



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

Minutes of the meeting held remotely on Zoom and livestreamed on <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCt4VuYp8JJJvXCLRmSRJ1mw/featured> on 24 July 2020 from 10.00 am - 12.30 pm

Membership

Present

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

Absent

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

Candida Brudenell	- Assistant Chief Fire Officer
John Buckley	- Chief Fire Officer
Gavin Harris	- Head of Digital Transformation
Craig Parkin	- Deputy Chief Fire Officer
Ian Pritchard	- Assistant Chief Fire Officer
Terry Scott	- Estates Manager
Becky Smeathers	- Head of Finance
Malcolm Townroe	- Clerk to the Authority
Jane Garrard	- Senior Governance Officer, Nottingham City Council

31 Apologies for Absence

None

32 Declarations of Interests

None

33 Minutes

Prior to the Committee's consideration of this item, the following question had been submitted by the Fire Brigade's Union (FBU) and was read to members by Malcolm Townroe, Clerk to the Authority:

Item 29. Restructure of Procurement and Resources Department

The FBU believe that decisions that affect our members and this case potential redundancies, should be made in a public forum. This agenda item was excluded to the public and FBU. The Fire Authority must be open to public scrutiny and challenge when making decisions of this nature. Will the Fire Authority make this report public and commit to making all future decisions of this nature open to public scrutiny?

The following response was provided by the Chair:

Thank you for the question. The Authority fully appreciates the value and necessity of transparency, however, due to the very small scale of changes being proposed within the report it would be possible to individually identify members of staff, and therefore the decision to exclude the public was appropriate under the relevant areas of legislation.

Notwithstanding this position, the affected employees and their nominated representatives were made aware of the contents of the report, and formal consultation will be undertaken in line with Service policy. I would also point out that the Service has an excellent track record in mitigating potential redundancies where possible, and I am assured by the Chief Fire Officer that all reasonable steps will be taken in these circumstances.

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 May 2020 were confirmed as an accurate record.

34 Membership

The Committee noted that Councillor Stephen Garner had replaced Councillor Stuart Wallace as a member of the Fire and Rescue Authority as of 11 June 2020.

35 Chair's Announcements

The Chair welcomed the opportunity to, on behalf of the Authority, sign the joint commitment to improve workforce diversity in conjunction with the Chief Fire Officer and all representative bodies. This was another step forward in making sure that the Service is relevant to, and reflective of the communities it serves. However, there is no complacency and the Chair is keen for the Service to go further where it can.

The Government has launched a consultation of fire safety and the Chief Fire Officer will be responding to ensure the observations of this Service are put forward. The Bill essentially takes forward Dame Judith Hackitt's review of building regulations and fire safety, and a draft has been published to allow for consultation before formal Parliamentary scrutiny.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services has indicated that it is seeking approval from the Home Secretary to undertake a thematic inspection of all Fire and Rescue Services specifically relating to the response to the Coronavirus pandemic. If approved, formal details will be communicated to the Service and members will be informed.

Along with the Deputy Chief Fire Officer, the Chair attended meetings hosted by the National Employers as part of national joint council to seek opinion on the pay rise for firefighters. We recognise that the pay for firefighters needs to be properly addressed, but any increases

above the 2% we have budgeted for would need to be supported by Government or it would have a direct impact on our ability to deliver services. Therefore we urge the Government to give serious consideration to funding above the 2%.

The Minister for Fire has announced a review of the Police and Crime Commissioner model this week with an element of focus on fire reform. The Chief Fire Officer will bring forward further information when it is available.

Subject to approval at this meeting, there will be a virtual members' seminar held at the rising of the Fire Authority meeting in September. A formal agenda and further information will be sent out to members nearer the time.

The Memorial Garden at Sherwood Lodge, supported by both Services and their workforce representative bodies, will be formally opened in the very near future. Members will be invited to attend and appropriate measures will be in place to ensure that those wishing to share the celebrations will be able to attend safely.

This is the last Fire Authority meeting that Ian Pritchard will attend before retiring in August. He has worked for the Service since 2009 in a variety of roles, bringing valuable experience from the private sector. Thank you to Ian for his public service.

36 Authority Governance

Malcolm Townroe, Clerk to the Authority, presented the report updating members on the temporary changes to Authority governance and meeting arrangements following the previous meeting of Policy and Strategy Committee on 1 May 2020. He highlighted the following information:

- (a) The virtual meeting of Policy and Strategy Committee on 1 May 2020 was held successfully and there have been over 270 views of the meeting on YouTube.
- (b) The proposed governance arrangements set out a plan for ensuring transparent governance in line with the required legislation, in the context of the current coronavirus pandemic.
- (c) While the proposed Fire Authority meeting in September will take place on Zoom, arrangements for later meetings will be agreed nearer the time depending on the circumstances and may be held in person if appropriate.
- (d) At the rising of the proposed Fire Authority meeting in September there will be a members' seminar.
- (e) It is proposed to have a meeting of Fire Authority in November to consider the audited accounts.
- (f) The meeting of Policy and Strategy Committee provisionally scheduled for November will only be held if necessary.
- (g) It is intended to resume the full schedule of Fire Authority meetings from January 2021.

During the subsequent discussion the need to consider whether vulnerable members could be expected to attend physical meetings and therefore the possibility of holding hybrid meetings rather than fully face-to-face meetings was raised. The Clerk informed members that while there was provision to hold hybrid meetings it was technically more difficult and there was a preference for either fully virtual or fully face-to-face meetings. However, all options would be considered.

Resolved to:

- 1) agree to hold a virtual Zoom meeting of the full Authority on Friday 11 September 2020 to include only essential reports;**
- 2) 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) agree to hold a further meeting of the full Authority (either by Zoom or in person, depending on the prevailing circumstances) 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) agree that, subject to the coronavirus 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 the prevailing circumstances) and meetings be held on the following days:**

Full Fire Authority

- 11 September 2020 (virtual meeting via Zoom)
- 27 November 2020 (virtual or physical dependent 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 Committee

- 22 January 2021
- 23 April 2021

Policy and Strategy Committee

- 13 November 2020 (virtual and only if required for urgent business)
- 29 January 2021
- 30 April 2021

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

37 2019/20 Revenue and Capital Outturn

Prior to the Committee's consideration of this item, the following written question had been submitted by the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) and was read to members by Malcolm Townroe, Clerk to the Authority:

The Service has underspent on wholetime wages and overtime by a considerable amount. However, the wholetime ridership continues to suffer due to large numbers of vacant posts. Many appliances continue to ride at minimum crewing levels due to budget restraints. Will the Fire Authority commit to spending all the wholetime budget and earmark enough overtime budget to ensure appliances are crewed at correct levels?

The following response was provided by the Chair:

In relation to the 2019/20 underspend referenced on page 14 of the agenda pack, it is recognised that this equated to just 0.34% of the allocated budget, with considerable funding redirected to support overtime. The Service routinely utilises overtime to support the crewing of appliances, but this must be balanced with the appropriate use of contracted hours already made available for the cover of sickness and other absences, an area where performance still needs to be improved and I would ask that the FBU support the Chief Fire Officer in this regard.

Within the current year, the FBU will be aware that officers are working hard to maintain the operational establishment through On-call migration, transferees from other services, and a wholetime firefighter recruitment campaign. Furthermore, short term measures are being utilised to offset the delay in recruitment caused by the pandemic, including; On-call staff working additional shifts, overtime to cover substantive deficiencies, and a continuous drive to improve sickness cover performance within the contracted hours already made available. Appliance availability and operational cover has remained strong over recent months, and I am assured by the Chief Fire Officer that these measures are appropriate to support the ridership going forward.

Becky Smeathers, Head of Finance, presented the report outlining the provisional financial performance of the Service in 2019/20. She highlighted the following information:

- (a) In February, the Fire Authority approved a 2019/20 revenue budget of £42.696m on the basis that a budget deficit of £1.240m would be supported by general reserves.
- (b) In-year savings were requested to reduce the requirement for reserves and total expenditure for 2019/20 was £42.096m, resulting in an underspend of £600,000 requiring £603,000 of funding from general reserves.
- (c) While the revenue underspend is a relatively small proportion of the overall budget it includes a few significant over and underspends, including expenditure relating to employees, transport and income.
- (d) The net movement in earmarked reserves relates to some unused Emergency Service Network grant and some unused Covid-19 grant.
- (e) Overall, reserves are in a healthy position.

- (f) Final capital expenditure was £1.843m, which is an underspend within the year of £4.755m against the revised budget of £6.599m.
- (g) £2.6m of the slippage relates to the replacement of Worksop Fire Station which is delayed due to issues with site availability. Other slippages include transport, protective equipment, property and IT and communications.
- (h) The date for publishing the draft accounts has been extended to 31 August 2020, but they are on course to be completed by the end of July. The accounts will be audited from 7 September prior to the deadline for final completion at the end of November.

The Committee noted the contents of the report.

Resolved to:

- 1) approve the slippage of £4,182,000 on the capital programme; and**
- 2) approve the carry forward of surplus funding relating to the Child Safety Equipment Pilot in an earmarked reserve.**

38 Revenue, Capital and Prudential Code Monitoring Report to 31 May 2020

Becky Smeathers, Head of Finance, presented the report about the financial performance of the Service during 2020/21. She highlighted the following information:

- (a) Expenditure has been more erratic than normal due to Covid-19 and its impact on services. Therefore it has been hard to predict the outturn position.
- (b) The revenue forecast outturn position is £43.914m with a £1.497m underspend against a revised budget of £45.411m. A significant proportion of the underspend relates to the Covid-19 grant, which was greater than expected and some of which has not yet been allocated.
- (c) One of the major variances relates to wholetime pay, caused by a higher than anticipated level of vacancies due to the wholetime training course being later than originally anticipated. The question from the Fire Brigades Union raised the issue of underspend on wholetime pay and holding vacancies. Options are being looked at and it is anticipated that the underspend will drop significantly.
- (d) The Service has received Government funding for Covid-19 but this can only be used for specific purposes and not to address potential shortfalls in the 2021/22 budget caused by reduced collection rates for Council Tax and Business Rates. The current best estimate is that the impact could be up to £1m which will impact on the Medium Term Financial Plan for the next 3 years.
- (e) There has been slippage in the capital programme which impacts on the Minimum Revenue Provision and it is proposed that the underspend is reallocated.
- (f) Reserves are in a healthy position and the expected level of reserves at 31 March 2020 is £10.9m.

- (g) It is proposed to add £30,000 to the Capital Programme for an ICT project funded by the Covid-19 grant and approve slippage relating to the Worksop replacement fire station. It is also proposed to add the Command Support Unit upgrade to be funded from earmarked reserves to the Capital Programme.
- (h) In May 2020, Fire Authority increased the limits for prudential indicators to deal with uncertainties related to Covid-19. This has not been required and borrowing is comfortably within the original indicators and limits set out in February 2020.

During subsequent discussion the anticipated lower collection rates for Council Tax and Business Rates was raised. It was clarified that the estimate of the impact of lower collection rates for Council Tax and Business Rates is based on data provided by local authorities to the Department for Communities and Local Government. It is difficult to estimate the impact and the figures are based on current best estimates. The Service's estimate mirrors national estimates so it is thought to be reasonable. The Government is being urged to address this issue in the forthcoming spending review.

The Committee noted the contents of the report.

Resolved to:

- 1) approve the virement of £62,000 from the MRP budget to operational equipment to fund the purchase of new fire hoods in response to the Grenfell enquiry outcomes (£37,000) and to correct an error in the medical equipment budget (£25,000);**
- 2) approve the addition of two new projects to the Capital Programme:**
 - i) £30,000 capital project for ICT equipment to enable the service to react to Covid-19; and**
 - ii) £70,000 Command Support upgrade to be funded from Earmarked Reserves**
- 3) approve the slippage of £2,557,000 to 2021/22 for the Worksop replacement fire station project.**

39 Service Delivery Performance Report

Prior to the Committee's consideration of this item, the following written question had been submitted by the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) and was read to members by Malcolm Townroe, Clerk to the Authority:

The table in Appendix A shows On-call availability. Ashfield and Retford stations have not been included in this table, interestingly both stations have the worst on-call availability in the Service. Why has the Service decided not to include these stations in the report, as all other stations that have On-call at them are included?

The following response was provided by the Chair:

Contrary to the question posed, I refer the FBU to section 2.4 of the report where the performance of both Ashfield and Retford fire stations have been clearly articulated in the report. These stations are not included in the On-Call performance tables as they operate the unique Day Shift Crewing system recently implemented and are specifically drawn out, at

the request of members, so that more transparency and greater scrutiny can be applied to those locations.

As part of the implementation of Day Shift Crewing it was also agreed to undertake a review of the model and report it back to the Authority. This review is being progressed by the Chief Fire Officer and staff and their representatives will be fully engaged in this work.

Craig Parkin, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, introduced the report updating members on the performance of the Service Delivery Directorate, noting that this information is normally reported to the Community Safety Committee which is currently not meeting due to the coronavirus pandemic. He highlighted the following information:

- (a) Between April and June 2020 there was a decrease of 237 incidents compared with the same period in the previous year.
- (b) Between April and June 2020 the overall average attendance time for emergency incidents was 07:56 minutes which was an increase in performance of 5 seconds compared with the previous quarter and within the target set for the Service. Lots of work had taken place to deliver this improvement.
- (c) Between April and June 2020 the on-call availability was excellent and it is intended to learn lessons from this. However there are some concerns about the impact of furlough ending.
- (d) The Community Safety Committee had previously raised concerns about cover in Ashfield and Retford. A review is underway and staff, including the Fire Brigades Union will be engaged in the review.
- (e) During the coronavirus pandemic, the public should have experienced no difference in the delivery of services but the Service has been involved in additional activities to support partner organisations and communities e.g. delivering food parcels and making befriending telephone calls to high-risk residents. There are lots of lessons to be learnt from experiences during the pandemic and these will be reported to members in due course.
- (f) The coronavirus pandemic has restricted the ability to carry out preventative work but there is still a positive direction of travel.
- (g) The Protection Team has amended ways of working in line with national guidance and has had to focus on desktop audits as many buildings have not been accessible. However this is now starting to change.
- (h) In the City, work is taking place in relation to multiple occupancy buildings and is intended to present the findings of this work to City Councillors. It is intended to try and engage developers on this agenda so they are sighted on things that would not meet fire safety standards and might lead to enforcement.

During subsequent discussion the following points were raised:

- (i) The Service should be proud of the support it has provided to partners and communities during the Coronavirus outbreak.

- (j) Training is important to avoid losing people. It had been paused during the lockdown period, but it is now restarting with Covid-safe arrangements in place. In addition, with furlough arrangements in place on-call staff have been used more and this has reduced the longer-term impact on competencies and training.

On behalf of the Authority, the Chair thanked staff for their work with partners to support communities and particularly the most vulnerable people during the current Coronavirus outbreak.

The Committee noted the contents of the report.

Resolved to send a thank you letter from the Fire Authority to all staff for their work to support communities during the current Coronavirus outbreak.

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

Ian Pritchard, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, presented the report updating members on the Service's response to the outcomes of inspection by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services. He informed members that this report covered all 25 areas for improvement as reporting to specific committees is suspended due to the current coronavirus outbreak. He highlighted the following information:

- (a) In September 2019 the Fire Authority was presented with an action plan detailing 'areas for improvement' following an inspection of the Service by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services.
- (b) There are eight areas for improvement that are now complete (numbers: 3, 7, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18, and 24).
- (c) The remaining seventeen areas for improvement are on schedule for completion and progress is reported regularly to the Chief Fire Officer.

In the subsequent discussion, members welcomed the positive direction of travel and the regular monitoring of progress.

Resolved to

- 1) note the progress made against the Areas for Improvement Action Plan; and**
- 2) close eight specific areas for improvement (AFIs 3, 7, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18 and 24).**

41 Shaping Our Future Organisational Health Update 2020

Craig Parkin, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, presented the report updating members on organisational development, equality, diversity and inclusion activities taking place across the organisation. He highlighted the following information:

- (a) Over the last 12 months the Service has made progress towards its organisational development aims and this is important in the context of issues raised in the 2019 inspection by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services.
- (b) A new performance and development review process has been introduced linking individual objectives to overall Service plans, and monitoring performance on this.
- (c) There has been a drive to embed the new Behavioural Framework, including through 1:1s and recruitment and selection processes.
- (d) As part of the organisation's commitment to improving workforce diversity, targets have been set and there has been lots of work on positive action to embed this on a day-to-day basis and not just think about it in terms of recruitment and selection.
- (e) The Black Lives Matter movement has generated challenge for the Service on how it reflects the communities it serves. All Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) staff have been invited to a BAME forum to discuss these issues. A BAME action plan is being developed and the first review of the draft action plan will be undertaken by BAME staff. As part of addressing this challenge, it is important to create an environment in which staff are confident to talk about issues without fear of disciplinary action.
- (f) 360 degree feedback for middle and senior leaders has been really useful and continues to be rolled out.
- (g) So far 45% of staff have completed the staff survey. The findings of the survey will be used to inform future organisational development work.
- (h) Protection and Prevention Teams are working to consider how to engage all communities, particularly those under-represented in the Service.

During subsequent discussion the following points were raised:

- (i) Alongside recognising progress that has been made, the honesty about the challenges faced is commended.
- (j) There is potential to make more use of elected members as role models.
- (k) The Fire Authority could work more closely with partners on establishing LGBT+ role models to talk about their experiences, as has previously been done in relation to BAME communities.
- (l) It is really important to listen to people about their own experiences.
- (m) Work in relation to the BSL Charter, supporting the deaf community and those with hidden disabilities is appreciated.
- (n) The Nottingham Together Board is a community-focused group with a BAME sub-group working to mobilise civil society and engage with key public sector organisations on issues such as employment and skills. There could be opportunities for the Authority to engage with the Board and communicate key messages through its community networks.

Resolved

- 1) to note the progress made in the organisational development and inclusion agenda;**
- 2) that the Chief Fire Officer and his Team explore opportunities to develop role models, particularly in relation to Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic and LGBT+ communities across the City and County;**
- 3) that following receipt of a formal invitation from the Nottingham Together Board, to engage with the work of that Board.**

42 Collaboration Update

Ian Pritchard, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, presented the report updating members on collaboration activities. He highlighted the following information:

- (a) The Collaboration Strategy was approved in September 2018 and a large proportion of the work has now become business as usual for the Service, for example Police staff co-located at fire stations.
- (b) The contract for construction of the new building that will form part of the new Joint Police and Fire Headquarters at Sherwood Lodge has been awarded to Henry Brothers Midlands, and some work on site has already started.
- (c) Work to redevelop West Bridgford fire station has been delayed slightly by the coronavirus outbreak.
- (d) The Ambulance, Police and Fire Station in Hucknall has been operating for some time but the official opening was delayed by the coronavirus outbreak and will be rescheduled.
- (e) Prevention activities have been temporarily on-hold due to the coronavirus outbreak.
- (f) A business case is being put forward to the next meeting of the Collaboration Delivery Board for the CHARLIE referral training.
- (g) The joint drone was successfully used at the Langar Airfield incident.

The Committee noted the contents of the report.

43 Exclusion of the Public

Resolved to exclude the public from the meeting during consideration of the remaining agenda 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 outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

44 Exempt Minutes

The exempt minutes of the meeting held on 1 May 2020 were confirmed as an accurate record.

45 Joint Headquarters Collaboration Programme

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

46 Worksop Fire Station Project

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

47 Disposal of Hucknall Fire Station

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