



Nottinghamshire & City of Nottingham Fire & Rescue Authority

MINUTES of the meeting held at Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters - Bestwood Lodge Drive, Arnold, Nottingham, NG5 8PD on 25 February 2022 from 10.31am - 12.47pm

Membership

Present

Councillor Michael Payne (Chair)
Councillor Toby Neal (Vice Chair)
Councillor Callum Bailey
Councillor Scott Carlton
Councillor John Clarke
Councillor Robert Corden
Councillor Eddie Cubley
Councillor Bethan Eddy
Councillor Sybil Fielding
Councillor Nicola Heaton
Councillor Tom Hollis (minutes 51 - 61 inclusive)
Councillor Patience Uloma Ifediora
Councillor Roger Jackson
Councillor Gul Nawaz Khan
Councillor John Lee
Councillor Nick Raine
Councillor Jason Zadrozny

Absent

Councillor Steve Battlemuch
Commissioner Caroline Henry

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

John Buckley	-	Chief Fire Officer
Craig Parkin	-	Deputy Chief Fire Officer
Candida Brudenell	-	Assistant Chief Fire Officer
Becky Smeathers	-	Head of Finance and Treasurer to the Authority
Malcom Townroe	-	Clerk and Monitoring Officer to the Authority
Neil Harris	-	Ernst and Young, External Auditors
Catherine Ziane-Pryor	-	Governance Officer

48 Apologies for Absence

Police and Crime Commissioner Caroline Henry
Councillor Steve Battlemuch
Councillor Tom Hollis for unavoidable lateness.

49 Declarations of Interest

None.

50 Minutes

Subject to including Councillor Nicola Heaton's attendance, the minutes of the meeting held on 17 December 2021 were confirmed to be a true record and signed by the Chair.

51 Chair's Announcements

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

Ukraine

- a) with regard to the horrific circumstances as Russia invades Ukraine, our thoughts as an Authority and a Service are with those people in Ukraine, including the emergency services, and also those with friends and family in Ukraine at this time;
- b) Members of the Authority agreed that the current situation is horrendous and requested that not only should a strong message of support and solidarity be sent to the firefighters of Ukraine with a joint statement of the Chair and Chief Fire Officer, but constructive, practical firefighting resources should also be provided if at all possible, either now or at a later stage, with a meeting of political group leaders to discuss this in more detail.

COVID -19

- c) all restrictions have been removed and the Service is delivering all services as usual, with just one member of staff remaining deployed assisting the NHS;
- d) during the pandemic, Service staff provided support which included, but was not limited to;
 - i. a total of 495 urgent care shifts for East Midlands Ambulance Service, transporting 1,666 urgent care patients;
 - ii. delivering 12,687 medicine and food parcels;
 - iii. delivering 75,394 vaccinations;
 - iv. participating in 3,598 signposting and befriending telephone calls;
- e) the Chair requested that the Chief Fire Officer ensure that everybody in the Service is thanked for their work, help and support during the pandemic.

Joint Headquarters

- f) The Vice-Chair and Chief Fire Officer attended a formal handing over of the keys event in January and some staff have now moved over to the new Joint Headquarters site. Refurbishment of the existing buildings continues but during the next few months all remaining Fire Headquarters staff will also transfer to the new site;
- g) Fire Authority meetings will continue to be held at the current Fire Headquarters until after the AGM, with the exception of a Community Safety meeting. Members

will receive a full introduction to the site and an opening ceremony is proposed, the details of which will be circulated once confirmed.

LTGTQ + History Month

- h) The Service is supporting the LTGTQ+ history month with lots of small events and social media posts being created. It is understood that the support of the Service and visibility of staff on stations is greatly appreciated by the LTGTQ+ community in the City and County;
- i) The Chair thanked the entire Service, but particularly to the Equality and Inclusion Team and staff for securing the gold award for the Equality Work Place Index of the Stonewall 100, for which the Service is currently ranked 6th of all emergency services in the country. A remarkable and outstanding achievement.

Councillor John Clarke

- j) Councillor John Clarke was congratulated for being awarded the MBE in the New Year's Honours List. This is well deserved for all his good work within the County, nationally and for the Service.

Chief Fire Officer - Gold Award

- k) Congratulations also to Chief Fire Officer John Buckley for receiving the Queens Fire Service Medal, which is thoroughly deserved.

52 Chief Fire Officer - John Buckley

Although this item was not listed on the agenda, the Chair agreed that it could be considered as an urgent item in so far as this meeting was the last opportunity for members of the Authority to formally recognise the work of John Buckley as Chief Fire Officer in advance of his retirement in 6 weeks' time.

- a) as this was John Buckley's last Fire Authority meeting prior to retirement, the Chair, on his behalf and on behalf of all previous Chairs of the Authority who had worked with John Buckley, requested that a formal vote of thanks to John Buckley is recorded for his outstanding contribution, service and commitment to Nottingham, and Nottinghamshire whilst also contributing at a national level by supporting the National Fire Chiefs Council, and the Firefighters Charity, noting that John Buckley is quite rightly highly respected within the sector;
- b) members of the Authority from all political parties, along with former Authority Chair Brian Grocock, expressed their heartfelt thanks and gratitude to John Buckley for his commitment, diligence and advice to all members of the Authority, his exemplary support, guidance and advice and work in the best interests of the Service and for the community of Nottingham and Nottinghamshire and also at a national level, particularly under significant financial pressures where he always acted professionally and courteously with undoubtable commitment to the role and ensuring that the importance and value of the Service is recognised;
- c) it should be noted that the guidance provided to Authority members has directly influenced Authority decisions that have effectively saved many lives, so on behalf of all those citizens who don't know John Buckley but have benefited from his contribution, thank you.

Mr Buckley was wished well for his future endeavours.

Resolved to record a unanimous vote of thanks to John Buckley for his dedication and contribution during his time in post as Chief Fire Officer to the Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service.

53 Prudential Code for Capital Finance 2022/23

Becky Smeathers, Head of Finance and Treasurer to the Authority, presented the report which informs members of the Authority of the obligations under the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance and seeks the approval of members to the proposed capital plans, prudential limits, and monitoring processes as set out in the report.

- a) the purpose of the report is to review the Capital Finance Plan of the Authority and ensure that all borrowing and longer-term liabilities are affordable going forward and in line with good professional practice;
- b) the Prudential Code for Capital Finance was updated in December 2021 and comes into force in 2023/24, with the exception of the requirement that authorities must not borrow to invest primarily for financial return, which comes into effect immediately. This specific requirement does not affect NFRS. Training will be provided to members on the revised code of practice nearer the time of its implementation;
- c) the ratio of finance and costs to the revenue stream are set out in the report and show an upward trend of higher amounts of borrowing for the Capital Programme. This will be reviewed in the coming year;
- d) limits and bench marks are similar to those previously presented.

Resolved

- 1) to approve the Prudential Limits for 2022/23 as follows:

Maximum ratio of Financing Costs to Net Revenue Stream	8.0%
Estimated Ratio of Financing Costs to Net Revenue Stream	5.6%
Estimate of Total Capital Expenditure to be Incurred	£3,909,000
Estimate of Capital Financing Requirement	£34,526,000
Operational Boundary	£36,907,000
Authorised Limit	£40,598,000
Upper limit for fixed rate interest exposures	100%
Upper limit for variable rate interest exposures	30%
Loan Maturity:	Limits:
Under 12 months	Upper 20% Lower 0%
12 months to 5 years	Upper 30% Lower 0%
5 years to 10 years	Upper 75% Lower 0%
Over 10 years	Upper 100% Lower 0%

Over 20 years	Upper 100% Lower 30%
Upper Limit for Principal Sums Invested for Periods Longer than 365 Days	£2,000,000

2) to approve the following local indicators for 2022/23:

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

54 Treasury Management Strategy 2022/23

Becky Smeathers, Head of Finance and Treasurer to the Authority, presented the report which seeks approval for the proposed Treasury Management Strategy for 2022/23 and the Authority’s Minimum Revenue Provision Policy for 2022/23.

The following points were highlighted;

- a) the Treasury Management Strategy was updated in December 2021 and prevents authorities from borrowing to invest, which is not a practice undertaken by this Authority and so has no impact;
- b) most of the Authority’s borrowing is short-term with investments only for reserves and the Capital Programme;
- c) the revised strategy does consider environmental, social and governance (ESG) factors of potential investment opportunities. These have been examined quite closely and the Authority will take them into account for future investments;
- d) in March 2021 the Authority did borrow slightly above its initially agreed capital financing limits by £291,000, but this was to take advantage of low interest rates available from the Public Works Loan Board and mitigate cash flow risks caused by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. This borrowing was already planned, but at a later date;
- e) Asset Management monitor the credit worthiness of bodies to which the Authority lends and ensures that all investments are safe;
- f) with regard to yield, the bank of England has replaced the LIBID rate with the more secure SONIA compound rate.

Questions from Authority members were responded to as follows;

- g) the consideration of ESG factors and implications is included within the Authority's Code of Practice, and will continue to be examined;
- h) whilst the sector as a whole is aware of the preference for investing in ethical interest, it is not possible currently to clarify in detail the ESG of some current investments, but as awareness and interest increases, associated information will become more available;
- i) CIPFA and LINK Asset Management are considering the availability of ESG information and how it can be effectively measured. Currently there is a growing focus on providing social implications mainly for longer term borrowing opportunities, but it is expected that this will filter down to medium term borrowing opportunities, but the main requirement continues to be security of investment.

Comments from Authority Members included;

- j) there is comfort in knowing that time has been spent and due diligence displayed with regard to investigating and checking the ESG factors of investment opportunities. It is a concern that the profits of some other local authority and pension investments have been used to fund hostile weaponry. It is requested that all future reports include an ESG statement;
- k) members of the Authority thanked Becky Smeathers and the Finance Team for their hard work.

Resolved to approve the Treasury Management Strategy 2022/23 as set out in the report.

55 Budget Proposals for 2022/23 to 2025/26 and options for Council Tax 2022/23

Becky Smeathers, Head of Finance and Treasurer to the Authority, presented the report which sets out proposals for Revenue and Capital Budgets for 2022/23 to 2025/26 to allow members to determine the level of Council Tax for the coming financial year.

Members are also asked to consider for approval, fees and charges for 2022/23 and the continued payment of members allowances in 2022/23 in accordance with the approved scheme.

Highlights from the report included the following points;

- a) at its December meeting, the Authority requested the Finances and Resources Committee consider the budget in detail and options for council tax. This took place in January with a recommendation to the Authority to increase Council Tax by the maximum of 1.95%;
- b) since the initial presentation of the Medium Term Financial Strategy in December:
 - i. the one year settlement figure has been awarded and is approximately what was predicted;
 - ii. information on the collection of Council Tax and Business Rates has been

- provided and is better than anticipated;
- iii. the pension grant has been confirmed;
- c) work continues to identify temporary savings;
- d) the Capital Programme is presented in the report and will be reviewed in future years to bring it into alignment with the Community Risk Management Plan;
- e) whilst the list of significant pressures is provided in table 3 of the report, there is also a level of uncertainty with regard to the Revenue Account due to:
 - i. the uncertainty with rising inflation which will stretch resources;
 - ii. the pay award for this financial year is yet to be settled for support staff, but firefighters have settled for a 1.5% pay increase against the budget of 1%;
 - iii. the significant rise in petrol and oil prices will have an impact, particularly with the circumstances around Russia.;
- f) Reserves held at 1 April 2022 are anticipated to total £9.3m. This consists of £5m general reserves and £4.3m earmarked reserves;
- g) where significant financial pressures appear, the Finance Team will endeavour to ensure that the Service continues to operate within the budget, including closer monitoring to enable the Authority to be alerted where action needs to be taken;
- h) the report identifies the options of not increasing the Council Tax and increasing it by 1.95% and provides the respective resulting impact on the budget and also on individual households;
- i) there are also recommendations to marginally increase the fees and charges, and the members allowance scheme.

Members of the Authority commented as follows:

- j) on behalf of the Authority, the Chair thanked Becky Smeathers and the Finance Team for the outstanding budget report and their ongoing work to ensure that the Service is able to carry out its role, noting the significant financial pressures;
- k) thanks are also extended to members of the Finance and Resources Committee, political group leaders, and all staff for assisting in the achievement of a balanced budget which continues to provide excellent value for money for a vital public service;
- l) the Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee thanked Becky Smeathers and the Finance Team, recognising their additional work, dedication and effort and the impact on their personal lives of 'going the extra mile' to ensure the Service has a sustainable budget;
- m) pressure on Central Government needs to be maintained to provide information for a three year funding plan to enable the Service to plan ahead, particularly as the current financial position will result in additional financial pressures for most services due to price rises;

- n) although it is recognised that this is a price increase in difficult financial times for many households, the cost of contributing to such a vital service remains exceptionally good value for money;
- o) there are a lot of pressures on this budget going forward and there are alerts as the Service temporarily dips into reserves. Inflation and the rapidly rising price rise of crude oil, are of particular concern and may yet substantially increase if the situation in Ukraine worsens. Members are aware that these factors could have a significant impact on what is otherwise a balanced budget;
- p) all members of the Authority need to collectively approach our respective Members of Parliament to urge them to further highlight and champion to those who are responsible for the national debates, the importance of this vital Service. We need to ensure that our Members of Parliament are equipped and briefed and have all the facts and figures to hand. Flexibility for the Fire Service has been limited with regard to opportunity to raise the precept in such difficult times when other services, such as the Police were given far greater flexibility;
- q) raising Council Tax is not favoured due to the disproportionate impact on the majority of citizens at a difficult financial time, and whilst a different approach to funding would be preferred, as the Service is underfunded, and so the increase is supported;
- r) members of the Authority, regardless of political party, have come together and done the very best for the Service and the citizens of Nottingham and Nottinghamshire but also with consideration of frontline staff;
- s) retaining as many full time fire fighters as possible and providing security for on call fire fighters should be, and remain, a priority.

John Buckley, Chief Fire Officer informed the Authority:

- t) that the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) is a critical document which has been revised to ensure the very best use of resources, but also to support the continuous improvement of the operational model and providing a platform for making efficiencies. There are currently a lot of unknowns but the building blocks of the CRMP are in place to support adaptations. It is not currently advisable to launch into trying to achieve further longer-term savings at this point as we need to see if the economic situation settles down;
- u) the level of settlement in future years, along with whether significant savings are required, will dictate the level of the scale of change needed in the organisation;
- v) whole-time recruitment is being delayed by 6 months as clarity is expected regarding financial pressures by that time, and then in September the Authority will need to consider planning for future proposals. It will be a tough year ahead but the Service will aim to continue to meet attendance standards and will try to mitigate any capacity impact with overtime and redistribution of resources, which happens anyway at peak times;
- w) if unknowns become known and are of a significant impact, then there may well be a need to shrink the numbers of whole-time staff so the Service does not want

to recruit to then have to make redundancies. It's a matter of careful stewardship. We need to trust operational leads to use resources to the best possible efficiency;

- x) it will definitely be a challenge but we do maintain a high level of operational response but there are other increasing pressures regarding the built environment legislation, along with prevention and protection which are harder to quantify for citizens;
- y) there will inevitably be an impact on the current levels of prevention and protection work by the Service, but the only other option is to propose cuts now, which may prove unnecessary if the current situation improves.

The Chair commended cross party collaboration of the Authority in working for the benefit of the Service and the citizens of Nottingham and Nottinghamshire.

Resolved:

- 1) **unanimously to agree the recommendation of the Finance and Resources Committee to the Fire Authority, that there be a 1.95% Council Tax increase;**
- 2) **unanimously to approve the 2022/23 precept level to be notified to the Billing Authorities based on the information set out in Section 2 and Appendix C in the report, as required by statute;**
- 3) **to approve the fees and charges for 2022/23, as set out in Appendix D of the report;.**
- 4) **to approve the payment of Members Allowances for 2022/23 in accordance with the approved scheme.**

56 Annual Governance Statement 2020/21

Becky Smeathers, Head of Finance and Treasurer to the Authority, presented the report which sets out the Annual Governance Statement which requires the Authority's approval prior to signature by the Chair and Chief Fire Officer for inclusion in the Final Statement of Accounts.

Resolved to approve the Annual Governance Statement 2020/21.

57 External Audit Plan 2020/21

Becky Smeathers, Head of Finance and Treasurer to the Authority, presented the report which sets out the External Audit Plan for 2020/21 and also introduced Neil Harris from External Auditors Ernst and Young.

Points highlighted by Neil Harris included:

- a) having taken over from Helen Henshaw, Neil is familiar with the Fire and Rescue Services across England, having worked with Services in previous years;

- b) the timetable and requirements of the 2020/21 Local Audit System have been investigated and are being reviewed by the Public Accounts Authority and Sir Tony Redman to ensure sustainability. It is recognised that it has not been a satisfactory position for any party;
- c) there have been no significant changes in the Auditor's view of the Service's risk profile, including the following areas:
 - i. misstatements due to fraud or error;
 - ii. risk of fraud in revenue and expenditure recognition and appropriate capitalisation of expenditure;
 - iii. valuation of pensions liabilities of the firefighters pension scheme;
 - iv. valuation of land and buildings;
 - v. valuation of pension liabilities
- d) there are some areas which remain as estimates but with a higher inherent risk with regard to valuations;
- e) there have been some changes in the regulator regarding estimates, particularly pensions liabilities. When Ernst and Young ran a test parallel pensions model, no issues had appeared at that time;
- f) rather than just a conclusion, the Value for Money commentary now includes a more narrative commentary on financial sustainability and making informed decisions and effectiveness to identify any weakness in processes. No significant weaknesses have been identified to date;
- g) good progress has been made and the Audit is expected to be concluded before the end of March. The Finance Team have been helpful and are working well together.

Members continued to express concern that the Audit was still running late and was nearly a year out of date, particularly at this difficult time. Neil Harris responded that involving the Auditors in real time decision making with regard to value for money will be helpful, and that there is a drive to catch up, return to the expected schedule and take a longer term view of how valuations should be undertaken following conclusion of the reviews.

The Chair commented that a collective resolution is urgently required to resolve the issues around the Auditing System before it damages the reputation of Authorities where Audits are delayed. Assurance to citizens is vital regarding robust procedures and value for money.

Resolved to note the report.

58 Community Risk Management Plan 2022-2025

Candida Brudenell, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, and Craig Parkin, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, jointly presented the report which presents the final version of the 2022-2025 Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP), following several levels of consultation.

Candida Brudenell, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, updated the Authority on the process and

structure of the consultation and highlighted the following points:

- a) the document sets out the Service's ambition for the next 3 years and has taken 18 months to develop with a significant level of analysis and engagement on the strategic needs assessment;
- b) the pre-consultation draft was approved by members last year with the consultation of statutory partners and neighbouring Fire and Rescue Authorities starting in the spring, followed by a 10 week formal consultation by an external organisation to ensure a statistically valid consultation was achieved. This was accompanied by a targeted effort to engage with communities which rarely engage with the Service, including via social media, leaflet dropping and direct contact with a variety of community leaders, as set out in the report;
- c) the full consultation results are attached to the report with 98 responses, including people involved with the Fire Service;
- d) changes were made following the consultation, the document was revised and the style further streamlined;
- e) one key and ongoing theme is that there is a lack of understanding in the community of the breadth of the remit of the Service's activity, beyond emergency response.

Craig Parkin, Deputy Chief Fire Officer presented the final version of the CRMP document and the Annual Delivery Plan (ADP) for 2022-23, highlighting the following points:

- f) members have been involved in the plan from the pre-development stage and have received regular updates on progress;
- g) national good practice was considered at every stage, including active gap analysis;
- h) the ambition of the Authority remains to be formally recognised as 'outstanding' by 2032;
- i) the ADP incorporates the CRMP's 6 Strategic Goals: 1,2,3, are around protection, prevention and response, whilst goals 4,5 and 6 are about the workforce – diversity, training and culture;
- j) commitment is a key element of the plan, setting out what the Service will provide to citizens, some elements of which are under significant pressures so with regard to this and the consultation feedback, some of the commitments have been pared back due to availability of funding, with some statements purposely made quite broad;
- k) it is noted that this Service doesn't experience the cultural difficulties seen in some other Services, but there is no room for complacency and there is still work to be done;
- l) detailed data will be used to further inform the Strategic Assessment of Risk, including more detailed consideration of demographics, but especially the built environment and the increasing workload pressure that this element is forecast to present with increasing built environment legislative requirements;

- m) governance, financial management, monitoring and assurance is set out in the document, including how decisions are made and prudence applied;
- n) an Annual Statement of Assurance will be presented to the Authority every autumn which will look backwards and forwards at performance, including scrutiny by the committees;
- o) there is a higher requirement for performance data and its scrutiny, including both by officers and members of the Authority. In response, a Community Risk Management Plan Assurance Board has been established to monitor and check that the Service is performing as required and as per its commitments.

The Chair welcomed the ease of reading and format of the CRMP and thanked officers involved. It is noted that whilst there has been a broad reach for consultation, as the consultation document it did not contain contentious issues or proposals, it was predicted that the response level would be low.

At the suggestion of members, it was requested that all members are provided with an electronic copy of the plan to share within their communities, and also a limited number of hard copies if requested.

Members commented as follows:

- p) this document is welcomed as it explains clearly exactly what the Service does and illustrates to citizens how their money is spent. It should be made as widely available in as many public places as possible;
- q) in addition to easy access to electronic copies, it would be beneficial to provide paper copies of the plan for those citizens who do not access electronic data and also for the harder to reach communities which can be particularly vulnerable;
- r) at least a few translated hard copies would be welcome for circulation to specific communities, including at places of worship;
- s) citizens also need to understand that the Service works hard to keep people safe with preventative work, so this document which highlights the broader role of the Service is welcomed.

Craig Parkin, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, assured members that the Community Engagement Plan was exploring further engagement, including new and emerging communities. The issue of digital literacy and also digital access, as highlighted during the height of the pandemic, is also being considered, as is including digital translation availability. This work is taking place within the remit of the Wider Community Prevention and Protection Plan.

Resolved

- 1) to note the consultation feedback and amendments made to the CRMP;**
- 2) to approve the final draft version of the Service's CRMP;**
- 3) to approve the contents of the Year One Annual Delivery Plan.**

59 Appointment of Temporary Assistant Chief Fire Officer

Councillor Michael Payne, as Chair of the Appointments Committee, presented the report which recommends to the Authority that Mr Michael Sharman is appointed Temporary Assistant Chief Fire Officer.

It is noted that both internal candidates were incredibly strong and gave excellent accounts of themselves and the Service. Each clearly illustrated that they were of great value to the Service, but the decision was made on the particular requirements of the Service at this time.

Resolved to approve the recommendation of the Appointments Committee to appoint Mr Michael Sharman as temporary Assistant Chief Fire Officer with effect from 14 March 2022.

60 Update on Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services

Candida Brudenell, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, presented the report which provided an update on the latest developments of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICRFS).

Highlighted points included the following:

- a) the round 2, tranche 1 inspection for NFRS took place last Autumn and was more thorough and comprehensive than previously;
- b) a 'hot de-brief' gave very positive feedback, especially around the commitment of the workforce and how they had embraced the inspectors during their visit;
- c) the formal outcome of the inspection will be published in the late Spring;
- d) the Annual State of Fire and Rescue Report was published in December 2021 in which the inspector, Sir Thomas Windsor, expressed frustration that whilst there have been some changes and improvement, more change is urgently required Nationally. As set out in the report, as the majority of previous recommendations are yet to be completed and signed off, no new recommendations are proposed at this time;
- e) for the round 2, tranche 1 reports, 11 Cause For Concern (CFC) have been issued (for 13 Services), against 10 CFCs during the last round of inspections for 45 Services. As a result, combined with the poor progress on last year's recommendations, the Inspectorate is becoming more critical and targeted in its judgement and stated that progress has not been as fast and progressive as expected, even taking into consideration the Sector strains around responding to COVID-19;
- f) one additional element to the inspection has been the inclusion of 'innovative practices' which is an area in which this Service excels, so it is hoped that it will be recognised.

Members commented as follows:

- g) members of the Authority recognise that everyone in the Service has worked really hard through the pandemic and continues to do so under normal working conditions so it's hoped that this is recognised and the report reflects the positive direction of travel;
- h) the Annual State of Fire and Rescue report was a national 'wrap on the knuckles' but this Service's reputation and the respect of citizens remains high and has assisted in identifying points to progress. It's vital that the Service take citizens and staff with it on the improvement journey;
- i) with regard to collaboration, the formal opening of the Joint Police/Fire Service Headquarters was held recently. The building is impressively modern and an attractive working environment. The contribution of current and previous Chairs of the Authority, Chief Fire Officers and Paddy Tipping as the former Police and Crime Commissioner should be noted.

Responses from the Senior Management Team included:

- j) during the first round of inspections, NFRS was not issued with any CFCs but was issued with 24 areas for improvement. NFRS were within the bottom quarter of national ranking in 2019;
- k) no CFCs were issued to NFRS on either inspection (they are issued within 28 days of the inspection so would have been received by now) and all the previous areas for improvement have now been addressed with one waiting for formal closure at a future Community Safety Committee meeting;
- l) all comments on areas for improvement from the last inspection are being considered and addressed;
- m) recommendations which required progress via the Local Government Association and/or National Fire Chiefs Council have been completed but the outstanding recommendations require Central Government to resolve and relate them to the white paper on reform, which is progressing through Government, and is beyond the remit of Services.

Resolved to note the report.

61 Committee Outcomes

The report provides the minutes of the following meetings:

Appointments Committee 02 December 2022
Community Safety Committee 14 January 2022
Finance and Resources Committee 21 January 2022
Human Resources Committee 28 January 2022
Policy and Strategy Committee 04 February 2022
Appointments Committee 04 February 2022

Resolved to note the report.