation on mixed and alternative crewing models will finish this weekend. The Chair has accompanied the Chief Fire Officer on some watch visits to stations as part of the consultation process, and has met with Ashfield Councillors and Members of Parliament.

37 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2017/18 TO 2020/21 AND BUDGET GUIDELINES 2018/19

Prior to consideration of this item, representatives of the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) were invited to ask their question of the Authority.

In summary, the question referred to concerns around the need for the Authority to save £1.1m, and sought assurances that crewing policies will not be changed and result in appliance crews being reduced from 5 to 4 firefighters.

The Chair responded with a summary of the work undertaken to date to identify money-saving measures and referred to the current public consultation and the Chief Fire Officer's preference to maintain appliance ridership at five firefighters, but stated that it is not possible to provide any reassurances that this position would not change.

Becky Smeathers, Head of Finance, presented the joint report of the Chief Fire Officer and Interim Treasurer which provides members with an updated Medium Term Financial Strategy and requests approval and the setting of general guidelines by which the Finance and Resources Committee can develop a detailed budget proposal for 2018/19.

It is noted that reserves have been, and will continue to be, used but that the current minimum level of general reserves has been set at £4.4 million, but may be subject to change. This results in available general reserves of £2.7m.

Whilst external funding has been cut by almost 21% up to 2019/20, it is anticipated that funding for future years will continue to be restrained. The referendum limit for Council tax currently stands at 2%, but there may be potential for this to be relaxed but clarification is yet to be received.

Growth is currently at 1.5% and the Office for Budget Responsibility has cut annual growth rates below 1.5% until 2020.

The higher than anticipated pay award of 2%, when only 1% has been budgeted for, is predicted to cost in the region of an additional £320,000 with additional cost regarding pensions and national insurance.

Business rates have increased substantially and require an additional £230,000 to be budgeted for.

The Finance and Resources Committee is requested to consider:

- (i) the options for Council tax to be recommended to the Fire Authority in February, as set out within the report;
- (ii) the options for eliminating any budget deficit to enable the Fire Authority to approve a balanced budget, as required by law, which may include tasking the Chief Fire Officer with identifying further savings, the potential further use of reserves.

Members questions were responded to as follows:

- (a) officers are working hard examining all budgets to find further savings and build resilience;
- (b) the cost implications of proposing a Council Tax precept higher than the 2% referendum limit has been considered in the past, but the cost of a referendum, if successful, would take approximately 3 years to recoup so is not considered feasible.

Councillor Malcolm Wood, Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee, paid tribute to the continuing hard work of finance officers in producing the budget following a loss of £13m of funding.

RESOLVED

- (1) to approve the Medium Term Financial Strategy as set out at Appendix A to the report;**
- (2) to task the Finance and Resources Committee with providing guidance to the Fire Authority in February in respect of:**
 - (a) the options for Council Tax limited to either a Council Tax freeze or an increase in Council Tax within the referendum limit;**
 - (b) the options for addressing any budget deficit to enable the Fire Authority to approve a balanced budget, as required by law.**

38 TREASURY MANAGEMENT MID YEAR REVIEW 2017/18

Becky Smeathers, Head of Finance, presented the report which updates members with the Treasury Management activity during the first half of the 2017/18 financial year.

The following points were highlighted:

- (i) the External Treasury Management Adviser (Capita Asset Services) has been bought out by Link Asset Services but the same service will continue to be provided by the same staff;
- (ii) economic growth is slow;
- (iii) inflation is increasing;
- (iv) the Authority will consider borrowing towards the end of the financial year;
- (v) one loan has a break clause to review interest rates in March 2018 and consequently has an option to repay at this point. This may impact on performance indicators but does not cause any concern.

RESOLVED to note the report.

39 JOINT PENSION BOARD

Becky Smeathers, Head of Finance, presented the report of the Chief Fire Officer which seeks the approval of the Authority for the amalgamation of Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire and Derbyshire Pension Boards to create the East Midlands Joint Pension Board.

The proposal has previously been discussed and agreed by the Authority, but since this was over a year ago and it then became apparent that the amalgamation required the approval of the Secretary of State, the confirmation of the Authority's approval is now requested.

Pension representatives on the Authority fully endorse the proposal as a future proof move.

RESOLVED

- (1) to approve the creation of an East Midlands Joint Pension Board;**
- (2) for a joint request be submitted to the Secretary of State to gain approval for the creation of an East Midlands Joint Pensions Board.**

40 PRINCIPAL OFFICER PAY REVIEW

Prior to the Authority's consideration of this item, Chief Fire Officer, John Buckley, and Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Wayne Bowcock, withdrew from the meeting and only returned once the item had concluded.

Malcolm Townroe, Clerk and Monitoring Officer to the Authority, introduced the joint report the Clerk and Interim Treasurer, which presented the recommendation of the Policy and Strategy Committee following its consideration of the Chief Fire Officer's Salary Review.

It is noted that this review is undertaken every two years and compares principal officer pay within the 'family group' of Fire and Rescue Authorities.

RESOLVED

- (1) **to approve the recommendation of the Policy and Strategy Committee to apply no increase to the pay of the Chief Fire Officer based upon the outcomes of the local pay review;**
- (2) **to note that the next Principal Officer pay review take place in 2019, for application from 1 January 2020.**

41 INSPECTION OF FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES IN ENGLAND

Prior to consideration of this item, representatives of the FBU were invited to ask their question of the Authority.

The question is summarised as follows: It is believed that Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI) will assess Fire and Rescue Services against a risk based approach to operational services and not a demand based approach. How will this affect the Authority's decisions on the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) and given the 22% reduction of firefighters during the past 10 years, will there be firefighter capacity to focus resources into this new priority area?

The Chair responded that the Authority is still developing a new IRMP in line with the Fire and Rescue National Framework requirements. The inspection methodology is still in development so until confirmed, the true impact on resources cannot be identified. However, the Authority will continue to tackle risk in all areas of the Service.

John Buckley, Chief Fire Officer, presented the report which informs the Authority of the intention of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary to take on the role of inspectorate of Fire and Rescue Services in England.

HMICFRS hosted an information and discussion event which the Chair and Chief Fire Officer attended. It is intended that the 45 Fire and Rescue Services in England will be assessed on efficiency, effectiveness and leadership. It is anticipated that once requested, the submission will be required within a one week timescale. The resourcing implications are difficult to assess but officers are working with Police colleagues to try and gauge this and an initial budget of £50,000 has been allocated. An officer has been seconded for 2 years to HMICFRS. This figure may be amended once further clarity is received.

The scope of the inspection will not include the activity of the Authority, even though it is the Authority which takes decisions. This was raised with Zoe Billingham, responsible for Fire and Rescue of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS), as being very difficult to separate in the service inspection.

RESOLVED to note the content of the report and agree to accept future reports when more detail emerges in relation to the new inspection regime.

42 CONSULTATION UPDATE ON MIXED AND ALTERNATIVE CREWING

John Buckley, Chief Fire Officer, presented the report which updates the Authority on the consultation which will close on Sunday. The full details of the proposals are included in the report to the last Fire and Rescue Authority meeting on 22 September 2017.

The Opinion Research Services (ORS) will submit the outcome to the next meeting, alongside a report of the Chief Fire Officer.

Significant face-to-face staff consultation with senior officers has been undertaken alongside the use of social media. Overall the experience was positive, but some misguided feedback has been received regarding concerns that retained firefighters are not as competent as wholetime firefighters, and the potential for attendance time to be extended by 15 minutes, neither of which is correct.

A significant number of responses have been received from the Bassetlaw, Ashfield, Retford and Worksop areas compared to other areas of the county, but the potential of mixed crewing will affect the whole county.

Members of the Authority defended the efficiency and effectiveness of retained firefighters as committed and professional staff who are trained to the same high standards as wholetime firefighters.

Disapproval was expressed by an Ashfield member of the Authority at the proposals and the 'easy option' of targeting stations in the Ashfield area which will result in response times being extended by at least 5 minutes.

RESOLVED to note the progress on consultation on the mixed and alternative crewing options proposed in the Sustainability Strategy for 2020.

43 COMMITTEE OUTCOMES

RESOLVED to note the minutes of the following committees:

**Community Safety Committee 06 October 2017
Finance and Resources Committee 13 October 2017
Human Resources Committee 20 October 2017
Policy and Strategy Committee 10 November 2017**

44 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.

45 RETAINED SUPPORT STRUCTURE

John Buckley, Chief Fire Officer, presented the report.

RESOLVED to approve the recommendations as set out within the report.

46 OUTCOMES OF DISCIPLINARY PANEL HEARING

Prior to the Authority's consideration of this item, Wayne Bowcock, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, withdrew from the meeting having declared an interest within minute 33. Craig Parkin, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, also withdrew from the meeting.

John Buckley, Chief Fire Officer, introduced the report of the Clerk to the Authority.

The minute, including recommendation, of this item is exempt from publication under Paragraphs 1 and 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 because it contains information which relates to an individual and to the financial affairs of the individual and the organisation.

The public interest in maintaining an exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information because the posts specified within this report can lead to the identification of individuals within Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service.