



NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
Fire & Rescue Service
Creating Safer Communities

Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham
Fire and Rescue Authority

COMMITTEE OUTCOMES

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

Date: 26 February 2021

Purpose of Report:

To report to Members the business and actions of the Fire Authority committee meetings which took place in January 2021.

Recommendations:

That Members note the contents of this report.

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Chief Fire Officer

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1. BACKGROUND

As part of the revised governance arrangements the Authority has delegated key responsibilities to specific committees of the Authority. As part of those delegated responsibilities, the chairs of committees and the management leads report to the Authority on the business and actions as agreed at Fire and Rescue Authority meeting on 1 June 2007.

2. REPORT

The minutes of the following meetings are attached at Appendix A for the information of all Fire Authority Members:

Community Safety Committee	08 January 2021
Finance and Resources Committee	15 January 2021
Human Resources Committee	22 January 2021

(The Policy and Strategy Committee due to take place on 29 January 2021 was subsequently cancelled).

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

All financial implications were considered as part of the original reports submitted to the committees.

4. HUMAN RESOURCES AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

All human resources and learning and development implications were considered as part of the original reports submitted to the committees.

5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

An equality impact assessment has not been undertaken because this report is not associated with a policy, function or service. Its purpose is to update the Fire Authority on the outcomes of committee business.

6. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

There are no crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal implications arising directly from this report.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

The Service's performance in relation to matters addressed through the committee structure is scrutinised through a range of audit processes. The Service needs to continue to perform well in these areas as external scrutiny through Comprehensive Performance Assessment and auditors' judgement is key to future Service delivery.

9. COLLABORATION IMPLICATIONS

There are no collaboration implications arising from this report, as the report seeks to provide Members with an update on the business and actions of Fire Authority committee meetings which have taken place in the last quarter.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Members note the contents of this report.

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

None.

John Buckley
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER



Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire and Rescue Authority Community Safety Committee

**Minutes of the meeting held remotely and streamed to YouTube on 8 January 2021 from
10.02 am - 10.53 am**

Membership

Present

Councillor Nick Raine (Chair)
Councillor Stephen Garner
Councillor Gul Nawaz Khan
Councillor Sue Saddington
Councillor Parry Tsimbiridis
Councillor Jason Zadrozny

Absent

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

Craig Parkin - Deputy Chief Fire Officer
Damien West - Area Manager for Prevention and Protection
Mick Sharman - Area Manager for Response.
Gavin Harris - Head of Digital Transformation
Catherine Ziane-Pryor - Governance Officer

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

None.

3 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 January 2020 were confirmed as a true record and will be signed by the Chair.

4 SERVICE DELIVERY PERFORMANCE REPORT

Craig Parkin, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, introduced the report for the period between 1 September and 30 November 2020, with updates delivered by Damien West, Area Manager for Prevention and Protection, and Mick Sharman, Area Manager for Response.

It is noted that performance comparisons are to non-covid affected periods so are not a similar comparison.

Mick Sharman, Area Manager for Response, provided an outline of incidents.

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

- a) 2,238 incidents were attended, a decrease of 106 incidents which is within the expected fluctuation range;
- b) the attendance target average of within 8 minutes continued to be achieved and averaged 7.42 minutes;
- c) the on-call availability target is 85% but during this period availability was 91.75%;
- d) targets for the Joint Fire Control Centre were exceeded and system availability maintained;
- e) in-person operational exercises with partners have had to cease but alternative methods, such as table-top exercises have been implemented to ensure training standards are maintained;
- f) partnership work to support communities has delivered 11,000 food parcels. This activity including delivery of medication, has reflected well against the activity of other Fire and Rescue Services;
- g) the food parcels were gathered from a variety of different sources, including food banks, and some fire stations are even drop-off points for food banks. Partners identified those in need and the Service assisted with deliveries;
- h) with regard to on-call availability, the Ashfield and Rufford Stations are assessed separately due to the different day shift crewing model operating at these sites. An update report will be submitted, to the Authority, including the proposal of a pilot whereby the Service will offer an area specific on-call offer to help recruit local residents;
- i) the Service also performed well in the Thematic HMI COVID-19 Response Inspection, for which the Service was commended and only 2 minor points for consideration identified.

Damien West, Area Manager for Prevention and Protection, provided the following summary and responded to committee members' questions:

- j) safe and well visits by operational crews were initially paused in the first lockdown but are now being undertaken for the most vulnerable people in community by the Persons

at Risk Team with a triage process against the 'CHARLIE' matrix, targeting those most at risk, primarily with telephone contact, and where possible, visits in person. 4 additional personnel have been temporarily engaged to address the backlog of referrals;

- k) there have been 2 incidents involving loss of life, one in Top Valley and one in Costock. Community reassurance activity was undertaken in each area following the incidents but it is of great concern that there continues to be a lack of adequate smoke alarm installation (40% of the homes visited in Costock had inadequate smoke detection alarms) so this remains a focus for prevention work;
- l) with regard to Fire Protection work, 6 enforcement notices have been issued and 5 prohibition notices;
- m) the Service continues to work in partnership with the City Council's Joint Audit and Inspection Team (JAIT) to inspect higher risk premises. Over 100 premises were inspected with 47% having fire compartmental issues identified. Many compartmentation issues arise on properties which have been adapted for residential use. Examples have included the installation of hard wired fire alarms where the holes drilled for the cabling have not been sealed. The methodology on determining which properties to assess is agreed with the City Council and higher risk based properties (following patterns of size/ownership/signing-off officer) are prioritised for assessment. There are a range of options to follow depending on the severity of the issues, including initially encouraging the owner to undertake the necessary work, but legislation can be enforced where there is resistance or urgent action is required. The approach is being recognised nationally as good/best practice.
- n) 33 fire investigations were undertaken across commercial, domestic and the fatal fires;
- o) organised public bonfire events were cancelled due to COVID-19 socialising restrictions and whilst the Service discouraged citizens from holding their own displays, safety advice was offered where events continued. There is nothing to stop people having bonfires and fireworks on their own land as formal permission is not required. The Service worked with the Police, particularly in the Gedling area where a communal bonfire was held, but overall there was no significant increase in bonfire night related incidents;
- p) it is acknowledged that Councillors have expressed concern that there had been reports of industrial waste and plastics being burned during the bonfire night period. The Service works hard to initially liaise and educate people, alongside the Local Authority Environmental Health Teams which are the regulatory body, but if people are determined, then it's generally very difficult to prevent but any information gathered around such behaviours can be passed to the Local Authority and the Police.

Members of the Committee expressed concern at the 47% fire compartmental issues identified in the JAIT work, but were assured by the response of the Service and commended the Service on taking on additional community support duties whilst still maintaining the expected standards during this particularly difficult period.

Resolved to note the report.

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

Craig Parkin, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, presented the report which updates the committee on progress on addressing the 25 areas identified for improvement (AFI) during Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services Inspection.

Overall, there are only four AFIs remaining to be fully addressed, but members should be assured that work continues to embed improvements into the culture of the Service.

Resolved to note the progress made against the Areas For Improvement (AFI) action plan.

6 UNWANTED FIRE SIGNALS UPDATE

Craig Parkin, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, presented the report which updates the committee on the Tri-Service (Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and Leicestershire) Unwanted Fire Signals (UFS) and provides an overview of unwanted fire signals during the past 12 months.

The report sets out the key elements of the Tri-service policy, including premises types that are exempt from call challenging.

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

- a) good progress has been made in reducing the number of UFSs by 9.5%, but there is further work to be done as they continue to have a significant impact on occupying the time of the Service, counting as one third of all call-outs;
- b) the most prolific offenders are a small number of complex premises such as the major hospitals but work is ongoing to ensure that the responsible person actively takes responsibility to comply to legislation, good practice and keeping their buildings safe;
- c) there will be a further review of exempt premises to reflect the results of a risk based inspection programme;
- d) it is noted that some Fire and Rescue Services have taken the decision not to respond to Automatic Fire Detection (AFD) systems, which is an approach the Service will monitor, although is currently not a proposed approach to adopt;
- e) there are occasions where access to premises is challenging due to on-street parking. It can be difficult to enforce with legislation but where apparent, the Service initially takes an engagement approach to educate and appeal to people's moral responsibilities not to prevent emergency vehicle access. It is a complex issue with the Local Authorities willing to assist, but their policies are to pursue changes through a consultation process with residents. Historically the layout of some residential areas were not designed for multiple car ownership households and whilst the instances of blockages may be rare, the implications can be very significant, including risk to life, so members are requested to support the Service at a local level with access issues wherever they occur, including in the planning process.

Some members of the Committee suggested that with regard to roads blocked by inconsiderate parking, further legislative powers should be sought to address these issues. It is acknowledged that some parking issues in the City are as a result of commuter parking which is also an issue for residents, although less so since the introduction of COVID-19 restrictions, so this may change again as businesses adapt after the pandemic.

Resolved to

- 1) note the progress made in addressing unwanted fire signals;**
- 2) support the exploration of developing the Tri-Service Unwanted Fire Signals Policy;**
- 3) receive a further report with recommendations within six months.**



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

**Minutes of the meeting held remotely via Zoom and live-streamed on YouTube on
Friday 15 January 2021 from 10:04am to 11:42am**

Membership

Present

Councillor Toby Neal (Chair, items 10-11)
Councillor Andrew Brown
Councillor Mike Quigley MBE
Councillor Nick Raine

Absent

Councillor John Clarke

Councillor Michael Payne (Chair, items 1-9, substitute for Councillor John Clarke)

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

John Buckley	- Chief Fire Officer
Phil Dent	- Internal Auditor, Nottinghamshire County Council
Rob Disney	- Internal Auditor, Nottinghamshire County Council
Gavin Harris	- Head of Digital Transformation
Helen Henshaw	- External Auditor, Ernst and Young
Adrian Mann	- Governance Officer, Nottingham City Council
Ian Pritchard	- Joint Head Quarters Programme Support Manager
Terry Scott	- Head of Procurement and Resources
Becky Smeathers	- Head of Finance and Treasurer to the Fire Authority

• **Chair**

As Councillor John Clarke, Chair of the Finance and Resources Sub-Committee, was absent, Councillor Michael Payne chaired the meeting.

1 Apologies for Absence

Councillor John Clarke

2 Declarations of Interests

Councillor Michael Payne declared an Other Interest in agenda item 11 because he is a Councillor of Gedling Borough Council, and because the Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters are located within his Gedling Borough Council ward. He left the room prior to discussion and voting on this item.

3 Minutes

The Committee confirmed the minutes of the meeting held on 17 January 2020 as a correct record and they were signed by the Chair.

4 Revenue, Capital and Prudential Code Monitoring Report to 30 November 2020

Becky Smeathers, Head of Finance and Treasurer to the Fire Authority, presented a report on the financial performance of the Service in 2020/21 and the Prudential Code monitoring to the end of November 2020. The following points were discussed:

- (a) the latest revenue budget monitoring position shows very little change in expenditure since November. Currently, it shows a forecast outturn position of £43.967 million, which represents a £1.398 million underspend against the revised budget of £45.365 million. Of this, £748,000 will be allocated to the general reserves, and £274,000 will be earmarked for the Transformation and Collaboration reserve, to be used in future years;
- (b) the level of reserves at the end of the year is anticipated to be £10.7 million, which will put the Service in a strong position to respond effectively to the high degree of uncertainty about the future, in the context of Coronavirus. It is probable that the funds held in the reserves will be needed to support the Service in future years, which are likely to be challenging;
- (c) £376,000 of grants have also been received during this financial year, and the funding will roll forward to the next financial year. All current borrowing and investments are compliant with the requirements of the Prudential Code;
- (d) the current capital budget is £5.873 million, and the forecast outturn position is £4.107 million. Much of the current capital budget relates to the move to a combined headquarters with Nottinghamshire Police, and this project is still progressing well;
- (e) the following amendments to the 2020/21 capital programme are proposed: the addition of a conference room sound system project, costing £57,000, which will be funded from the Covid-19 grant; an increase of £24,000 for the migration of the SharePoint system to a cloud-based product; and an increase of £14,000 for air bag replacement in Service vehicles;
- (f) the investment of £57,000 in new conferencing facilities does represent a high cost but, in response to the current circumstances, it has is being designed to include both individual and group microphones to improve audio quality in meetings held under social distancing requirements, and to be fully integrated with video-conferencing systems, so that meetings can support both in-person and remote participation at the same time. It is anticipated that the provision for socially distanced and remote attendance of meeting will be required for some time in the future. However, due to the intended relocation of the Service headquarters, it is proposed to install the new conferencing system at the Highfields Fire Station, and an appropriate site survey is being organised;
- (g) the Committee noted the report and thanked the Service's Finance Team for their hard work in steering the organisation through a very difficult year.

Resolved to approve the following amendments to the 2020/21 capital programme:

- (1) the addition of a conference room sound system project, costing £57,000, which will be funded from the Covid-19 grant;**
- (2) an increase of £24,000 for the migration of the SharePoint system to a cloud-based product;**
- (3) an increase of £14,000 for air bag replacement in Fire and Rescue Service vehicles.**

5 Budget Proposals for 2021/22 to 2024/25 and Options for Council Tax 2021/22

Becky Smeathers, Head of Finance and Treasurer to the Fire Authority, presented a report on the budget proposals for 2021/22 to 2024/25, and the options for Council Tax rates for 2021/22. The following points were discussed:

- (a) there have been a number of areas of change since the Medium Term Financial Strategy was approved in November 2020, as budgets have been developed and actualised. Further grant support from Government has also been confirmed, to alleviate some funding pressures. Budgets have been reduced by up to £600,000 in some areas but, due to the strong performance of on-call firefighters during the Coronavirus period and the wide range of support provided to communities by on-call staff (a number of whom have been more available to work during the Coronavirus period, due to being furloughed from their primary employment), further investment is being put in place to roll this work through to next year and enhance on-call provision. Additional investment is being made for new IT systems, and the schedule of planned fleet and property maintenance is being increased, to reduce costs in the long term;
- (b) due to the severe economic hardship imposed by Coronavirus, there are concerns about Councils' ability to collect the full amount of Council Tax in the current crisis, and forecasts of a potentially reduced Council Tax base have been produced. There is still also significant uncertainty in the area of potential income from Business Rates. The Government has been providing financial support to businesses, and the Service has been compensated by the Government to offset the reduction in the collection of Business Rates. Currently, it is unclear for how long this support will continue, so this uncertainty does represent a significant risk to future budgets;
- (c) the Government has indicated its preference to freeze public sector pay increases. However, as the salaries of firefighters and Service support staff are set by independent bodies, a 1% pay award has been allocated (which is slightly greater than inflation), in the interests of responsible budgeting. If the pay award is set a 2%, sufficient reserves are in place to cover these costs. However, due to the uncertainties still present in the budget, a nil increase of the Council Tax rates would contribute to a large shortfall in the budget, which would have a significant impact on the reserves position – meaning that £5.3 million would be required from reserves to achieve a balanced budget for 2024/25. As such, it is proposed to increase the Council Tax requirement by 1.95% (of a possible increase of up to 2%) to achieve a more sustainable deficit of £65,000, and this increase has been used for the current budget forecasts;

- (d) the Committee thanked the Finance Team for their substantial work over the last four years in securing savings in the budget and building the reserves. It commended the outstanding work of Service staff during the Coronavirus period, and regretted that the current emergency could result in a pay freeze;
- (e) the Committee noted that, ultimately, it did not wish to increase the Council Tax burden on citizens struggling during a period of economic hardship – though Councils do have various schemes in place to protect the most vulnerable. It recognised, however, that the Service provides a vital service at good value for money, and does require a suitable level of funding to maintain these services and value. Given the substantial impact on the budget deficit that a nil increase would cause, it considered that a 1.95% increase in Council Tax was a prudent and sensible step to take;
- (f) Councillor Michael Payne moved that, on the basis of the report and following discussion, the Committee should recommend a Council Tax increase of 1.95% to the Fire Authority. Councillor Andrew Brown seconded this motion.

Resolved to recommend to the Fire Authority that, in order to achieve a sustainable funding position for the Fire and Rescue Service, Council Tax is increased by 1.95%.

6 Internal Audit Annual Report 2019/20

Becky Smeathers, Head of Finance and Treasurer to the Fire Authority, and Rob Disney, Internal Auditor from Nottinghamshire County Council, presented a report on the results of the 2019/20 annual internal audit, including the internal audit plan for 2020/21 to 2022/23. The following points were discussed:

- (a) the internal audit report reviewing 2019/20 would normally have been presented much earlier in the financial year, but was delayed due to the Committee not meeting as a consequence of the Coronavirus emergency. The report establishes the key lines of enquiry used to gather evidence and provide a combined opinion for positive assurance that appropriate processes are in place in the organisation for effective governance, risk management and control, across the three 'lines of defence' of front-line management, corporate functions and internal audit. The plan for the Service's next audit is also being established;
- (b) as part of the audit process, the 'Cardiff Checks' methodology was used, which identifies a random invoice from a given batch, so that the whole process that lead to the creation and payment of that invoice can then be reviewed for the effectiveness of its controls. However, the Cardiff Checks are a relatively old system, so a much greater level of data analytics is now being used to gain an overview of the full spread of payment, with focused work following in certain areas. As such, it is possible to achieve a greater level of assurance across a 100% sample size;
- (c) the recharge system for the use of Service fuel depots by Nottinghamshire Police is a new service development. An audit of the recharging considered the potentially high risk areas such as fuel security, consumption recording, recharges, debt recovery and the maintenance of fuel stocks, but effective controls were found to be in place for the mitigation of these risks.

The Committee noted the report.

7 External Audit Plan 2019/20

Becky Smeathers, Head of Finance and Treasurer to the Fire Authority, and Helen Henshaw, External Auditor from Ernst and Young, presented a report on the external auditors' audit plan for the intended work on the Service's 2019/20 financial statements and value for money arrangements. The following points were discussed:

- (a) normally, members would have approved the external audit plan following its preparation in March 2020 and prior to the audit commencing, but this was not possible for the 2019/20 audit, due to Coronavirus. It was intended for the audit to be completed by the statutory deadline of the end of November 2020, but this was not achieved due the current challenging audit environment, where less than 50% of Public Sector audits had been signed off by this deadline. The audit is now in its latter stages of completion, and it is expected that the final report will be submitted to the February meeting of the Fire Authority – though work is still ongoing;
- (b) the external audit assesses areas of significant risk in the Service's financial statements, including the potential for misstatements due to error or fraud, mistakes in the statements such as capital expenditure being accounted for within the fixed assets, and the up-to-date valuation of land and buildings. For example, identifying accurately the value of a fire station to the organisation in the context of the financial statements (which is not the same as identifying its realisable value through a sale) can be a complex issue, and errors in accounting can occur due to this complexity. Pension scheme liabilities remain a substantial risk and, due to the results of recent court cases, are subject currently to a high degree of estimate and uncertainty;
- (c) the audit also addresses value for money within the organisation, reviewing financial resilience across the next few years (where the current strong reserves position is positive), the establishment of a joint headquarters with Nottinghamshire Police and the associated governance implications for decision-making and finances, and the response to the 2019 Service inspection;
- (d) materiality has been set at £1.34 million, which represents 2% of the prior year's gross expenditure on the provision of services. Performance materiality has been set at £670,000, which represents 50% of materiality, to achieve the right level of detail at the accounts level;
- (e) the duty to prescribe fees for external audit is a statutory function delegated to Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) by the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, and the PSAA will approve the final fee charged to the Authority. However, this final fee is yet to be confirmed, and will be affected by a range of factors;
- (f) the Committee noted that the Chair of the Fire Authority had written to the external auditor on 6 January to raise concerns about the delay to the completion of the audit, and to seek assurance that it would be completed by February, and as to the proposed final fees. It recognised the unusual difficulties caused by Coronavirus for the carrying out of the audit, but felt that the delay was contributed to by staffing shortages at Ernst

and Young, which could have been mitigated more effectively. It remained concerned and disappointed that full assurance has not been provided in response to the letter regarding the completion date of the audit and the final costs. It considered that, given the significant public interest in the performance of the Service, better assurance should have been provided, and it requested that these comments are fed back to Ernst and Young appropriately.

The Committee noted the report.

8 Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services Update

John Buckley, Chief Fire Officer, presented a report on the Service's response to the outcomes of the latest inspection by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services. The following points were discussed:

- (a) the 2019 inspection highlighted 25 areas for improvement (AFI) for the Service to consider. Each improvement area was allocated to a lead officer, with clear milestones and expected outcomes to deliver the improvement required. In relation to the Finance and Resources Sub-Committee, the remaining AFI to be completed is number 15, where "The Service needs to accelerate its plans to improve ICT so that it makes best use of available technology to support operational effectiveness and efficiency";
- (b) this action is now largely complete, as a great deal of work has been carried out to improve IT systems, which provided a substantial benefit during the Coronavirus pandemic. Remote working processes have been implemented successfully, and improvements have been achieved in effective data management. A dedicated staff trainer for IT is in place, and it is intended to develop full cloud working within the next three years;
- (c) unfortunately, the action relating to the recording of competency and training through an integrated learning management system has been delayed, as no single, standard system is available that meets all of the Service's requirements. As such, work is underway to reduce the three systems in use currently down to two, within 2021/22;
- (d) the Committee thanked the Service personnel for their impressive work in addressing the recommendations of the inspection, and the effective reporting mechanisms that had been put in place to keep the members of the Fire Authority informed as to progress.

The Committee noted the report.

9 Exclusion of the Public

The Committee decided 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, as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act.

- **Chair**

Councillor Michael Payne declared an Other Interest in agenda item 11 because he is a Councillor of Gedling Borough Council, and because the Fire and Rescue Service headquarters are located within his Gedling Borough Council ward. He left the room prior to discussion and voting on this item.

As Councillor Michael Payne, Chair of the Finance and Resources Sub-Committee, was absent, Councillor Toby Neal chaired the meeting.

10 Exempt Minutes

The Committee confirmed the exempt minutes of the meeting held on 17 January 2020 as a correct record and they were signed by the Chair.

11 Land and Legal Title of the Headquarters at Bestwood Lodge

John Buckley, Chief Fire Officer, and Ian Pritchard, Joint Head Quarters Programme Support Manager, presented a report on the land and legal title of the Service's headquarters at Bestwood Lodge.

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



Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire and Rescue Authority Human Resources Sub-Committee

**Minutes of the meeting held remotely via Zoom and live-streamed on YouTube on
Friday 22 January 2021 from 10:04am to 11:33am**

Membership

Present

Councillor Shuguftah Quddoos (Chair)
Councillor Vaughan Hopewell
Councillor Jawaid Khalil
Councillor John Longdon
Councillor Salma Mumtaz

Absent

None

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

Tracy Crump - Head of People and Organisational Development
Gavin Harris - Head of Digital Transformation
Adrian Mann - Governance Officer, Nottingham City Council
Craig Parkin - Deputy Chief Fire Officer
Matt Sismey - Organisational Development and Inclusion Manager
Tracey Stevenson - Assistant Head of Finance

1 Apologies for Absence

None.

2 Declarations of Interests

None.

3 Minutes

The Committee confirmed the minutes of the meeting held on 24 January 2020 as a correct record and they were signed by the Chair.

4 Human Resources Update

Tracy Crump, Head of People and Organisational Development, presented a report on the key Human Resources metrics for the period of 1 April to 31 December 2020. The following points were discussed:

- (a) sickness absence in Quarters 1 and 2 (1 April to 30 September 2020) has seen a significant decrease in comparison to previous years, even taking into account absence in the period as a direct result of Coronavirus. This decrease in sickness may be attributed to a reduction in social contact and an increase in personal hygiene during the Coronavirus period, lowering the transmission of regular illnesses. In addition, staff working from home may have continued to work in a flexible way. Absence relating to Coronavirus is recorded specifically, and there is a requirement to report on cases at the national level. A full analysis of the sickness trends due to Coronavirus is underway, to improve planning and support;
- (b) there has been a small increase in sickness absence towards the end of Quarter 2, and numbers are likely to rise slightly due to seasonal factors. However, it seems probable that absence will continue to remain lower than normal – though instances of long-term sickness still remain a factor. The Service's absence figures are below the national average, which represents a good performance, and strong support structures remain in place for staff;
- (c) many support staff are now working remotely, and structures are in place from Occupational Health and HR to assist staff working in the new circumstances arising from the Coronavirus pandemic. Online workshops addressing mental health in yourself and others have been commissioned, and sessions have been run for managers on how to identify and approach mental ill health amongst staff;
- (d) the Committee thanked Service staff for their exceptional work during the Coronavirus period, and for the substantial improvement in sickness absence in the context of significant pressures. It requested that its written thanks are passed on to staff as part of the Chief Fire Officer's regular feedback to employees, to acknowledge their hard work during the Coronavirus period;
- (e) between 1 April and 31 December 2020, 33 new employees started work at the Service. The current whole-time staffing is 3 below the establishment level. A recruitment campaign (carried out completely online and with a strong focus on positive action) has been completed, resulting in 28 offers of employment, so the Service should be at a full establishment by April. Apprentice firefighters are starting their training programmes in April and September;
- (f) two recruitment campaigns for on-call firefighters have been carried out, with 20 new trainees coming in, and the next training course is now being advertised. The recruitment and retention of on-call firefighters remains a national challenge, and work is underway to try to develop local agreements that are as sustainable as possible. Work is also underway to seek to mitigate staffing issues arising from sickness absence amongst dual-contract staff, where a firefighter has both a whole-time and on-call role;
- (g) there have been a number of new starters amongst the support staff, though many of these are on fixed-term contracts funded through the Transformation Budget. Ultimately, the recruitment team have been working hard on various campaigns, despite the difficulties caused by the Coronavirus pandemic;

- (h) one redundancy occurred due to the restructuring of the Equipment Section, and preparation is taking place for an Employment Tribunal case scheduled for later in the year.

The Committee noted the report.

5 Equalities Monitoring Report

Matt Sismey, Organisational Development and Inclusion Manager, presented a report on the breakdown of the workforce by protected characteristic between 1 January and 31 December 2020, and the work being done to improve diversity within the Service. The following points were discussed:

- (a) since 2018, the Service has seen an increasing number of both female and Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) employees. The increase in the last 12 months has not been large, but the recruitment campaigns that took place during the summer were preceded by an early period of positive action, and this should have an impact on the workforce from later in 2021;
- (b) as part of the role of HR and Service Delivery functions in engaging with communities more effectively, a Community Engagement Manager has been appointed to provide support, engage with positive action to bring greater representation into the Service, and lead consultations with BAME communities on service delivery for their areas. The post-holder will also work closely with the current BAME staff, including in the context of the Future Leaders programme. Training is in place to assist managers with talent-spotting and supporting staff progression;
- (c) a BAME forum was brought together in response to the Black Lives Matter movement, and a BAME Action Plan is being developed, including processes to increase representation on interview panels. The learning from this forum will be applied more broadly to other areas of inclusion. The forum continues to meet in an informal style every other month, with the Action Plan now integrated into the Service's formal reporting;
- (d) the Committee felt that the appointment of the Community Engagement Manager was a positive step forward, and that this would be important in promoting organisational engagement with BAME staff and communities;
- (e) a great deal of inclusion training is now online. A pilot course has taken place as part of the development of e-learning relating to faith training, and the feedback from this is being used to make improvements for the delivery of more sessions in the future. Staff podcasts on faith are being developed, and greater engagement with places of worship is being planned;
- (f) the rates of declaration of disabilities remain level. Training is underway for managers on supporting mental health needs and on ensuring that reasonable adjustments are made to create a suitable work environment for staff with a disability. The number of employees who declare as identifying as LGBTQ+ also remains level, so development work is underway with staff to enhance awareness

and understanding. However, of the new intake of staff for 2021, 18% identify as LGBTQ+.

The Committee noted the report.

6 Apprenticeship Update

Craig Parkin, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, presented a report on apprenticeships within the Service. The following points were discussed:

- (a) the Service pays into a national levy for apprenticeships in the Public Sector. It can then draw down funding from this apprenticeship levy to provide training, which is regulated and inspected by Ofsted, and this counts toward the Public Sector apprenticeship target of 2.3% of the workforce. Currently, the Service has eight apprentices in support roles, who have passed their courses with good scores. Managers are encouraged to recognise the value of apprenticeships in recruitment, as a great deal of work has been put into establishing a strong scheme that results in a level 3 qualification;
- (b) consideration has been given to apprenticeships for on-call roles, but creating a suitable scheme is proving to be complex and difficult, so this is not being progressed further at this time.

The Committee noted the report.

7 Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services Update

Craig Parkin, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, presented a report on the Service's response to the outcomes of its 2019 inspection report. The following points were discussed:

- (a) the 2019 inspection of the Service raised 25 headline areas for improvement (AFIs). Of the eight AFIs falling under the remit of the Committee, only two remain to be signed off, relating to the creation of a training plan that clearly aligns and supports the workforce plan, and the introduction of processes for the development and support of high-potential staff and aspiring leaders;
- (b) a new leadership and behavioural framework is in place to help staff advance through progression opportunities via a number of training routes, including formal qualification development programmes. This approach has seen good engagement from staff, and has aided actual progression. The framework is robust and has a number of strands for growing potential, including an aspiring leaders programme, and staff are being supported actively in moving forward. Diagnostic work is carried out with staff on an individual basis to establish their best training and progression approach, and work has been carried out to ensure that as many potential pathways are in place as possible;
- (c) due to the relatively small size of the organisation, it is difficult to implement a viable high potential development scheme. Nevertheless, mentoring and coaching provision is being brought in and embedded. Clear progression pathways are available for staff to pursue, including opportunities for temporary promotions, to try

advanced roles and gain experience. Unfortunately, due to organisational size, it is difficult for support staff to follow a straight line of upward progression. However, processes are in place to develop opportunities for support staff to move laterally to different roles, to gain wider experience;

- (d) ultimately, the right building blocks are in place, but continual work is required to spot and nurture talent, give staff the confidence to seek progression, and achieve effective institutional culture change. A significant amount of work has been put into delivering the AFI targets, including across the Coronavirus period, to take these AFIs to a point where they can be signed off. Following a very strong effort, the Service has responded well to the AFIs. It has a good relationship with the Inspectorate, and has been able to maintain positive relations with staff unions and communities while making improvements in a very difficult period. However, the Service cannot afford to be complacent, and must continue to work hard to maintain the current standards and deliver on the remaining AFIs;
- (e) the Committee was heartened by the establishment of these progression opportunities for staff at all levels within the Service, and considered that it is vital to ensure that diversity is embedded within the organisation through effective and proactive support. It noted that close attention must be given to ensuring that the opportunities established are fully accessible to all staff;
- (f) the Inspectorate carried out a thematic inspection of the Service's response to Coronavirus at the end of 2020, and the report will be published later today. During the inspection, the response from the inspectors was positive. A date for the next inspection has not yet been confirmed, but the Service has alerted the Inspectorate to the planned timetable for its relocation to a joint headquarters with Nottingham Police, and requested that this is taken into account when setting the next inspection date.

Resolved to approve the closure of Area for Improvement (AFI) 20 and 25, within the overall AFI Action Plan.

8 People Strategy 2020-22

Tracy Crump, Head of People and Organisational Development, presented a report on the Service's People Strategy for 2020 to 2022. The following points were discussed:

- (a) the People Strategy has been reviewed and updated for the period of 2020 to 2022, to set out and address the current priorities, workplace matters and new issues that have arisen since the creation of the previous plan. The People Strategy is key to the delivery of the 2019-22 Strategic Plan, and the People Strategy will be updated again when a new Strategic Plan comes into effect from 2022. The People Strategy is intended to be owned by all managers and departments as a fully-encompassing workforce strategy that needs to be embraced by everyone. The strategy is ambitious and will be reviewed regularly, with clear measures of what success looks like in place;
- (b) the Strategy continues to focus on the key priority areas of: Delivering our Services; Shaping our Workforce; Inclusion; Outstanding Leadership; Workforce Development; Workforce Engagement; Positive Workplace and Culture; and Employee Well-Being.

These priority areas are to help ensure that the workforce is effective and sustainable; that the organisation can work differently to provide a better service; that the workplace is founded on respect and the acceptance of individuals; that the Service understands the needs of its communities; that the Service grows its own future leaders; that accessible development opportunities are available to all staff and that staff are confident to access them; that there is a strong relationship between the organisation and its workforce and stakeholders; that there is a strong set of core values and behaviours of acceptance, inclusion and involvement that are lived by staff; and that staff have available and accessible support in the workplace;

- (c) the Committee noted that the move to a joint headquarters with Nottinghamshire Police will have a significant impact on staff and their working environment, and that this should be given full consideration in the Service's strategic planning;
- (d) ultimately, the joint headquarters project is a major priority in the overall Strategic Plan. Engagement with staff will be carried out under the People Strategy to give them the opportunity to contribute to planning, and to address any concern or anxiety. Consultation is underway with staff representative bodies, and a formal process will start shortly to work with them on how the workforces will come together at the new headquarters;
- (e) as the Coronavirus pandemic has changed the world of work considerably, and has brought forward changes to ways of working that will have benefits going forward, the People Strategy will be used to consider agile working, and what form flexible working will take in the future organisational culture. The move to the new headquarters represents a significant opportunity to re-think how people can work in the future, and the learning generated during the Coronavirus period will be given full consideration as part of this.

Resolved to endorse the People Strategy 2020-22, and to receive six-monthly updates on the progress made against it.

9 Exclusion of the Public

The Committee decided 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, as defined in Paragraphs 1 and 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act.

10 Exempt Minutes

The Committee confirmed the exempt minutes of the meeting held on 24 January 2020 as a correct record and they were signed by the Chair.

11 Changes to the Permanent Establishment

Craig Parkin, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, presented a report on proposed changes to the current permanent establishment.

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

12 Regrading of Posts

Craig Parkin, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, presented a report on the outcomes of the latest job evaluation process.

The Committee noted the report.