



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: 17 December 2021

Purpose of Report:

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

Recommendations:

That Members note the contents of this report.

CONTACT OFFICER

Name : John Buckley
Chief Fire Officer

Tel : 0115 967 0880

Email : john.buckley@notts-fire.gov.uk

Media Enquiries Contact : Corporate Communications Team
0115 967 0880 corporatecomms@notts-fire.gov.uk

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 October 2021
Finance and Resources Committee	15 October 2021
Human Resources Committee	05 November 2021
Policy and Strategy Committee	12 November 2021

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 Sub-Committee**

**Minutes of the meeting held at Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service
Headquarters, Bestwood Lodge Drive, Arnold, Nottingham, NG5 8PD on Friday
8 October 2021 from 10:01am to 11:21am**

Membership

Present

Councillor Jason Zadrozny (Chair)
Councillor Nicola Heaton
Councillor Toby Neal (items 10-14)

Absent

Councillor Scott Carlton
Councillor Eddie Cubley
Councillor Nick Raine

Councillor Patience Uloma Ifediora
(Substitute for Councillor Nick Raine)

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

Candida Brudenell - Assistant Chief Fire Officer
Adrian Mann - Governance Officer, Nottingham City Council
Mick Sharman - Area Manager for Response

7 Apologies for Absence

Councillor Scott Carlton
Councillor Eddie Cubley
Councillor Nick Raine

8 Declarations of Interests

None.

9 Minutes

The Committee confirmed the minutes of the meeting held on 11 June 2021 as a correct record and they were signed by the Chair.

10 Service Delivery Performance Update

Mick Sharman, Area Manager for Response, presented a report on the performance of the Service Delivery Directorate between 1 April 2021 and 31 August 2021. The following points were discussed:

- (a) there have been no significant changes to the incident profile in the period, and the incidents in each category are of a similar level to the previous year. There has been an increase in fires attended, which has largely been due to fires being set deliberately in the open ground around the Oak Tree Estate in Mansfield. A multi-agency approach to education and enforcement is underway, to address this issue. There are a number of construction sites close to the affect area, so the Service will engage with the site developers on security considerations, where appropriate. There have been 11 serious incidents requiring multi-appliance attendance, with a number taking place within the city in high-rise residences. The tri-service response with Leicestershire and Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Services continues to be effective in managing larger incidents;
- (b) response times remain below the Service attendance standard of 8 minutes, and are likely to decrease during the winter. The Service continues to meet the attendance standards set by the Authority in a consistent way. Ongoing monitoring and assurance is in place for the Functional Collaboration Agreement between Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Services, including for the Joint Control Room, for which three key performance measures have been agreed. The Control Room performance was close to target, with the slight shortfall in meeting the mobilising system availability standards due primarily to a prolonged technical fault during June. The fault has now been corrected and work is underway with the supplier to improve the stability of the system;
- (c) on-call availability remains a continual challenge, with a current average availability of 85.24%, which just meets the service target of 85%. However, of the 16 on-call sections, 10 are performing above target. Day shift crewing availability is now reported separately. Of the two day shift crewing stations, the position is improving at Retford, but still remains challenging at Ashfield. There is a very strong commitment the on-call sections and everything possible is being done to support on-call provision, including the introduction of a new 3-year training planner. In order to mitigate unavailability in some sections such as Ashfield, cover is provided by appliances from other areas, so no availability is left empty at any of the major stations;
- (d) on-call availability is a national issue and presents a constant challenge in recruitment and retention. A dedicated team has been established to support the sustainability of the current on-call structure and the on-call firefighters. Currently, this team has been able to increase on-call availability by just over 10%. The available resources are being aligned to areas on the basis of risk, and the team is working proactively to increase availability, which is good in the national context;
- (e) however, there is a lack of supervisory managers and incident commanders, so it is important to carry out training to build confidence amongst on-call staff to carry out these roles. The training programme has been changed significantly in 2021, and has been very successful. It is important that on-call staff are able to work as flexibly as possible, so the Service is investing in a new, easily accessible rostering system that will facilitate this. As much work as possible is required on engaging with the large communities around the on-call stations to increase numbers, with a particular focus on the day shift crewing stations. The 2020/21 recruitment campaigns generated 166 applicants, which are being supported by

the dedicated team, but a large number of applicants for on-call roles often drop out of the process;

- (f) the national conditions for on-call firefighters require a high level of time commitment, so a local contract is being trialled with more flexible terms, to make the role more accessible. The contracts will be reviewed and evaluated towards the middle of 2022, and the conclusions will be reported to the Authority. The Service recognises the challenges of increasing diversity as part of the recruitment process, so work is underway to take positive action and broaden the appeal and inclusivity of a role as a firefighter. Positive action has been most successful in increasing diversity amongst whole-time firefighters, but is proving more difficult for on-call roles;
- (g) engagement is being carried out with schools to widen awareness and outreach is carried out with a wide range of communities. There is also support available to help break down barriers to making an application for a role in the Service, including in developing the required level of fitness. There is a clear focus and challenge in place to ensure that all recruitment requirements are reasonable and necessary, and consideration is given to who might be discouraged from applying due to certain requirements. All support from members of the Authority in reaching communities is very welcome, and the details of the upcoming recruitment campaign starting on 18 October will be forwarded to members;
- (h) the Service is now returning to a 'business as usual position' following the Coronavirus lockdown, but is still providing support to the East Midlands Ambulance Service and to food banks. Emergency planning procedures are in place and the Service will provide support as needed in the event of a new emergency as part of the Local Resilience Forum. Fire prevention work continues, including the carrying out of a large number of 'safe and well' visits following lockdown, which are on track to achieve the target number of visits, which is higher than the national average;
- (i) the Committee requested that the details relating to where and when safe and well visits are being carried out, the priority areas for them and their resource allocations are circulated to members, for their information.

The Committee noted the report.

11 Response Times and Call Handling Performance

Mick Sharman, Area Manager for Response, presented a report on the Service's response times and call handling performance. The following points were discussed:

- (a) in January 2021, the Home Office published the national response times to attending incidents, which showed the Service as having a higher than average response time. However, the Home Office figures identify Nottinghamshire as a predominantly urban area, though its context is relatively different to that of the other metropolitan regions against which it is compared in the data. A tri-service review has been carried out with Leicestershire and Derbyshire, which are much more similar in context to Nottinghamshire – and the response times for the three Services are relatively similar;

- (b) the Service's response time reflects the time taken to answer a call, mobilise assets and then travel to an incident. The Service has two key performance indicators relating to answering a call and then mobilising assets. However, there is disparity across the country as to at what point response time starts to be recorded, depending upon the system that each individual service uses. As such, it is most helpful to compare the Service against others that use the same recording system;
- (c) ultimately, there are no national targets for response times, and the Service's response times do meet the targets set by the Authority, and they are decreasing. Means of reducing call handling times are under review, but a main priority of the Service is to ensure that mobilisation is properly informed by clear information, so that the right assets are sent to attend the incident. As such, the longer lead-in time recorded as part of the call handling time leads to a much more informed and effective response to the incident.

The Committee noted the report.

12 Fatal Fires Review 2020

Mick Sharman, Area Manager for Response, presented a report on the fatal fire incidents attended in 2020 and the Services' response. The following points were discussed:

- (a) the number of fire-related fatalities are relatively low, with 5 in 2020. Of there, two were adult women and three were adult men, and four were over the age of 65. Three lived alone, and 4 had mental health needs. Profiling vulnerable people is carried out as part of the Service's fire prevention activity, and a visit had been carried out at the address of one of the fatalities. Vital work is done with partners to provide education and to identify and seek to mitigate the risks to vulnerable people as much as possible. An Occupational Therapist is now in place to work with the Service and partners in engaging with vulnerable people with particularly complex needs;
- (b) reviews are carried out into the circumstances surrounding all fatal fires, and they look at previous responses, whether the victim was known to the Service, and whether the victim had been identified as being at risk. In many cases, a fire is caused as a result of a person's actions, so the main focus of risk mitigation is on addressing individual behaviour. However, the risk to an individual can be exacerbated by the nature of the building in which they live. Reassurance and engagement activities take place immediately following a serious or fatal fire to support the local community and increase awareness of fire safety.

The Committee noted the report.

13 'Areas for Improvement' from the HMICFRS Inspection 2019 Update

Candida Brudenell, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, presented a report on the Service's response to its 2019 inspection report. The following points were discussed:

- (a) Area for Improvement (AFI) 9 ('to ensure that mobile data terminals are reliable to allow staff to access risk information') is the final AFI from the last HMICFRS Inspection to be completed. Whilst significant progress has been made and a focused programme of work is underway, there are still some actions to be undertaken to mitigate problems relating to the reliability of the risk information uploaded onto the appliance data terminals. Currently, manual interventions are taking place to ensure that crews have access to the most up to date risk data;
- (b) an extension of the completion date to 31 March 2022 is required to conclude this AFI, to allow for the completion of the action plan. The additional time will allow for the implementation and testing of a planned upgrade to the data terminals. In the longer term, a process will take place to recommission the mobilising system for the Service.

Resolved to agree the extension of the completion date for Area for Improvement 9 to 31 March 2022, and to receive update reports on the progress against this outstanding Area for Improvement.

14 Fire Protection Update

Mick Sharman, Area Manager for Response, presented a report on the developments within Fire Protection. The following points were discussed:

- (a) fire protection is an important national focus and the National Fire Chief's Council has published a framework to support the changes to fire safety arising from the Grenfell Inquiry. In response, the Service has implemented a new and more detailed fire safety audit process for high-rise residential buildings;
- (b) a set of training standards has been introduced to embed the framework into ongoing practice, and new investment has been made in further specialist training on fire safety and education, to professionalise the approach to fire protection. An accreditation scheme is in place for the Service's Fire Safety Inspectors, and two members of staff are taking a Fire Engineer course. The Service is making a strong investment to establish in-house fire protection roles, and staff are being brought in at the introductory level, for development;
- (c) a full building risk review is being carried out, and partnership working is being done with a focus on high-rise premises. Unfortunately, of the buildings inspected, there has been a very low level of fire safety compliance. As such, a great deal of work is being carried out with building owners to ensure that the structures are compliant. However, there is still a substantial amount of work to be done, so the right investment must be in place to ensure good recruitment to and resourcing of fire protection roles, to fulfil the requirements of the safety standards and legislation.

The Committee noted the report.



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

**Minutes of the meeting held at Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service
Headquarters, Bestwood Lodge Drive, Arnold, Nottingham, NG5 8PD on Friday 15
October 2021 from 10:02am to 10:52am**

Membership

Present

Councillor John Clarke (Chair, items 11-16)

Councillor Toby Neal (Chair, item 17)

Councillor Callum Bailey

Councillor Steve Battlemuch

Councillor Eddie Cubley

Absent

Councillor John Lee

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

Candida Brudenell - Assistant Chief Fire Officer

Leila Henry - Head of Risk Assurance and Operational Training

Adrian Mann - Governance Officer

Ian Pritchard - Joint Head Quarters Programme Support Manager

Becky Smeathers - Head of Finance and Treasurer to the Fire Authority

11 Apologies for Absence

Councillor John Lee

12 Declarations of Interests

Councillor John Clarke declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in item 17 because he is the Leader of Gedling Borough Council. He left the meeting prior to the discussion of and voting on this item.

13 Minutes

The Committee confirmed the minutes of the meeting held on 2 July 2021 as a correct record and they were signed by the Chair.

14 Revenue, Capital and Prudential Code Monitoring Report to 31 August 2021

Becky Smeathers, Head of Finance and Treasurer to the Fire Authority, presented a report on the 2021/22 financial performance of the Service and Prudential Code monitoring to the end of August 2021. The following points were discussed:

- (a) the current revenue position is close to budget, with a slight overspend of £23,000. However, inflation is now starting to grow, and the unions representing the non-uniform fire and rescue service staff nationally have rejected the latest pay award offer, meaning that there is some uncertainty in the budget that may lead to additional pressures. The pay for firefighter and support roles is set at a national level and, although agreement has been reached for the firefighter pay awards (which represents the majority of the Service's staffing costs), negotiations for the non-uniform pay will continue. Given that the Government requested a pay freeze for public sector workers, it seems unlikely that the pay awards will be accounted for in the upcoming national spending review. The Authority had to increase its Council Tax ask as part of this budget – with around three quarters of the Service's income coming from Council Tax and Business Rates, and around one quarter from the national grant;
- (b) the budget for next year is being developed, with provision for both general and wage inflation. Increasing ICT costs will be brought through into the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) for December, along with a ten-year capital plan. The Service could be subject to a high level of pressure in relation to the capital programme in the medium term, so it will be reviewed as part of the budgeting process, and it may be necessary to extend the period between building new fire stations. However, no major cuts or additional funding requirements are anticipated, currently;
- (c) in terms of the capital programme, the project to replace the Eastwood Fire Station is due to commence in 2022/23, but feasibility work for this project needs to begin in 2021/22 to enable works to start in 2022/23. As such, a budget of £16,000 needs to be brought forward to fund the associated costs;
- (d) the project to move to a new joint headquarters with Nottinghamshire Police is proceeding to timetable and within the budget envelope, on the basis of a fixed-price agreement with the contractor. However, there are a number of planned projects where tendering and procurement processes have not yet been carried out that will be affected by potential increases in inflation and building costs, so this will need to be reflected in the MTFS;
- (e) there is a Special Appliances budget of £150,000 for the purchase of replacement Aerial Ladder Platforms, but the project is now on hold as a special vehicle review is taking place, so the budget needs to be carried forward into 2022/23. In addition, a review of the ICT Replacement Programme has found that some IT equipment at fire stations had not been accounted for. This equipment is becoming obsolete and requires replacing as a matter of urgency, so it is anticipated that £125,000 will be needed to fund this project;
- (f) in terms of the prudential code monitoring, borrowing remains within the limits set by the Authority, and stands currently at £28.9 million. Due to the potential for interest rates to rise, the planned borrowing of £2 million for capital financing costs has been brought forward.

To mitigate against rising costs, the Service is now holding larger stocks of important supplies, and the Procurement team is monitoring the supply situation closely.

Resolved:

- (1) to approve the early commencement of feasibility work for the Eastwood Fire Station capital project, requiring £16,000 of expenditure to be brought forward into 2021/22;**
- (2) to approve the slippage of expenditure of £150,000 in the Special Appliances capital budget into 2022/23;**
- (3) to approve an increase to the ICT Replacement Equipment capital budget of £125,000, to be funded from underspends of £20,000 from the Performance Management System budget, £30,000 from the Business World Upgrade budget, and £75,000 from the Hucknall Fire Station budget.**

15 Corporate Risk Management, Including Management of Operational Road Risk

Leila Henry, Head of Risk Assurance and Operational Training, presented a report on the Corporate Risk Management Process. The following points were discussed:

- (a) the risks relating to the Coronavirus pandemic have been de-escalated, but remain high. Governance and performance management processes for a pandemic situation are in place, and measures to prevent the spread of infection remain active, particularly for station-based staff. The staff response to Coronavirus was very strong, with very few cases of infection – the majority of staff absence during the pandemic was due to the requirement to self-isolate following contact, rather than as a result of catching the virus. With winter approaching, staff also have access to flu vaccinations. Recovery processes are progressing well and the situation continues to be monitored, with the business continuity group meeting on a monthly basis;
- (b) the availability of resources has been escalated as a risk due to supply chain disruption and the increasing cost of gas. Supplies of smoke detectors have been re-stocked. The recent fuel supply problems had a minimal impact upon the Service, due to its bunkered fuel stores;
- (c) in terms of staffing sustainability, some key support roles have become vacant and, due to the relatively small size of the organisation and its support teams, this could have an operational impact – particularly in specialist areas such as ICT. Work is underway to develop resilience internally, and structures for cover are being established in collaboration with other fire and rescue services. A significant project to provide assurance and mitigation in response to problems with the mobile data terminals on appliances is in place, to ensure the safety of crews;
- (d) the Corporate Risk Register includes specific reference to operational road risk because, around five years ago, a number of high-cost collisions involving appliances travelling to incidents led to the insurer withdrawing cover. To mitigate this risk, a dedicated working group was put in place to reduce the number of vehicle collisions. This includes the high-cost potential incidents when appliances are responding to incidents, but also the low-

cost but high frequency collisions that can occur during the low-speed manoeuvring of appliances – so crews have been trained to guide drivers down narrow roads with on-street parking to limit damage as much as possible. To date, the working group has achieved a 41% reduction in vehicle collisions, resulting in a saving of £50,000 in insurance costs;

- (e) the Committee extended its thanks to all staff who have played a part in bringing about the large reduction in operational road risk incidents, as this represents a substantial achievement.

The Committee noted the report.

16 Exclusion of the Public

Resolved to exclude the public from the meeting during consideration of the remaining items in accordance with Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, under Schedule 12A, Part 1, Paragraph 3, on the basis that, having regard to all the circumstances, the public interest in maintaining an exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

- **Chair**

As Councillor John Clarke, Chair of the Committee, declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest and left the meeting, Councillor Toby Neal chaired the rest of the meeting.

17 Update on the Land and Legal Title of the Headquarters at Bestwood Lodge

Councillor John Clarke declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in this item because he is the Leader of Gedling Borough Council. He left the meeting prior to the discussion of and voting on this item.

Ian Pritchard, Joint Head Quarters Programme Support Manager, presented a report on the actions taken to resolve any issues relating to the land and legal title of the Service's Headquarters at Bestwood Lodge.

The Committee noted the report.



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

**Minutes of the meeting held at the Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service
Headquarters, Bestwood Lodge Drive, Arnold, Nottingham, NG5 8PD on Friday 5
November 2021 from 10:00am to 11:35am**

Membership

Present

Councillor Patience Uloma Ifediora
(Chair)
Councillor Bethan Eddy
Councillor Tom Hollis
Councillor Roger Jackson
Councillor Gul Nawaz Khan
Councillor Toby Neal

Absent

None

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance

Adrian Mann - Governance Officer, Nottingham City Council
Craig Parkin - Deputy Chief Fire Officer
Matt Sismey - Organisational Development and Inclusion Manager

10 Apologies for Absence

None.

11 Declarations of Interests

None.

12 Minutes

The Committee confirmed the minutes of the meeting held on 2 July 2021 as a correct record and they were signed by the Chair. The following matters arising from the minutes were discussed:

- (a) best practice for on-call contracts is being reviewed at a national level, but very different issues affect different areas. Following discussions with staff and trade unions, a pilot for a new form of on-call contracts is underway and a report on the outcomes will be produced for the second half of 2022;

- (b) the pilot will be taking place at a couple of different stations. It is hoped that the more flexible offer will attract a wider range of people and positive engagement is underway with the communities around those stations. It is important that all communities local to the stations are engaged with effectively, particularly those that are most disadvantaged;
- (c) a communications programme and 'have a go' days are in place to help communities understand what it means to be an on-call firefighter. Engagement is also in place with employers, including local authorities, to help raise awareness. However, resources are limited, so careful consideration will be required as to where these resources can be best deployed to achieve the greatest effect.

13 Human Resources Update

Craig Parkin, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, presented a report on the key Human Resources metrics for the period of 1 June 2021 to 30 September 2021. The following points were discussed:

- (a) wholetime staffing is above the approved establishment level currently, in preparation for upcoming leavers – with a number of the new wholetime staff going through initial training. There are 79 firefighters on dual contracts to support on-call provision, but this can cause coverage issues if a dual contract firefighter has an unexpected absence, such as due to sickness. As such, there is a significant focus on on-call recruitment. Numbers in the support staff are also above the approved establishment level, but this is because several people in this area are carrying out temporary roles on fixed-term contracts;
- (b) the Workforce Plan has been accurate in forecasting the number of leavers and starters. However, there have been resilience problems caused by the departure of some specialist support staff;
- (c) the rate of sickness absence has risen to above the national average, which is an unusual result for the Service. The primary causes of long-term sickness absence are musculo-skeletal injuries and mental health, and the two issues can become connected where long-term physical illness gives rise to mental health problems. A well-established 'return to work' process supports staff in coming back after a long period of physical injury, guided by medical advice. There is also provision for returning to a modified role, to facilitate the transition back into work;
- (d) sickness absence has also been increased due to some operations that would have taken place during the Coronavirus pandemic being delayed, and staff found it more difficult to get medical appointments during the pandemic. Good internal mental health and wellbeing assistance continues to be in place to support staff. The reasons for poor mental health are varied and can relate to non-work issues, but the Coronavirus pandemic has worn down staff resilience and may have made some mental health problems worse;
- (e) although sickness absence is unusually high, particularly as it was so low during the pandemic, the reasons behind the sickness absence do not appear to be out of the ordinary. However, the position will be monitored closely over the coming reporting periods, to ensure that the right provision is in place;

- (f) currently, there are no disciplinary, grievance or harassment and bullying cases underway;
- (g) steps are underway to manage any tensions or anxieties that might arise as more staff return to working in the office more regularly. All firefighters continued to operate throughout the pandemic, but are now returning to other face-to-face frontline functions such as 'safe and well' visits and fire protection activity. Managers are having ongoing conversations with teams and individuals on the impact of returning to the office, particularly in the context of moving to a new headquarters site. A policy for agile working is being developed. Staff morale is being monitored closely, and the current feedback is largely positive.

The Committee noted the report.

14 Equalities Monitoring

Matt Sismey, Organisational Development and Inclusion Manager, presented a report on the breakdown of the workforce and applicant analysis by protected characteristic for the period 1 April 2021 to 30 September 2021. The following points were discussed:

- (a) there has been a small, gradual increase in staff numbers in the underrepresented groups in the Service, with a particular increase in those identifying as lesbian, gay or bisexual, particularly amongst new starters. The Service's figures for underrepresented groups are broadly in line with the national average for the sector. However, the number of staff who are Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) remains low, and the Service is finding it challenging to encourage BAME people to apply for roles in the organisation;
- (b) work is underway with communities, with a Community Engagement Manager and BAME community advisory group in place to ensure that this engagement is done continually and through all interactions with the Service, rather than just in recruiting periods. It is the aim to continue to integrate inclusion into everything that the Service does. Positive action opportunities are being developed across all teams, and 'safe and well' visits represent one, important channel for raising awareness about the Service in communities;
- (c) the Service is taking a broad approach to positive action and developing internal employee networks, which are now becoming more integrated. The number of women in leadership roles still needs to grow and, primarily, this will be enabled by recruiting more female firefighters. As such, the current focus on bringing more women into operational roles in the Service is at the entry level, though work is being carried out nationally to seek to develop appropriate avenues for direct entry to management positions;
- (d) the declaration rate amongst support staff is consistent with the national average. The Service is working hard with existing staff on encouraging declarations relating to disability to ensure that all staff can be properly supported, and there is funding in place to make reasonable adjustments in the workplace for disability. Specific work is underway with personnel with dyslexia. The policy and provisions for supporting

employees with disabilities is included in recruitment-related communications, to try to ensure that potential applicants are aware of the assistance that is available;

- (e) much more of the workforce has now been engaged on LGBTQ+ issues the Service continues to work with Stonewall to improve its approach in this area. Steps have also been taken to develop staff knowledge of religion and how to engage with citizens with different beliefs effectively, through podcasts and both face-to-face training and e-learning. There is a growing confidence amongst staff to be themselves in the workplace;
- (f) preparation is underway for a new stage of firefighter recruitment, and a number of awareness days will be held. It is intended to challenge the traditional narrative around who firefighters are and what they do, to attract as wide a range of applicants as possible;
- (g) the Committee noted that strong staff networks, along with effective strategy and policy, is important in attracting the widest possible range of people during recruitment activity. It is vital that the Service seeks to engage actively with the most disadvantaged communities that it serves, and be aware of their needs;
- (h) the Committee queried whether there is a specific engagement plan for Nottingham City itself, as it is where a large number of the BAME people within the Service's area live, and asked that the Service's community engagement plans are discussed in more detail at a future meeting.

The Committee noted the report.

15 Equal Pay Audit

Craig Parkin, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, presented a report on the findings of the Equal Pay Audit, gender pay gap reporting and ethnicity pay gap information. The following points were discussed:

- (a) the report has been carried out in line with the Gender Pay Gap Regulations to identify any inequality issues in pay. Currently, there are fewer women in senior and on-call roles, so positive action and talent spotting in the workforce is underway to grow the number of women in these areas;
- (b) investment is being made in 'future leaders', to support female firefighters in training for supervisory and senior management roles over the next few years. Structures are needed to help overcome any potential barriers, such as returning to work following a period of maternity leave. Flexible working continues to develop, but this can be challenging in the context of ensuring fully-crewed wholetime firefighter shifts, so provision needs to be considered carefully. A women's network is in place, to develop engagement on these issues;
- (c) ultimately, the Service operates a grading system whereby each type of role has a set salary. The identified gap is because there are more men than women in the Service, and in its senior roles. However, all staff members holding the same role earn the same salary;

- (d) the Committee noted that, as such, the Equal Pay Audit must be understood within the wider equality context. Primarily, the issue that the report identifies is that there is an imbalance in the number of men and women that are recruited into the Service, which the Service should seek to address, rather than that there is a disparity in how men and women are paid for carrying out the same role.

The Committee noted the report.

16 Agile Working

Craig Parkin, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, presented a report on proposals for implementing agile working arrangements for Service employees. The following points were discussed:

- (a) a policy for agile working arrangements has been developed, following the experiences of the Coronavirus pandemic and in the context of the upcoming move to the new joint headquarters. The Service moved to remote working during the pandemic rapidly, and it is clear that it is not necessary for all office staff to work from their main office for all of the time. As such, staff will be able to apply for agile working, creating a balance of office-based and remote working. However, it will be vital to manage business continuity and both individual and team performance closely in this context, to ensure that services continue to be delivered as effectively as possible;
- (b) the representative bodies of both uniformed and non-uniformed staff have been engaged with fully as part of the development of the policy, and have been supportive of the proposals;
- (c) the new joint headquarters was designed before the Coronavirus pandemic. Although the office working space will be shared, it will still have the capacity to accommodate the current headquarters workforce numbers in full. However, discussions are underway with the Police on how to use the shared space as effectively as possible in an agile working context.

Resolved to support the Service's implementation of the Agile Working Policy.

17 Review of the People Strategy

Craig Parkin, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, presented a report on the progress of the People Strategy for 2020 to 2022. The following points were discussed:

- (a) the People Strategy is key to the delivery of the Strategic Plan 2019-22, and sets out how the Service will address and prioritise workforce issues to meet the Plan's aims and objectives. In terms of key activities, the firefighter apprentice scheme is progressing well and has had a good first Ofsted report. The Workforce Plan has been refreshed to inform recruitment planning, and recruitment and promotion processes are in place. A Community Engagement Plan and Equality and Inclusion Plan have been produced, and a report on the on-call position is underway;
- (b) strong employee networks and champions are in place. A new Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Community Advisory Group has been established to engage with

how services are delivered to communities. Engagement is also underway with both Service and Police staff networks on the upcoming move to a joint headquarters. The focus on supporting both good physical and mental health and wellbeing continues, and the Service is working hard to support staff on maintaining their needed fitness levels and physical conditioning.

The Committee noted the report.

18 Exclusion of the Public

The Committee resolved to exclude the public from the meeting during consideration of the remaining items 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 outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

19 Exempt Minutes

The Committee confirmed the exempt minutes of the meeting held on 2 July 2021 as a correct record and they were signed by the Chair.

20 Changes to the Permanent Establishment

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

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

21 Regrading of Posts

Craig Parkin, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, presented a report on the outcomes of the latest Job Evaluation process, which has led to permanent changes to the non-uniformed establishment.

The Committee noted the report.



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

**Minutes of the meeting held at Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service
Headquarters on 12 November 2021 from 10.02 am - 10.50 am**

Membership

Present

Councillor Michael Payne (Chair)
Councillor Sybil Fielding
Councillor Toby Neal (minutes 11-13)
Councillor Roger Jackson
Councillor Tom Hollis (substitute for Councillor Jason Zadrozny)

Absent

Councillor John Lee
Councillor Jason Zadrozny

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

Craig Parkin	Deputy Chief Fire Officer
Malcolm Townroe	Clerk and Monitoring Officer to the Authority
Becky Smeathers	Head of Finance and Treasurer to the Authority
Catherine Ziane-Pryor	Governance Officer

9 Apologies

Apologies were received from

Councillor Jason Zadrozny (Councillor Tom Hollis in attendance as a substitute)
Councillor John Lee
John Buckley, Chief Fire Officer

10 Declarations

No declarations of interests were made but it was noted that both Councillor Sybil Fielding and Becky Smeathers, Head of Finance and Treasurer to the Authority, are heavily involved in the Pensions Board, from which a report is submitted today.

11 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 July 2021 (not 7 July 2021 as stated in error on the agenda) were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

12 Local Firefighter Pension Annual Report 2020/21

Becky Smeathers, Head of Finance and Treasurer to the Authority, presented the report which informs members of the activities of the Local Firefighter Pension Board and Scheme Manager up to 31 October 2021.

The following points regarding current pension issues were highlighted and questions from members responded to:

- a) following McLeod's finding that the 2015 firefighters pension scheme is age discriminatory, the case has been settled out of court and the Local Government Association (LGA) and Fire Brigades Union (FBU) have negotiated a memorandum of understanding and a framework agreement for handling immediate detriment cases;
- b) affected members of the 2015 pension scheme can be separated into two categories:

category one, members continuing to work up to retirement;
category two, members who have already retired and need a retrospective adjustment to their pensions;
- c) the Final Remedy Legislation should come into place in October 2023 but the courts have indicated that employers have a duty to address the age discrimination with immediate effect. Immediate Detriment is already being applied to category one members. Work to identify members in category two will start shortly;
- d) there is a risk that when the legislation finally comes into effect, it may slightly differ from the current proposal around which the framework was formulated, but if this is the case, the figures for any affected members will be reviewed;
- e) Central Government have provided a £63,000 grant, the majority of which is likely to be required by West Yorkshire Pension Fund (WYPF), which provides pension services to 21 Fire and Rescue Authorities, to update the pension system as currently calculations for individual cases are done by hand;
- f) there is concern regarding the required timescales for identifying people affected, which is predicted to be between 20 and 30 members, so NFRS are working to identify cases and forward them to WYPF;
- g) previously pension schemes included 1995, 2006, and then 2015, with some members nearing retirement, being moved onto the new scheme. However, as this took place on different dates, it was found to be discriminatory. All currently serving pension scheme members will change to the 2015 pension scheme as of 1 April 2022;
- h) there will be a financial impact on NFRS Payroll and HR as it has been necessary to authorise payroll overtime to complete the 'additional' work, the cost of which is predicted to be within the region of £5-6k but the ongoing costs cannot yet be quantified. An additional administrator in HR may be appointed to support the

work (dependent on budget approval), with additional costs to NFRS from WYPF likely to be £2-3K, which in the circumstances, can be considered reasonable;

- i) nationally, it is not clear how the tax implications will be refunded in some cases. However, the framework expects Fire Authorities to make good any payments to retired members to cover the tax variation element. Members will receive an update once the position of NFRS in reclaiming tax and interest payments has been clarified;
- j) promotion can have an impact on pension benefit and so whilst there is uncertainty on the impact, there has been a slowdown in staff applying for promotion. This is predicted to continue until the pension situation is clarified, so there has also been an operational impact;
- k) as employer rates increased by 9%, and the cost of the scheme varied more than 2%, a review of the 2015 scheme cost cap mechanism has been undertaken and the results are out for consultation with the aim to prevent any unfair burden on the tax payers;
- l) as a result of the 'Matthews and O'Brien case' regarding discrimination of part-time workers, current and former employees engaged since 2000 onwards, could buy back pensions and join the 2015 scheme. There is a challenge that this is discriminatory on age, and it proposed that employees should be able to backdate membership from the date their employment started, and not just from 2000. The LGA and Central Government are now in discussions. It should be noted that if agreed, there will be a huge impact on the Authority due to GDPR requirements whereby the authority no longer holds information on employees from this period. A creative approach is required to identify those affected and those who will be eligible for the extra pension. It is likely to be a complex process as many staff transitioned from part-time to whole time. There is also likely to be an impact on when current affected staff may leave. It is not yet known how many individuals will be affected;
- m) Fire Service pensions operate differently to local authority pensions in that they are unfunded and so there are no pension fund investments. NFRS pays out between £8 - £10 million per year in pensions, but this is claimed back from Central Government;
- n) through the LGA, NFRS does benchmark the cost of administering pensions and has changed suppliers to more cost-effective options. Having previously appeared mid ranking on administration costs, the Service can now expect to be within the lower cost rankings against other services. The internal administration cost for pensions can be calculated and reported to the committee at a future meeting;
- o) Central Government has provided an additional grant of £2.3 million to cover costs of increased employer superannuation contributions following the 2016 revaluation, but the increased cost totals nearer £2.5 million, and so the service has to fund the difference. Whilst costs are increasing, the grant, which isn't guaranteed long-term, remains stagnant;
- p) nationally, £800 million is paid out in pensions annually, but only £300 million per year, is coming in as contributions.

Members of the committee;

- q) expressed concern at the additional and unknown costs, both currently and in future, including the potential necessity to increase staffing to help enable the 62 day response requirement to be met;
- r) acknowledged the complexity of the task ahead;
- s) welcomed that the FBU has embraced a collaborative approach and negotiated a memorandum of understanding and contributed to and agreed the formulation of the framework;
- t) suggested that it may be beneficial to share some previous committee reports on pensions with newly appointed members to the authority to provide the background to the current position of different schemes running concurrently.

Resolved

- 1) to take note of the activity of the pension board and pension scheme manager along with the update on current pension issues;**
- 2) to approve the adoption of the framework for managing immediate detriment issues, as attached as appendix C to the report;**
- 3) to record the huge thanks and appreciation of the Chair, Chief Fire Officer and the Authority to the pensions administrators, West Yorkshire Pension Fund, particularly Helen Scargill, for their hard work and support, and for a formal letter of thanks to be sent from the Authority.**

13 Constitution Update

The Chair introduced the report which outlines the need to revise the current constitution to ensure it remains compliant with legislation, financial regulation and can meet the current and future needs of the Authority.

It is proposed that a draft revised constitution is produced by small working group consisting of the Chair, Chief Fire Officer, Clerk to the Authority and the Chief Fire Officer's Executive Support Officer identifying any elements in need of alteration or amendment. Members of the Policy and Strategy Committee will be asked to consider a final draft version prior to it being submitted to the Full Fire Authority meeting for approval.

Resolved

- 1) to approve the commencement of a review of the Authority's constitutional framework documents;**
- 2) for a working group to be established consisting of the Chair of the Authority (or vice-chair in the absence of the Chair), the Chief Fire Officer, the Clerk to the Authority, and the Chief Fire Officer's Executive Support Officer, to undertake the review;**

3) for an update report to be brought to a future meeting of the Policy and Strategy Committee.

14 Exclusion of the public

RESOLVED to exclude the public from the meeting during consideration of the remaining 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 outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

15 exempt minutes

The exempt minutes of the meeting held on 2 July 2021 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.