



Nottinghamshire & City of Nottingham Fire & Rescue Authority

MINUTES of the meeting held at Dunkirk and Beeston Suites - Highfields Fire Station, Hassocks Lane, Beeston, Nottingham. NG9 2GQ on 14 July 2023 from 10.30 am - 12.44 pm

Membership

Present

Councillor Michael Payne (Chair)
Councillor Patience Uloma Ifediora (Vice Chair)
Councillor Liaqat Ali
Councillor Callum Bailey
Councillor Richard Butler
Councillor John Clarke MBE
Councillor Robert Corden
Councillor Sybil Fielding
Councillor Tom Hollis
Councillor Anwar Khan
Councillor Gul Nawaz Khan
Councillor John Lee
Councillor Devontay Okure
Councillor Nick Raine
Councillor Nigel Turner
Councillor Roger Upton
Councillor Jonathan Wheeler

Absent

Councillor Jason Zadrozny
Commissioner Caroline Henry

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

Craig Parkin – Chief Fire Officer
Damien West - Assistant Chief Fire Officer
Mick Sharman - Assistant Chief Fire Officer
Becky Smeathers – Head of Finance and Treasurer to the Authority
Malcolm Townroe – Clerk and Monitoring Officer
Leila Henry - Risk, Resilience and Assurance Manager
Catherine Ziane-Pryor – Governance Officer

8 Apologies for Absence

Police and crime Commissioner Caroline Henry
Jason Zadrozny (personal)

9 Declarations of Interest

None.

10 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 May 2023 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

11 Chair's Announcements

With regard to the horrific incidents which took place on 13 July 2023 in the City, where 3 people were tragically killed, the thoughts of the Service and Authority go out to the families and friends of Barnaby Webber, Grace O'Malley Kumar and Ian Coates.

Members are immensely proud and grateful of how the Service, along with the other emergency responders and the City Council, mobilised in circumstances of uncertain risk.

In addition, our thoughts also go out to the family and friends of Kyle Knowles who was stabbed and killed 26 June 2023 near Highbury Vale tram stop.

Thankfully these incidents are rare but if any Service staff feel the need for support as a result, they are urged to please access the wellbeing support available.

Councillor Nick Raine, on behalf of the City Council, echoed the thanks of the Authority to the Emergency Service responders. The subsequent coming together of the community at the 'Nottingham Together' vigil and hearing victim's families speak with such dignity was extremely moving and powerful.

On 21 June 2023, Iain Hughes, a colleague serving with the West Midlands Fire Service, went missing whilst swimming the English Channel in aid of the Firefighter's Charity, British Heart foundation and Midlands Air Ambulance. Despite the best efforts of Search and Rescue, he is yet to be found. Iain had aimed to raise £21,000 for the charities, the total at this time is in the region of £55,000 and donations can still be made via Iain Hughes' Just Giving page. Our thoughts are with his family, friends and colleagues.

A minute's silence was observed by all those present in honour of Barnaby Webber, Grace O'Malley Kumar, Ian Coates, Kyle Knowles and Iain Hughes.

The Service is extremely proud to again be leading the Nottingham Pride parade with a fire engine. Colleagues will be present promoting fire safety and Service recruitment. This is a huge event for the LBGT+ community and everyone is encouraged to attend.

A Strategic Inclusion Board meeting will be held today at the rising of the Authority, and is open to all members to attend.

12 Revised Procurement Thresholds

Becky Smeathers, Head of Finance and Treasurer to the Authority, presented the report which, as part of the revision of the Fire Authority's Financial Regulations, seeks approval for revision of the Procurement Thresholds, to ensure they are appropriate and relevant. The thresholds were last reviewed in 2012.

The report sets out the proposed revised thresholds against the previously approved thresholds.

Members were assured that although individually set, the proposed thresholds were broadly in line with those of other Fire and Rescue Authorities, and compliant with general standard practice.

Resolved that the updated procurement thresholds are approved and are to be incorporated into the financial procedures of the financial regulations.

13 Treasury Management Annual Report 2022/23

Becky Smeathers, Head of Finance and Treasurer to the Authority, presented the report which provides an update on treasury management activity during the 2022/23 financial year.

The following points were highlighted and members' questions responded to:

- a) The report outlines the definition of Treasury management, the requirements of the Authority with regard to financial regulations, and provides an update of activity against the agreed Treasury Management Strategy;
- b) Borrowing has been driven by the capital programme, of which, £2.2 million has been spent, mainly from a capital receipt;
- c) £6 million was borrowed at the end of 2122, prior to interest rate rises. There has been no need to increase borrowing during 2022/23, which was resulted in increased interest income;
- d) Paragraph 2.30 of the report includes a table of the approved indicators compared to those achieved, of which none were breached and all limits were adhered to;
- e) With regard to the phrasing in paragraph 2.3 intimating that increased inflation is contributed to by pay inflation, some members challenged that this is an incorrect political point. The economic review is provided by the external accountants, but the point is noted.

Resolved to note the update on treasury management activity during the 2022/23 financial year as required under the Local Government Act 2003.

14 Annual Governance Statement 2022/23

Becky Smeathers, Head of Finance and Treasurer to the Authority, presented the report which seeks the approval of the Annual Governance Statement covering the financial year, up to 31st of March 2023, as set out in the report.

The following points were highlighted and members' questions responded to:

- a) The Annual Governance Statement is usually presented alongside the statement of accounts, but due to the ongoing National delays in external audit, this has not been possible and so is presented in advance, with the unaudited accounts available to view

on the Service's Website, having been reviewed by the Finance and Resources Committee;

- b) The Authority is required by statute to approve an annual governance statement which sets out processes and procedures, which enable the Service to function efficiently;
- c) The three main areas of the statement focus on;
 - i. Governance Framework;
 - ii. Effectiveness Review;
 - iii. Conclusion;
- d) Significant assurance has been provided by an Internal Audit review and the report 'acknowledged that effective controls were in place regarding self-assessment, leadership, accountability, long term sustainability and value for money'.

Members welcomed the report and statement which confirms that the Authority is still in a good position when compared to some other Fire and Rescue Service Authorities, adding that members need to ensure that this does not change.

Resolved to approve the Annual Statement of Assurance 2022-23 for publication.

15 Annual Statement of Assurance 2022-23

Leila Henry, Risk, Resilience and Assurance Manager, presented the Annual Statement of Assurance for 2022/23, which sets out how the Service had performed against the six strategic goals of the Community Risk Management Plan, while also providing assurance on financial, governance and operational management.

The following points were highlighted and members' questions responded to:

- a) The statement in its entirety is attached to the report and designed to provide citizens with assurance that the Service is functioning as proposed;
- b) Key highlights from the past 12 months are outlined in report and include:
 - i. Positive external assurance reports, from both OFSTED for the fire fighter apprenticeship, and His Majesty's Inspectorate for Constabulary Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS), both rating the Service as 'good';
 - ii. The ongoing inclusion journey, supporting Pride and ensuring the deaf community has access to 999 calling;
 - iii. Ongoing support and investment in staff and the Service, with the new Incident Command Training Facility, and the new fire station at Worksop;
- c) The report includes information which members may find useful in passing to citizens in the constituencies regarding the activities and achievements of the Fire Service, particularly during a challenging period;

- d) OFSTED inspected the Service for the first time following its registration as an employer provider. External scrutiny took place, the same as any other training provider. It is anticipated that the next Ofsted inspection will be more than two year's away;
- e) Additional functions system have been provided to the community to improve access, all of which have been tested to ensure they are embedded and ready for use;
- f) Under representation is an continuing focus to be addressed by the Service with ongoing recruitment action, specifically targeting underrepresented groups;
- g) Smoke hoods, although not new, when not generally in use until following the Grenfell Tower tragedy, have been used to support the evacuation of multiple persons. Initially additional funding was made available by Central Government to assist with this purchase;
- h) With regard to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI), the Service does have an integrated action plan which is currently under review. It's acknowledged that the culture of the Service as a whole does have a long way to go with regard to representation, attitude and behaviour. The complete buy-in to the equalities agenda needs to be adopted by everyone, including elected members and all staff, including the challenging of inappropriate behaviour. There are mechanisms in place, including the Strategic Inclusion Board which members are welcome to attend and have the opportunity to directly engage with the EDI networks. There is also an inclusion Performance Group within the organisation. Any information can be shared with members on request.

Members of the Authority congratulated the Service for:

- i. the Worksop Fire Station which has excellent facilities;
- ii. the Service's attendance over a long period at the Ranskill incident, for which a great deal of respect was expressed from the local community;
- iii. on achieving a good rating from the Ofsted inspection of the firefighter apprenticeship scheme;
- iv. the impressive achievement of the Service responding to a 12% increase in incidents, particularly as the workforce has reduced by up to 40 persons.

Resolved to approve the Annual Statement of Assurance 2022-23 for publication.

16 Resourcing to Risk

Craig Parkin, Chief Fire Officer, introduced the report which had been requested by members to support the Efficiencies Strategy (Futures25) and the resulting associated risks to the community from the £3.3 million deficit in funding at that time.

The deficit has since been massively reduced but there is still a focus on resourcing to risk for the current £1.2 funding deficit. There are very few feasible options to address the risk within the available budget, but these must be carefully considered.

Damien West, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, presented the report, which seeks to discharge the task allocated by members to address the resourcing to risk concerns, most significantly highlighted at the Ashfield Fire Station.

The following points were highlighted:

- a) the tree main elements considered are
 - i. Resourcing to Risk;
 - ii. CRMP commitments;
 - iii. the available budget;
- b) the report is based on the risk evidence provided from the Independent Fire Cover Review and the current resourcing model, with the re-instating of 24 hour crewing;
- c) To achieve the 24 hour crewing model, an additional 12 additional posts will be required at a cost of £600,000 per year, which, with the budget deficit, is not viable, and so amendments must be made within the current establishment of 356 without impacting on the level of fire cover across the City and County;
- d) it is proposed that crewing models be amended to a ridership of 24 personnel for a single pump station, and 44 personnel at a double pump station, with a minimum crew of 4;
- e) 65% of responses were crewed by 4 firefighters overall which rose to 85% at the height of the summer response demand;
- f) This will result in an increased crewing risk with the occurrence of sickness or other abstractions from ridership, but the Service does have mechanisms in place to support this, which would be more likely to impact on multiple appliance responses;
- g) Productive hours will be increased and the average attendance time for second appliances is likely to remain under 6 minutes;
- h) Current operational procedures will also be reviewed to ensure the safety of firefighters and our communities;
- i) 4 operational posts will be released to other areas within the Service;
- j) Changes will take a project based approach led by ACFO West, with implementation by the end of November 2023, with regular monitoring and updates;
- k) Ongoing monitoring, including Quality Impact Assessments will be undertaken regarding attendance, training and resources, with monitoring of any impact on communities and the workforce;
- l) The additional cost of reinstating 24 hour cover at Ashfield is £36,310 per year, the responsibility for which has been delegated to the Chief Fire Officer, and can be managed from current crewing levels;
- m) The Authority does have a statutory duty to provide a balanced budget;
- n) Section 8 to the report sets out identified risks associate to the recommendation.

The Chair invited the formally submitted questions from representatives from the Fire Brigades Union:

FBU question: Resourcing to Risk – Para 2.7

The current crewing model in Nottinghamshire allows for additional hours to cover sickness, maternity, retirements, and other gaps in the ridership. These new proposals will reduce the number of hours available by 28,634, leaving us with a deficit of 11,875 hours.

Not only does this remove all our capacity to cover deficiencies in the ridership, but it also removes our ability to maintain standard crewing levels even with the full establishment levels listed within the policy.

Will this fire authority commit to increasing the establishment by 12 to properly crew Ashfield without affecting the level of fire cover provided elsewhere?

The Chair responded:

The report of the Chief Fire Officer, and the proposed deployment of resources acknowledges that there will be increased occasions where appliances are crewed with 4 personnel. However, the approach being proposed does mean that the Service is not adopting an approach of permanently crewing with 4 personnel and maintains the flexibility of self-rostering for personnel. The Service also has well-established processes to managing the levels of ridership and availability of both wholetime, and on-call, appliances.

As outlined in the medium-term financial strategy, and referenced in this report, the Service faces continued uncertainty in the levels of funding for coming years and there is an anticipated deficit for next year in the region of £1.2 million. The approach proposed by the Chief Fire Officer addresses the requirement of using the current resources in the most effective way to address the identified risk in the Ashfield area, whilst maintaining current levels of fire cover across the City and County.

FBU question: Resourcing to Risk – Para 2.5

2.5 of the report states that there will be an additional cost of around £600,000 to create additional posts at Ashfield.

This figure does not consider that current recruitment plans mean up to 50 firefighters will be on apprentice wages by the end of 2024.

These individuals are on substantially lower wages than a competent firefighter.

In addition, due to current establishment vacancy levels we believe the majority of costs can be contained within current budgets in the short term.

Does the Fire Authority commit to use reserves to cover the slight increase in costs until the true financial implications can be seen?

The Chair responded:

The Service does not currently employ any firefighters on an apprenticeship wage and has, in fact, recently taken steps to ensure that all new firefighters are paid at a higher, development rate of pay from their starting date with the Service. The Service is also undertaking actions to address some of the vacancies in the wholetime establishment within this financial year. It would not be prudent, nor appropriate, to commit to additional expenditure that would present an even greater deficit than is currently forecast, and which would present a greater risk to the Authority in delivering its statutory duty of ensuring a balanced budget.

The use of reserves is not sustainable and is not advised by the Head of Finance and Treasurer as an appropriate approach to funding established posts within the Service's structure.

Members and the Chief Fire Officer will continue to lobby for a more realistic and longer-term funding settlement for the Service, as this is the key to a sustainable future that ensures the safety of our communities.

This report has been a difficult piece of work but provides a balance between the legal requirement to present a balanced budget, against supporting the communities of the Ashfield District.

FBU question: Resourcing to Risk – Para 2.12

Whilst the FBU support the intent behind the proposal to reinstate wholetime night cover at Ashfield with the addition of 12 posts, we do not understand why they are at the same time looking to remove a further 4 posts from the ridership.

When day shift crewing was first implemented at Retford & Ashfield it was done so with the removal of 44 posts from the ridership. It is completely unacceptable to reinstate this cover, lowering ridership figures at all other wholetime stations whilst simultaneously removing an additional 4 posts.

This will lead to serious and dangerous shortfalls in the crewing of other appliances and affect firefighter safety.

Will the fire authority commit to keeping these 4 posts in the ridership rather than see them reallocated to other departments?

The Chair responded:

The disposition and direction of resources is a matter for the professional judgement of the Chief Fire Officer, providing advice to the Fire Authority. The Service has many commitments to its communities in its Community Risk Management Plan, and it is the responsibility of the Chief Fire Officer to ensure that the available resources of the Service are used effectively to address all of these.

I know that the Fire Brigades Union are committed to the work relating to developing the culture in the Service and efforts to increasing the establishment figure through positive action and recruitment over the coming months. It is vital that these areas of work are resourced effectively, whilst also presenting opportunities for the development of operational colleagues, by offering alternative roles within the Service.

It should also be noted that all operational personnel maintain their operational competencies and remain available to be deployed if required, even when their role is

outside of the operational ridership, therefore maintaining a resilience and support for the availability of fire appliances when required.

The Chair thanked the FBU for the constructive way in which it has engaged on a difficult issue for everyone involved, stating that the good relationship with the Trades Unions is much valued. The Chair assured all present that he would continue to work with Trades Unions for longer term settlements from Central Government and the work against the way in which this Service has been singled out disproportionately for funding cuts over several years.

Other contributions included:

- o) on behalf of himself, Councillor Jason Zadrozny and the community of Ashfield, Councillor Tom Hollis thanked everyone involved in working towards today's decision. In Councillor Jason Zadrozny's unavoidable absence, Councillor Hollis read the following on behalf of Councillor Zadrozny, Leader of Ashfield Council;

‘I would like to thank the thousands of residents who have joined the Ashfield Independent campaign for a full time Fire Station. We've always said that the decision to move to a part-time station in 2018 was the wrong one. The Ashfield Independents instigated the Ashfield Fire Service Review and led Ashfield's response to the consultation, working with communities to provide positive results and make life safer. This is why we do the job we do and why as the Council Leader, I'm delighted with the decision to be taken today’;
- p) Councillor Hollis added that the cross-party working of Fire Authority Members for the benefit of the community has been phenomenal, as has the activity and sensitive responses by the Fire Service to community fear following local Ashfield tragedies. Disappointment was expressed at the lack of involvement by the Ashfield MP regarding the consultation, but the hard work of everyone else is acknowledged and appreciated;
- q) Cllr Nick Raine welcomed the decision as a positive move for the Ashfield Area but expressed concern that within risk management implications listed in the report, risk is still recognised as ‘mitigated in part’ with regard to the availability of resources. With funding being consistently cut the need to reform is ongoing, and whilst this is a significant reform, there are still problems and there is real concern around the increasing effects and pressures on the workforce, particularly as numbers are reducing but workload increasing, including ridership regularly reducing from 6 to 4. This makes some members of the Authority uneasy, primarily regarding firefighter safety, but on a broader level with regard to hours and overtime and the increasing complexity of many premises, specifically within the City, but with fewer firefighters riding, this is a grave concern;
- r) The CFO welcomed the scrutiny and being held to account by members, highlighting that policies have changed over many years, assuring members that this is not an outright policy decision. The risk to communities has been considered and whilst there is less risk to communities, the professional people who deal with that risk will be carrying additional risk but in a different way. Many other Services already have already implemented a ridership of 4 policy, and have been successfully operating it for several years. This Service had not implemented such a policy, but to achieve the required coverage, this is the only feasible option within the current financial restraints. Incident command training will be reviewed to take into account the changing risk profile. The Service is scrutinised on many levels beyond blue light response, including culture, which is not specifically

resourced, along with Equalities Diversity and Inclusion, Building Safety Inspection, and Fire Protection; which all requires resourcing. Whilst this is a positive outcome for Ashfield, the decision affects every station across the county. Nationally, consideration is required with regard to crewing models and how they are funded;

- s) Councillor Wheeler, as Group Leader of the Conservative membership, welcomed the lowering of the response times across the county as a result of this decision, acknowledging the stated risks and requested an update report in six months' time to the November meeting and then ongoing, to include response times, to ensure that any required adjustments are highlighted and acted upon promptly;
- t) The CFO noted that wholetime availability monitoring and evaluation is already taking place and reported to the Community Safety Committee along with On-Call availability, but that a report focused on this decision could be provided.

Resolved

- 1) to support and endorse the approach of the Chief Fire Officer in the deployment of resources to risk;**
- 2) to agree to receive further updates at full Authority meetings relating to this workstream.**

17 Futures25 - Phase 2 update

Leila Henry, Head of Risk Assurance and Operational Training, presented the report which provides an update on the progression to phase 2 of the Service's efficiency and improvement programme, Futures25.

The following points were highlighted:

- a) Phase 1 focused on efficiency, but due to changes in budget deficit, thankfully not all proposals were required to be implemented;
- b) The programme is also a vehicle for delivering service improvement and redesign, for which there is a specific budget allocation;
- c) The operating context of the Fire Service nationally is changing very quickly, so this needs to be taken into consideration, including the necessity to quickly and dynamically respond to new and emerging risks. In addition there is an increasing expectation for the sector to improve EDI values, culture and leadership within the Service, and so these National priorities need to be included within the program to ensure appropriate resourcing and speedy responses;
- d) National expectations from the Inspectorate and Home Office have included the requirement to provide efficiency and productivity plans, which include detailed financial and quality information on progress. The LGA have proposed that 2% of non-pay efficiencies, and 3% of productivity increases can be achieved within the futures 25 proposed implementation schedule into 2024/25;
- e) The report sets out the strategic aims and objectives for phase 2 of Futures 25, including four key work streams;

- i. Governance Review;
 - ii. Revenue Budget Management;
 - iii. Service Redesign;
 - iv. Culture, EDI and Leadership.
- f) The governance review will consider the governance and meeting structures of the Service to ensure there is an appropriate amount of control and risk mitigation around decisions ensuring that risks are assured at the highest level and the responsibilities dissolved to the most appropriate level in the organisation. This will enable a rapid and dynamic response to national demands and ensure that community outcomes are as good as they can be;
- g) Revenue budget management includes the requirement to achieve 2% non-pay efficiencies, but to date, the Service has already identified £1.1 million worth of savings, which is in excess of the 2% required efficiency, although some savings can only be considered temporary to vacancies. Non-cashable savings will be monitored closely. Assurance is provided that to address the predicted budget deficit of the next financial year, every effort will be made to achieve non-pay efficiencies prior to consideration of any pay budget alterations;
- h) Service redesign is the most significant area of improvement work. It will identify where there are interfaces which can be streamlined to improve efficiency, including potential investment in IT systems;
- i) The workforce has been consulted throughout and it's reassuring that areas identified for improvement by the workforce have also been identified through the program team. Several areas of improvement will start this year as part of the Annual Delivery Plan, potentially with Futures 25 enabling additional funding to be accessed to implement the changes;
- j) Any redesign activities taking place will be done in conjunction with the workforce to generate a ground-up approach for improvement. The people who hold the answer to the Service improving are the people who are doing the job every day. This will be supported by an internally appointed organisation development professional to support workforce engagement;
- k) Culture, EDI and Leadership has been added as the fourth element as people are key to the successful implementation of change, whilst also ensuring that the necessary resourcing is available and ensure that work will progress with the expected speed;
- l) The responsibility of the Service is to respond in a balanced manner to different risks, including emergency response. There has been a significant reduction in number of support staff over recent years, resulting in very few people working very hard to deliver services to communities. However, if the Service doesn't continue to evolve and progress ways of working, there will be a degradation of services;
- m) Workforce engagement is key to the success of the program, ensuring that station based staff can share and identify areas which will make their time more efficient in supporting communities, including risk mitigation beyond that of the frontline. The amount and variety of tasks expected from the frontline workforce has expanded in recent years, but

to the benefit of communities, both in identifying emerging risks and working to address or respond to them.

Comments of members included:

- n) The need to make efficiencies is understood, £900k cost of implementation futures 25, makes members uneasy when asked to make £600k cuts on frontline services;
- o) Members welcome the approach and consideration of efficient investment and suggested that consideration should also be given to withdrawing elements of work, which may not be wholly necessary, particularly as many staff feel that the authority is asking too much of staff;
- p) Central government is directing the tasks for which of firefighters need to be responsible, and yet is not providing additional funds in response to the additional responsibilities;
- q) The lack of funding and investment from Central Government is having a huge impact on the Service. It would be a struggle to determine which areas of work the Service should retreat from as is believed that the Service is currently working as leanly as possible to meet the requirements of the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) commitments;
- r) The CRPM sets out what citizens can expect from the service and the commitment from the authority. There is an opportunity to look again at the CRMP in advance of the new plan to be introduced in April 2025, within the available budget;
- s) There still needs to be ambition for the Service which is currently achieving very well in difficult circumstances;
- t) Efficiency must continue to be examined and work prioritised;
- u) Officers of the Futures25 Programme Team were thanked for their work;
- v) It is acknowledged that without support staff, the Service could not operate, and so adequate investment is required.

Resolved

- 1) to note the content of the report;**
- 2) to agree to receive future updates on the Futures 25 Programme.**

18 His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services

Damien West, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, presented the report which provides an overview of national reports issued by his Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS), and provides an update on inspection preparation activities by this Service.

The following points were highlighted and members' questions responded to:

- a) Report covers two key areas, the first report of the new Chief Inspector Fire rescue and secondly the commencement of the third round of inspections by the inspector and the plans preparing for the inspection later this year;
- b) Stay to the fire report was published in January and reviews, inspections of the previous year;
- c) Three inspection areas covered are efficiency, people and effectiveness;
- d) Overall, there had been a decrease in efficiency with regard to:
 - i. resource management and affordability across the sector,
 - ii. with the range of issues including inadequate preplanning the collaborative arrangements;
 - iii. lack of fully developed saving plans;
 - iv. staff shortages,
 - v. issues with resource management;
 - vi. challenges associated with funding and governance arrangements;
- e) It was stated that most Services could improve their productivity through using more effective performance management, such as utilising whole time firefighters more prevention activity, and the more efficient use of technology;
- f) National productivity targets have been developed to support the use of whole time firefighter capacity in prevention and protection tasks which linked to the local community risk management plan (CRMP);
- g) Effectiveness was examined within five the key areas, with most services lacking a link between the CRMP and daily operations, whilst responding well to incidents, but with capacity to improve some response standards;
- h) Fire fatalities have increased nationally, reflecting the need to raise fire prevention to a higher priority within prevention strategies. Fire protection improvements across the sector following the Grenfell Tower incident were acknowledged;
- i) The common challenges of recruiting staff, particularly to specialist roles, and diversifying work forces through recruitment and positive action was recognised;
- j) Some services were recognised for the risk critical training, and efforts to develop training in other skills, including leadership, management, equality, diversity and inclusion;
- k) Following the spotlight report on values and culture, an immediate sector wide response is swiftly required. This service submitted a report to its human resources committee, outlining the responsive approach;
- l) report sets out this Service's inspection preparation program for the third round of inspections which are due to begin in January 2023;
- m) variations on previous inspection approaches are outlined in the report, along with how the Service is planning to respond;

- n) The inspectorate will undertake a full review with advance notice provided and a dedicated contact in HMICFR with a good 2-way relationship with allot of scrutiny with an open approach;
- o) Performance management should be considered in the broader sense of business management and not just the management of poor individual performance.

Members commented:

- p) Welcomes the preparedness of the Service for the inspection and the additional of an extra grade;
- q) There is concern that the Service is expected to improve through performance management but the influences responsible for performance impacting elements, such as pay and a shortage of staffing, are outside of the resourcing ability of the Service. If the Service doesn't have enough staff or funding, performance will be impacted, which is not appropriate;
- r) Performance management referred to in the report needs to be explained in more detail in the Service's reports and communications, even though it originates from the nationally issued State of Fire report;
- s) Staff on the ground have told members that it takes an unreasonable length of time to refer vulnerable people to the Service for Fire/Home safety checks, even though there is a good working relationship with partners.

Resolved to note the report.

19 Mobilisation System Update

Mick Sharman, Assistant Chief Fire Officer for Strategic Collaboration for Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Services, presented the report which provides an update on the progress to replace the current tri-service call handling and mobilisation system.

The following points were highlighted and responses provided to member's questions;

- a) All Fire Services have a statutory duty to ensure they are operating an appropriate 999 call handling and response system;
- b) The current system requires replacement and is only being maintained by Systell, the provider, until October 2024, by which time a replacement system must be procured and implemented;
- c) Within the last few months, Leicestershire Fire and Rescue has given notice that it is withdrawing from the current tri-service arrangement when the contract concludes and will be working independently of Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Services to procure its own new mobilising system;
- d) With just 2 partners taking part on the procurement, the risks are greater to each party, and so too the cost is predicted to be higher, particularly as existing suppliers are

currently quoting prices which are significantly higher than the allocated budget. This is a serious concern;

- e) A dedicated working group is desegregating the current tri-service agreement, amending business continuity management arrangements, call fail-over processes and call management practices in busy periods, such as spate, and working to protect the interests of Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire's Services;
- f) With 2 rather than 3 partners, the required system is less complicated, particularly as operation will be from only one control room;
- g) Procurement of a new system with additional features including mobile data terminals, which are crucial for communication and mapping safety, and improved security connectivity is being undertaken in lots;
- h) Tenders were published in May 2023 and it is anticipated that the successful suppliers being announced in September/October 2023, but with high demand and few capable suppliers, alongside the withdrawal of Leicestershire, the end costs are uncertain, although £2 million has been budgeted as an earmarked reserve by Nottinghamshire, it is now anticipated that the final cost will be far in excess of this estimated figure;
- i) There is potential to enter into new partnership agreements with other Fire and Rescue Services, but none have been identified as of yet;
- j) The Joint control Centre receives 47,000 calls per year and supports incidents, not just in dispatching assistance, but is a vital resource for the Service to respond effectively;
- k) The level of funding required will depend on the type of system. Some systems will be self-hosted and so require capital outlay, whilst some of the Cloud-based systems will be revenue costs based;
- l) Legal advice is ongoing regarding the procurement, liabilities and contingency planning if it is not be possible to secure a new system prior to the 2024 contract end with Systelle, including the potential to further extend the existing provision temporarily;
- m) Under current tri-service arrangements, cross-county boarder communications and response are seamless. Following the contract end in October 2024, Fire and Rescue Services will continue to co-respond, but there may be additional considerations to the co-ordinated response agreement, but these are likely to be little more than a few minutes to determine a course of action or referral;

There are no significant liabilities for which Leicestershire are likely to be responsible for once the tri-service contract with Systell is closed.

Members commented:

- n) the importance of an effective system is appreciated so the details of any alternative contingency arrangements, should securing a system by before 2024 is not possible, should be shared with members;

- o) A UK supplier would be welcomed but it is appreciated that even companies based in the UK are international suppliers;
- p) It is a very real concern that the costings will not be known until the tenders are submitted.

Resolved to note the report.

20 Committee Outcomes

Resolved to note the minutes of the following meetings, provided for information:

Community Safety Committee 24 March 2023; 09 June 2023

Human Resources Committee 31 March 2023; 16 June 2023

Finance and Resources Committee 21 April 2023; 23 June 2023

Policy and Strategy Committee 28 April 2023