



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

**MINUTES of the meeting held at Fire and Rescue Services HQ, Bestwood Lodge, Arnold
Nottingham NG5 8PD on 22 September 2017 from 10.30 am - 12.36 pm**

Membership

Present

Councillor Brian Grocock (Chair)
Councillor Michael Payne (Vice Chair)
Councillor Liaqat Ali
Councillor Andrew Brown
Councillor Eunice Campbell
Councillor John Clarke (minutes 18-31 inclusive)
Councillor Sybil Fielding
Councillor Vaughan Hopewell
Councillor Patience Uloma Ifediora
Councillor John Longdon
Councillor Francis Purdue-Horan
Councillor Phil Rostance
Councillor Parry Tsimbirdis
Councillor Jonathan Wheeler
Councillor Malcolm Wood
Councillor Jason Zadrozny

Absent

Councillor Jackie Morris
Councillor Mike Quigley MBE

Also in attendance

Nottinghamshire Police and Crime Commissioner, Paddy Tipping

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

John Buckley	-	Chief Fire Officer, NFRS
Wayne Bowcock	-	Deputy Chief Fire Officer, NFRS
Craig Parkin	-	Assistant Chief Fire Officer, NFRS
Malcolm Townroe	-	Clerk and Monitoring Officer to the Fire Authority
Theresa Channell	-	Acting Treasurer
Becky Smeathers	-	Head of Finance
Andrew Cardoza	-	Director of KPMG LLP External Auditors
Simon Allsop	-	Temporary Scheme Manager of Nottinghamshire Fire Pension Scheme
Catherine Ziane-Pryor	-	Governance Officer

14 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor Mike Quigley – personal
Councillor Jackie Morris - personal

15 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

John Buckley, the Chief Fire Officer, declared an interest in agenda item 14, 'Impact on Annual Allowance Change / Joint Administration and Communications Strategy (SLA)' (minute 27) and so intended to withdraw from the meeting for the duration of the item.

16 CHANGE IN MEMBERSHIP

RESOLVED

- (1) to note the appointment of Councillor Parry Tsimbiridis to the Fire Authority in place of Councillor Nicki Brooks and to confirm his appointment to the Community Safety Committee, Personnel Committee and Strategic Equalities Board.**
- (2) to note the appointment of Councillor Jonathan Wheeler to the Fire Authority in place of Councillor Tony Harper and to confirm his appointment to the Policy and Strategy Committee and Community Safety Committee.**

17 MINUTES

Subject to minute 7(3) and the vote for the Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee showing that Councillor Mike Quigley was nominated and not Councillor Andrew Brown, the minutes of the meeting held on 9 June 2017 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

18 CHAIRS' ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced the newly appointed Head of Finance, Becky Smeathers.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary now has responsibility to inspect Fire and Rescue Services. The Chief Fire Officer (CFO) and Chair of the Authority have been invited to a briefing in London next month and will inform members of the implications.

The CFO and Chair recently represented the Authority at the Firefighters National Memorial Service in London where they laid a wreath in remembrance of those who have given their life in the line of duty. The event was very moving and very well attended.

The members' seminar was held last week and provided a useful opportunity to discuss in detail the direction of the Service in these difficult times and issues currently being dealt with.

Former Authority Members Ken Rigby, Councillor Chris Barnfather, Councillor Gordon Wheeler and Liz Yates were thanked for their service to the Authority and presented with a certificate of thanks.

19 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2016/17

John Buckley, Chief Fire Officer, presented the Annual Governance Statement 2016/17 which requires the approval of the Authority before the Annual Accounts can be considered for approval.

The Annual Governance Statement refers to the most recent review of governance arrangements and identifies the challenges ahead, a summary of which is included in the covering report.

The Chair assured the Authority that all identified challenges will be addressed.

RESOLVED to approve the Annual Governance Statement 2016/17.

20 FINAL ACCOUNTS 2016/17

Becky Smeathers, newly appointed Head of Finance, introduced the report which presents the final detailed accounts for 2016/17 and seeks Authority's approval.

The covering report refers to the core statements of accounts, revenue expenditure, capital expenditure, reserves and pensions.

Within the Statement of Accounts, Becky Smeathers informed the committee that pages 47-50 of the Statement of Accounts would be removed (agenda pages 91-94) as these had been included in error.

Councillor Malcolm Wood, Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee, commended the finance team on putting together a comprehensive set of final accounts.

Members had previously expressed concern regarding variances, but at 1%, this level of variances is considered acceptable.

In response to member's concerns regarding the £263,000 operational pay under spend, the Chief Fire Officer informed the committee that for the current and future years, a more risk-based approach to staff budgeting is being applied as part of a strategy in preparation of planned reductions (retirements and leaving the Service) ensuring that any over establishment is only temporary. The high level of staff at the start of financial year has been budgeted for but also taken into account is the predicted level of establishment, therefore resulting in fewer variances. It is recognised that establishment prediction is not an exact science as staff are only required to give 28 days' notice.

RESOLVED

- (1) to approve the Statement of Accounts for 2016/17, as attached at Appendix A to the report;**
- (2) to note the financial results for the 2016/17 year for Nottinghamshire Fire Safety Limited, as attached at Appendix B to the report.**

21 EXTERNAL AUDITORS' REPORT TO THOSE CHARGED WITH GOVERNANCE 2016/17

Andrew Cardoza, Director of KPMG LLP External Auditors, presented the external auditors draft report to those charged with governance 2016/17 and informed the committee that he was satisfied with his findings, appreciated the standard of work undertaken by the Authority and was expecting to issue an unqualified audit opinion.

Councillor Malcolm Wood, Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee, welcomed the unqualified opinion of a completely 'clean' audit, stating that this was a reflection on the high standards and quality of staff within the Authority.

RESOLVED

- (1) for the contents of the External Auditors' ISA 260 report, attached as Appendix A to the report, to be noted;**
- (2) to approve the management representation letter to the External Auditors as set out in Appendix B to the report.**

22 TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REPORT 2016/17

Becky Smeathers, Head of Finance, presented the report of the Treasurer which provides a retrospective update on treasury management activity during the 2016/17 financial year.

The report provides an overview of;

- o economic review;
- o review of the investment and cash management strategy;
- o investment and cash activity in 2016/17;
- o review of investments/ cash position and useable reserves;
- o review of the borrowing strategy and borrowing activity in 2016/17;
- o summary of compliance with treasury and prudential limits.

Becky Smeathers responded as follows to Councillor's questions:

- (a) the 0.4% difference in actual net revenue against approved net revenue is as a result of some loans being taken out later than expected due to internal budgeting and low interest rates;
- (b) with regard to the £4m loan which is expected to be repaid by the end of next year, the option is available to repay the loan early, however, this would be dependent on interest rates.

RESOLVED to note the report.

23 ANNUAL STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE 2016-17

John Buckley, Chief Fire Officer, presented the Annual Statement of Assurance 2016/17, which provides assurance on financial, governance and operational matters, in line with the requirements of the Fire and Rescue Service National framework, replacing the 'Annual Report'.

RESOLVED to approve the Annual Statement of Assurance 2016-17 for publication.

24 CONSULTATION ON MIXED AND ALTERNATIVE CREWING

Prior to consideration of the item, the Chair informed the Authority that questions have been submitted by the Fire Brigades Union regarding this and the next item (realignment of operational resources). Although the questions have been submitted after the deadline, in the interests of openness and transparency, on this occasion only, they have been accepted and may be asked.

In summary, the FBU opposes the increase of attendance time which will be caused by mixed crewing, and seeks assurance from the Authority that safety will not be compromised by the proposals.

The Chair responded that the report recommends that proposals are the subject of public consultation, but that the landscape of operation has changed in recent years with the number of incidents halving. With a duty to provide the best service within financial constraints, mixed crewing would provide an opportunity to align the availability of resources with demand, in preference to reducing the number of appliances and staff.

The Chief Fire Officer presented the report, adding that there were significant financial pressures which must be responded to, ensuring a balanced budget is achieved at a time when funding is reduced, and so five potential options are proposed in the appendix to the report.

Citizens are safer now from fire than they have ever been, so reducing whole time capacity overnight by moving to mixed and alternative models to provide a valuable saving and more efficient working. Consideration also needs to be given to increased retirement age of firefighters with alternatives suggested to the current 12-hour shift pattern.

A 12 week consultation period is recommended, which will enable staff and citizens to respond. There is an intention to visit staff at stations and actively seek responses so that members can have a complete view prior to further considerations.

Alternative crewing is complex. Currently, if less than 4 retained crew members are available, the appliance is not used and another station is called upon. This is often the case at Southwell Fire Station where it has been difficult to recruit due to the local demographics. When fewer than 4 crew members are available, the call is transferred to Carlton or Newark. However, it is proposed that if 3 crew members are available, then the appliance is utilised as that appliance and crew can have a significantly positive impact at an incident. All crew are fully trained but additional training will be provided if required and crews of 3 will still not be sent to incidents where there is a risk of expansion but if assistance is needed for other incidents, back-up will still be available.

Councillor Jason Zadrozny requested an amendment to the recommendation, to remove Ashfield Fire Station from the consultation and therefore any potential changes to crewing, but as it was not seconded, it was not carried and the original recommendation remained.

Further comments from Authority members included:

- (a) Although there is little doubt that there will be a robust response to the consultation, Central Government should be lobbied by all members regarding the on-going reduction of funding and pressures on the Service;
- (b) Citizens need to understand the current position and the impact of reduced funding going forwards and be motivated to respond to the consultation;
- (c) The proposal to consult is supported, but not the subject proposals and diminishing Service;
- (d) There needs to be a clear pathway laid out, ensuring that the press and public are fully engaged and understand the implications on the Service and their Council Tax of the on-going funding cuts;
- (e) If the Fire Minister is lobbied and citizens informed and engaged, it is possible that changes to crewing may be avoided;
- (f) This is an outstanding Service with staff, both front line and back office, doing a valuable job. The Staff and Authority need to stand as one team and the suggestion to lobby the Fire Minister is welcomed as influence within Central Government can make a difference ;
- (g) We all need to do everything possible to ensure that this is full and meaningful consultation as the final recommendations are not pre-determined;
- (h) Councillors and Officers across the country are being forced to make these type of decisions due to the on-going funding restraints. Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service have already implemented all possible savings whilst trying to protect front line Services. There really is nowhere else to find savings other than changing how the Service operates;
- (i) The Authority and Fire Brigades Union (FBU) need to stand shoulder to shoulder regarding the austerity cuts and the terrible impact so far;

The Chief Fire Officer welcomed opportunities to speak with Officers, the FBU and Citizens on the current position and consultation. It is vital that citizens understand the full implications of the current position and exercise their right to give an opinion.

The Chair thanked members for their comments and assured the Authority that the subject of the report has been carefully considered over a period of time but no alternatives identified. Following several large incidents, citizens need to understand the significance of the Service and the implications of the proposals.

RESOLVED to publicly consult on the Mixed and Alternative Crewing options as detailed in the body of the report.

It is noted that Councillor Jason Zadrozny did not support the recommendation.

25 REALIGNMENT OF OPERATIONAL RESOURCES

As referred to in the previous minute, prior to the Authority's consideration of the item, the FBU asked a question which, in summary, highlighted the deletion of posts and 6 operational

appliances since the introduction of the austerity cuts, the deletion of officer posts was recently increased by another 20 posts and now a further 16 posts are proposed to be deleted. The FBU queried at what point did the Authority refuse to make further cuts to front line services and refuse increased response times?

The Chair responded that to date the Authority has implemented a cost reduction of £13million on operating costs and cannot avoid the legal duty to act appropriately with the resources it has. However, whilst the concerns of the FBU are shared and representations have been made to Central Government, with regard to this item, the Chief Fire Officer has given assurances that the proposals within the report will not impact on the ability of the service to respond to incidents, and is an example of where efficiencies can be made without unduly affecting outcomes.

The Chief Fire Officer presented the report which recommends the realignment of operational staff numbers to match the crewing requirements following previously agreed changes to the operational cover, by deleting 16 vacant posts.

The following points were highlighted:

- (a) If approved, there will be no changes to Terms and Conditions for staff (as a result of the realignment) and there would be no impact on crewing and operations;
- (b) Consultations have already taken place, including with the FBU;
- (c) The saving from deleting the posts would be in the region of £590,000 and contribute to achieving the targets within the sustainability strategy for 2020.

Members pointed out that an illegal budget (which did not meet future funding as per the 2020 sustainability strategy) could not be set without the Authority being 'thrown out' and Central Government Officers taking over the Service and implementing far harsher actions.

RESOLVED to delete 16 vacant firefighter posts from the operational establishment.

26 COLLABORATION STRATEGY

John Buckley, Chief Fire Officer, presented the report which proposes the introduction of a Collaboration Strategy to develop existing arrangements and activities.

In addition to the details within the report, the following points were highlighted:

- (a) Collaboration is a significant part of how the Service will operate in future
- (b) Partners are already collaborating with each other and whilst the Fire and Rescue Service already collaborates on different levels, this needs to be more broadly;
- (c) While some collaboration opportunities have been emerged naturally, the Service has a duty under the Policing and Crime Act 2017 to continually consider collaboration opportunities with other emergency services;
- (d) The strategy provides a clear structure and proposes that a strategic collaboration board is established with each partner organisation, with arrangements reviewed every six months;

- (e) Where scoping of further opportunities may initially result in additional costs, funding to cover this can be sought from Central Government resources.

Paddy Tipping, the Police Crime Commissioner, commented:

During this period of austerity, the Fire and Rescue Service needs to save a further £2-3 million in the next few years, however the Police are in a position where a saving of £16 million is required. I will pursue the issues raised in today's meeting with the Fire Minister, but Services need to ensure that value for money is achieved with regard to estate, emergency planning and community safety whilst delivering more comprehensive services. The newly formed 'Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabularies and Fire and Rescue Services' (MHICFRS) specifies the requirement for a fresh focus on collaboration.

Comments from Authority members included:

- (f) There are still areas, including the 'back office' where further savings through collaboration can be made;
- (g) Collaboration is supported and can work well as is shown by the local Police moving into the Carlton Retained Fire Station instead of relocating miles away. The PCC and CFO should be congratulated for facilitating this;
- (h) There will be some difficulties to get over, but collaboration will be beneficial in the longer term.

RESOLVED to adopt the proposed Collaboration Strategy.

27 IMPACT OF ANNUAL ALLOWANCE CHANGES / JOINT ADMINISTRATION AND COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY (SLA)

Prior to consideration of this item, Chief Fire Officer John Buckley withdrew from the meeting having declared an interest under minute 15, Declarations of Interests.

Simon Allsop, Temporary Scheme Manager of Nottinghamshire Fire Pension Scheme, presented the report which;

- (i) updates members on the changes to the Annual Allowance;
- (ii) seeks approval for the discretion to use Voluntary Scheme Pays for scheme members;
- (iii) seeks approval for the introduction of a Firefighters Pension Scheme Joint Administration and Communications Strategy (SLA) with Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Service and Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Combined Fire Authority.

The changes to pensions are outlined within the report.

The Authority's approval for discretionary use of Voluntary Scheme Pays will enable high earning individuals (including firefighters with a second job) to offset tax against their pension, without any financial implications for the Fire and Rescue Service.

A copy of the Administration Communications Strategy is attached to the report.

RESOLVED

- (1) to approve the discretionary use of Voluntary Scheme Pays for affected members of the Pension Scheme;**
- (2) to approve the introduction of the Firefighters Pension Scheme Joint Administration and Communication Strategy (SLA).**

Following the conclusion of this item, the Chief Fire Officer John Buckley returned to the meeting.

28 REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL

Malcolm Townroe, Clerk and Monitoring Officer to the Authority presented the report of the Independent Remuneration Panel, which has been considered by the Policy and Strategy Committee which recommends approval by the Fire and Rescue Authority.

The Authority is required to have a member's allowance scheme which is regularly reviewed by an independent panel to ensure that the scheme is fit for purpose.

It is noted, as was highlighted during the Policy and Strategy Committee, due to differing structures, organisation and governance, it is not possible to make a full comparison with schemes operated by other Authorities.

The following comments were made by members of the Authority:

- (a) it is a concern that there appears to be a significant disparity between the Chair, Vice-Chair, and Major Committee Chairs. The scheme should be reconsidered by Policy and Strategy Committee to enable further discussion;
- (b) having been considered by an Independent Review Panel which has provided an independent report and decision that the scheme is fit for purpose, further consideration is not necessary and the Authority should only accept or reject the recommendations of that panel;
- (c) This is a difficult item to challenge as it would be preferable to respect the recommendation of the independent panel. However, the member's allowances scheme model appears to be based on the circumstances and structures of 2006, prior to the new governance and committee arrangements. There is no evidence to suggest that it is reasonable that chairs of Committees should not be recognised, so the model should be reconsidered with better recognition for chairs of committees and the lead opposition spokesperson;
- (d) It is correct that members should not set their own allowances, that's why the task has been allocated to an independent review panel. The recommendations of the review panel are welcomed, but members' comments and concerns should be considered at the next review.

RESOLVED

- (1) to accept the recommendation of the Policy and Strategy Committee to accept the findings of the independent review panel regarding members' allowances and annual uplift arrangements;**
- (2) to approve that Members' allowances continue to be paid on the same basis as the existing scheme and that inflators continue to be applied on an annual basis linked to increases set by the National Joint Council for Local Government Service.**

29 PAY POLICY

Chief Fire Officer John Buckley, presented the report which provides a Pay Policy Statement for approval by the Authority in line with the requirements of the Localism Act 2011. It is noted that have not been any policy changes since the Pay Policy was approved last year.

RESOLVED to approve the Statement of Pay Policy at Appendix A to the report.

30 ANNUAL REPORT ON TRANSPARENCY AND DATA PROTECTION

Further to the Policy and Strategy Committee's request in April 2017 that the Authority receives more detailed information, Chief Fire Officer John Buckley, presented the annual report which updates the Authority on Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service's information governance, which has been given a 'clean bill of health'.

The report provides information on:

- (a) freedom of information requests;
- (b) environmental information requests;
- (c) data protection;
- (d) Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA).

Since the recruitment to the Information Governance Manager post, compliance with freedom of information (FOI) requests response times have significantly improved.

Whilst partnership working and collaboration, including sharing of information, continues to expand, this further complicates the operating environment and increases the focus on risk controls being applied and sustained.

RESOLVED to note the report.

31 COMMITTEE OUTCOMES

RESOLVED to note the minutes of the following committees:

Community Safety Committee 30 June 2017
Finance and Resources Committee 07 July 2017
Human Resources Committee 14 July 2017
Policy and Strategy Committee 21 July 2017