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Additional / To Follow Agenda Items

This is a supplement to the original agenda and includes reports that are additional to the original agenda or which were marked 'to follow'.

Meeting of the Fire and Rescue Authority

Date: Friday, 16 December 2022 **Time:** 10.30 am

Venue: Joint Fire / Police HQ, Sherwood Lodge, Arnold, Nottingham, NG5 8PP

Governance Officer: Cath Ziane-Pryor **Direct Dial:** 0115 8764298

Agenda	<u>Pages</u>
7 Medium Term Financial Strategy 2023/24 to 2026/27 and Budget Guidelines 2023/24 – Revised Page 54	3 - 4
11 Committee Outcomes	5 - 30

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position, enabling it to balance the budget without the use of reserves in 2024/25.

SCENARIO 3 – BEST CASE SCENARIO

6.13 This scenario assumes that:

- The 2022/23 firefighter pay award is settled at 5%
- The 2023/24 pay award is settled at 3% for all staff
- Government funding (Revenue Support Grant (RSG) and Business Rates top up grant) increases 5% for 2023/24 and 2% thereafter
- Pension Grant remains flat in cash terms at £2.34m
- Services Grant is not reduced to reflect NI reductions (£650k)
- Business Rate collection remains flat in 2023/24 due to revaluation exercise. Increases of 1% are assumed for 2024/25 and future years
- Council Tax collection increases by 1.35% in 2023/24 and future years
- Council Tax is increased by £5 in 2023/24 and 2.95% thereafter.

Table 4 – Best Case Scenario

	2022/23 £'000	2023/24 £'000	2024/25 £'000	2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000
Budget Requirement	46,006	48,421	51,654	53,088	54,450
Revenue Support Grant (RSG)	(5,619)	(5,900)	(6,018)	(6,138)	(6,261)
Business Rate (BR) Income	(2,925)	(3,217)	(3,282)	(3,314)	(3,347)
Pension Grant	(2,340)	(2,340)	(2,340)	(2,340)	(2,340)
BR Top up Grant	(7,277)	(7,277)	(7,641)	(7,794)	(7,950)
Council Tax (£5)	(27,692)	(29,725)	(31,015)	(32,360)	(33,765)
Budget Deficit / (Surplus)	153	38	1,358	1,142	787

6.14 This scenario reflects that if inflation reduces more quickly than anticipated allowing a 3% pay award to be agreed for 2024/25 along with a £5 increase in Council Tax then it would be possible to set a balanced budget for 2023/24. Members should note that this would be the best case scenario if all variables were to be favourable – this may yet prove unlikely.

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NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
Fire & Rescue Service
Creating Safer Communities

Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham
Fire and Rescue Authority

COMMITTEE OUTCOMES

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

Date: 16 December 2022

Purpose of Report:

To report to Members the business and actions of the Fire Authority committee meetings which took place in October and November 2022.

Recommendations:

That Members note the contents of this report.

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1. BACKGROUND

As part of the revised governance arrangements the Authority has delegated key responsibilities to specific committees of the Authority. As part of those delegated responsibilities, the chairs of committees and the management leads report to the Authority on the business and actions as agreed at Fire and Rescue Authority meeting on 1 June 2007.

2. REPORT

The minutes of the following meetings are attached at Appendix A for the information of all Fire Authority Members:

Community Safety Committee	07 October 2022
Finance and Resources Committee	14 October 2022
Policy and Strategy Committee	11 November 2022

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

All financial implications were considered as part of the original reports submitted to the committees.

4. HUMAN RESOURCES AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

All human resources and learning and development implications were considered as part of the original reports submitted to the committees.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

An equality impact assessment has not been undertaken because this report is not associated with a policy, function or service. Its purpose is to update the Fire Authority on the outcomes of committee business.

6. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

There are no crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal implications arising directly from this report.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

The Service's performance in relation to matters addressed through the committee structure is scrutinised through a range of audit processes. The Service needs to continue to perform well in these areas as external scrutiny through Comprehensive Performance Assessment and auditors' judgement is key to future Service delivery.

9. COLLABORATION IMPLICATIONS

There are no collaboration implications arising from this report, as the report seeks to provide Members with an update on the business and actions of Fire Authority committee meetings which have taken place in the last quarter.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Members note the contents of this report.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR INSPECTION (OTHER THAN PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS)

None.

Craig Parkin
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

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Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire and Rescue Authority Community Safety Committee

**Minutes of the meeting held at Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service Joint
Headquarters - Sherwood Lodge, Arnold, Nottingham, NG5 8PP on 7 October 2022 from
10.01 am - 11.26 am**

Membership

Present

Councillor Jason Zadrozny (Chair)

Councillor Nicola Heaton

Councillor Nick Raine

Councillor Dave Trimble

Councillor Roger Upton

Councillor Mike Quigley MBE (Substitute for Councillor Robert Corden)

Absent

Councillor Robert Corden

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

Candida Brudenell - Assistant Chief Fire Officer

Bryn Coleman - Area Manager for Prevention

Andy Macey - Area Manager for Response

Guninder Nagi - Community Engagement Manger

Matt Sismey - Organisational Development and Inclusion Manager

Catherine Ziane-Pryor - Governance Officer

5 Apologies for Absence

Councillor Robert Corden (Councillor Mike Quigley MBE substitute)

Cllr Nick Raine for lateness.

5 Apologies for Absence

Councillor Robert Corden (Councillor Mike Quigley MBE substitute)

Cllr Nick Raine for lateness.

6 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 June 2022 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

7 Declarations of Interests

None.

8 Service Delivery Performance Report

Bryn Coleman, Area Manager for Prevention and Protection, and Andy Macey, Area Manager for Response, presented the report which informs members of the performance of the Service between 1 April 2022 and 31 August 2022.

Andy Macey, Area Manager for Response, highlighted the following points and answers to members' questions:

- a) a total of 5,561 incidents were attended during the period, which is a 27% increase in the same period last year, but this is mainly due to lockdown restrictions in April and May 2021, and extreme hot and dry weather experienced in July and August 2022, during which there was an increase by 52% of fire attendances compared to the same period last year;
- b) tables within the report provide a rich visual representation of the numbers and types of incidents attended during the past 12 months, for which is noted that outdoor, refuse and grassland fires had significantly increased by 236%, 93% and 327% respectively;
- c) the number of unwanted fire signals (UwFS) received had reduced during lockdown restrictions in the same period of last year as many business premises were unoccupied and less likely to accidentally trigger alarms;
- d) there had been a significant increase in the number of Priority 3 fires since March 2022. The additional demand is reflected within the average response times, which rose to 8 minutes 36 seconds, exceeding the average target of attending within eight minutes. Some delays were due to the remoteness of grass fires, gaining access and an unclear location report. The Service continues to promote the use of the 'what three words' location app;
- e) the On-Call availability has a target of 85% which was exceeded at 85.97%. Hucknall station achieved 100% availability, Warsop 99%, Misterton 96%, and Newark 95%. One quarter of all stations fell below the 85% targets, and ongoing recruitment issues at Southwell resulted in the station achieving less than the 70% minimum standard of availability;
- f) the report provides further detailed breakdown of availability at the Day Shift Crewing (DSC) fire stations of Ashfield and Retford, compared to previous years;
- g) three key performance measures are monitored regarding activity of Joint Control:
 - i. 96% of 999 calls answered within seven seconds. During the height of the summer activity, this dropped to 94%, purely due to increased demand;

- ii. the call handling time aims for completion within 89 seconds, and although significant improvement has been achieved, the target was not met;
 - iii. mobilisation system availability has a target of 99%, and although improvement was clear against the same period last year, the target was missed by a small margin;
- h) it has not yet been possible to compare the Services activity against that of other similar authorities for the July August period, but this information can be provided to a future meeting. However, it should be noted that other services have a different ways of measuring activity so will not provide a fully compatible comparison.

Bryn Coleman, Area Manager for Prevention and Protection, highlighted the following points and provided responses to members' questions

- i) a total of 4,829 Safe and Well Visits (SWVs) were completed in the period between 1 April 2022 and 31 August 2022, against an annual target of 13,000. This equates to 37.15% completion;
- j) prevention work is currently targeting the over 65-year-olds and disabled citizens as these groups have been statistically (data led intelligence) identified as the most vulnerable;
- k) two safety zone events were held, one at Ranby Preparatory School, and another at Ashfield Fire Station, to which schools from the North of the county were invited. Further events are planned in the south of the county during September;
- l) work to address hoax calls and promote fire prevention was undertaken with secondary schools. The Service's intervention package has now been adopted by the National Fire Chiefs Council as part of the stay-wise education initiative;
- m) the Service also contributed to multiagency, holistic road safety interventions, including 'Biker Down' with further multiagency engagement planned with schools and colleges across the county on 'Operation Highway' events, which previously have been well received;
- n) 463 Fire Safety Audits (FSAs) were completed and as a result, 98 premises required informal action, whilst a further 14 were issued formal notices. The Service doesn't hesitate to issue action and enforcement to ensure the safety of citizens;
- o) the number of audits is increasing compared to the same period in the last three years, as is illustrated in figure 12 within the report;
- p) 156 of the 500 Business Safety Checks (BSCs) of lower level risk businesses such as shops and smaller businesses have been completed, mainly by operational crew and watch managers who undergo supervised checks before being allowed to work unsupervised;
- q) Fire Safety Audits and Business Safety Checks are prioritised through the risk-based inspection programme (determined by an algorithm) which includes consideration of building height, locality, what the businesses may store, and sleep risk. The top 10% of premises (4,500) are then targeted for examination every three years. The remaining

90% of business are subject to business safety checks by operational crews. Premises such as nursing homes are considered high-risk, but if graded as good by the Care Quality Commission, then they drop down the priority list as they have a proven good management programme in place;

- r) takeaway food businesses aren't specifically considered high risk but do form the majority of safety prosecutions and are where incidents do occur, the premises are subject to a safety inspection visit. These premises should not have living accommodation above, but often do;
- s) citizens should not doubt that the Service does prosecute where necessary if the advice and support of the Service are not headed;
- t) figure 13 of the report provides a chart of the protection activities over the past 3 years, of which Building Regulation Consultations provide the majority of work and will continue to increase;
- u) whilst the CRMP aims for a 3% annual reduction of UwFS, overall, there has been an increase but work continues to address this with the initial advice, but following a sixth occurrence at the premises, a full audit from a Fire Safety Inspector is undertaken;
- v) the work of the JAIT (Joint Audit Inspection Team) continues with 25 buildings of over 18 m in height and 339 buildings under 18 metres in height still requiring inspection;
- w) regarding training, recruitment and retention of Fire Safety Inspectors, since last reported, none have left. There is now a career development pathway to enable existing Fire Service staff progress to the role. External recruitment has been useful, but there is still a capacity issue and currently whilst the 11 inspectors are each aiming to undertake 100 inspections per year, this has not been possible and is a huge challenge;
- x) there are increasing numbers of new student accommodation schemes within the city and it has been challenging with regard to capacity to ensure that all are compliant with building safety regulations. There have been prosecutions and prohibitions whereby buildings cannot be occupied until the required safety work has been completed. There will be further information on this at the next meeting;
- y) of the 81 lift incidents, the majority will be late night occurrences in student accommodation or hotels where more people enter the lift than the capacity, often having been drinking. The Service is looking at repeat offenders and urging appropriate building management. The Service only attends if there are people in distress or there is a medical emergency, but people do panic so the Service does often attend. There may be a possibility for the Service to charge to attend non-emergency lift related incidents, but this is yet to be determined;
- z) for those uninspected businesses and high buildings, the Service has targeted those considered at most risk, but all need inspecting. If a complaint is made, then inspectors will attend but otherwise it's prioritised by a desk top risk evaluation and capacity has to be directed to the most appropriate areas. There is potential for the Service to be challenged if an incident occurs at a property which was not considered high priority and therefore wasn't inspected;

- aa) of the 1,117 false alarms approximately 500 are attributed to the larger hospitals across the county, with the majority of the rest relating to local authority housing – so basically only a few organisations provide the greatest number of incidents. Members should be assured that although there are several stages whereby the Service writes to the repeat offenders, there is regular contact with hospitals and Local Authority Housing to address these unwanted alarms. It's not possible to legally charge for responding to false alarms;
- bb) deregulated building control is a huge issue for the Service and very complex. There is an overlap of duty with building control and members concerns that the Service undertaking building control work without charge is noted. Further to Councillor Ogden's query, he would be welcome to spend time with the Building Safety Inspection Team to see first-hand what these issues are, and possibly report back to a future meeting.

Members of the Committee expressed concern and frustration that when fire regulations change, there isn't a formal process in place to ensure that all relevant parties are informed. It is sometimes not until premises are inspected by the Service that the responsible persons are aware of changes but would have been willing to comply earlier if the information was known. It would be helpful if there could be a process whereby when fire regulations change, the information is widely promoted, including to Local Authorities.

Resolved to note the report.

9 On-Call Recruitment

Andy Macey, Area Manager for Response, presented the report which informs the Committee of the challenges and recent efforts to increase On-Call firefighter recruitment.

The following points were highlighted and responses provided to members' questions:

- a) there are 16 On-Call sections, 12 of which are stand-alone and 4 of which share a station with whole-time crews. On-Call firefighters are trained to and provide the same level of service as full time firefighters;
- b) the On-Call Support Team (OCST) consist of 6 staff to help promote recruitment and maintain crewing for On-Call stations;
- c) recruitment of On-Call firefighters has been a national challenge as applicants must live and/or work within five minutes travelling time of a fire station. This is particularly an issue in rural areas with ageing populations and where the majority of residents don't work within their community and commute elsewhere;
- d) another challenge is that more primary employers are reluctant to enable staff to be available to attend incidents;
- e) being an On-Call firefighter requires a high level of commitment which can be a barrier along with the perception that pay is low and that there may be difficulty maintaining a work/life balance, and particularly achieving the required level of flexibility from their primary employer;

- f) for the period between April 2021 and July 2022, 178 applications were received at all On-Call stations but only 34 applicants succeeded in completing the recruitment process which consists of staged tests, including for where the applicants live/work, the amount of time they can commit, written, memory and comprehension tests, job related fitness tests, an interview, medical, DBS checks and a reference check. The report provides the percentage of applicants which failed at each stage;
- g) to help increase successful applications, new initiatives such as 'try it' are being trialled to help potential applicants gain a better understanding of the role and requirements of recruitment process, including the level of fitness, for which support can be provided;
- h) physical tests are very much job related, such as rolling out fire hoses and carrying weight, but also include manual dexterity and overall fitness against the bleep test. The more support the Service can provide applicants with understanding the level of fitness required and sporting them to achieve it, the greater the success level;
- i) if all initially successful applicants were to receive a medical examination at an early stage of the recruitment process, this would require a significant amount of time from the Service Doctor, so the medical is scheduled for later in the process once the majority of other requirements have been met and the numbers progressing are much reduced;
- j) On-Call firefighters are encouraged to promote their role to potential recruits, including at jobs fairs, coffee mornings and being visible within their community. This approach has successfully attracted 23 applications in the Hucknall, Ashfield and Stapleford areas, from which 14 were successful;
- k) the Service's upgraded website is much improved, providing potential candidates an opportunity to register an interest which is then passed to the local station to make contact;
- l) the OCST establish and maintain contact with primary employers to emphasise the importance of releasing On-Call firefighters to allow them time to attend incidents, but also to promote the benefits in terms of personal development that working for the Service can provide to their staff and therefore their business;
- m) the traditional training programme is 13 weeks long but a new alternative policy initiative of 'Safe To Ride' has been introduced whereby trainees have the option to complete a modular programme over a 12 month period, which it is hoped to prove more attractive than the 13 week course which can obviously provide an income barrier and is a significant impact on primary employers. 50% of new trainees have chosen the 'Safe to Ride' option;
- n) the standard On-Call commitment time required by the Service of 84 hours per week is a big demand to be physically On-Call; no drinking and remaining within 5 minutes travelling time of the station, so, to enable greater flexibility a trial was operated offering a lower level of commitment, the results of which will closely examined;
- o) details of gender, age and ethnicity of applicants and successful recruits is tracked and can be brought to next meeting;

Members of the Committee commented as follows:

- q) Mansfield District Council used to have a good arrangement and allowed their staff to respond as On-Call firefighters during working hours as the station was close to the offices. Maybe Local Authority promotion of this arrangement could be encouraged elsewhere;
- r) the Service's engagement with members of the Pythian Youth Group has been successful, so widening that type of offer to other youth groups may be beneficial;
- s) other Fire Service models of operation across Europe have been examined. Whilst the German model relies largely on On-Call and volunteering staff, firefighters are not trained to the same high level and rely on power in numbers. There may be potential for a similar model, but it would be difficult to train all such firefighters to an acceptable standard of skill and ability for every eventuality;
- t) interesting lessons can be learned from Dutch Fire Service colleagues who maintain a good level of recruitment and retention. The Dutch service allows On-Call officers to undertake primary employment tasks from the On-Call station. For example, an office-based job can be done from the Fire Station. In addition, where necessary, when pagers go off, alerts are automatically sent to call a nursery worker to fire station to provide childcare;
- u) the vast majority of British citizens would want fully trained firefighters;
- v) the community value of On-Call firefighters should be promoted, both within the public and private sector;
- w) consideration should be given to some sort of commendation for business who engage On-Call firefighters, which would highlight individual business commitment and investment in their communities by providing necessary flexibility for On-Call firefighters. It is reasonable that businesses which is happy to support the safety of the community with a commercial sacrifice should be publicly acknowledged;
- x) the trial of the 'Safe To Ride' twelve-month module is welcomed, it being acknowledged that very few citizens could afford, or would be able to undertake a three-month training course away from their primary employment;
- y) the potential for childcare provision during a callout would be an economic and logistic necessity for some parents;
- z) some sort of commendation for businesses who engage On-Call firefighters could be investigated as they are supporting their community and their contribution should be promoted.

Resolved to note the report.

10 Community Engagement - Working with Ethnic Minority Communities Update

Matt Sismey, Organisational Development and Inclusion Manager, was in attendance with Guninder Nagi, Community Engagement Manger, who provided an overview of the community

engagement work over the last 14 months which has focused on Black Asian Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities and highlighted the following points:

- a) the Community Engagement Plan approved in 2021, has three main work streams of:
 - i. understanding our community;
 - ii. inclusive services and communications;
 - iii. inclusive workforce;
- b) initially ethnicity is gauged via the census information and then the approaches applied tailored appropriately;
- c) a pilot scheme has been run in Berridge, which is a very diverse community, as a gap in take-up of safe and well visits had been identified within the BAME community. The pilot was run over eight days, aimed to establish a baseline and identify the specific community needs;
- d) cultural changes have meant that more elderly Asian people are now living alone and not with extended families, and so may be more at risk from fire and incidents;
- e) it is acknowledged that among many BAME communities there is a mistrust of uniformed services, so work is focused on engaging and interacting to raise confidence and trust;
- f) Shisha is a growing trend among young people and presents new safety and prevention challenges;
- g) prevention and protection messages were promoted through Radio initiatives which have been positively received by listeners. Anything said in English by representatives of the Service were directly translated and/or shows were broadcast directly in Punjabi/Urdu/ Mirpuri to reach the wider South Asian community, including the business sector. As a result, business targeted translated workshops will be considered;
- h) expanding the Service's chaplaincy to become multi-faith will help the Service broaden its inclusiveness;
- i) women's groups have been approached within the community with the idea of promoting community volunteer role to engage with the community and promote the Service's messages as Service Champions and highlight the opportunities available within the workforce;
- j) engagement with youth groups is key and has proved successful, including a six-week pilot with the Pythian Club, following which a young Romanian man was keen to become a community champion for the Service within his community;
- k) there is now potential to work with the Nottingham Girl's Academy. Sowing the seed of interest and trust at an early age is vital for the Service's successful engagement and potential recruitment;
- l) previously, some of the areas within the City had been mainly been home to one or two cultures, but diversity has much expanded, particularly with regard to new emerging

communities including refugees who arrive through settlement programmes from Syria, Afghanistan and the Ukraine. Some sections of these communities often fear uniformed services so initially engagement is soft to help build relationships. Sometimes contact is most successful through the voluntary sector which appears to be the main support route for such communities and can provide valuable communication and introduction pathways;

- m) the latest census results are likely to provide an interesting view of how diversity expanding. As a result, the Service will need to respond with applying differing languages and BSL to engage citizens and promote prevention and safety messages, but also promote employment opportunities;
- n) the County population is still less diverse than that of the City, but this is changing and there are pockets of diverse communities establishing in some areas of the county;
- o) for some people being self-employed and/or a small business owner can be seen as a barrier for becoming an On-Call firefighter and many do not even consider the Fire Service as career. It is a very alien concept in some communities, so the Service needs to continue to engage, promote and show that there people like them employed in the Service and that the opportunity is there for them too.

Members of the Committee commented as follows:

- p) much community support during Covid emerged from the BAME communities which illustrated a cultural approach to public service, helping people and the hospitality culture. The connection with the community care role of the Fire Service needs to be emphasised. The third sector plays an important role with contacting, and encouragement for communities to engage with the Service;
- q) the Service does need to reflect the communities it serves;
- r) there is still much to be done but the progress to date is very much welcomed.

Resolved to note the report.

11 Future Meeting Dates

Resolved to note the future meeting dates of Friday 6 January 2023 at 10am, and Friday 24 March 2023 at 10am.

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Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire and Rescue Authority Finance and Resources Committee

**Minutes of the meeting held at Joint Fire / Police HQ, Sherwood Lodge, Arnold,
Nottingham, NG5 8PP on 14 October 2022 from 10.01 am - 11.08 am**

Membership

Present

Councillor John Clarke MBE (Chair)
Councillor Callum Bailey
Councillor Steve Battlemuch
Councillor Nicola Heaton
Councillor John Lee
Councillor Mike Quigley MBE

Absent

Councillor Sybil Fielding

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

Becky Smeathers - Head of Finance and Treasurer to the Authority
Candida Brudenell) Assistant Chief Fire Officers
Michael Sharman)
Leila Henry - Head of Risk, Assurance and Operational Training
Terry Scott - Head of Procurement and Resources
Catherine Ziane-Pryor - Governance Officer

8 Apologies for Absence

None.

9 Declarations of Interests

None.

10 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held 24 June 2022 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

11 Revenue, Capital and Prudential Code Monitoring Report to August 2022

Becky Smeathers, Head of Finance and Treasurer to the Authority, presented the report and highlighted the following points:

- a) The outturn to the end of August this year is anticipated to provide an underspend just shy of £900,000. This is mainly due to the deliberate delay in whole-time recruitment, knowing the position of the Authority next year;
- b) The Green Book offer has now been accepted by trade unions and will result in an additional cost of £126,000 to the Authority;
- c) If a 6% pay increase is agreed for firefighters, this would cost an additional £510,000;
- d) The Joint Headquarters Capital Project requires an additional £150,000 due to higher than anticipated tender costs and a small change to the scope of the project. A revenue contribution to capital expenditure is requested to fund the additional costs. The delay in the project has meant that the closing of the old Bestwood Lodge Headquarters has been delayed. A request is made to transfer £62,000 from the 2022/23 budget into an earmarked reserves to cover the expected costs in 2023/24;
- e) Additional training costs have occurred as a result of training staff in anticipation of industrial action and also covering some vacant posts, so a virement of £50,000 is requested from the whole-time training budget;
- f) Additional premises costs are outlined within the report and will result in an overspend of approximately £42,000. The required planned maintenance work at Stockhill Fire Station is anticipated to cost a further £50,000, totalling £170,000 for maintenance works which cannot be delayed;
- g) A new command support vehicle is due to be purchased in 2023/24. The vehicle has a long lead-in time, so to ensure delivery as scheduled approval is sought to place a pre-order for the chassis now to ensure the completed vehicle can be delivered when it is needed (next year), and to achieve the best possible price. It is noted that this is in effect only an allocation of funding and payment is only made on receipt of the completed vehicle.

Committee members' questions were responded to as follows:

- h) Whilst members may be concerned at the use of revenue to fund capital, particularly as this is not common practice in private business, if the underspend in this year's revenue budget were to be utilised, it would reduce next year's borrowing requirements. The Service is keen to keep borrowing to a minimum. This solution reduces the need for capital borrowing, which is more efficient, particularly regarding current interest rates and the longer term impact over the next 10 years. It is not efficient for the Service to hold underspend reserves whilst paying high interest rates.;
- i) Budgets were reduced to achieve the £2 million of in year savings, which included lowering the maintenance budget, however, there has been an unusual number of

circumstances requiring attention. The £120,000 proposed increase in maintenance would bring the maintenance budget back to its originally proposed figure, however, the additional £50,000 for the necessary works at Stockhill Lane Fire Station is a further cost;

- j) Once pay awards are announced the benefit of the initial underspend of £900,000 is likely to be reduced to approximately £250,000;
- k) The underspend on staffing is a deliberate approach of holding vacancies within a mixture of whole-time and support staff posts to prevent the need for future redundancies once the structure proposal was developed. This is causing additional work pressures and stress to and for existing staff, some of whom have now left the Service. It is evident that this level of vacancies within the current structure cannot be sustained which does not support the suggestion that having operated below number for some period, this can become the accepted staffing level;
- l) With regard to using the revenue underspend to fund capital, members concerns that it doesn't sit right regarding the context of entering into consultation focused on reductions in services due to lack of revenue, and yet using revenue to fund capital, is noted. However, if not utilised, the underspend will feed into general reserves, and would only provide a temporary saving next year. The alternative is to use the underspend to prevent the need for borrowing, which will have a greater financial impact in future years with the savings on interest charges. Utilising the underspend is recommended;

Members of the committee commented with gratitude on the goodwill of remaining staff who are temporarily coping with the additional workload caused by unfilled vacancies.

Resolved

- 1) to note the contents of the report;**
- 2) to approve a temporary virement of £50,000 from the whole-time pay underspend to fund additional training costs (as detailed in section 2.9 of the report);**
- 3) to approve a temporary virement of £170k from the whole-time pay underspend to fund critical premises related projects that need to be addressed (as detailed in section 2.10 of the report and further elaborated to in the meeting to fund the necessary works at Stockhill Fire Station);**
- 4) to approve a £62k contribution to earmarked reserves to cover security costs at the former headquarters at Bestwood Lodge which were initially anticipated in 2022/23 but will now be incurred in 2023/24 (as detailed in section 2.10 of the report);**
- 5) to approve the increase in the Joint HQ project of £150k due to additional work being required (as detailed in section 2.27 of the report) to be funded by a Revenue Contribution to Capital of £150k;**

- 6) **to increase the rostering project budget by £20k to be funded from Earmarked Reserves;**
- 7) **to approve slippage of £755k relating to the Arial Ladder Platforms (ALPs) to be slipped into future years (as detailed in section 2.39 of the report);**
- 8) **to approve the placing of an order for a support unit chassis in advance of approval of 2023/24 capital programme.**

12 2020/21 Audited Final Accounts

Becky Smeathers, Head of Finance and Treasurer to the Authority, presented the report and highlighted the following points:

- a) The Authority had considered the accounts at its meeting in May 2022, prior to the completion of the audit. It was agreed to delegate the approval for any superficial changes to Becky Smeathers, Head of Finance and Treasurer to the Authority, and that any changes of a significant nature would be submitted to the Fire Authority for consideration;
- b) The audit has now been completed and there have been no amendments made to the accounts since the Fire Authority considered the accounts, however, the 'going concern' disclosure is required to be updated;
- c) The PSSA has now appointed sufficient auditors for the 2023/24 audits, but client allocations are yet to be made. A 150% increase in audit charges is anticipated, which is likely to total in excess of £100,000, but there is potential that 'new burdens' funding may be available from Central Government to contribute towards this;
- d) The lateness of completing the audit is still an issue as it is one year behind and the new auditors will not be able to start their audit until Ernst Young has completed its audit;
- e) Member suggestions that due to the delays, it would not be unreasonable to request a fee reduction are noted, however, the PSSA has stated that there is no come-back or penalty for poor service delivery as allowances have to be made for gathering information, for which the auditors can't be penalised. This has been raised as a significant issue but PSSA believe that if penalties were to be factored into the contracts, then Auditors wouldn't want to bid for the contracts;
- f) Nationally there is a significant lack of fully qualified Auditors, which adds to the pressure of those currently operating and it will take time for new Auditors to be trained up to work at Local Authority level, which is quite complex. In addition there are new legislative requirements. There does not appear to be any easy and quick solution.

Resolved to note the audited Statement of Accounts for 2020/21, as Attached at Appendix A to the report.

13 Unaudited Final Accounts 2021/22

Becky Smeathers, Head of Finance and Treasurer to the Authority, introduced the report which presents the 2021/22 draft Statement of Accounts of Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Authority to the Fire Authority prior to audit.

These have been authorised for upload to the internet. The outturn report as of June provided £194,000 underspend and it was proposed to transfer £163,000 to reserves but then found that this figure had already been moved across and was accounted for in the £194,000. The general fund position was understated by £163,000 in the June report and the underspend has now been corrected. General fund reserves figure stands at £5,189,000, and earmarked reserves £4.853m.

Resolved to note the draft Statement of Accounts for 2021/22, as attached at Appendix A to the report.

14 Corporate Risk Management and Management of Occupational Road Risk

Leila Henry - Head of Risk, Assurance and Operational Training, presented the report which provides an overview of the Corporate Risk Management Process, including the current version of the Corporate Risk Register.

The following points were highlighted and members' questions responded to by officers in attendance:

- a) The risk factor around the Service providing a balanced budget for 2023/24 has been escalated from high to very high due to external national and global factors such as rapidly rising inflation, the funding of pay awards, and the ability to plan effectively over the medium term due to annual funding allocations;
- b) The efficiency strategy, which was presented to full Fire Authority, sets out the mitigating action proposed by the Service to address the budget shortfall which is anticipated to be £3.2m by April 2023;
- c) If the Futures 2025 efficiency programme is not implemented, there is a risk that the service will not be able to set a balanced budget;
- d) Following the McCloud finding with regard to firefighters pension scheme, this was escalated at the April meeting from high to very high dissolution from central government is still awaited, resulting in a local financial risk;
- e) Employee engagement and the potential for industrial action around the national pay agreement has been escalated from high to very high. Although an offer of a 5% increase has now been made and is being considered by the trades union members, Trades Unions are recommending it is rejected, so the Service's planning for industrial action continues;

- f) The risk around workforce sustainability has been raised from high to very high due to difficulties in recruiting and high staff turn-over in some areas. Operational staff are also below number whilst the outcome of the Futures 2025 programme is awaited;
- g) Insurance market is hardening which will affect next year's premiums, particularly around cyber insurance, further to the ten-fold increase of this year's premiums. This is not unique to the Service, but across all sectors, partly due to the increased remote working of staff. As a result of the massive increase in premiums and the level of restrictions of the cyber insurance policies, the decision was taken to terminate the cyber insurance as it wasn't providing the level of cover required, and the resulting saving has been invested in internal security and risk mitigation measures;
- h) Externally driven risk can only be mitigated against as the Service has no power to influence external factors;
- i) With regard to staffing, the Service do a lot of workforce planning and do respond to gaps where they are identified. The impact on experience levels of operational staff was carefully considered prior to introducing the recruitment freeze. Experience gaps have emerged previously during recruitment delays, but officers are confident in the Service being able to train to the required levels and provide a high quality service and the alternative options were limited;
- j) With regard to the impact of rising interest rates on the Service, all borrowing is fixed rate for the term of the loan. A presumption of 3% interest rate rise was anticipated for future borrowing, but will obviously need to be reassessed for any new borrowing;

Members commented:

The Fire Minister needs to be alerted to member's concerns at elevation of risk and the impact on the Service.

- k) Whilst there is sympathy for the current situation, the Service will struggle to pay 5% increase, and anything more will be a massive struggle. It needs to be understood that the money isn't there;
- l) Although financially the reasoning is understood, there is concern about the ongoing recruitment freeze with regard to the continuation of service and experience, as there needs to be a flow of people coming into the service as others retire or leave;
- m) It is important that all members of the Fire Authority are fully aware of the rising risk levels, including around operational staff, and so this information needs to be submitted to the Full Fire Authority. Not political but we need to resolve. These concerns also need to be raised with the Fire Minister and pressure maintained to resolve them.

Resolved:

- 1) to note the most recent version of the Corporate Risk Register and the work ongoing to mitigate the risk to the Authority;**

- 2) **to note the high level of risk and uncertainty associated with the current operating environment, and the subsequent impact on risk to both the Authority and the Service;**
- 3) **for a report on Corporate Risk and its management to be presented to the Full Fire Authority to ensure that all members are aware of the current circumstances.**

15 Exclusion of the Public

Resolved to exclude the public from the meeting during consideration of the remaining item in accordance with Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, under Schedule 12A, Part 1, on the basis that, having regard to all the circumstances, the public interest in maintaining an exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

16 Sale of the Former Fire Station Site - Worksop

Terry Scott, Head of Procurement and Resources, presented the report.

Resolved to approve the recommendations as set out in the report.

17 Disposal of the Former Headquarters Site at Bestwood Lodge

Terry Scott, Head of Procurement and Resources, presented the report.

Resolved to approve the recommendations as set out in the report and added to in the meeting.

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Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire and Rescue Authority Policy and Strategy Committee

**Minutes of the meeting held at Joint Fire / Police HQ, Sherwood Lodge, Arnold,
Nottingham, NG5 8PP on 11 November 2022 from 10.01 am - 10.51 am**

Membership

Present

Councillor Michael Payne (Chair)
Councillor Patience Uloma Ifediora
Councillor Mike Quigley MBE
Councillor Jonathan Wheeler
Councillor Tom Hollis (substitute for Councillor Jason Zadrozny)

Absent

Councillor Sybil Fielding
Councillor Jason Zadrozny

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

Craig Parkin, Chief Fire Officer
Becky Smeathers, Head of Finance and Treasurer to the Authority,
Malcolm Townroe, Clark and Monitoring Officer
Mick Sharman, Assistant Chief Fire Officer
Leila Henry) Risk Assurance and Operational Training
Matt Reavill)
Catherine Ziane-Pryor, Governance Officer

8 Apologies for Absence

Councillor Sybil Fielding
Councillor Jason Zadrozny (Councillor Tom Hollis substituting)

9 Declarations of Interest

None.

10 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 June 2022 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

11 Local Firefighter Pension Annual Report 2021/22

In her role as Firefighter Pension Scheme Manager, Becky Smeathers, Head of Finance and Treasurer to the Authority, presented the report.

Highlighted points included the following:

- a) Following the findings of the McCloud case, in April 2022 the Policy and Strategy Committee agreed for members of the firefighter's pension scheme to be treated in line with a previously agreed Framework for handling immediate detriment cases, despite the Framework now being withdrawn. In October 2023 legislation is expected to determine the final procedure, following which, adjustments will need to be made. The majority of older cases have been addressed with the exception of a small minority were circumstances such as divorce, which are not covered by the memorandum of understanding, and as such will have to wait for the legislation to be passed before being progressed;
- b) The Matthews and O'Brien case finding, regarding the modified scheme, enabled On-Call firefighters to retrospectively join the 2006 pension scheme back to original start of employment dates. Finding information to evidence employment has been difficult due to data protection legislation requirements, which prevents the retention of personal information, along with changes in pension providers. There is still a lot of work outstanding regarding this area. Links with the FBU are being used to support previous members to come forward and place claims. Again, legislation is expected in October 2023;
- c) Due to the additional workload, authority was provided to recruit additional expertise but no applications were received;
- d) The proposal to establish a joint Pension Board with Leicestershire, Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire is now progressing since the new administrators are embedded and West Yorkshire are willing to support the transition. Such an arrangement will help prevent expertise and knowledge gaps emerging as is the current situation;
- e) Scheme valuations and the cost cap mechanism, in 2012 there was a significant shortfall in the scheme and there then followed a significant increased employer contribution for which central government grant funding of £2.3m was provided as a one-off payment. There has since been a cap applied but the Service now funds £0.5m annually;
- f) The 2016 valuation was suspended until the finding of the McCloud case, and the implications on valuation were clear. However, there is now a judicial review to be taken to court in January querying whether the cost of the McCloud finding should be included in the valuation cap. This will also have implications on employer contributions.
- g) Partly dependant on the findings, over the next year employer costs are likely to significantly increase and it is unclear if the Service will receive any 'new burdens' funding to cover this cost. This is a significant risk to the Service;

- h) Approval is being sought to amend the Service's pension abatement policy regarding the amount of pension/wages that retired employees can be paid if returning to work for the Service. The LGA has now advised that there should not be a blanket policy regarding abatement and cases should be considered individually to identify if there is a clear exceptional benefit to the Service in doing so.

Members' questions were responded to as follows:

- i) It is difficult to specify what 'benefit to the service' may involve, in general terms, until individual circumstances are known. The decision would be finance based, or if the Service was not able to provide statutory service without the engagement of the individual(s). Providing a different blanket within a rigid framework would not necessarily allow the required flexibility;
- j) The Service needs as many tools as possible to ensure that the required skills can be accessed if required, or accept the operational risk to the Authority and public safety;
- k) All discretionary payments are reported to the Pensions Board, but there is also the option for a Discretions Panel similar to that for the Local Government Pensions Scheme, consisting of the Pension Manager, a member of Human Resources and a PO;
- l) The reality is that more people are leaving than joining the Service and there have been incidents in other occupations whereby senior officers leave and then are re-engaged and receive not only their pension but also a wage, which combined is a significant sum. How grievances and challenges will be managed needs further discussion and consideration;
- m) People returning to this Fire Service once left is quite common but pension abatement would really only be applied to the more specialist roles such as Fire Protection Building Inspection which require long-term specialist training, and not necessarily firefighters where new applications are more forthcoming;
- n) An issue has also been raised with regard to those who leave are not then paying into the pension scheme, whereby new employees are;
- o) During Covid some ex-full time firefighters were providing additional hours which then tipped over the abatement level whilst providing a good service to the community, but all returners are warned that this can happen, so should be aware;
- p) The perception of setting a precedent will be considered but potentially there is always the risk of challenge to the Service.

Member's comments included:

- q) It is requested that a framework by which benefit to the service can be determined, otherwise decisions will be open to interpretation and leaves the manager of the scheme open to challenge. It would not be effective for the Policy and Strategy Committee to have to approve individual applications so it is suggested that Becky Smeathers, as Pension Scheme Manager and Craig Parkin as Chief Fire Officer, set out a framework with a clear rationale, to be submitted to the Policy Strategy

Committee for approval so it can be clearly seen on what basis the exceptional decisions are made when reported on an annual basis;

- r) There is no value on the policy having a serious detriment of the quality of life of those returning to the employment of the Service, so the provision of a framework/rationale is required.

Resolved

- 1) **to note of the activity of the Pension Board and Pension Scheme Manager along with the update on current pension issues;**
- 2) **to approve a change in the Abatement Policy to allow discretion around abatement to be considered in exceptional in exceptional circumstances where there is a clear benefit to the Service in doing so;**
- 3) **for the Pension Scheme Manager to submit to a future meeting of the Policy and Strategy Committee, a framework/rationale by which discretionary abatements will be guided.**

12 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.

13 Exempt Minutes

The exempt minutes of the meeting held on 24 June 2022 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

14 Resilience Update

Matt Reavill, Risk, Assurance and Operational Training, presented the report.

Resolved to agree the recommendations as set out in the report and added to in the meeting.