



Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire and Rescue Authority Policy and Strategy Committee

**Minutes of the meeting held remotely and streamed to YouTube on 13 November 2020
from 10.01 am - 10.45 am**

Membership

Present

Councillor Michael Payne (Chair)
Councillor Andrew Brown
Councillor Sybil Fielding
Councillor Toby Neal
Councillor Jonathan Wheeler

Absent

Councillor John Clarke

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

John Buckley	- Chief Fire Officer
Becky Smeathers	- Head of Finance
Malcolm Townroe	- Clerk and Monitoring Officer
Terry Scott	- Head of Procurement and Resources
Bryn Coleman	- Area Manager and Head of Corporate Support
Gavin Harris	- Head of Digital Transformation and ICT
Catherine Ziane-Pryor	- Governance Officer

48 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor John Clarke - Leave

49 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

None.

50 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 July 2020 were confirmed and will be signed by the Chair.

51 HER MAJESTY'S INSPECTORATE OF CONSTABULARY AND FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES UPDATE

John Buckley, Chief Fire Officer, presented the report which provides members with an update on the Service's response to the outcomes of the inspection by Her Majesty's

Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS), along with an update on the thematic inspection related to COVID-19, which took place during October.

The following points were highlighted:

- a) the first inspection took place in July 2019 and identified 25 Areas For Improvement (AFI). An action plan to address these areas was presented to Fire Authority and it agreed to be dealt with through the committee structure. Due to the current circumstances, this role will now be undertaken by the Policy and Strategy Committee;
- b) of the initial 25 AFI, 11 have already been completed and the following further 6 are to be confirmed as complete:
 - i. AFI 1 – the Service should use its Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) to ensure it keeps the public safe and secure from the risks identified;
 - ii. AFI 2 – the Service should ensure its firefighters have access to relevant and up to date risk information;
 - iii. AFI 8 – the Service should ensure it implements the process to monitor incident commanders and provide feedback following operational incidents;
 - iv. AFI 11 – the Service should arrange a programme of over-the-border exercises, sharing the learning from these exercises;
 - v. AFI 17 – the Service should put appropriate mechanisms in place to enable closer monitoring of hours worked by staff;
 - vi. AFI 23 – the Service should ensure individual performance targets clearly support objectives within the IRMP.
- c) significant progress has been achieved against AFI 23 in that key elements of the Service's strategic plan are now included in the target and appraisal system for all staff. This clearly identifies how individual staff are contributing to the achievement of elements within the strategic plan. As of September 2020, 90% of appraisals had been completed;
- d) whilst it hasn't been possible in the current circumstances to hold physical cross-border exercises, virtual and desk top exercises have taken place and systems and processes are in place to ensure that AFI 11 can be achieved, so it is proposed to close this AFI as complete although members should be assured that the Service currently and will continue to work collaboratively cross-border;
- e) AFI 4, regarding prevention work with people most at risk was due to be completed by 31 October 2020 but due to national circumstances in responding to the pandemic, an extension to this deadline until 31 January 2021 is requested;
- f) a thematic inspection was undertaken virtually in October 2020 looking at the Service's work in response to the COVID-19 Pandemic between February and July 2020. The Service prepared for the inspection by ensuring that statistics and data were to hand for the inspectorate if required. It was also felt a positive move that the Chair and Officers were interviewed. Initial verbal feedback was positive with no areas

of concern identified and some areas of work highlighted as best practice. A formal response to the thematic inspection is expected in December and will be shared with members and submitted to a formal meeting in the New Year.

Members of the Authority welcomed the progress made in addressing the points raised by HMICFRS and congratulated staff on the achievements, particularly whilst coping with the challenges of COVID-19.

Members' questions were responded to as follows with contributions from Bryn Coleman (Area Manager).

- g) one of the Service's officers has returned having worked with the HMICFRS and gained significant learning and insight which will support the Service to make improvements and provide assurance of ongoing monitoring which will prevent any backwards slippage in the progress made;
- h) a further 46 AFIs have been identified by the Service which if addressed will support the Service from being ranked as 'requiring improvement' to 'good';
- i) prior to any future inspections, the Service will undertake a pre-inspection audit to enable any areas needing attention are identified and, where possible, addressed as part of a new 'inspection-ready' process.

Resolved to:

- 1) note the progress made against the AFI Improvement Plan;**
- 2) agree the closure of six further Areas for Improvement (AFIs 1, 2, 8, 11, 17, and 23) as identified in the report;**
- 3) agree the extension of the deadline for AFI 4 to 31 January 2021 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic;**
- 4) note initial feedback from the HMICFRS COVID-19 response inspection.**

52 LOCAL FIREFIGHTER PENSION BOARD ANNUAL REPORT 2019/20

Becky Smeathers, Head of Finance, as the officer responsible for the day-to-day function of the Pension Scheme which is managed by the Fire Authority, presented the annual report.

The following points were highlighted:

- a) usually there would be 3 meetings of the Pension Board per year, but only 2 had taken place due to the March meeting being cancelled due to the COVID-19 Pandemic lockdown, but members were circulated the reports and kept informed and were still able to raise any queries or questions;
- b) the issues around the transfer of pension members from the old firefighters' scheme to the new scheme was challenged as discriminatory so those who were members of the old scheme prior to 31 March 2012, now have the option to choose either now or on their retirement, which scheme they want to apply to their pension from 31 March

2022. The Home Office has provided guidance but it is only guidance and if followed, could potentially put the Authority at risk of financial challenge with regard to current legislation, so further clarity is being sought and the Chief Fire Officer and Head of Pensions with the National Fire Chief's Council, met with a Lead Officer from the Home Office Pensions Section and together they are now considering how best to progress and implement the new scheme;

- c) following a full tender process, from the 5 submissions, West Yorkshire Pension Fund has been appointed as the new pension service provider from 31 December 2020;
- d) there has been a saving of £15,000 which will be invested in specialist pension advice for the Service, in collaboration with Derbyshire and Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Services to ensure best value for money as this is a very complex area;
- e) there is potential for other Fire and Rescue Services within the region, which also change to the same pensions administrative provider and align policies, to join with the current three services to form an East Midlands Network.

Sybil Fielding, Chair of the Pension Board, thanked Becky Smeathers and her team for providing clear, timely and comprehensive information, ensuring that Board Members remained fully informed.

Resolved to note of the activity of the Pension Board and Pension Scheme Manager during 2019/20.

53 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

Resolved to exclude the public from the meeting during consideration of the remaining item in accordance with Section 100A 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 an exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

54 SALE OF THE FORMER FIRE STATION SITE AT HUCKNALL

Terry Scott, Head of Procurement and Resources, presented the report which seeks approval for the sale of the site of the former Hucknall Fire Station.

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