



**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 16 February 2018 from 10.30am - 1.00pm**

Membership

Present

Councillor Brian Grocock (Chair)
Councillor Michael Payne (Vice Chair)
Councillor Liaqat Ali
Councillor Andrew Brown
Councillor Eunice Campbell (minutes 47-54)
Councillor John Clarke
Councillor Vaughan Hopewell
Councillor Patience Uloma Ifediora
Councillor John Longdon
Councillor Jackie Morris (minutes 47-54)
Councillor Francis Purdue-Horan
Councillor Mike Quigley MBE (minutes 47-55)
Councillor Phil Rostance
Councillor Parry Tsimbirdis
Councillor Jonathan Wheeler
Councillor Malcolm Wood
Councillor Jason Zadrozny

Absent

Councillor Sybil Fielding

Also in attendance

Nottinghamshire Police and Crime Commissioner, Paddy Tipping

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

John Buckley	- Chief Fire Officer, NFRS
Wayne Bowcock	- Deputy Chief Fire Officer, NFRS
Craig Parkin	- Assistant Chief Fire Officer, NFRS
Malcolm Townroe	- Clerk and Monitoring Officer to the Fire Authority
Theresa Channell	- Interim Treasurer
Becky Smeathers	- Head of Finance
Tracy Crump	- Head of People and Organisational Development
Noel McMenamin	- Governance Officer

47 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor Sybil Fielding – personal reasons.

48 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

None.

49 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 December 2017 were agreed as a true record and they were signed by the Chair.

50 CHAIRS' ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair made the following announcements:

- The Fire and Rescue Service has been commended for resolving the recent incident at Nottingham Train Station swiftly and safely, and assisting the timely re-opening of the station. The Chair received a letter of thanks from the Leader of Nottingham City Council, and wished to put on record his personal thanks to all those involved;
- The Chief Fire Officer and Chair of the Authority have met their counterparts in the Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Service to discuss working more closely. A joint meeting, involving members, will be arranged to discuss potential areas of work in more detail;
- The Chair thanked all those who attended the recent Member's Seminar event.

51 PRUDENTIAL CODE FOR CAPITAL FINANCE 2018/19

Becky Smeathers, Head of Finance, presented the report of the Interim Treasurer to the Authority, which outlines the Authority's obligations under the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Prudential Code for Capital Finance and seeks the Authority's approval for the proposed Capital Plans, Prudential Limits and Monitoring Processes.

RESOLVED to approve the Prudential limits for 2018/19 as follows:

Estimate of Ratio of Financing Costs to Net Revenue Stream	5.7%
Estimate of Total Capital Expenditure to be Incurred	£3,191,000
Estimate of Capital Financing Requirement	£27,306,000
Operational Boundary	£29,723,000
Authorised Limit	£32,695,000
Upper limit for fixed rate interest exposures	100%
Upper limit for variable rate interest exposures	30%
Loan Maturity:	<u>Limits:</u>
Under 12 months	Upper 20% Lower 0%
12 months to 5 years	Upper 30% Lower 0%

5 years to 10 years	Upper 75% Lower 0%
Over 10 years	Upper 100% Lower 0%
Over 20 years	Upper 100% Lower 30%
Upper Limit for Principal Sums Invested for Periods Longer than 365 Days	£2,000,000

52 TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2018/19

Becky Smeathers, Head of Finance, introduced the report of the Interim Treasurer to the Authority, which presents the Treasury Management Strategy 2018/19 report which provides information on the following areas:

- Balanced budget requirement;
- Economic background;
- Management of cash resources;
- Borrowing strategy;
- Investment strategy;
- Minimum revenue provision policy;
- Training of officers and members.

RESOLVED to approve:

- (1) the Treasury management Strategy 2018/19 as set out in the report;**
- (2) the continued use of UK counterparties should the UK sovereign rating fall to AA-;**
- (3) the Minimum Reserve Provision policy 2018/19 as set out in paragraphs 2.43 to 2.46 to the report.**

53 REVIEW OF RESERVES AND WORKING BALANCES

Becky Smeathers, Head of Finance, introduced the report of the Interim Treasurer to the Authority, which seeks the approval of the Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire and Rescue Authority to the minimum level of working balances sufficient to meet the needs of the Authority during the 2018/19 financial year and beyond.

This is a legal requirement and although there is no prescribed formula, guidance from CIPFA states that the level of general reserve should be appropriate for the risks to which the Authority is exposed. A risk assessment is attached to the report at Appendix A.

RESOLVED to

- (1) note the results of the review of risks shown at Appendix A to the report;**
- (2) approve the proposed minimum level of working balances of £4.3 million for 2018/19.**

54 BUDGET PROPOSALS FOR 2018/19 TO 2020/21 AND OPTIONS FOR COUNCIL TAX 2018/19

Nottinghamshire Fire Brigades Union submitted a question relating to budget proposals for 2018/19 to 2021 as follows:

'The previous significant reductions to the operational establishment approved by this Authority have led to continued pressures to deliver on the current collective agreement maintaining fire appliance availability, with implications for communities of Nottinghamshire and our members. The FBU continues to engage with management in negotiations for a new collective agreement.

In the face of these prolonged significant cuts and continued period of transition, what strategy, including funding, has, or will be, put in place that ensures the Authority's commitment to a new Collective Agreement will be met and provide FBU members reassurance before any new agreement can be reached?'

The Chair responded as follows:

'The Authority recognises that dealing with a reduction in resources since 2010 has been difficult for the Service and the staff within it. To mitigate this we have always worked with staff to ease implementation and I welcome the FBU's commitment to work with Management to secure a new collective agreement, as this is required to address some of the current challenges.

To support implementation of the proposals, a project plan is being developed and I would welcome engagement with the FBU in that work. There is also an earmarked reserve of £120,000 specifically for organisational transition, and also £1.4 million of general reserves will be used in 2018 which clearly demonstrates the strong commitment of this Authority to the Service, staff and communities we serve'.

Becky Smeathers, Head of Finance, introduced the report of the Interim Treasurer to the Authority, which informs members of the proposals for the revenue and capital budgets for 2018/19 to 2020/2021.

The Committee also considered a recommendation of the Finance and Resources Committee to apply a 2.95% Council Tax increase for the year 2018/19, with the balance of £1,444,104 being met by funding from reserves, in line with the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

Members made the following comments:

- (a) the Treasury Team was commended on producing the report in trying circumstances;
- (b) reserves could not be used in future years to meet the residual balance, as it was not recommended that reserve levels went below the current level of £4.3 million;
- (c) it was suggested that a cross-party working group be established to consider the wider issue of rationalising the Fire and Rescue Service estate, and the Chair agreed to discuss with the Chief Fire Officer. Councillor Zadrozny asked to be involved with the working group, should it be established;

- (d) central government grant has reduced from £28 million to £16 million and there is frustration that financial support from central government in the wake of Grenfell has not been forthcoming;
- (e) it was suggested that the issue of payment of Member Allowances should be the subject of a separate report in future years.

Members voting in favour of implementing a 2.95% increase of Council Tax precept are:

Councillor Brian Grocock (Chair)
Councillor Michael Payne (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Liaqat Ali
Councillor Andrew Brown
Councillor Eunice Campbell
Councillor John Clarke
Councillor Vaughan Hopewell
Councillor Patience Ifediora
Councillor John Longdon
Councillor Jackie Morris
Councillor Francis Purdue-Horan
Councillor Mike Quigley
Councillor Phil Rostance
Councillor Parry Tsimbiridis
Councillor Jonathan Wheeler
Councillor Malcolm Wood

Members voting against implementing a 2.95% increase of Council Tax precept are:

Councillor Jason Zadrozny

Member not present:

Councillor Sybil Fielding

RESOLVED to:

- (1) approve the recommendation of the Finance and Resources Committee to increase Council Tax by 2.95%, with the residual balance of £1,444,104 to be met by funding from reserves, in line with the Medium Term Financial Strategy;**
- (2) set a 2018/19 precept level to be notified to the Billing Authorities as required by statute;**
- (3) approve the flexible use of capital receipts strategy as set out at Appendix 3 to the report, which is that capital receipts in 2018/19 will be used either to finance future capital expenditure or to repay borrowings, and will be in this year to fund the revenue cost of reform projects;**
- (4) approve the fees and charges as set out in Appendix 4 to the report;**
- (5) approve the payment of Member Allowances for 2018/19 in accordance with the approved scheme.**

Councillor Jason Zadrozny abstained in respect of resolutions 3-5 above, and asked that his abstention be recorded.

55 SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY CONSULTATION OUTCOMES

The Nottinghamshire Fire Brigades Union submitted a question on alternative crewing as follows:

‘Whilst the FBU recognises that government imposed financial pressures on the Authority are continuing, it is a growing concern of the FBU that proposals like alternative crewing conflicts with the fundamental principles to successfully resolve incidents and ability to maintain the safety of firefighters is likely to be compromised and goes against the position of the FBU nationally.

With proposed changes to crewing arrangements, what assurances are the Authority able to provide the FBU that firefighter safety will not be compromised, where the FBU believe insufficient crew are available to resolve a dynamic and escalating incident?’

The Chair responded as follows:

‘The Service already has well established procedures to deploy additional resources should they believe the incident being responded to is dynamic or escalating. In all circumstance where there is a risk to life or property, appliances with less than 4 crew members will be deployed in addition to the normal level of attendance.

The Service has well trained operational commanders able to deal with complex situations whilst additional resources are en route, and this will be under pinned through the development of robust risk assessments, procedures and tactics, and I would encourage the FBU to engage with Management in this work.’

The Nottinghamshire Fire Brigades Union submitted a question on mixed crewing as follows:

‘The FBU is significantly concerned regarding the continued recommendation of crewing arrangements that reduce public services, or encourage a move away from nationally recognised terms and conditions of the NJC grey book. The Chief Fire Officer’s recommendation to implement mixed crewing at Ashfield and Retford fire stations is in our view another example that compounds national concerns over recruitment and retention of sufficient RDS personnel. The stations are currently very low on staffing numbers and will struggle to deliver the proposed crewing model, without the continued help and co-operation of FBU members.

What assurances can the Authority provide that any implementation strategy for crewing arrangements, including mixed crewing, addresses our concerns over recruitment, training and sustainability of the proposal, that maintains appliance availability to communities, while maintaining NJC grey book terms and conditions of service to our members?’

The Chair responded as follows:

‘The Authority recognises the very real pressures on the traditional working arrangements of retained duty personnel and difficulty in recruiting staff to provide day-time cover.

The Chief fire Officer believes that recruiting retained staff to provide night-time cover will be more successful. Furthermore, the increased numbers of calls being responded to by the retained sections is likely to offer a more attractive package and assist with competency and retention.

To support this work the proposals within the report identify £200,000 investment across all retained sections to increase their day-time capacity and resilience. This will require innovative ways of working that will be beneficial to all parties and I would again encourage the FBU to engage with managers in this work.'

The Authority received a presentation from Dale Hall and Kelly Lock of Opinion Research Services Ltd on the Shaping Our Future public consultation exercise on alternative crewing and mixed crewing, highlighting the following points:

- (a) the consultation exercise was very wide-ranging, but was not meant to be a local referendum. Rather, it was a means of informing judgements on what was in the interests of 'the public good';
- (b) there were 2,665 open questionnaires returned during the consultation period, 8 public focus groups were held across Nottinghamshire (89 attendees), as well as 2 staff focus groups (11 attendees). In addition, 11 written submissions were received, along with a 'Save Ashfield's Firefighters online petition (2,375 signatures) and a joint standardised submission from John Mann MP and the Fire Brigades Union (4,256 responses);
- (c) over half of respondents to the open questionnaire disagreed with the alternative crewing proposals, and over 70% of respondents disagreed with mixed crewing proposals. Proposals were almost unanimously endorsed at Public Focus Group meetings. 7 of the 11 written submissions objected to mixed crewing, while there was a more even response on alternative crewing proposals;
- (d) while it was clear that there was public anxiety about the proposals, interpreting the outcomes of local protesting campaigns was difficult in view of the lack of partiality in framing information on the proposals.

John Buckley, Chief Fire Officer, presented the report on mixed and alternative crewing and proposing changes to the operational service delivery. The following points were highlighted:

- (e) savings had to be made, and the alternative to the proposals would involve the removal of appliances and/or the closure of stations. Two East Midlands Fire and Rescue Services have already introduced similar service delivery models;
- (f) it was recognised that recruitment of retained staff was a national issue;
- (g) there has been a 40% reduction in incidents, and the majority occur between 12 noon and 8.30pm. This means that there is a lack of availability in the day but lots of availability at night. Greater flexibility in overall capacity was needed to address demand and secure savings;
- (h) the proposals were estimated to increase response times by 5 minutes. However, the proposals also ensured that there will be no redundancies and will create a more flexible, skilled service.

The following comments were made:

- (i) it was confirmed that the changes will not be fully implemented until a full staffing complement is in place;
- (j) the proposals disproportionately affected Ashfield district, leaving just 2 appliances to cover up to 100,000 homes in Mansfield and Ashfield;
- (k) public submissions and petitions demonstrated a significant majority of affected citizens not in favour of the proposals, and these concerns were not being given adequate consideration;
- (l) it will not prove possible to get to Ashfield Station within 5 minutes, and it is not possible to confirm that the proposals will not cost lives;
- (m) the proposals have not been drawn up lightly, and both the Chief Fire Officer and the Authority cannot avoid operating within the financial envelope as set by central government;
- (o) there was a collective responsibility to deliver the most effective Service within the financial constraints that were outside the control of the Authority and the Fire and Rescue Service senior leadership.

RESOLVED to

- (1) approve the implementation of alternative crewing at all retained sections within the Service;**
- (2) approve the implementation of the mixed crewing model at both Ashfield and Retford fire stations;**
- (3) request that the Chief Fire Officer provide a future report on the amendments required to the permanent establishment of both retained and wholetime firefighter posts; and**
- (4) periodic reviews are undertaken on the impact of alternative and mixed crewing, and that outcome reports are subsequently presented to the Fire Authority for consideration.**

Councillor Jason Zadrozny voted against resolutions (1) to (4) above, and asked that his vote be recorded.

Councillor Mike Quigley and Councillor Phil Rostance abstained in respect of resolutions (1) to (4) above, and asked that their abstentions be recorded.

56 APPOINTMENT OF TREASURER

RESOLVED to appoint Charlotte Radford as the Treasurer to the Fire Authority through the provision of a Service Level Agreement in collaboration with the Nottinghamshire Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner.

57 DEVELOPMENT OF THE INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN

John Buckley, Chief Fire Officer, presented the report. He explained that the development of the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) was a statutory requirement, and that with a little over a year for the current Plan to run, it was time to commence the process of developing the new Plan.

RESOLVED to:

- (1) note the requirements of the project and support the process to develop the next Integrated Risk Management Plan;**
- (2) request that the Policy and Strategy Committee be convened as a task and finish group to work with Officers in the early development of the next IRMP;**
- (3) agree to receive future reports as the IRMP development process continued.**

58 COMMITTEE OUTCOMES

RESOLVED to note the outcomes of the following meetings:

**Personnel Committee held on 15 December 2017;
Community Safety Committee held on 12 January 2018;
Finance and Resources Committee held on 19 January 2018;
Human Resources Committee held on 26 January 2018;
Policy and Strategy Committee held on 2 February 2018.**

59 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 paragraphs 1 and 3 of Schedule 12A to the Act.

60 EXEMPT MINUTES

The exempt minutes of the meeting held on 15 December 2017 were agreed as a true record and they were signed by the Chair.

61 EXEMPT COMMITTEE MINUTES

The Authority noted the exempt minutes of the Authority's Personnel Committee meeting held on 15 December 2017, and its Policy and Strategy Committee meeting held on 2 February 2018.