



## **Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire and Rescue Authority**

**Minutes of the meeting held remotely via Zoom and live-streamed on YouTube on Friday 26 February 2021 from 10:32am to 1:36pm**

### **Membership**

#### **Present**

Councillor Michael Payne (Chair)  
Councillor Toby Neal (Vice Chair)  
Councillor Andrew Brown  
Councillor John Clarke  
Councillor Sybil Fielding  
Councillor Stephen Garner  
Councillor Vaughan Hopewell  
Councillor Jawaid Khalil  
Councillor Gul Nawaz Khan  
Councillor John Longdon  
Councillor Salma Mumtaz  
Councillor Shuguftah Quddoos  
Councillor Mike Quigley MBE  
Councillor Nick Raine  
Councillor Sue Saddington  
Councillor Parry Tsimbirdis  
Councillor Jonathan Wheeler  
Councillor Jason Zadrozny

#### **Absent**

None

Also in attendance: Paddy Tipping, Nottinghamshire Police and Crime Commissioner

### **Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:**

John Buckley - Chief Fire Officer  
Craig Parkin - Deputy Chief Fire Officer  
Candida Brudenell - Assistant Chief Fire Officer  
Malcolm Townroe - Clerk and Monitoring Officer to the Fire Authority  
Becky Smeathers - Head of Finance and Treasurer to the Authority  
Helen Henshaw - Auditor from Ernst and Young LLP  
Gavin Harris - Head of Digital Transformation  
Damien West - Area Manager for Prevention and Protection  
Catherine Ziane-Pryor - Governance Officer

## **29 Apologies for Absence**

None.

## **30 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 November 2020 were confirmed as a true record and will be signed by the Chair.

## **31 Declarations of Interests**

None.

## **32 Chair's Announcements**

As Chair of the Authority, Councillor Michael Payne made the following announcements:

### Police and Crime Commissioner and Nottinghamshire County Council Elections

- (a) elections are to take place on 6 May 2021 for both the Police and Crime Commissioner position and Nottinghamshire County Council. All members on the Authority who are standing, are wished good luck. Councillor Andrew Brown and Councillor Parry Tsimbiridis are not standing again and are thanked both on a personal level and on behalf of the Authority for their service. There will be a more formal acknowledgement at a future meeting;
- (i) Councillor Andrew Brown has served on the Authority since the 2017 AGM, consistently acting in straight-forward, sensible and calm, diligent and professional manner, working closely with the Chair and Vice-Chair and seeking cross-party collaboration and consensus on issues prior to their submission to the Authority;
  - (ii) Councillor Parry Tsimbiridis has been a member of the Fire Authority on-and-off for many years. He speaks up for his values and beliefs which have come about as a result of his own experiences of living through some difficult regimes in his previous country of residence. He has, for several decades, provided a passionate and dedicated service to the County Council in standing up to support the most vulnerable people in society and he will be sorely missed in the community, at County Hall and the Fire Authority;
  - (iii) Councillor Andrew Brown thanked the Chair for his kind words, noted that he has seen many changes both within the Fire and Police Services and has enjoyed his time on the Authority and welcomed the collaborative approach and hoped that the legacy will live on;
  - (iv) Councillor Parry Tsimbiridis responded that the Fire Authority had been close to his heart for many years, and whilst he had enjoyed the time, he is also proud of the valuable achievements of the Authority, particularly with regard to promoting citizens' safety, recruitment and inclusion;

### Staff Activity and Community Support during the Ongoing Pandemic

- (b) on behalf of Authority members and the Police and Crime Commissioner, the Chair thanked most sincerely all service staff for their excellent work to support communities during the

COVID-19 pandemic and particularly the additional support provided beyond the usual roles, such as delivering food parcels, medication and clothing to vulnerable citizens, working with mortuaries, helping to deliver vaccinations, and supporting other emergency staff. Members of the Authority are proud and grateful that all staff, operational and office based, have been so keen to support their local communities. The effort has been matched by every sector of the emergency services, including the Police, Ambulance and NHS, for which citizens are also very grateful. Thanks also go to local trades union representatives, with whom the Authority has established a good relationship over several years, which added their support to the combined effort. The Strategic Leadership Team are to be recognised for all of their ongoing work and dedication, particularly throughout the pandemic. Fire Service staff have been a credit to the Service and their communities;

- (c) Councillor Shuguftah Mumtaz, Chair of the Human Resources, supported the Chair's appreciation and thanks, highlighting the work of volunteer employees who have taken part in delivering more than 11,000 citizen vaccinations;
- (d) Councillors Jonathan Wheeler, Sue Saddington, Vaughan Hopewell, and Sybil Fielding added their heartfelt thanks to staff, particularly for that witnessed in their specific constituencies, and also acknowledged the good work and contribution of retiring Councillors Andrew Brown and Parry Tsimbirdis, wishing them well in their retirement;

#### Covid-19 'recovery road map'

- (e) the Chair reported the 4 stage COVID-19 'recovery road map' announced by the Prime Minister, noting that the Chief Fire Officer and Strategic Leadership Team were considering implications, including the requirement for ongoing support of communities. Further consideration is to be given by the Clerk to the most appropriate method of conducting future meetings of the Fire Authority depending on whether the Government decides to extend the regulations permitting meetings to be held remotely. Representations have been made in support of an extension. Members will be kept informed;

#### The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) White Paper

- (f) the PCC review white paper is due to be published imminently and members will be informed accordingly. It is understood that there will be a specific reference to Fire and Rescue Services which may affect the governance arrangements of the Fire Authority. It is acknowledged that in Nottinghamshire, Police and Fire Service collaboration is working very successfully and could be held up as an example of good practice;
- (g) Police and Crime Commissioner Paddy Tipping, informed the Authority that the white paper may possibly be issued next Thursday or after the budget, and that it will include a section on 'Fire Service Reform'. However, once published, it will go out for consultation and it is unlikely that any significant amendments will be implemented for 12-24 months. The success of Police and Fire Collaboration in Nottinghamshire has proved that it can be done without the need to change governance arrangements;

#### Strategic Inclusion Board

- (h) The Strategic Inclusion Board will meet after the Authority meeting today.

### 33 Prudential Code For Capital Finance 2021/22

Becky Smeathers, Head of Finance and Treasurer for the Fire Authority, presented the report which informs members of the Authority’s obligation under the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance, and seeks approval for the proposed Capital Plans, Prudential Limits and Monitoring Processes. The following points were discussed:

- (a) this report considers the affordability of the capital programme which will form part of the budget report later in the agenda and ensures that borrowing is sustainable going forward without becoming a burden to the tax payer;
- (b) the current maximum ratio of financing costs to Net Revenue Stream is set at 8% and whilst estimated as 6.9% by 2024/25, the figure does creep up towards the maximum towards the end of the 10 year capital plan;
- (c) the capital financing cost also increases to reflect the higher level of borrowing. This is something which the Finance Team and Treasury Management Consultant are watching very carefully. Once the Independent Risk Management Plan (IRMP) is approved next year and Fire Cover Review results are known, capital financing can be re-examined and indicators reviewed;
- (d) there has been a further slight increase in the authorised limit, referring to the amounts able to be borrowed without Fire Authority approval. This limit had been extended, originally due to the uncertainties at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

(During consideration of this item, the Chair lost internet connectivity and so the Vice-Chair stepped in to temporarily Chair the meeting.)

#### Resolved:

(1) to approve the Prudential Limits for 2021/22 as follows:

<b>Maximum ratio of Financing Costs to Net Revenue Stream</b>	<b>8%</b>
<b>Estimated Ratio of Financing Costs to Net Revenue Stream</b>	<b>5.4%</b>
<b>Estimate of Total Capital Expenditure to be Incurred</b>	<b>£5,835,000</b>
<b>Estimate of Capital Financing Requirement</b>	<b>£31,971,000</b>
<b>Operational Boundary</b>	<b>£33,959,000</b>
<b>Authorised Limit</b>	<b>£38,255,000</b>
<b>Upper limit for fixed rate interest exposures</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Upper limit for variable rate interest exposures</b>	<b>30%</b>
<b>Loan Maturity:</b>	<b>Limits:</b>
<b>Under 12 months</b>	<b>Upper 20% Lower 0%</b>
<b>12 months to 5 years</b>	<b>Upper 30% Lower 0%</b>
<b>5 years to 10 years</b>	<b>Upper 75% Lower 0%</b>
<b>Over 10 years</b>	<b>Upper 100% Lower 0%</b>
<b>Over 20 years</b>	<b>Upper 100% Lower 30%</b>
<b>Upper Limit for Principal Sums Invested for Periods Longer than 365 Days</b>	<b>£2,000,000</b>

**(2) to approve the following local indicators for 2021/22:**

<b>Upper limit for internal borrowing as a % of the Capital Financing Requirement</b>	<b>20%</b>
<b>Limit for proportion of net debt to gross debt</b>	<b>Upper 85% Lower 50%</b>
<b>Investment security benchmark: maximum historic default risk of investment portfolio</b>	<b>0.08%</b>
<b>Investment liquidity benchmark: maximum weighted average life of investment portfolio</b>	<b>0.40 years</b>
<b>Investment yield benchmark</b>	<b>Internal returns to be above 3-month LIBID rate</b>

**34 Treasury Management Strategy 2021/22**

Becky Smeathers, Head of Finance and Treasurer to the Authority, presented the report which proposes a Treasury Management Strategy for 2021/22, and seeks approval for the Authority’s Minimum Revenue Provision Policy for 2021/22.

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

- (a) the Treasury Management Strategy sets out a framework for the Finance Team to work within, such as limits which cannot be exceeded, and ensures good financial governance;
- (b) it is linked to Prudential Code, but goes on further to look at borrowing in more detail, including where, when and how borrowing is managed and the investment strategy regarding where funds are invested externally;
- (c) the Strategy also considers the liquidity of cash funds, ensuring that the Service has adequate funds available to pay staff and operate;
- (d) the 2020/21 Strategy was revised at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure that measures were in place to rapidly access funds if necessary. This was approved by Policy and Strategy Committee on 1 May 2020;
- (e) the security of investment funds is managed using the Credit Worthiness Criteria provided by the Treasury Advisors. This continuously monitors all banks and organisations which the Service deals with and provides alerts where any concerns are identified. The higher their credit worthiness, the longer the Fire Service can consider investing with that counter party;
- (f) all investments are currently only held for one year due to the low interest rates, with a £2m limit set for any investments to be made for more than one year, which is unchanged from the previous year;
- (g) there are no major changes proposed from the previously agreed Treasury Management Strategy;

(At this point the Chair regained access to the meeting and retook the Chair.)

- (h) the 4 year projected borrowing figure of £14.5m includes £3m to replace maturing loans to reflect the Authority's approach in managing the timing of borrowing to fund the capital programme.

**Resolved to approve:**

- (1) the Treasury Management Strategy 2021/22 as set out in the report;**  
**(2) the Minimum Revenue Provision Policy 2021/22 as set out in paragraphs 2.54 to 2.57 of the report.**

**35 Final Accounts 2019/20**

Becky Smeathers, Head of Finance and Treasurer to the Authority, presented the Final Accounts 2019/20 report and highlighted the following points;

- (a) the unaudited accounts presented to the November meeting of the Fire Authority are now available fully audited;
- (b) since the initial presentation, there has been a minor change of £15,000 with regard to the 2019/20 capital outturn position, as reported to Policy and Strategy Committee on 24 July 2020;
- (c) there have been some further changes which are identified and detailed in the notes of the Audit report, including a £129,000 payment which was included in both the debtors and creditors figure. This was a system generated payment which has been corrected and has a net impact of £0;
- (d) with regard to identifying a new site for the new Worksop Fire Station, a planning permission application has been submitted to Bassetlaw District Council for a development at the Vesuvius site. Members of the Finance and Resources Committee will be kept informed of progress.

Members of the Authority thanked Becky Smeathers and the Finance Team for their thorough work.

**Resolved to approve the audited Statement of Accounts for 2019/20, as attached to the report as Appendix A.**

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

Becky Smeathers, Head of Finance and Treasurer to the Authority, introduced the report which presents the proposals for Revenue and Capital Budgets for 2021/22 to 2024/25 to support members in determining the level of council tax for 2021/22. The report also seeks approval for fees and charges for 2021/22 (in line with inflation), and the continued payment of members allowances for 2021/22, in accordance with the approved scheme. The following points were discussed:

- (a) since the report was last presented to the Finance and Resources Committee in January, (where a 1.95 percentage increase in council tax was recommended) there has been a small

amendment to the capital budget, the council tax and business rate projections have been received from the Billing Authorities, with council tax payments exceeding the predicted income and providing a small surplus. However, it is anticipated that business rate collection will drop further, so there is no overall gain and there is still expected to be a shortfall from pre-pandemic collection rates. Support from Central Government is still required;

- (b) it is anticipated that the additional financial pressures due to the pandemic will result in reduced income from both Council Tax and Business Rates, which may drop by 5%. Movement here, along with Central Government funding, provides a significant area of risk;
- (c) savings of £640,000 have been identified in the budget and re-invested in services;
- (d) 1% pay awards for fire fighters and support staff are yet to be approved by respective independent pay bodies, but any change from 1% will impact on the budget by £330,000 per 1% variation;
- (e) Section 31 grants continue to be relied upon significantly, such as the pension grant, business rates and Council Tax support funds; there is a risk that they will not be ongoing so this has been reflected in the budget;
- (f) the report sets out the predicted income streams up to and including the year 2024/25, but these may still be impacted by the national economy. The Chair and Treasurer to the Authority will monitor the situation closely, but the Authority does have the opportunity to use reserves to cover short-term financial gaps. Members will be informed if this occurs;
- (g) Table 5 of the report sets out the impacts of a 1.95% increase in council tax for property bands A-H.

Members of the Authority commented as follows:

- (h) whilst this is a positive budget, and this Service is in a good position, particularly compared to some others, there are still multiple potential unknown elements, including those resulting from the ongoing pandemic, the national economy and Brexit;
- (i) the potential for a 2021 pay increase for those who have worked so hard during the pandemic is welcomed;
- (j) it's pleasing that this budget has received cross-party agreement and that members of all parties have raised points and feed into the budget process;
- (k) although there is to be a rise in council tax, it is very much still to the benefit of citizens not only in the respect of Fire and Rescue, but also with prevention and protection work and the excellent community support work taking place throughout the pandemic;
- (l) the collaboration systems are working well between the Local Authorities the Police and Fire and Rescue Service to support communities. It is hoped that Central Government will recognise this valuable work;
- (m) the budget and associated reports are very thorough pieces of work for which members are thankful to Becky Smeathers and the Finance Team;

- (n) many members would prefer not to impose a council tax increase, but this is only a small increase and essential to the Service, so it is hoped that citizens will understand and accept it.

Members unanimously voted in favour of implementing a 1.95% increase of Council Tax precept and are named as:

Councillor Michael Payne (Chair)  
Councillor Toby Neal (Vice-Chair)  
Councillor Andrew Brown  
Councillor John Clarke  
Councillor Sybil Fielding  
Councillor Stephen Garner  
Councillor Vaughan Hopewell  
Councillor Gul Nawaz Khan  
Councillor Jawaid Khalil  
Councillor John Longdon  
Councillor Salma Mumtaz  
Councillor Mike Quigley MBE  
Councillor Shuguftah Quddoos  
Councillor Nick Raine  
Councillor Sue Saddington  
Councillor Parry Tsimbiridis  
Councillor Jonathan Wheeler  
Councillor Jason Zadrozny

**Resolved to:**

- (1) agree the recommendation of the Finance and Resources Committee to the Fire Authority that there is a 1.95% Council Tax increase;**
- (2) approve the 2021/22 precept level to be notified to the Billing Authorities based on the information set out in Section 2 and Appendix C to the report, as required by statute;**
- (3) approve the fees and charges for 2021/22, as set out in Appendix D to the report.**
- (4) approve the payment of Members' Allowances for 2021/22 in accordance with the approved scheme.**

**37 External Auditor's Report to Those Charged with Governance 2019/20**

Becky Smeathers, Head of Finance and Treasurer to the Fire Authority, presented the report which requests approval of the management representation letter to the external auditors. She introduced Helen Henshaw, Auditor from Ernst and Young LLP, who was in attendance to present the Auditor's report and respond to questions from the Authority.

Highlighted points from the Executive Summary of the Auditor's report and responses to Authority Members' questions by Helen and Becky included:

- (a) it needs to be acknowledged that the small Finance Team at NFRS has done a very thorough job and worked well with Ernst and Young to get the report here today;

- (b) the executive summary sets out the impact of COVID-19 and the susceptibility risk and disclosure risks, including valuation, which has required further work including seeking assurance that the Service is in a secure financial position with adequate reserves that will be able to operate for 12 months from the date that the Accounts are signed, (as is the requirement);
- (c) this Audit was largely carried out virtually with remote meetings, shared screens and scanned documents, so social distancing restrictions have not had an impact on the ability to undertake the Audit;
- (d) since the report was issued, the majority of outstanding areas of further detailed consideration have been completed, including the expenditure and funding analysis. Where suggested adjustments or recommendations made by the Auditors have not been acted upon by management, generally due to their insignificant impact, these have been referenced in Section 4 of the Auditor's report and do not alter the Audit Opinion;
- (e) the key points for Councillors to be most aware of are listed on page 24 and 25 of the Auditor's report which identify the differences between the findings and those which have and haven't been adjusted. Where unadjusted, it has been agreed that amendments would be immaterial and did not impact on the financial statements;
- (f) risks are considered in detail, including setting and compliance of indicators, overriding of controls, manipulation of outturn, none of which were identified, other than one transport related expenditure issue which was incorrectly recorded. The Firefighter's pension scheme is identified as a significant risk due to the size of liability and level of uncertainty, but it was concluded that the liability is fairly stated;
- (g) initially there was one area which needed further attention regarding asset revaluation, but this has been completed with a revised value sum of £800k instead of £1.2m due to depreciation, which is reflected in the final document;
- (h) with regard to value for money risks, the move of NFRS Headquarters is identified as a potential for overspend, but the overall mitigation of risks is considered adequate and good governance has been followed;
- (i) monthly reconciliations in payroll and financial accounting systems have been suggested to prevent any roll-on discrepancies;
- (j) Appendix A to the report sets out the required communications from the External Auditor to those charged with governance. It was requested that further communications which the Authority feel could or should be included, should be forwarded to Helen Henshaw;
- (k) Members of the Authority made the following points, acknowledging that Helen Henshaw was the representative of Ernst and Young LLP and comments were not directed at her personally;
- (l) it is agreed that for so few people, the Finance Team has done an outstanding job and should be proud of their work which has resulted in an Unqualified Audit Opinion;

- (m) it is disappointing that the presentation of the audit report has been delayed from a specifically arranged meeting in November;
- (n) it is also greatly disappointing on behalf of tax payers that the cost of the audit is more than three times higher than initially tendered, being awarded at £23,909, but with the final bill proposed as £87,814. A explanation with a full breakdown is requested;
- (o) the delay in presenting the Audit has caused a lot of inconvenience to staff. In Business, if the terms of an accepted contract are not met, sometimes it's appropriate to seek a partial refund, not for the final cost to increase to this extent, which may impact on front line services. This increase is not acceptable, particularly as the provided accounts were in a good position;
- (p) it is acknowledged that a lot more work has gone into this audit than previous audits due to additional requirements, but whether this warranted the increase in price was questioned. An explanation from Central Government on the inaccuracy of the Public Sector Audit Appointment (PSAA) was requested.

Helen Henshaw responded:

- (i) a breakdown of the fees is included on page 44 of the audit report, and it is acknowledged that they are significantly higher than the PSAA which was made 4-5 years ago, since then the requirements of Audit have increased, and more time and work is necessary to meet those requirements. The entire public sector audit profession are under extreme pressure with regard to the sustainability of the fees being allocated by the PSAA;
- (ii) PSAA are undertaking a consultation with Auditors and the affected Authorities. They have asked Auditors where they feel the fee should be set and Ernst and Young have proposed a figure in the region of £70k due to the more detailed work required, and the need for any additional or specific one-off work to be taken into consideration, (as has occurred in this current year);
- (iii) the £47K uplift in cost was communicated to the Authority, in the Audit Plan issued in March 2020. It is believed that this was circulated to members but not formally presented to the Authority. The further estimated final charge is believed to be an additional £16,000 but is still to be determined once the work is complete, and is yet to receive approval;
- (iv) NFRS does have contractual rights under PSAA contract and so there is an element of protection.

Police and Crime Commissioner, Paddy Tipping, stated that this is a national systems failure issue which is not extraordinary to NFRS in that the PSAA rates have put tendering firms in a difficult position. The PSAA are looking at the situation and an uplift in fees is expected in future years.

The Chair thanked Helen Henshaw for her attendance and presentation of the Auditor's report.

An additional recommendation was proposed by the Chair, Councillor Michael Payne, and seconded by Councillor Andrew Brown, Lead Member for the opposition, regarding the Authority's disappointment at the additional time taken and cost of the Audit.

**Resolved:**

- (1) to note the contents of the External Auditor's ISA 260 report, attached as Appendix A to the report;**
- (2) to record the Authority's disappointment, both as to the length of time taken to receive the Auditor's report and in respect to the disproportionate and unacceptable additional cost to be levied.**

**38 Strategic Plan - Year Three Strategic Actions**

Candida Brudenell, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, presented the report which provides recommendations for the year three strategic actions to be delivered within the Strategic Plan.

It is noted that the strategic actions may be influenced by the outcome of the Strategic Risk Assessment.

The year three strategic actions are as follows:

- (i) Shaping Our Future – Creation of New 2022-2025 Strategic Plan;
- (ii) To Embed an Inclusion Approach to all that we do, by understanding and engaging with our diverse communities to enhance service delivery, and by providing a positive workplace where our employees feel supported and valued;
- (iii) Business Recovery – Restoration of Services and Implementation of New Ways of Working Following Covid-19 Pandemic;
- (iv) Continuous Improvement;
- (v) Agile Working;
- (vi) Specialist Response Review;
- (vii) Sustainability of On-Call;
- (viii) Operational Response (Rostering); and
- (ix) Collaborating to Improve Community Outcomes.

Members commented as follows:

- (a) the report and summary are welcomed. It may be of benefit if some of the strategic actions could be discussed in detail by members at committee meetings, particularly regarding recruitment and business recovery;
- (b) ensuring that inclusion is embedded within all aspects of the Service is welcomed;

- (c) members would welcome assurance that consideration is being given to what, if any changes should be made in preparation for moving to the Joint Service Headquarters to ensure it is a smooth transition. The plans for transition need to be scrutinised prior to the move and then an evaluation report provided once the move is complete.

(During this item, Councillor Mick Quigley MBE lost connectivity.)

**Resolved to:**

**(1) note the content of the report;**

**(2) endorse the Year Three Strategic Actions;**

**(3) receive the Annual Statement of Assurance for Year Two outcomes at a later meeting in 2021.**

### **39 The Service's Response to Covid - Inspection Report and Update**

John Buckley, Chief Fire Officer, presented the report which informs the Authority of the outcome of the COVID-19 Thematic Inspection by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS), and provides an update of the Service's ongoing efforts in supporting communities through the pandemic. The following points were discussed:

- (a) the results of the inspection which considered the Service's response to COVID-19 during the period up to June 2020, were provided in an ungraded letter, a copy of which is attached to the report;
- (b) the thorough inspection provided an outstandingly positive response in every area inspected, for which everybody involved should be very proud;
- (c) two areas which were identified for further consideration by the service and the wider sector included that the Service:
- (i) should determine how it will adopt, for the longer-term, the new and innovative ways of working introduced during the pandemic, to secure lasting improvements;
  - (ii) should update its plans, including business continuity plans, using the lessons it has learned from the pandemic to date;
- (d) an update of recent COVID-19 response work was summarised as follows:
- (i) urgent care shifts completed for East Midlands Ambulance Service (EMAS) 336;
  - (ii) urgent care patients transported 1,132;
  - (iii) medicine and food parcels delivered 12,137;
  - (iv) COVID-19 tests administered 392;
  - (v) vaccinations given 16,468;
  - (vi) signposting and befriending calls made 3,233;
  - (vii) COVID testing centres built across the county 7;
  - (viii) COVID testing volunteers trained 144;
  - (ix) staff seconded to support partner organisations 50;

- (e) the Central Government support grant is rapidly being spent but it is hoped that a further grant will be forthcoming;
- (f) although some areas of work have been temporarily delayed and paused, the Service continues to meet its statutory functions, and is enabled to provide community support under the remit of the Fire and Rescue Service Act 2004, Part 2, Section 11, which provides 'Powers to respond to other eventualities' where 'the event or situation is one that causes or is likely to cause'....'one or more individuals to die, be injured or become ill'.

Comments from Authority members included:

- (g) all staff and managers were thanked by the Chair for helping the Service support communities whilst still fulfilling statutory functions;
- (h) it is suggested that members of the Authority are provided with copies of the updated activity to enable them to share it online to highlight the work of the Service during this period;
- (i) members of the Authority, welcomed the report and joined the Chair praising the flexibility and willingness of staff, unions and managers to enable such valuable collaborative work;
- (j) the temporary extension of the fixed contract staff who were initially engaged for prevention work is welcomed;
- (k) it is requested by members that those staff who had willingly been redeployed should receive a letter of thanks from the Chair on behalf of the Authority, particularly those involved in personally delivering more than 1,000 individual vaccinations.

**Resolved to:**

- (1) formally receive the outcome letter on the Thematic COVID-19 Inspection;**
- (2) endorse the Chief Fire Officer's approach and use of Fire and Rescue resources to support the strategic joint agency response to COVID-19.**

#### **40 Emergency Services Network Update**

John Buckley, Chief Fire Officer, presented the report which provides a brief update on the current position in establishing the Central Government led Emergency Services Network for a new radio network for all national Emergency Services.

The following points were highlighted:

- (a) initially update reports were submitted on a quarterly basis, however, there has been no significant progress in the past year with a full business case yet to be approved by Central Government;
- (b) Craig Parkin, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, is the Regional Lead on this project, with contribution from Gavin Harris, Head of IT;
- (c) project closure is anticipated during 2023/24, with transmission for the East Midlands to the new Emergency Network expected to be achieved by the end of 2022;

- (d) replacement of equipment has been delayed pending the establishment of the network (to ensure compatibility), but due to the delay in implementing the new network, this is now causing problems with legacy equipment.

**Resolved to note the report and agree to receive further updates as the project develops.**

#### **41 Evaluation of the Central Fire Station Relocation to London Road**

John Buckley, Chief Fire Officer, presented the report for which Damien West, Area Manager for Prevention and Protection, had been Lead Officer, and highlighted the following points:

- (a) a relocation was initially, discussed in 2004, due to several factors including the introduction of the tram, new road configurations, changes to infrastructure, and city development, which meant that the old site was no longer appropriate;
- (b) plans for a new fire station south of the City were in place by 2011, and the site built and occupied by 2016;
- (c) the site includes a multi-partner-hub which provides facilities for the Nottingham City Council Emergency Planning Team, the local Police Beat Team and an ambulance waiting point;
- (d) with regard to outturn, the Service has maintained the response standard, however there is a knock-on effect in that appliances from Arnold and Stockhill Lane stations attend more incidents, whilst West Bridgford and Highfields stations attend fewer. However, the old and new locations cannot be measured like for like given the infrastructure changes;
- (e) approximately £600,000 has been saved of the estimated budgets for the build and relocation and whilst the old station on Shakespeare Street required substantial long-term maintenance and day-to-day maintenance costing approximately £6,000 per annum, maintenance at the new station is minimal so savings can be increased by £6,000 per year. If the challenge to the rates band (currently £91,000 pa) is successful, savings will further increase;
- (f) the new site is also within the City Regeneration area and so provides broader social benefits.

The Chair welcomed the detailed, thorough and transparent report, the successful relocation and establishing of a modern multi-hub fire station with excellent facilities for users. Thanks are given to Damien West and the Property and Estates Team to whom this station is a credit.

**Resolved to:**

**(1) note the evaluation report;**

**(2) receive updates on the full integrated risk management planning process during 2021/22.**

## **42 Implementation Review of the Sustainability Strategy for 2020**

John Buckley, Chief Fire Officer, presented the report which provides an overview of the sustainability strategy for 2020, which aimed to save £4.5 million to mitigate the long-term potential funding shortfall, whilst having the least possible impact on frontline services.

The following points were highlighted:

- (a) following extensive public consultation, a new crewing system has been implemented at Ashfield and Retford stations, whilst response standards are still met;
- (b) an IRMP (Integrated Risk Management Plan) will be undertaken across the county next year;
- (c) increased staffing levels at Retford have been achieved from 11 to 14 members of staff, with ongoing recruitment. Staffing at Ashfield has been maintained;
- (d) availability of on-call staff at both stations has improved, which is a credit to the crews;
- (e) at Ashfield 70% of the time, both appliances were available, and at least 95% of the time one appliance was available;
- (f) at Retford, 45% of the time both appliances were available, and 89% fire cover was available for one appliance. Issues have been identified at 'pinch times' at the start and end of a working day and are being responded to;
- (g) night working has been removed and the length and times of shifts is to be considered in more depth;
- (h) the aim was to save £1.12m but achieved £1.18. The additional savings are required to be reinvested into the recruitment of additional On-call firefighters;
- (i) arrangements across the county continue to be tweaked to achieve the best outturn implications for both the community and staff.

Comments from members included:

- (j) it was unfortunate that the Service had to rebuild on the same site at Retford as access to it is a 'one-in and one-out' arrangement;
- (k) there are strong views on mixed crewing and the implications of adding 2 minutes 18 seconds to the Ashfield response time is significant in some emergency circumstances, particularly when adding to the 5-6 minute attendance time can have significant life and death implications;
- (l) another concern for Ashfield is that neighbouring stations at Alfreton are considering reducing some of their services. Parts of Ashfield rely on the Alfreton station, in addition to their covering the section of the M1 around junctions 27 to 29. Assurance is sought that NFRS is aware and planning ahead for the potential impact;

The Chief Fire Officer assured the Authority that full feasibility studies are undertaken when proposing to build a new station, including consideration of relocation. With regard to Retford, it was necessary to rebuild on the same site to ensure that it is close to where on-call staff live and work. The same consideration is currently being undertaken with regard to Worksop.

NFRS works seamlessly with Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Service, whilst appliances may travel over the border in either direction, we do work closely with Derbyshire around IRMPs and are looking to align IRMPs in the future as part of the collaboration agenda. We are full consultees with Derbyshire and if there is a proposal to reduce cover, we will make full representation and work with them to find an appropriate resolution.

**Resolved to:**

**(1) note the contents of the report;**

**(2) receive updates on the full integrated risk management planning process during the 2021/22 year.**

**43 Committee Outcomes**

As Chair of the Community Safety Committee, Councillor Nick Raine highlighted the valuable work of the JAIT team (Joint Audit and Inspection Team) with the City Council in inspecting buildings converted for residential use to ensure safety following some of the issues highlighted by the Grenfell Tower fire. To date more than 100 inspections have taken place, whereby safety issues were identified at 47% of properties. This is a good example of partnership working and a credit to the officers involved.

**Resolved to note the report and minutes of the following meetings:**

**Community Safety Committee 08 January 2021**

**Finance and Resources Committee 15 January 2021**

**Human Resources Committee 22 January 2021**

**44 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, Paragraphs 1 and 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.**

**45 Permanent Changes to the Establishment**

Craig Parkin, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, presented the report of the Chief Fire Officer which had previously been submitted to, and is supported by the Human Resources Committee.

**Resolved to support the recommendations set out within the exempt report.**