



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

Minutes of the meeting held at Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service HQ, Bestwood Lodge Drive, Arnold, Nottingham, NG5 8PD on 17 January 2020 from 10.00 am - 11.13 am

Membership

Present

Councillor John Clarke (Chair)
Councillor Toby Neal (from minute 21 to 27 inclusive)
Councillor Nick Raine
Councillor Andrew Brown
Councillor John Longdon

Absent

Councillor Mike Quigley MBE

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

Becky Smeathers	- Head of Finance
Charlotte Radford	- Treasurer to the Authority
Ian Pritchard	- Assistant Chief Officer
Gavin Harris	- Head of Digital Transformation
Terry Scott	- Head of Procurement and Resources
Catherine Ziane-Pryor	- Governance Officer

18 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor Mike Quigley – Councillor John Longdon substituting

19 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

None.

20 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 October 2019 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

21 Revenue, Capital and Prudential Code Monitoring Report to 30 November 2019

Becky Smeathers, Head of Finance, presented the report which informs members of the financial performance of the Service in the year 2019/20 to the end of November 2019.

Committee members' questions were responded to as follows;

- a) With regard to the transport overspend of £57k, this relates to the efforts to get the vehicle maintenance backlog cleared under the new contract, but also with regard to the accidental damage of a water carrier. Further, more detailed information will be provided to members at a later stage once a full review has taken place to identify any potential cost recovery from the previous contract. Any potential benefit of any cost recovery can be assessed at this time. Members should be assured that contractual clauses have been added to the new maintenance contract to protect the Service;
- b) There will be a report brought to the Committee regarding the future disposal options for the old Hucknall Fire Station;
- c) The upgrade and replacement of vehicle CCTV system will allow the download of footage automatically when the vehicles return to the station.

Members of the Committee welcomed the overall budget underspend.

Resolved to

- 1) note the report;**
- 2) approve the transfer of £170k CCTV in vehicles project funding, to fund the PPE helmets to enable them to be purchased in 2019/20 rather than 2020/21 as originally anticipated;**
- 3) approve slippage of £160k for the CCTV in vehicles capital project.**

22 Budget Proposals for 2020/21 To 2023/24 and Options for Council Tax 2020/21

Becky Smeathers, Head of Finance, presented the report which provides the budget proposals for 2020/2021 to 2023/24 including the impact of funding variations, and requests that Members consider and select the preferred council tax option for recommendation to the full Fire Authority.

The following anticipated elements were recognised for having a potential impact on future budgets:

- i. An unconfirmed grant allowance;
- ii. The required upgrade of ICT equipment, including on appliances;
- iii. The final determination Local Government Pension Scheme superannuation following the McCloud case;
- iv. Pension administration (as a new provider is required and the cost will increase);
- v. Pay increase;

- vi. Additional overtime pay;
- vii. ICT licenses;

The potential options for setting Council Tax and the impact on future year budgets are set out in the report.

Members of the Committee made the following comments and questions were responded to:

- a) The report is well presented and given the number of citizens served, and the service provided, the option to increase Council Tax by 1.95% was recommended;
- b) The further use of reserves is not supported but the proposed Council Tax increase of 1.95% is supported;
- c) The compensation element of pensions could be an area that will impact on the Income and Expenditure Account, as is the same across the whole of the Public Sector. The extent of the impact is not yet known so it's not possible to look for a remedy yet and as pension funds are not eligible to pay compensation, the cost may be borne by the Service unless Central Government provide a grant;
- d) Advice has been sought from the precepting Authorities with regard to business rates, but clarity cannot be provided until the end of January;
- e) Following a review of earmarked reserves, £1.4m has been reallocated to create a Transformation and Collaboration earmarked reserve. There will be a report to the full Fire Authority with further details on how this will help support the Service's efficiency and transformation plans over the coming years.;
- f) The Service has finite resources and once the reserves are spent, it will be difficult to replace them.

Resolved to recommend the Fire Authority that a 1.95% increase in Council Tax is approved.

23 Digital Strategy 2019-2022 (Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Department)

Gavin Harris, Head of Digital Transformation, presented the report which seeks approval for the new Digital (ICT) Strategy 2019 to 2022.

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

- a) Whilst the last ICT Strategy was for a 4 year period, it has been reviewed and re-written to align with the latest Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP);
- b) The 7 principals of the strategy are:
 - i. Access from anywhere with any device;
 - ii. Innovation and responsiveness built in;
 - iii. User-centric solutions;

- iv. Digital skills development;
 - v. Digital-first;
 - vi. Microsoft –first;
 - vii. Cyber security is essential;
- c) Whilst one of the principals is to enhance the agility of staff, cyber security will remain a priority;
- d) It is proposed that new tablets, 2 to each fire appliance, will increase the flexibility and efficiency of staff particularly when attending Safe and Well visits. This will remove the need to update forms and paperwork on return to the station and provide access to real-time data;
- e) The roll-out of the new systems will be managed as projects with an analysis of performance and effectiveness through staff feedback.

Resolved to approve the Digital (ICT) Strategy 2019 to 2022.

24 Update on the Service Response to Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire And Rescue Services Inspection

Becky Smeathers, Head of Finance, presented the report which provides responses to the recommendations of the Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) with regard specifically to the Finance and Resources Committee and the improvement plan schedule.

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

- a) The Service is confident that the improvement work can be completed in time for the next inspection;
- b) With regard to the need to accelerate ICT to support efficiency and effectiveness, there is a small team focusing on digitalisation and ensuring that an 'incident ready' system can be used 'on the go' as fire appliances travel back to the station rather than the updates being required on return to stations;
- c) With regard to ensuring sufficiently robust plans are in place to consider the medium term financial challenges beyond 2020, processes are being examined to determine if digitalisation will be of benefit, with an additional focus on ICT training and an improved use of statistics;
- d) The proposed computers have an expected lifespan of approximately 5 years; the current tablets in use are approximately 10 years old;
- e) Issues around the implementation of the new emergency services network (ESN) are complicated but the financial implications will be considered within a comprehensive spending review.

Resolved to note the progress made against the Action Plan.

25 Exclusion of the public

Resolved to exclude the public from the meeting during consideration of the remaining items in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 on the basis that, having regard to all the circumstances, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

26 Disposal of surplus land at Newark Fire Station

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

Resolved to approve the option determined at the meeting.

27 Installation of an electrical substation by Western Power Distribution at Bingham Fire Station

Further to minute 20 of the Finance and Resources Committee on 19 October 2018, Terry Scott, Head of Procurement and Resources, presented the report which informs members of the requested amendments to the lease agreement for Western Power to install an electrical substation at Bingham Fire Station.

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