



NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
Fire & Rescue Service
Creating Safer Communities

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

Authority Governance

Report of the Clerk to the Authority

Date: 24 July 2020

Purpose of Report:

To further update members on the temporary changes to Authority governance and meeting arrangements following the previous meeting of Policy and Strategy Committee on 1 May 2020.

Recommendations:

- 1 To agree that a virtual Zoom meeting of the full Authority be held on Friday 11 September 2020 to include only essential reports.
- 2 To note that at the rising of the full Authority meeting on 11 September 2020 there will be a virtual members briefing session to enable an informal information exchange between all members of the Authority and the Chief Fire Officer and his team.
- 3 To agree that a further meeting of the full Authority (either by Zoom or in person, depending on prevailing circumstances) be held on Friday 27 November 2020, in substitution for the meeting usually scheduled for December, to enable the Authority to formally sign off the audited accounts.
- 4 To agree that, subject to the Corona virus remaining under appropriate control, all meetings of the Authority and its committees recommence with effect from January 2021 (either by Zoom or in person, depending on prevailing circumstances) and that the meeting dates set out in paragraph 2.5 be agreed.

- 5 To request that when considered appropriate the Chief Fire Officer, following consultation with the Chair of the Authority, seek to arrange a meeting of the Strategic Inclusion Board (either by Zoom or in person depending on the prevailing circumstances).

CONTACT OFFICER

Name : Malcolm R. Townroe, Clerk to the Authority

Tel : 0115 8764332

Email : malcolm.townroe@nottinghamcity.gov.uk

Media Enquiries Contact : Vicky Brown
(0115) 8388689 vicky.brown@notts-fire.gov.uk

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Coronavirus Act 2020 and the regulations issued under s78 of that act have made time limited changes to the requirements placed on local authorities in respect of public meetings.
- 1.2 In order to ensure that the Authority maintains proper and transparent governance arrangements in the short to medium term the Authority agreed to a number of recommendations at the meeting of the Policy and Strategy Committee on 1 May 2020.
- 1.3 This committee, under its terms of reference, remains responsible for dealing with urgent matters and is now requested to consider further interim proposals relating to the governance of the Authority.

2. REPORT

- 2.1 At its meeting on 1 May 2020 the Policy and Strategy Committee, as the committee responsible for dealing with matters of urgency, made a number of decisions to ensure continuity of the Authority's governance arrangements during the pandemic. One of those decisions was to recommend that a further report be brought to this committee regarding future meeting arrangements.
- 2.2 The meeting on 1 May 2020 was held successfully as a virtual meeting, through the Zoom platform, with the public elements being live streamed through YouTube. The public streaming element ensured that the Authority

was legally compliant with regard to its access to meeting arrangements and provided a degree of public accountability. To date that YouTube footage has been viewed 270 times and still remains publically available.

- 2.3 Whilst meetings continue to be held virtually the required meeting notices will, as before, be published on the Authority's website in accordance with the required legislation. Committee reports will be made available via an appropriate link. Continuation of the YouTube streaming facility will ensure that the public are able to view the open part of the relevant meeting.
- 2.4 As previously agreed members of the Authority and representatives from recognised trade unions will still be able to submit questions in the same manner as is provided for in the Standing Orders i.e. in writing to the Clerk to the Authority at least 3 working days before the meeting. Provided that the questions have been correctly submitted, and are valid, they will be read out at the meeting by the Clerk to the Authority.
- 2.5 In order to ensure that the Authority can continue to deliver transparent governance members are asked to consider the recommendations as set out in section 10 of the report as well as the dates for future meetings set out below. Whilst the September Fire Authority meeting will be held virtually through Zoom, decisions regarding future meeting arrangements will need to be made closer to the relevant date and, depending on the prevailing circumstances, may be held virtually or by physical attendance.

Proposed meeting dates:-

Full Fire Authority

11 September 2020 (Virtual meeting via Zoom)

27 November 2020 (Virtual or physical dependant on circumstances)

26 February 2021

28 May 2021 (AGM)

Community Safety Committee

8 January 2021

19 March 2021

Finance and Resources Committee

15 January 2021

26 March 2021

Human Resources

22 January 2021

23 April 2021

Policy and Strategy

13 November 2020 (Virtual and only if required for urgent business)

29 January 2021

30 April 2021

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no significant financial implications arising out of the proposals contained in this report.

4. HUMAN RESOURCES AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

The proposals set out in the report mean that both members and officers will need to continue to adapt to new ways of working, which may highlight the need for further training and support.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

There are no equalities implications arising from this report however further consideration will be given to this requirement in the event that any issues are raised by meeting participants or by the viewing public.

6. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

There are no crime and disorder implications arising from this report other than those referred to in the section on risk management.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Any relevant legal implications are set out in the body of the report.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

The risks associated with the proposals outlined in the report mainly relate to technology failure or online security breaches. The technology which will be used to deliver the online meeting provision is being used widely across the UK and,

inevitably, as the new method of meeting delivery becomes more embedded lessons will be learned and good practice shared. It is not proposed to share any confidential or sensitive data through visual media.

There have been instances in other authorities where meetings have been “hijacked” by online trolls but this seems to have occurred where proper IT controls have not been put in place. In order to mitigate this risk the IT manager will continue to sit in on all online meetings to ensure that if anything untoward were to occur immediate action could be taken.

9. COLLABORATION IMPLICATIONS

There are no collaboration implications arising out of the proposals contained in the report.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 To agree that a virtual Zoom meeting of the full Authority be held on Friday 11 September 2020 to include only essential reports.
- 10.2 To note that at the rising of the full Authority meeting on 11 September 2020 there will be a virtual members briefing session to enable an informal information exchange between all members of the Authority and the Chief Fire Officer and his team.
- 10.3 To agree that a further meeting of the full Authority (either by Zoom or in person, depending on prevailing circumstances) be held on Friday 27 November 2020, in substitution for the meeting usually scheduled for December, to enable the Authority to formally sign off the audited accounts.
- 10.4 To agree that, subject to the Corona virus remaining under appropriate control, all meetings of the Authority and its committees recommence with effect from January 2021 (either by Zoom or in person, depending on prevailing circumstances) and that the meeting dates set out in paragraph 2.4 be agreed.
- 10.5 To request that when considered appropriate the Chief Fire Officer, following consultation with the Chair of the Authority, seek to arrange a meeting of the Strategic Inclusion Board (either by Zoom or in person depending on the prevailing circumstances).

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR INSPECTION (OTHER THAN PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS)

None

Malcolm R. Townroe
Clerk and Monitoring Officer to the Authority