



Nottinghamshire & City of Nottingham Fire & Rescue Authority

MINUTES of the meeting held at Joint Fire / Police HQ, Sherwood Lodge, Arnold, Nottingham, NG5 8PP on 22 September 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 Anwar Khan
Councillor Gul Nawaz Khan
Councillor John Lee
Councillor Devontay Okure
Councillor Nick Raine
Councillor Nigel Turner
Councillor Roger Upton
Councillor Jonathan Wheeler
Councillor Jason Zadrozny

Absent

Councillor Tom Hollis

Police and Crime Commissioner Caroline Henry

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

Craig Parkin - Chief Fire Officer
Candida Brudenell – Assistant Chief Fire Officer
Damien West - Assistant Chief Fire Officer
Mick Sharman - Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Strategic Collaboration for Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Services)
Becky Smeathers - Head of Finance and Treasurer to the Authority
Malcolm Townroe - Clerk and Monitoring Officer to the Authority
Catherine Ziane-Pryor - Governance Officer

21 Apologies for Absence

Tom Hollis (personal)

22 Declarations of Interest

None.

23 Minutes

Available at the next meeting.

24 Chair's Announcements

Sargent Graham Saville – Members will have followed closely the recent news and tragic loss of Sargent Graham Saville, a loss felt across the whole emergency services family. Our continued sympathies are with his family and colleagues at this time. It is a sobering reminder of the dedication blue light services have to communities.

Alex Norris MP – recent announcements to the shadow cabinet saw Nottingham MP, Alex Norris appointed to the role of Shadow Minister for Policing. This clearly provides an opportunity for the Fire Authority to lobby and influence for the interests of the Fire and Rescue Service. A letter will be sent to Alex Norris to arrange a meeting to discuss the challenges faced.

Chair and Chief Officer meeting – Along with the Chief Fire Officer (CFO), the Chair met with our counterparts from Derbyshire as part of a long standing arrangement to build relationships. This forms part of the Futures 25 programme recommendations approved by Members in 2022. From that meeting it was agreed that a joint Member event would be arranged and that the CFO's should develop a vision of closer working for discussion.

His Majesty's Inspector, Lee Freeman – Due to recent changes, the Chair and CFO recently met the Service's new HMI Inspector, Lee Freeman, who also had opportunity to meet with representatives of staff networks and trade unions. The discussions were positive and meaningful in creating a good first impression, particularly as the Service heads towards its next inspection in early 2024.

Asian Fire Service Association (AFSA) conference 2024 – Following discussions with the CFO, AFSA have invited Nottinghamshire to host the 2024 summer conference and the CFO has accepted. This is likely to be in early July and further updates will be provided as arrangements develop. This is a great opportunity to Showcase the Service, share learning from across the whole sector and support the journey of improvement.

CFA Report template – At the latest Group Leader meeting, a revised report template was agreed, a copy of which will be circulated to Members. Changes include the moving of Crime and Disorder Implications into the Legal Implications section, addition of Environmental and Sustainability Implications, and expanding the Equalities section to include an Ethical aspect. It is aimed to better reflect the 6 strategic goals within the Authority's Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP).

Becky Smeathers, Head of Finance and Treasurer to the Authority

This meeting is Becky Smeathers' last Fire Authority meeting as she will be leaving the Service soon. Heartfelt thanks go to Becky for her service and support as Head of Finance and Treasurer to the Authority. The past few years have been incredibly challenging, but Becky has provided first class support throughout and been brilliant at ensuring that finance reports are clear and understandable. We wish Becky good luck in her future role.

This sentiment and thanks were echoed by Councillor John Clarke, Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee, Councillor Sybil Fielding as a Pensions Board member, and Councillor Jonathan Wheeler as Lead Officer for the Opposition, who added that Becky would be missed both professionally and personally. Other members of the Authority also expressed their appreciation of Becky's dedication and professionalism.

Becky responded that working for the Service had been a real pleasure and the move was for personal reasons rather than professional.

25 Statement of Pay Policy

Craig Parkin, Chief Fire Officer, presented the report which seeks the Authority's approval of the Statement of Pay Policy, as is required by the Localism Act 2011.

The following points were highlighted:

- a) Several pay levels and policies are set at national level, independent of the Authority's powers;
- b) The main changes from the previous policy are outlined paragraph 2.12 of the report, and include reference to the gender pay gap, national pay awards, and annual rate;
- c) It is noted that compensation for 2 compulsory redundancies was paid during 2022/23;
- d) There were 2 instances of early payment of pension due to the compulsory redundancies,
- e) The Authority funded 2 exit payments with a combined total of £155,000, which includes £76,000 pension strain payments;
- f) There were no settlement payments made in 2022/23;
- g) The next round of pay talks has commenced;
- h) Chief Fire Officer pay is benchmarked against that of all other Fire Services rates every 2 years.

Resolved to approve the Statement of Pay Policy as attached to the report.

26 Update on the 'Areas For Improvement' From The 2021 HMICFRS Inspection

Candida Brudenell, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, resented the report which updates the Authority on progress to address the 'Areas for Improvement' (AFI), as identified by His Majesty's Inspectorate for Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS).

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

- a) As a result of the initial visit and inspection, 28 AFIs were identified. The latest inspection resulted in 4 AFIs which are being, or have been, addressed as follows, with in-depth scrutiny of each AFI delegated to relevant focus committees:

- AFI 1 – the Service should make sure it effectively monitors, reviews and evaluates the benefits and outcomes of any collaboration activity;
 - AFI 2 – the Service should assure itself that its risk-based inspection programme prioritises the highest risks, and includes proportionate activity to reduce risk;
 - AFI 3 – the Service should assure itself that staff understand how to access well-being support;
 - AFI 4 – the Service should ensure that, when responding to a 999 call, mobile data terminals (MDTs) are reliable to allow staff to access to risk information;
- b) To ensure there is consistency, the same Nottingham Trent University postgraduate student is supporting the Service with all current evaluations within AFIs 1 and 2. No further external evaluation is taking place, but the internal evaluation approach and framework is constantly under review to ensure it is appropriate and the evaluation process examined by HMI;
- c) With regard to AFI 3, staff well-being and support, this was already in place without a formalised strategy specifically relating to this area, which has now been addressed and at the last inspection HMI commented that there is good provision in place, but some staff were unaware of what was available. As a result communication routes have been revised and further varied to include a multi-pronged approach, including in-person staff and station briefings, in addition to actively trying to identify areas of staff concern and potential need.

Resolved to note the progress to address the improvements required and continue to support the approach of the Chief Fire Officer for addressing the ‘areas for improvement’.

27 Implementation of Resourcing to Risk

Damien West, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, presented the report, updating the Authority on progress since the approval by the Authority at the July meeting to return Ashfield Fire Station to 24 hour crewing.

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

- a) As directed by the Authority, officers have considered how best to resource the Service to enable 24 hour crewing at Ashfield to be reinstated by the end of November 2023;
- b) The Authority had previously delegated authority to the Chief Fire Officer to make amendments to staffing numbers and structures within the agreed budgets to enable a faster response to resourcing issues. This delegation has been utilised following engagement with staff and representative bodies, with the aim of minimum overall impact;
- c) A project approach was taken which took into consideration the risks, including ridership levels and evaluation criteria. It is proposed that additional training will be provided, with on-going monitoring and a further update report to the next meeting;

- d) It is proposed that in 2024, a recruitment process will engage up to 40 Firefighters, some of which will support ridership levels and facilitate the broader commitments of the Community Risk Management Plan;
- e) As previously reported, an increased occurrence of a reduced crew ridership of 4 per appliance is anticipated and will be supported by additional training;
- f) In summary, progress is good and on track to complete on target;
- g) Risk implications are outlined in the report.

Members' comments included:

- h) The ongoing positive action with regard to recruitment activity to attract applications from diverse communities is welcomed;
- i) Progress to date is welcomed and it is requested that the Community Safety Committee also receive updates every 6 months and the Authority, an update 12 months after implementation;
- j) The Service and members are thanked by the elected members and communities of the Ashfield area, for following the evidence and responding to the identified increase in risk to local communities. Thanks are also given to the on-the-ground staff who are making the proposed changes.

Resolved to note and endorse the report.

28 Changes to Establishment Annual Report

Craig Parkin, Chief Fire Officer, presented the report which provides an update on the action delegated to him by the Authority for the Chief Fire Officer to permanently amend the establishment within the pay budget, in consultation with the Chair. It is noted that other elected members have also been consulted. This delegation has enabled increased flexibility to regrade, delete and restructure the establishment with an appropriately timely response to specific need within the Service.

The details of the changes to date are set out in the report with the establishment now more appropriately aligned to the Service's commitment of the Community Risk Management Plan.

Resolved to note the Report.

29 Annual Report of Information Governance 2022/23

Candida Brudenell, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, presented the Annual Information Governance report which sets out the numbers and monthly patterns of Freedom of Information (FoI) requests, Environmental Information requests, and Data Protection performance in the past year, compared to previous years', along side the subject of the request and the response time.

Questions from members were responded to as follows:

- a) There was an increase in FOIs during the period of consultation on Futures25 proposals, in addition to the issues raised nationally following the damning London Fire Service cultural report;
- b) The source of requests varies from local and national media, political enquiries, local and national trades unions, and citizens, with the 'other' 37 not fitting easily into any of the main criteria. Further, more detailed information can be made available to members;
- c) Response performance dropped slightly this past year, but has since recovered now that a vacant post has been filled;
- d) Financial implications of the report are stated as zero, but there is a resource cost implication in responding to enquiries;
- e) There isn't a specific policy in place to deal with persistent vexatious requestors seeking to cause unnecessary work, but to date this has not been an issue for this Service. However, some requests are refused in their entirety, mainly relating to information which is already accessible in the public domain, particularly since the website has significantly improved. Requests for personal and exempt information are also rejected.

Resolved to note the report.

30 Exclusion of the Public

Resolved to exclude the public from the meeting during consideration of the following item in accordance with Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 (under Schedule 12A, Part 1, Paragraphs 3) 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.

31 Replacement Mobilisation System Contract Award

Mick Sharman, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, presented the report which informs members of the robust evaluation and procurement process, in partnership with Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Service, for a RMS, and requests consideration of awarding the RMS contract.

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