



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 28 February 2020 from 10.33 am - 12.10 pm

Membership

Present

Councillor Michael Payne (Chair)
Councillor Andrew Brown
Councillor John Clarke
Councillor Vaughan Hopewell
Councillor John Longdon
Councillor Mike Quigley MBE (minutes 56-70 inclusive)
Councillor Jonathan Wheeler
Councillor Sybil Fielding
Councillor Parry Tsimbiridis
Councillor Sue Saddington
Councillor Jawaid Khalil
Councillor Gul Nawaz Khan
Councillor Salma Mumtaz
Councillor Toby Neal (Vice Chair)
Councillor Shuguftah Quddoos
Councillor Nick Raine
Councillor Stuart Wallace

Absent

Councillor Jason Zadrozny

Also in attendance

Paddy Tipping, Nottinghamshire Police and Crime Commissioner

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

John Buckley	- Chief Fire Officer
Ian Pritchard	- Assistant Chief Officer
Malcolm Townroe	- Clerk and Monitoring Officer to the Fire Authority
Charlotte Radford	- Treasurer to the Fire Authority
Becky Smeathers	- Head of Finance
Catherine Ziane-Pryor	- Governance Officer

53 Apologies for absence

Councillor Jason Zadrozny – on County Council business

54 Declarations of interests

John Buckley, Chief Fire Officer, and Ian Prichard, Assistant Chief Officer, both declared personal interests with regard to the 'Provided Car Scheme' agenda item (minute 66), insofar as any decision would have a direct impact on each, stating that they intended to withdraw from the meeting for the duration of that item.

55 Minutes

Subject to removing Councillor John Clark's name from the 'in attendance' list, the minutes of the meeting held on 20 December 2019 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

56 Chair's Announcements

The Service has been very busy over the past few months with widespread flooding and several serious fires at Sutton in Ashfield, Worksop, and Retford. The Chair thanked all staff involved, particularly those in Fire Control who were extremely busy throughout the storm period. Thanks to the Service were also received from the Police, Local Authorities and the Environment Agency, including for the support of residents and livestock.

John Buckley, Chief Fire Officer provided a brief update to members on flooding issues for which the Service focused on rescue and limitation, but did not have capacity for property protection. Response was further complicated due to road closures, planned and due to flooding, of the A617, Kelham Bridge, A52 and Gunthorpe Bridge. However, resources were relocated to enable continuity of service and the cross-partner approach was a credit to all staff.

The Chair has written with condolences to the Chief and Chair of the West Midlands Fire Service following the suicide of one of their firefighters. Mental health is a real challenge for the sector and wider society. NFRS is dedicated to do everything possible for employees, including promotion of 'it's okay not to be okay' and support for stress, whether caused by work or in domestic life.

Both the Chair and Chief will attend an event in March hosted by Her Majesty's Inspectorate's for Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS). The next inspection will commence in July and conclude with a visit to the Service in December.

Following the general election, James Brokenshire MP has been appointed Minister of State with ministerial responsibility for security. Having previously been Secretary of State for Local Government, he has an understanding of the issues facing the sector following the Grenfell Fire and Inquiry.

The Chair has written to the Chancellor emphasising the need to consider the immediate and longer term Fire and Rescue Service budgets, including the comprehensive spending review of the ongoing work in fire prevention and improving safety in the built environment.

The Police Crime Commissioner Statutory Instrument has now been passed in the House of Commons which enables Police and Crime Commissioners to be full members of Fire Authorities, with full voting rights. A report will be brought to the AGM to formalise this arrangement.

Finally, a staff engagement event is scheduled at the rising of the Fire Authority meeting on 24 July 2020, to which members are welcome. A members' seminar will be held on 16 September, more information will follow. Treasury Management training will take place at the rising of the Fire Authority meeting on 25 September 2020.

57 Change of Date for the Annual General Meeting

Resolved to change the date of the annual general meeting from Friday five June to Friday, 12 June 2020.

58 Prudential Code for Capital Finance 2020/21

Becky Smeathers, Head of Finance, presented the report which informs members of the Authority's obligations under the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance, provides assurance that these obligations are being met, and seeks approval for the proposed capital plans, prudential limits and monitoring processes, as set out in the report.

Resolved to approve the following:

a) Prudential limits for 2020/21:

Maximum ratio of Financing Costs to Net Revenue Stream	8%
Estimated Ratio of Financing Costs to Net Revenue Stream	5.3%
Estimate of Total Capital Expenditure to be Incurred	£5,576,000
Estimate of Capital Financing Requirement	£29,073,000
Operational Boundary	£31,850,000
Authorised Limit	£35,035,000
Upper limit for fixed rate interest exposures	100%
Upper limit for variable rate interest exposures	30%
Loan Maturity:	<u>Limits:</u>
Under 12 months	Upper 20% Lower 0%

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

b) local indicators for 2020/21:

Upper limit for internal borrowing as a % of the Capital Financing Requirement	20%
Limit for proportion of net debt to gross debt	Upper 85% Lower 50%
Investment security benchmark: maximum historic default risk of investment portfolio	0.08%
Investment liquidity benchmark: maximum weighted average life of investment portfolio	0.40 years
Investment yield benchmark	Internal returns to be above 3 month LIBID rate

59 Treasury Management Strategy 2020/21

Becky Smeathers, Head of Finance, presented the report which sets out for approval the proposed Treasury Management Strategy for 2020/21 and the Minimum Revenue Provision Policy for 2020/21.

Responses to Members' questions included:

- a) With regard to the 'over borrowing' position in March 2019, the Service receives a grant in July and council tax contributions in 10 blocks. A cash shortfall is predicted in February and March so short term borrowing is used to ease the cash flow during March. This is only short-term borrowing for a matter of weeks;
- b) Any longer term borrowing is split across the year and generally only considered if interest rates decline and following the advice of Link Asset Management. There are only usually two or three lots of borrowing in the year but this does depend on the level of capital expenditure.

Resolved to approve:

- a) **the Treasury Management Strategy 2020/21 as set out in this report;**
- b) **the Minimum Revenue Provision Policy 2020/21 as set out in paragraphs 2.52 to 2.55 in the report;**

- c) **a treasury management training session at the rising of the full Fire Authority on 25 September 2020.**

60 Budget Proposals for 2020/21 to 2023/24 and Options for Council Tax 2020/21

As Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee, Councillor John Clarke, thanked the Committee's members and all members of the Finance Team for their hard work and dedication, stating that the Service is now in a good financial position but caution needs to be exercised with regard to the potential impact of coronavirus on financial markets, adding that this will be carefully tracked.

Becky Smeathers, Head of Finance, presented the report which:

- i. proposes Revenue and Capital Budgets for 2020/21 to 2023/24, including the recommendation of the Finance and Resources Committee regarding the Council Tax precept (with the predicted impact of different potential levels of Central Government funding, along with a zero council tax rise, or a 1.95% Council Tax rise);
- ii. sets out Fees and Charges for 2020/21;
- iii. seeks approval for the continuation of the approved members' allowances scheme; and
- iv. provides a statement from the Treasurer to the Authority.

The Chair thanked all members, the Finance Team and members of the Finance and Resources Committee for their response to challenging financial situations, and also to political group leaders for their contribution and support. The impact on frontline staffing is acknowledged but if the recommendation of the Finance and Resources Committee is accepted with a council tax increase of 1.95%, the Service will be in a relatively healthy financial position, without using reserves or implementing further cuts, whilst having minimal impacts on citizens and providing important frontline services and prevention work.

Questions from members were responded to as follows:

- a) The final settlement for pensions is still yet to be determined, but the Local Government Association is looking at the potential outcomes, including a potential additional costs and the possibility of Central Government support. A final decision is not expected before 2022 although the final impact on the Service could be extended for more than 40 years. The McCloud judgement and on-going uncertainties will also impact on the new, and yet to be determined, pensions administration contract in that there will be additional costs due to the additional complexities, but all additional costs will be closely monitored and fed into the budget process;

Members of the Authority acknowledged the hard work and engagement across the Service which has resulted in the achievement of a balanced budget.

Members voting in favour of implementing a 1.95% increase of Council Tax precept are:

Councillor Michael Payne (Chair)
Councillor Toby Neal (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Andrew Brown
Councillor John Clarke
Councillor Sybil Fielding
Councillor Vaughan Hopewell
Councillor Gul Nawaz Khan
Councillor Jawaid Khalil
Councillor John Longdon
Councillor Salma Mumtaz
Councillor Mike Quigley MBE
Councillor Shuguftah Quddoos
Councillor Nick Raine
Councillor Sue Saddington
Councillor Parry Tsimbiridis
Councillor Stuart Wallace
Councillor Jonathan Wheeler

Members absent: Councillor Jason Zadrozny

Resolved:

- 1) **to approve the recommendation of the Finance and Resources Committee that there is a 1.95% Council Tax increase;**
- 2) **to approve for the 2020/21 precept level to be notified to the Billing Authorities based on the information set out in Section 2 and Appendix D to the report, as required by statute;**
- 3) **to approve the fees and charges for 2020/21, as set out in Appendix E to the report:**
- 4) **to approve the payment of Members' Allowances for 2020/21 in accordance with the approved scheme.**

61 Transformation and Efficiency Strategy

John Buckley, Chief Fire Officer, presented the report which sets out the strategy to transform the Service by increasing efficiency, effectiveness and productivity, using the Transformation and Collaboration Reserve of £1.4m. This strategy has been established as a result of points raised in the HMICFRS inspection and the Grenfell Tower Inquiry.

The Chair and Vice-Chair, along with members of the Authority, welcomed the comprehensive approach and the intention for closer partnership working which builds on many aspects of current good practice.

Resolved

- 1) **to agree the approach of the Chief Fire Officer to target resources over the next two years in line with the transformational work stream as identified within the report;**

- 2) **to agree to receive updates on the expected efficiency and effectiveness outcomes.**

62 Strategic Plan (Integrated Risk Management Plan) Refresh

John Buckley, Chief Fire Officer, presented the report which seeks the Authority's approval of the refreshed Strategic Plan and the Year Two Action Plan which reflects the changes within the Service during the past year.

Resolved

- 1) **to approve the refreshed Strategic Plan (Integrated Risk Management Plan) as attached as Appendix A to the report;**
- 2) **to approve the Year Two Action Plan as attached as Appendix B to the report.**

63 Wellbeing Strategy 2020-22

John Buckley, Chief Fire Officer, presented the report which is in response to comments made following the HMICFRS inspection that although the Service is already providing good health and well-being employee support, the individual elements needed to be combined within one strategy.

Although there is to be no change in delivery and approach, the well-being strategy focuses on the core aspects of mental wellness, communication, fitness for role, and healthy lifestyle.

Resolved to approve the Wellbeing Strategy 2020/22 to promote health, well-being and fitness as part of the Service's commitment to its employees.

64 Appointment of Assistant Chief Fire Officer

Councillor Michael Payne, Chair of the Appointments Committee, presented the report with the recommendation of the Appointments Committee, that following the robust selection process, Candida Brudenell is appointed Assistant Chief Fire Officer with effect from 1 June 2020.

A good field of candidates underwent a rigorous application process including a technical test, stakeholder interview, a media test, psychometric testing and an interview by the Appointments Committee. The process throughout was well supported by recruitment consultants Gatenby Sanderson, and although the quality of candidates was extremely high, the decision of the Appointments Committee to appoint Candida Brudenell, was unanimous.

The Service has undertaken significant investments with regard to diversity, and although not the primary driver, the appointment of a female to a high level post in the Service, sends a positive message across the City and County.

Responses to members' questions and comments of Appointments Committee members included:

- a) There will be a standard six-month probation period, during which any appointee is required to prove that they are fit to undertake the role and any gaps in the skill sets can be addressed. With regard to operational practices, Candida will spend time training at a national level but also on the stations to gain a practical understanding;
- b) there is every confidence that Candida will move effectively into the operational role with internal and external training and also support from the Chief Fire Officer and Deputy Chief Fire Officer, and a temporary six-week overlap in post for a handover from Ian Prichard as the current Assistant Chief Fire Officer;
- c) Candida performed well throughout the selection process and has 30 years of experience working for the City Council, during which time she has worked her way up to Assistant Chief Executive. It is wholly believed that she will be an asset to the Service;
- d) Although conscious that she does not have a background in the Fire Service, Candida is keen to gain an understanding from the grass roots up, including at a practical operational level, and brings with her high-level experience in corporate performance and strategy and a mind-set ideally placed to support recommendations and desired direction of HMICFRS inspectors.

Resolved

- 1) to approve the appointment of Ms Candida Brudenell to the position of Assistant Chief Fire Officer with effect from 1 June 2020, as recommended by the Appointments Committee;**
- 2) to record the thanks of the Authority and Service to Ian Prichard for his time as Assistant Chief Fire Officer, during which he often went beyond the duties of the role.**

65 Permanent Changes to the Establishment

John Buckley, Chief Fire Officer, presented the report with the recommendation of the Human Resources Committee, to make permanent changes to the establishment, for the reasons set out within the report.

Resolved to approve the recommendation of the Human Resources Committee, to establish the following roles:

- a) an iTrent Development Support Officer;**
- b) Specialist Home Safety Operatives.**

66 Provided Car Scheme

Prior to the Authority's consideration of this item, John Buckley, Chief Fire Officer and Ian Prichard, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, withdrew from the meeting and for the duration of the item, having declared personal interests within minute 54, and returned to the room once consideration of the item had concluded.

Malcolm Townroe, Clerk and Monitoring Officer to the Authority, presented the report which recommends changes to the Principal Officers Provided Car Scheme to align with current Service values and strategies.

In response to questions from members, assurance was provided that more environmentally friendly model vehicles, appropriate to meet the performance and efficiency needs of the Service would be sourced and purchased (which provided better value than leasing) with predicted standard service life of three years.

Resolved to approve the revisions to the Principal Officers Provided Car Scheme as articulated in section 2.7 of the report.

67 Grenfell Enquiry Government Response

John Buckley, Chief Fire Officer, introduced the report which provides members with a summary of the Government's response to recommendations of the Phase One Grenfell Tower Inquiry.

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

- a) It is noted that there is nothing within the report which impacts on how the Service operates and that all current procedures and policies will remain in place;
- b) The 'stay put' approach is a building management specific policy and not that of the Fire and Rescue Services;
- c) Currently there is only one building within the City which retains the cladding of concern and work is underway to replace this;
- d) The proposed Fire Safety Bill will address some of the issues identified by the Inquiry and will provide Fire and Rescue Services with the power to test cladding for combustible materials but it is not yet clear on how resources to facilitate this will be provided;
- e) NFRS has taken very proactive approach with senior Prevention Officers, including Damien West, Head of Prevention, Protection and Fire Investigation, taking an active role on the National Fire Chiefs Council Protection group.

A Member of the Authority with industry experience, expressed great concern that whilst ACM cladding is the focus of concern, HPL cladding is far more combustible than that used on Grenfell Tower and yet is not currently recognised by Central Government as a significant risk.

The Chair commented that whilst the £600 million made available by Central Government to remove unsafe cladding from high-rise residential homes is welcomed, there are reports that leaseholders of affected buildings have been required to bear the cost of works. This is not appropriate as it is not their fault. As such the Chair intends to write to the Chancellor to emphasise this point which impacts on some residents within the City.

Resolved

- 1) to note the report;**

- 2) **to agree to receive further updates as the Government enact the actions outlined in their response.**

68 Committee Outcomes

John Buckley, Chief Fire Officer, presented the report which provides the minutes of the following sub-committees:

Community Safety Committee 17 January 2020
Finance and Resources Committee 17 January 2020
Human Resources Committee 24 January 2020
Policy and Strategy Committee 31 January 2020
Appointments Committee 04 February 2020

Resolved to note the contents of the report.

69 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, under Schedule 12A, Part 1, Paragraph 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.

70 Update to the Joint Headquarters LLP

John Buckley, Chief Fire Officer, presented the report which updates Authority Members on the Joint Headquarters LLP (Limited Liability Partnership) agreement.

Paddy Tipping, Police and Crime Commissioner, again emphasised that this was to be a joint Police and Fire Service Headquarters base which will belong to both organisations.

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