



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: 23 February 2024

Purpose of Report:

To report to Members the business and actions of the Fire Authority committee meetings which took place in October/November 2023 and January/February 2024.

Recommendations:

That Members note the contents of this report.

CONTACT OFFICER

Name : Craig Parkin
Chief Fire Officer

Tel : 0115 8388100

Email : craig.parkin@notts-fire.gov.uk

Media Enquiries Contact : Corporate Communications Team
0115 8388100 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	13 October 2023; 12 January 2024
Human Resources Committee	10 November 2023 (January meeting cancelled)
Finance and Resources Committee	20 October 2023; 19 January 2024
Policy and Strategy Committee	17 November 2023, 02 February 2024

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.

Craig Parkin
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER



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

**Minutes of the meeting held at Joint Fire / Police HQ, Sherwood Lodge, Arnold,
Nottingham, NG5 8PP on 13 October 2023 from 10.01 am - 11.12 am**

Membership

Present

Councillor Jason Zadrozny (Chair)
Councillor Robert Corden
Councillor Anwar Khan (minutes 12-15 inclusive)
Councillor Devontay Okure
Councillor Nick Raine
Councillor Nigel Turner

Absent

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

Damien West – Assistant Chief Fire Officer
Andy Macey - Area Manager for Response
Catherine Ziane-Pryor - Governance Officer

9 Apologies for Absence

None.

10 Declarations of Interests

None.

11 Minutes

Minutes of the meeting held on 9 June 2023 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

12 Service Delivery Performance

Andy Macey, Area Manager for Response, presented the comprehensive report which provides the committee with an update on the performance of the Service between 1 April and 30 September 2023.

Some highlighted points included the following, along with responses to members' questions:

- a) 5,430 incidents were attended by the Service during this reporting period, which, compared to the same period last year, is a decrease of 16.4%, but this can be attributed to last year's extreme summer weather conditions;
- b) The report provides a breakdown of the type of calls received, the volume of calls, comparative figures for previous years, month by month activity, priority, and activity levels by district;
- c) Whilst the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) target is to respond to all incidents within 8 minutes from the first appliance mobilisation, the average time achieved during this performance period was 8 minutes and 14 seconds. The slightly longer than previous response time can mainly be attributed to the introduction of the new appliance Mobile Data Terminals, which took place in June. This is being further investigated and will be monitored;
- d) On-call station availability is set out in the report, with Hucknall, Newark, Stapleford and Warsop achieving in excess of 95% availability, whilst Harworth and Southwell stations failed to meet the 70% minimum standard set by the Service. It is anticipated that the recent recruitment of 34 new on-call firefighters will help to address this issue;
- e) The year-to-date statistics for Ashfield DSC are set out in the report, and it is noted that the station will return to 24-hour crewing from 29 November 2023, in line with the resourcing to risk work stream;
- f) The year-to-date statistics for Retford DSC are set out in the report, and whilst there have been reductions in availability, there are no proposals to amend the current crewing arrangements;
- g) Performance data for 999 calls answered within 7 seconds, call handling times for priority one and two incidents, and mobilisation system availability, are all set out in the report with priority call handling performance improving;
- h) During six months of activity, the Service has completed more than half of the 14,000 proposed 'safe and well' visits, and so is expected to exceed this year's target;
- i) Safety initiatives, including water rescue, road safety, general fire safety, and fire safety for older citizens, were among the initiatives undertaken during the reporting period;
- j) People-focused events are being held three times a year, including at Warsop College, with the aim to reach approximately 3,000 pupils in total;
- k) Referrals for the 'Fire Setter' courses can come from the Police or Youth Offending Teams, with the aim to deter and address such behaviour;

- l) A comparison of fire safety audits completed month by month for the past 3 years is set out in the report and clearly shows that performance in the latest reporting period has exceeded that of previous years;
- m) However, with a target of 1000 business safety checks during the performance year, the Service is behind on target with only 386 completed. This is mainly due to several supervisory managers who are yet to complete the required qualification, but a training programme begins in November for 30 officers;
- n) A range of protection activities have been undertaken the reporting year-to-date, including statutory building regulation consultations, licensing consultations, post-fire inspections, follow-ups to complaints, enforcement and prohibition notices;
- o) The Service responded to 2,133 false alarms in this reporting period which is an increase of 16% from last year, against a target to reduce Unwanted Fire Signals (UwFS) by 3%. A breakdown of the four alarm classifications, including malicious, good intent, and apparatus, are set out in the report, with 383 attendances to non-residential premises, 234 of these being at hospitals, 1207 being residential, 400 of which were single occupancy houses or bungalows with telecare systems installed;
- p) The Building Safety Act was implemented on 1 October 2023, and requires dedicated multidisciplinary teams to support the work, which will include the Fire Service. The operating model is very similar to that already established by the Service with regard to the Fire Safety England Regulation 2022, and the statutory duties on responsible persons, particularly in buildings over 18 metres in height;
- q) Business safety checks are undertaken on smaller businesses, with a focus on seasonal themes and activities.

Members of the committee welcomed the ongoing good work of the Service and the recruitment of further on-call firefighters, specifically as it will help address the on-going availability concerns at Southwell Fire Station.

Resolved to note the report.

13 Approach to Reducing Unwanted Fire Signals - Update

Damien West, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, presented the update report on the Service's approach to reducing the number of unwanted Fire signals (UwFS).

The following points were highlighted and members' questions responded to:

- a) When an automatic fire alarm activates for a reason other than fire, this is regarded as an unwanted fire signal (UwFS);
- b) The Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) has a target to reduce UwFS year-on-year, but nationally, they have risen by 8%. For this Service the rise has been 16%;

- c) Previously there was a proposal not to attend automated alarm signals at hospitals between the hours of 7am and 7pm, following concerns raised by members the proposals was further explored and is now reported;
 - i. Consultation was undertaken of representative bodies including the respective NHS Trusts and Private hospitals providers, with an 86% response rate;
 - ii. A further data review on attendance was undertaken and it found that the vast majority of UwFS were from the City and Queens Medical Centre Hospitals;
 - iii. Whilst the Fire Protection Team (FPT) has a good working relationship with these providers and continues to work with them to reduce the number of UwFS, the review highlighted that a more specific risk-based approach would be the preferred option against non-attendance, with both sites committing resources to help tackle the problem;
- d) The Service Delivery Evaluation and Assurance Group (SDEAG) continues to monitor overall UwFS trends and recorded an increase at hospitals, and most concerning, a 50% increase in the number of signals from domestic dwellings, particularly sheltered housing and premises with independent living alarm systems;
- e) As a result, further work will be undertaken with hospitals and with regard to minimising the false activation of telecare call systems, which are usually fitted at premises occupied by the most vulnerable citizens in society who are often at very high risk;
- f) Investigation of the potential for chargeable calls as a mechanism to reduce repeat UwFS, continues and will be reported to members at a future meeting;
- g) Currently there are no easy solutions identified regarding unwanted telecare signals, but there is potential that as domestic communication technology moves away from analogue, there may be the ability to differentiate between the type of alert issued through the telecare type systems. As the population is living longer and remaining within their own homes is the preferred option, the increased use of alert systems needs to be taken into account and planned for, not only by the Service but by health and social care partners;
- h) A chargeable UwFS scheme is already in place, but any further expansion would require the approval of this committee.

The committee welcomed the new approach as an alternative to a blanket non-attendance policy for hospitals, noting that staffing is a nationwide issue for hospitals, but there needs to be more responsibility placed with sheltered housing alert systems.

This resolved to:

- 1) **note the update relating to the approach of the Chief Fire Officer in reducing UwFS;**
- 2) **support the continued work and focus to reduce the number of UwFS attended in line with the Service's CRMP.**

14 Safeguarding, Disclosure and Barring Update

Damien West, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, presented the report which provides a summary update, including implications to the Service, on the changes to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act (Exceptions), alongside an overview of current safeguarding practices in the Service.

The following points were highlighted, and members' questions responded to:

- a) New legislation requires increased vetting of all personnel, whereas previously, a basic check was undertaken for those coming into contact with vulnerable citizens;
- b) A higher-level check is now required for officers coming into contact with vulnerable citizens, which takes into consideration spent and unspent convictions, and is repeated on a recurring basis. Following consideration of risk, all other staff are to undergo only the basic check;
- c) There haven't been any dismissals from the Service due to the emergence of any previous convictions or crimes, and where convictions do emerge, they are considered on a case-by-case basis dependant on the nature of the offence;
- a) The National Fire Chiefs Council has issued guidance which explicitly sets out the safeguarding expectations for the Sector;
- b) A further update will be provided to the committee in 12 month's time, which will provide information on the outcome of the vetting which occurred;
- c) The Service sets out clear behavioural expectations for all staff, and has confidential reporting mechanisms in place that have been checked for effectiveness, and which can be used by all members of the workforce if inappropriate behaviours and/or cultures emerge. The Leadership Team are confident that if any issues arose, they would be appropriately and promptly addressed, and reported to the Human Resources Committee as part of its monitoring and scrutiny role;
- d) More broader checking/enhanced DBS checks of all staff could be further considered within the internal governance review;
- e) Safeguarding communities is a statutory requirement under the Care Act 2014, so the Service requires staff to undertake safeguarding training. To date more than 700 employees have completed the basic online e-learning package, whilst an additional 134 have completed the advanced training;
- f) In the year from 1 August 2022 to 31 July 2023, the Service identified and referred 27 people to multi-agency safeguarding hubs, 8 of whom were children;
- g) The safeguarding culture encourages staff to have professional curiosity and report instances and circumstances which don't feel are quite right, prompting further investigation;

- k) The Service is working with partners to support the 'Safer Streets' initiative and is promoting city fire stations as a place of safety for women and girls in fear of violence or intimidation. There is scope for all fire stations to be more broadly promoted as safe spaces, and there has been a report of a victim of modern slavery approaching the crew of a station, which then engaged the Safer Streets protocol along with partner organisations.

Members commented;

- l) Enhanced DBS checks for all staff would be welcomed, but the balance between risk and financial impact is acknowledged, along with the need for a standardised approach across all Services;
- m) There are of course, no guarantees that crimes may have been committed, but that there is no criminal record;
- n) The importance of ensuring that the cultures across all areas of the Service are aligned, is important. It is understood that no existing employees have declared themselves as members of the LGBT+ community, which raises concerns as to whether the Services' culture is perceived as being accepting of such declarations;
- o) Further information on the whistleblowing policy and enforcing a positive behavioural culture would be welcomed in future reports.

Resolved to:

- 1) note the contents of this report and the updated changes to legislation;**
- 2) endorse the approach of the Chief Fire Officer, as outlined in the report;**
- 3) agree to receive a further update in 12 months' time once the new approach to checks has been embedded.**

15 His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services, Areas For Improvement

Damien West, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, presented the report which updates the committee on progress in addressing the Areas For Improvement (AFI) allocated to the Community Safety Committee for monitoring and scrutiny, as identified in the 2021 inspection.

The following points were highlighted, and members' questions responded to:

- a) AFI 2 stated that 'the Service should assure itself that its risk-based inspection programme prioritises the highest risks and includes proportionate activity to reduce risk';
 - i. The Service already applies its own Risk Based Inspection Programme (RBIP) to ensure that fire protection activities are targeted at the highest risk premises;

- ii. the Service will be working with Nottingham Trent University to evaluate the RBIP and ensure it is functioning as intended;
 - iii. the Service is undertaking its own internal gap analysis, and evaluation of its RBIP, using the risk related guidance recently issued by the National Fire Chiefs Council;
 - iv. It is anticipated that this AFI will be ready for closure in Spring of 2024;
- b) AFI 4 advised that 'the Service should ensure that, when responding to a 999 call, Mobile Data Terminals (MDTs) are reliable to allow staff to access risk information';
- i. This AFI theme was initially identified in the 2019 inspection, and closed in 2022 following significant progress. However, this AFI seeks to continue progress and advancement in the reliability and access by crews of relevant risk information;
 - ii. New MDTs have been rolled out across all appliances across the Tri-Service collaboration, but some improvement are still required and work continues to improve reliability and accessibility;
 - iii. The new MDT system is due to be operational by October 2025, but information around risk will continue to be scrutinised and a secondary backup device provided to all responding crews, with the closure of this AFI predicted in early 2024;
- c) It is noted that Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Mick Sharman, works collaboratively across both Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Services to progress the appropriate joint commissioning of the new Replacement Mobilising System.

Resolved to note the progress with addressing the areas for improvement are assigned to the Community Safety Committee.



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

**Minutes of the meeting held at Nottinghamshire Joint Fire and Rescue Service/
Police Headquarters - Sherwood Lodge, Arnold, Nottingham, NG5 8PP on 12
January 2024 from 10.00 am – 10.46am**

Membership

Present

Councillor Jason Zadrozny (Chair)
Councillor Robert Corden
Councillor Anwar Khan
Councillor Devontay Okure
Councillor Nick Raine
Councillor Nigel Turner

Absent

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

Damien West – Assistant Chief Fire Officer
Bryn Coleman - Area Manager for Prevention and Protection
Andy Macey - Area Manager for Response
Catherine Ziane-Pryor - Governance Officer

16 Apologies for Absence

None.

17 Declarations of Interests

None.

18 Minutes

a) Confirmation

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 October 2023 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

b) Update

As suggested by members within the Safeguarding, Disclosure and Barring Update (minute 14), enhanced DBS checks have been considered and consultation is underway for all frontline staff to undergo enhanced DBS Checks.

19 Service Delivery Performance Report

Andy Macey, Area Manager for Response, presented the response element of the Service's performance, with highlights including the following:

- a) Whilst overall this year, the number of incidents has reduced, in quarter three response to incidents is expected to increase due to the flooding in October and November;
- b) The report provides a comparison of activity levels month by month for the past three years, which follow a consistent pattern, as are the types of incidents responded to. Also provided are statistics of incidents attended by priority type and district station;
- c) The Service has set a standard of an eight minute response time, but this was fractionally missed with an average of 8 minutes and 16 seconds, mainly due to the new Appliance Mobile Data Terminals, for which there were some initial issues which have now been resolved;
- d) On call availability is listed for every on-call station, with Harworth and Southwell struggling to achieve the 85% minimum availability target. Some staff on both of these stations have experienced long term illness, but are now returning to work and so performance is expected to improve. On call availability at Warsop and Hucknall fire stations achieved an impressive 99.7% and 99.5% respectively;
- e) The year-to-date performance data for Retford Fire Station On-Call crewing is set out in the report, as specifically requested by members. Five of the 34 new On-Call firefighters will be based at Retford, and so performance is expected to improve;
- f) More detailed data regarding recruitment, including the proportion of initial applications to successful appointees, can be provided to a future meeting. It should be noted that consideration is underway to revise the requirements of On-Call firefighters living within five minutes travelling of the fire station, to expand the time in some areas of specific need where recruitment has been especially difficult;
- g) Approximately 400 whole-time firefighter applications were received in the current round of recruitment, with 170 candidates shortlisted and now undergoing testing;
- a) Whole-Time appliance availability consistently exceeded the 98% available turnout target, with a minimum 99% availability;
- b) Fire Control did not meet the Services target in quarter two, again, this can be mainly attributed to the to the initial introduction of the new Appliance Mobile Data Terminals, but as can be seen from the performance chart in the report, performance has since much improved.

Members commented as follows:

- c) Overall performance is looking good, and it is welcomed that where there were challenges, solutions are now in place;

- d) The 99.9% availability of both Arnold and Ashfield Whole-Time fire station crews is pleasing.

Bryn Coleman, Area Manager for Prevention and Protection, presented the prevention element of the performance data, followed by protection data, highlighting the following points:

- e) the Service is on target to complete 14,000 safe and well visits this year, with a focus on reaching those most at risk of fire injury;
- f) Youth engagement events will be held during the summer, working with partners such as the Police the National Grid, the Railway Police, and the Ambulance Service. There is an open invitation for members to attend;
- g) In areas where hoax calls become an issue, schools are targeted with safety focused visits and messages;
- h) 'Biker Down' is programme run by firefighters teaching motorbike riders how they can most safely assist a fellow fallen rider. As part of engagement the Fire Service is involved in Easter egg run again this year from Forest Fields to Mansfield Fire Station on Easter weekend;
- i) As usual, throughout party season there will be a focus on drink/drug driving awareness, including targeting new drivers through colleges. It's very difficult to gauge prevention success, but there is a general feeling that it is working;
- j) With regard to protection, it is likely that the service will miss the Fire Safety Audits (FSAs) target of 1,500 as there are not enough Safety Advisers within the Service, or even nationally, to undertake the volume of work required. In addition, the data only registers the property and not the number of visits undertaken or required, which can be multiple if premises owners are required to take action which then needs to be re-inspected. Work is ongoing to recruit and/or train Fire Safety Auditors;
- k) A breakdown by type of FSAs and business safety checks is included in the report;
- l) 48 formal notices of action were issued. The Service prefers to take an initial educational approach, but applies enforcement and prohibition when necessary;
- m) The Service is completing more safety audits than ever before, with supervisory managers on appliances now trained so operating crews can undertake audits. In addition, crews are also now able to identify required interventions which in turn releases capacity from the audit teams;
- n) Safety programs around the festive season, such as the '12 days of Christmas', highlight prevention messages and retaining fire safety standards, such as not blocking fire exits with stock;
- o) Whilst the Service aims to reduce Unwanted Fire Signals (UwFSs) by 3% every year, this has not been possible and nationally the number of UwFSs has

increased. A generally small number are due to good but mistaken intent, and some will be hoax calls. Between April and December 79 malicious or hoax calls were received. The Service can trace these telephone numbers, including a pay-as-you-go, and does take action;

- w) The highest number of UwFS was 2875 due to alarm apparatus. Whilst hospitals used to be the worst culprit, the Service has worked hard with these partners to address the issue, which, as a result has reduced. Residential properties are now the most frequent source, with a 13% increase on the previous year's data;
- x) Whilst the Service does have enforcement powers and liaises with commercial properties to address UwFS issues, it has no powers with regard to residential properties, and so an urging co-operation approach is taken;
- y) When attending such incidents, crews have identified other vulnerability issues, including deprivation, which can then be assessed through Safe and Well Visits, including referrals to other service pathways where necessary;
- z) The majority of UwFSs are from residential premises by telecare alarm activation by people living independently but with an alarm facility. If the telecare call handler doesn't receive a response from the activation address, the alarm is escalated to the emergency services;
- aa) The 'Building Safety Act' requires a multibit disciplinary team to look at high-rise buildings. Nottinghamshire and Leicestershire are the East Midlands Regional Team Leads as other areas do not have the same extent of high-rise buildings;

Members comments included:

- bb) Overall performance and progress is positive, and welcomed;
- cc) With an ageing population and more people remaining in their own homes, it is likely that there will be an ongoing increase in telecare type systems, and unless processes change, the numbers of UwFS will also increase. However, members welcome confirmation that the Service does follow up where vulnerabilities are identified;
- dd) With regard to the regional response to the Buildings Safety Act, having local building safety inspection capacity is preferable, but its hoped that under these new arrangements, local officers will not be required to travel beyond the region, due to the national lack of qualified personnel.

Resolved to note the report.

20 Update on learning from the Manchester Arena Inquiry - volume two

Damien West, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, the report which provides an update on the Service's response to the recommendations in volume II of the inquiry regarding how to the emergency services responded to the Manchester Arena bombing.

The following points were highlighted and members' questions responded to:

- a) The report provided 53 recommendations which the Service must respond to, 32 are now closed and 21 ongoing, but progressing on track. It is anticipated that all recommendations will have been addressed by December 2024;
- b) In many of the areas for improvement the sector has updated response processes, added training requirements and with the consideration of the Fire Chief's Council, produced new national guidance to ensure consistency across the sector;
- c) Some of the learning from the Manchester Arena Bombing was implemented during the Nottingham murders in June last year, with effective communication across the blue light partnership;
- d) This Fire Service Chairs the Local Resilience Forum sub-group which has been formed on the recommendation of the inquiry, to address 55 actions across all responders, 33 of which are now closed and 22 are ongoing;
- e) His Majesty's Inspectorate for Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) is due to visit the Service in March 2024 and will scrutinise the progress made against the inquiry recommendations;
- f) Marauding Terrorist Attack (MTA) equipment packs have now been issued and members will have the opportunity to examine the equipment and speak to an officer after the meeting;
- g) The current threat level from MTA is 'likely' and whilst the additional requirements of equipment and training are a financial burden, they must be provided by the Service to keep firefighters as safe as possible in the event of an attack.

Members of the committee commented:

- h) It is diabolical that Central Government has withdrawn 60% of funding from services, particularly after the incident last year, and when there is a clear requirement for Services to purchase and maintain additional specialist equipment against so many other financial pressures;
- i) Working out the level of threat can be difficult, as threats are continuously unstable and can come in many forms and with so many significant venues in the City, is unrealistic to reduce funding when the threat level is rising;
- j) We need to praise the Blue Light Services for their action last June and we need to remember that these people go into an often unknown situation and risk their lives to do their job.

Resolved to:

- 1) note the update from the report and endorse the actions being taken by the Service in response to the Manchester Arena Inquiry;**
- 2) receive further reports for the monitoring and scrutiny of the implementation of learning through the Community Safety Committee.**



Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire and Rescue Authority Finance and Resources Committee

**Minutes of the meeting held at Dunkirk and Beeston Suites - Highfields Fire Station,
Hassocks Lane, Beeston, Nottingham. NG9 2GQ on 20 October 2023.**

Part 1 - 10.04am – 10.05am

The meeting opened and Committee unanimously agreed to postpone the meeting until 10.30am due to severe weather conditions and flooding which has delayed the arrival of some Lead Officers and Members.

Part 2 – 10.30am- 11.15am

Membership

Present

Councillor John Clarke MBE (Chair)
Councillor Liaqat Ali
Councillor Callum Bailey
Councillor Richard Butler
Councillor Anwar Khan (minutes 17-18 inclusive)
Councillor Roger Upton

Absent

Councillor Sybil Fielding

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

Candida Brudenell – Assistant Chief Fire Officer
Becky Smeathers – Head of Finance and Treasurer to the Authority
Matt Reavill – Head of Corporate Risk management
Hassan Rohimun - External Auditor of Ernst and Young LLP
Catherine Ziane-Pryor – Governance Officer

13 Apologies for Absence

Councillor Sybil Fielding (medical appointment)
Councillor Anwar Khan for predicted lateness.

14 Declarations of Interests

None.

15 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 June 2023 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

16 Revenue, Capital and Prudential Code Monitoring Report to August 2023

Becky Smeathers, Head of Finance and Treasurer to the Authority, presented the report, highlighting the following points and responding to members' questions:

- a) Previously reported to the end of April 2023, this report sets out the position as of 31 August 2023, presenting an underspend of £1.4 million which equates to 3% of the overall budget;
- b) There are several factors contributing to the underspend, including the Service operating under establishment, lower than predicted on-call pay costs, higher than anticipated investment returns due to the higher interest rates, and slippage on payment for fire appliances from last year;
- c) Previously, it was intended to draw on £400k of reserves, but it is proposed to not utilise these at moment;
- d) It is proposed that the underspends be reallocated to recruitment, (training, including training facilities and HR resources. Additional spend is predicted for maintenance cost due to significant market price increases, so it is proposed to accelerate timeframes of some key projects, including the mobilising system, for which additional contract costs and the additional internal work required to house the new servers;
- e) Additional HR funding is required as the Service accelerates the previously paused recruitment. It is not unusual to receive in the region of 600 applications, all of which require additional officer time to process, and as other areas of work are demanding at this time and no capacity is available within recruitment, additional staffing is required;
- f) With reference to the £38k virement relating to the Building Safety Regulator grant, it is noted that the Committee's approval is required for the virement, which technically enables the accounts to balance, and this is not a cost to the Service;
- g) The entire costings for the new mobilising system can only be predicted at this stage due to several uncontrollable influences, including the impact of the Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service withdrawing from the arrangement, which means that all costs are shared between Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire Services. As an initial response, the Authority had approved an additional £170k allocation to the capital programme. As the system servers will not be cloud-based, additional facilities are required to house them, hence the £100k spend for server costs with further costs anticipated;
- h) Breathing apparatus washing facilities are required in 2 stations along with establishing a system to collect and deliver kit;

- i) A significant increase in fuel costs was predicted and accounted for in next year's budget, but is yet to materialise, although prices continue to fluctuate;
- j) Capital Programme expenditure is not significant and mainly applies to 17 new vehicles. With increasing market costs, it is possible that there will be an overspend on appliances, but this is difficult to predict and a delivery date is not yet confirmed, but payment is only due on delivery;
- k) The buyer of the old Headquarters site has withdrawn, so other options are being considered and a long delay in selling is not anticipated;
- l) Electric charging points across all buildings are for the benefit of the Service's light fleet vehicles which are either electric or hybrid. Staff also have access to charging points on a recharge at cost basis. Where available, grants have been drawn down for the installation charging points and any other funding opportunities to further improve the infrastructure and progress the Services' commitment to decarbonisation;
- m) With regard to Prudential reporting, borrowing is purposely higher than the capital finance requirement as the Service took advantage of low interest rates but borrowing levels will return to required levels by the end of the year.

Resolved to:

- 1) note the report;**
- 2) approve the plans and virements for using £927k of the forecasted underspends, as outlined in Sections 2.2 – 2.3 of the report;**
- 3) approve the £38k virement relating to the Building Safety Regulator grant and the associated post (Section 2.4 of the report);**
- 4) approve the transfer of the £147k Fire Protection Uplift grant to earmarked reserves (Section 2.13 of the report).**

17 Corporate Risk Management

Matt Reavill, Head of Corporate Risk Management, presented the report.

The following points were highlighted and members' questions responded to:

- a) The risk situation is much improved, and has stabilised from that of a year ago, when there was uncertainty around industrial action, pension liabilities, and the Council Tax precept level;
- b) The report and register set out how risk levels are assessed and set from very high to low risk;

c) Very high, high, and medium risk areas are summarised as follows:

Very High Risk	Mobilising (Risk 3)	No change
High Risk	Balanced budget (Risk 1)	Reduced from Very High
	Firefighters Pension Scheme (Risk 2)	Reduced from Very High
	Service reputation (Risk 15)	No change
	Preventable deaths (Risk 6)	No change
	Employee engagement (Risk 4)	No change
	Workforce sustainability (Risk 5)	No change
Medium Risk	Health, safety and welfare (Risk 7)	No change
	Availability of resources (Risk 9)	No change

d) Members are assured of constant monitoring to identify any emerging or escalating risks, and that an audit of risk management provided an outcome of 'substantial assurance'.

Resolved to:

- 1) **endorse the Service's approach to managing the key risks to the Authority;**
- 2) **note the most recent version of the Corporate Risk Register attached at Appendix A to the report.**

18 External Audit Plan 2021/22

Hassan Rohimun, External Auditor of Ernst and Young LLP, presented the Audit Planning report for the year ended March 2022, as of September 2022.

The following points were highlighted and members' questions responded to:

- a) the Audit was on track to be completed by October 2023, but the Audit Manager responsible for this Audit has been taken ill, the Audit conclusion will be delayed as other officers release capacity to undertake the work;
- b) Section 1 of the Plan provides an overview of the strategy, including audit risks identified, with changes from the previous year highlighted;
 - i. Risk of fraud in revenue and expenditure recognition: Inappropriate capitalisation of expenditure;
 - ii. Misstatements due to fraud or error (as per international standards);
 - iii. Valuation of Pension Liabilities – LGPS;
 - iv. Valuation of land and buildings;
 - v. Valuation of Pension Liabilities – Firefighters' Pension Scheme;
- c) Set out in the report is a summary of the scope of the audit, including:
 - i. Overview of the audit strategy;
 - ii. Audit risks;

- iii. Value for money risks;
 - iv. Audit materiality;
 - v. Scope of the audit;
 - vi. The audit team and timeline;
 - vii. Interdependencies;
- d) No firm date can be provided yet for the predicted completion of the final Audit, nor the final cost as additional work may be required, but finance officers will be kept informed and a 'worst-case-scenario' estimate provided to members of the committee following the meeting;
- e) The external auditors currently have no responsibility to review climate impact within the corporate sector, but this may become more relevant to future public sector audits;
- f) The cost of the new External Audit contract for the new financial year will be significantly increased and expected to total approximately £95,000, although there has been some initial funding from Central Government to support these costs.

Whilst member of the committee acknowledged the additional National Audit requirements which have resulted in a significantly increased workload, along with the issues around availability of Auditors, concern was expressed that the cost has risen so significantly in recent years and that the Service and Local Authorities were expected to absorb this cost.

Resolved to note the report.

19 Becky Smeathers, Head of Finance and Treasurer to the Authority

As this is Becky Smeathers' last meeting with the Authority, the Chair wished Becky well in her new ventures and thanked her for her work, dedication and professionalism.



Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire and Rescue Authority Finance and Resources Committee

**Minutes of the meeting held at Joint Fire / Police HQ, Sherwood Lodge, Arnold,
Nottingham, NG5 8PP on 19 January 2024 from 10.01 am – 10.52 am**

Membership

Present

Councillor Michael Payne (Chair for the meeting)
Councillor Liaqat Ali
Councillor Callum Bailey
Councillor Richard Butler
Councillor Michael Edwards
Councillor Sybil Fielding
Councillor Jonathan Wheeler

Absent

Councillor John Clarke MBE
Councillor Roger Upton

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

Craig Parkin – Chief Fire Officer
Leila Berry – Assistant Chief Fire Officer
Mark Kimberly – Interim Treasurer to the Authority
Tracy Stevenson – Temporary Head of Finance
Catherine Ziane-Pryor – Governance Officer

20 Apologies for Absence

Councillor John Clarke MBE (Councillor Michael Payne, Chair of the Authority, substituting and Chairing)
Councillor Roger Upton (Councillor Jonathon Wheeler substituting).

21 Membership

To note the Change in membership to the Authority and this committee by Nottingham City Council in the replacement of Councillor Anwar Khan with Councillor Michael Edwards.

22 Declarations of Interests

None.

23 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 October 2023, were confirmed as a true record, and signed by the Chair presiding.

24 Revenue, Capital, and Prudential Code Monitoring Report to 30 November 2023

Mark Kimberly, Interim Treasurer to the Authority, and Tracy Stevenson, Temporary Head of Finance, presented the quarterly report with highlighted points including the following and responses to members' questions:

- a) Section 2 of the report refers to the underspend as of the end of November of £606,000 against the revised budget of £50.057 million;
- b) Whilst the approved budget included a £404,000 contribution from earmarked reserves, it is not predicted that the Service will need to use reserves into this financial year;
- c) Virements were previously approved to fund improvement projects, one of which, breathing apparatus wash facilities, is requested to be funded in this financial year, with funds transferred from the revenue to the capital programme;
- d) The majority of the underspend is on Whole-Time pay, which accounts for £344,000, however, as a result, the overtime budget is overspent by £80,000;
- e) The On-Call pay budget is anticipated underspend by £112,000, although this may change due to the additional demands of the recent flooding;
- f) Nonuniform pay is anticipated to underspend by £122,000 due to vacancies;
- g) An overspend of £37,000 is anticipated with regard to pension budgets, particularly gratuity payments;
- h) Other variances are set out in the report including transport -related costs, premises costs, supplies and services, and other income;
- i) Reserves are currently in a good position at £10.4 million;
- j) Capital programme variances are set out at appendix C to the report, including slippage into the next financial year of £1.1 million for aerial ladders, potentially with further slippage regarding other vehicle purchases;
- k) With the exception of Capital Finance Requirement, all Prudential Indicators were observed. The level of borrowing was exceeded due to the benefits of accessing a lower fixed rate interest, which once invested, could achieve a greater interest rate, and therefore income. This is a short-term approach and borrowing is expected to return to anticipated levels at the end of March 2024;
- l) The October flooding took place to the north of the county, mainly in the Retford area, with the January flooding focusing around the River Trent. The extent of

flooding was localised on each occasion, but resulted on the additional use of resources. The impact on on-call hours can be calculated provided to members.

- m) The £85,000 gas bill dispute, referred to in paragraph 2.9 of the report, relates to the old headquarters buildings which is on a metred charge, and so since being vacant, cannot have accrued such a debt, so is being challenged;
- n) The specification for the command unit chassis, ICT and electronics was amended from that of the indicative figure for initial budgeting. The specification was broadened to extend the expected longevity and capability of equipment to include large scale incidents, for which additional technology was required, hence the £225,000 additional cost. This was reported to the senior leadership team in November 2023;
- o) Following the move from the old headquarters to the joint headquarters, for a limited period, staff were granted an allowance for the additional time and mileage incurred travelling to the new headquarters.

members commented:

- p) The significant change in the financial position of the Service since the last report, with the longer-term improved position, is welcomed;
- q) Further information on the cost of the flooding would be welcomed, including a comparison of the January and October flooding periods and extent.

Resolved to:

- 1) note the contents of the report;**
- 2) approve the transfer of the £160k previously approved for breathing apparatus wash facilities to the capital programme, as set out in paragraph 2.28 of the report.**

25 Budget Proposals for 2024/25 to 2027/28 and Options For Council Tax 2024/25

Tracy Stevenson, Temporary Head of Finance, presented the report, with comments and strategic financial advice from Mark Kimberly, Interim Treasurer to the Authority.

The report seeks the committee's recommendation to the Authority, for setting the 2024/25 council tax precept, having had full consideration to the current and future year's budgets.

Following points were highlighted and members questions responded to:

- a) Section 2 of the report highlights capital budget proposals for the period 2024/25 to 2027/28 with the proposed Capital Programme attached to report as appendix A, which will continue to be kept under review;

- b) The 2024/25 programme totals £8.228 million, but will increase with any slippage from the current financial year;
- c) Of the 17 new pumping appliances on order, only one will be completed in this financial year, with the remaining 16 accounted for in the 2024/25 programme. Once the order is completed, further planned purchases will be delayed;
- d) The £2 million ICT budget for the replacement Service Control and Mobilising System is still indicative and may require revision once the procurement exercise is finalised;
- e) The Capital Programme is mainly funded from borrowing;
- f) It is anticipated that the Authority will have difficulty setting a balanced budget in 2024/25, mainly as a result of the effect of increased inflation, which in turn impacts on pay awards, along with uncertainty around some income streams;
- g) Now that the Local Government Finance Settlement for 2024/25 has been released, Table 1 of the report sets out the changes in assumptions, which total a £508,000 budget decrease;
- h) A further risk to the Authority has been identified with regard to employers contributions for firefighters pensions at 37.6%, from the previous 28%;
- i) the firefighter pension scheme runs at a deficit of approximately £600 million each year which forms part of the total Central Government funding £2.6 billion per year for the sector. Whilst the Fire Authority does receive a grant from Central Government top up employer contributions, assurance is required that further shortfalls will also be covered, otherwise the Fire Authority will be required to cover the cost, even though the decision is made nationally and the Fire Authority doesn't have any say. The immediate detriment scheme is expected to be underwritten by Central Government, but the Authority has set aside earmarked reserves of £200,000, if this is not the case;
- j) A spike in On-Call overtime costs is predicted as a result of the additional activity around the recent flooding, but is not expected to be as extensive as the very hot dry summer of 2022. Although figures are yet to be determined, the information will be forwarded to members of the committee;
- k) Although currently being negotiated at a national level, the firefighter pay award increase planning assumption is 5% for 2024/25, 3% for 25/26 and 2% ongoing. However, whilst this settlement may be lower than anticipated, an increase per 1% will have a £320,000 cost impact to the Service. Therefore to ensure that the Service can cover the cost of an increase, the assumption as set out above, is recommended;
- l) Whilst a £5 council tax increase will not be permitted this year, a 2.95% increase would provide additional funding for approximately £1.29 million, and a 1.95% increase would provide £991,000 of additional funding;
- m) As of April 2024, reserves are anticipated to total £10.3 million, with 5.2 million held as general fund reserves, and 5.1 million is earmarked reserves;

- n) The final financing settlement from Central Government is expected in February, and it is predicted to reflect the provisional figures;
- o) The budgetary impact anticipated for each of the three options presented to the committee of, a council tax freeze, a 1.95% increase, and a 2.95% increase, are set out individually in the report, with Table 6 of the report providing a summary comparison table;
- p) The reasoning behind a 2.95% increase, within the 3% limit, and not a 2.99% increase, is to ensure that any variance will not come too close to the limit and trigger challenge;
- q) The committee is requested to consider the impacts of budget deficits on the Service, and whilst reserves may initially be used to help balance the budget, they would not address the ongoing financial shortfall and impact on services;
- r) With multiple financial impact uncertainty and possibilities such as inflation, a potential pay restraint in the public sector, and a year-by-year government settlement that does not easily enable forward planning, the assumption of a 3 - 5% pay award increase, which is set externally at a national level, is a robust approach to enable financial planning;
- s) With every option there will still remain the deficit, but the higher the council tax increase, the lower the deficit. If the lower-level council tax increase is selected, this presents significant financial pressure which will result in real time cuts to the Service. If the higher-level council tax increase is chosen, the Service does have the capability to fill the gap, with the inclusion of ongoing efficiencies;
- t) It should be noted that with a general election pending, Central Government policy may change, including around the financial settlement, but the Service must work with the confirmed information currently available.

Members of the committee commented as follows:

- u) Whilst inflation is dropping there is still ongoing economic uncertainty and with the government only providing a one year at a time settlement it is sensible to support a 3 - 5% assumption for the pay award increase;
- v) Although not present, the Chair has confirmed that he supports a 2.95% increase in council tax;
- w) During the recent public consultation a clear view of residents is that there is no appetite for Fire Service and station cuts and reductions. If a rise of less than 2.95% council tax increase is implemented financial planning will be difficult;
- x) The results of the public consultation were clear that overall, residents would be prepared to pay more to protect services. If this committee recommends to the Authority, and the Authority approve the 2.95% increase, frontline services will be protected, at least initially for a few years;

- y) If a 2.95% is requested, the majority of residents will pay little more than an additional 14p per month extra, which is a small increase to protect services;
- z) Whichever option is selected, unless there are substantial financing changes, there will be an impact on frontline services in the future;
- aa) A council tax increase is not welcomed, but is supported in principle as the recent consultation has shown that residents are willing to pay more to maintain the current services available;
- bb) In addition to the general election, the future mayoral elections may impact on services, so political, cross-party consensus is particularly important at this time and very much welcomed;
- cc) Following the recent flooding and ongoing predicted storms, the Service would benefit from better publicity of its activities, including the new challenges faced within the City regarding development.

Resolved

- 1) to recommend to the Fire Authority, that Council Tax is increased by 2.95%;**
- 2) to endorse the pay award financial assumptions as set out in paragraph 2.31 of the Budget Proposals for 2024/25 to 2027/28 report.**



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

**Minutes of the meeting held at Joint Fire / Police HQ, Sherwood Lodge, Arnold,
Nottingham, NG5 8PP on 10 November 2023 from 10.00 am - 10.56 am**

Membership

Present

Councillor Nick Raine (Chair)
Councillor Robert Corden
Councillor Tom Hollis
Councillor Patience Uloma Ifediora
Councillor Gul Nawaz Khan
Councillor John Lee

Absent

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

Candida Brudenell - Assistant Chief Fire Officer
Tracy Crump - Head of People and Organisational Development
Matt Sismey - Organisational Development and Inclusion Manager
Catherine Ziane-Pryor – Governance Officer

7 Apologies for Absence

None.

8 Declarations of Interests

None.

9 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 June 2023 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

10 Human Resources Update

Tracy Crump, Head of People and Organisational Development, presented the report which provides an overview of key human resources metrics for the period 1 July to 30 September 2023, whilst absence data is for the period 1 April 2023 to 30 September 2023, and equalities monitoring data for the period 1 April 2023 to 30 September 2023.

The following points were highlighted and members' questions responded to:

- a) Due to a later agenda item on workforce planning, staffing numbers will be considered in further detail later in the meeting;
- b) In addition to the commentary, the appendix to the report provides helpful charts illustrating sickness absence trends and attributes, individually across Whole-Time, On-Call, and non-uniform staff, and combined. In addition, absence performance data of this Service is compared against the other Fire and Rescue Services nationally;
- c) In quarter 1, sickness absence significantly decreased, and then increased in quarter 2;
- d) Absences due to covid are still tracked, and whilst much lower at 4.6% in quarter one and 5.8% in quarter two, there is an upward trend, so tracking will continue;
- e) The Service provides flu vaccinations to staff via vouchers;
- f) Long-term absences in quarter one accounted for 57.3% of sickness absence and 59.1% in quarter 2. This includes employees with significant health conditions;
- g) Work-related sickness absence, including mental health and stress, has accounted for 13.5% of all sickness absence in Q1 and 14.7% of sickness absence in quarter 2;
- h) The Service has a robust support system in place to help staff return to work, which includes regular contact, referrals to occupational health, and reasonable adjustments. With regard to some longer-term serious health conditions, some members of staff have now retired;
- i) There were no dismissals or tribunal cases lodged during this reporting period;
- j) Equality monitoring is reported every six months and so data is for the period 1 April to 30 September 2023;
- k) The report provides a breakdown of equalities data across the Service including female, Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME), Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual (LGB), and disabled, with Service statistics compared to population statistics for each grouping;
- l) The increase in the number of employees declaring themselves LGB+ is welcomed as a reflection of employees' confidence in the environment and culture of the Service, and is welcomed as a positive result of a lot of work promoting equalities. This now needs to be duplicated for other groupings;
- m) A further breakdown of male and female within the BAME grouping can be provided to members following the meeting, along with the grading of roles occupied;

- n) Identifying protected characteristics of the workforce supports cultural change;
- o) Since disability was defined in the Equality Act 2010, the Service is very proactive in encouraging staff to consider, and where appropriate, declare non-visible disability and neuro diversity. Some staff may not consider themselves disabled, but the broadened definition of the Act may include their conditions. The methods of how disability can be declared have been revised and are much improved;
- p) There are frustrations that work in addressing the gender pay gap is not progressing as quickly as hoped. However, incremental changes are being made and a new piece of work seeks to accelerate the change in the make up of the workforce, including deprivation, type of roles citizens apply for, and localised community reflection of the workforce. Proposals will be submitted to the Strategic Inclusion Board, but will require further investment and resources;
- q) The Service actively encourages and facilitates staff development to management roles, but there needs to be a critical mass of BAME employees for take-up of the opportunities to reflect the broader local BAME population in management roles;
- r) Service diversity is much improved, but further investment is required to progress diversity in management roles and work continues in targeted recruitment of diverse communities in an effort to increase the diversity of the Service to proportionally reflect that of the population.

Members of the Committee commented:

- s) As the BAME population is smaller in the County than the City, consideration should be given to more intensive BAME targeted recruitment in the City;
- t) It would be interesting to know if there are any Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) identifying employees in the Service as this too is a protected characteristic and there is a notable population in the Newark area;
- u) It needs to be acknowledged that not everybody wants to declare their heritage/culture/sexuality, and so it's important to include the 'other' option when requesting information;
- v) It's a concern that currently there are no senior managers identifying as BAME, and so additional support should be considered to help BAME staff engage for promotion;
- w) The Service still has work to do but has increased the diversity of the workforce with very good recruiting campaigns which appeal to the broader community, for which officers should be proud.

Resolved to note the report.

11 Gender Pay Gap 2023

Candida Brudenell, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, presented the annual report which provides an update on the progress in addressing the gender pay gap, including the methodology applied, using data for the year ending 31 March 2023.

The following points were highlighted, and members' questions responded to:

- a) Whilst there has been a slight improvement in narrowing the gender pay gap in the Service, it is noted that it will be very difficult to eradicate it as there are fewer women in the Service as a whole, and fewer women in the higher paid roles. However, the Service does offer support to female employees to develop their skills to advance their careers into the higher paid roles, if that is what they choose;
- b) The Women's Network is valuable in providing a reference group for the development of strategies. Some actions stated are effective but need further impetus, as will be elaborated on in the strategic proposals report to the Strategic Equalities Board;
- c) Although the way in which the Service has to report some elements is set nationally, members are assured that the Service does pay the living wage. This will be clarified in future reports;

Members of the Committee commented as follows:

- d) The establishment of the Service's Women's Network is welcomed;
- e) Excellent equalities work has been achieved so far, but more women still need to be recruited to entry level posts;
- f) The Service needs to provide support in addressing some of the key issues which are preventing women from applying for the Service, but also further expand and promote the support available to women wanting to progress their careers;
- g) Higher level male colleagues can mentor women in areas where there is currently a lack of female representation;
- h) More involvement in project work could be a good way to expand the experience, confidence and visibility of women wanting to progress.

Resolved to note the outcomes from the report and support the action points set out within Paragraph 2.21 of the report, to maintain and enhance the career advancement of, and support provided to, women within the Service.

12 Review of Workforce Plan 2022-24

Tracy Crump, Head of People and Organisational Development, presented the report which provides an update on the workforce plan.

The following points were highlighted, and members' questions responded to:

- a) the report provides a breakdown of how the Workforce Plan monitors and calculates projections of workforce elements which are then responded to in ensuring workforce resilience, including the workforce numbers and skill bases required;
- b) Whole-time workforce numbers fell below those set out in the workforce plan as a result of the pause in recruitment due to the budget uncertainty. However, this is now being addressed through recruitment;
- c) 27 new Firefighters have been recruited, mostly into apprentice Firefighter roles and although mostly starting training in April, they are due to be placed on stations during December;
- d) 3 additional Firefighters have been recruited into the Fire Prevention Team as apprentices, but with time first spent on stations, which has proved valuable;
- e) During this reporting period, 16 members of the workforce left the Service, mostly due to retirement, but generally approximately 9 leave for other reasons. These numbers align with the plan turnover predictions;
- f) National advert for existing firefighters, specifically those with specialist skills, has been successful with 15 operational roles filled at different levels;
- g) The current recruitment programme is three quarters completed, with a lot of positive action, including selection days on stations in evenings and at weekends;
- h) It was decided to change the order of the selection process by holding fitness testing at an early stage and providing additional support to help candidates achieve the required level of fitness, which is set nationally for firefighters and the same for male and female candidates. Candidates who only just fail the fitness test now have the opportunity to take the test again in a different way after further fitness work. This approach will be evaluated;
- a) 370 applicants are to be externally telephone screened, and if successful at that stage then they will be job related tested, with successful candidates progressing to the assessment centre in January. It is anticipated that up to 32 new Firefighters could be in post over next year;
- b) The Service does provide a lot of support to applicants in advance of fitness testing to help them build their fitness to the required standard. This includes working with a fitness advisor, which has been particularly beneficial approach for some female candidates as historically this was the stage at which most failed. More information on the fitness test and what it involved can be found on the Service's website;
- c) Resourcing to risk has identified different approaches to ridership which resulted in the release of 4 operational posts. Work is ongoing to determine where these posts should now be placed;

- l) Promotions are set out in the report across every level as part of succession planning;
- m) As agreed by the Authority, Ashfield Fire Station is due to return to full time crewing as of 30 November 2023;
- n) 13 new On-Call Trainee appointments have just started. During this reporting period the Service has not experienced the usual anticipated level of turnover of On-Call Firefighters, which is welcomed;
- o) Support Staff turnover has slowed significantly from the 24% of the post-covid period, with 10 leavers and 14 starters in the past 6 months;
- p) The pay settlement has now been agreed as a flat sum of £1,925, which will also help with recruitment and retention of staff;
- q) The Futures25 efficiency programme is reviewing Prevention activities. It is anticipated that there will be workforce implications, with a report submitted to members towards the end of the year;
- r) The Service works hard to provide an outstanding Employee Wellbeing Service and support. A recently introduced scheme to enable an advance of up to £1,000 to purchase white goods, with repayment over several months as a deduction from wages, has been put in place to support employees manage their finances in difficult times.

Resolved to note the report.

13 Confidential Reporting of Employee Concerns

Candida Brudenell, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, presented the report which sets out the process for confidential reporting and the reporting data for the period 31 March 2022 to 31 March 2023, as required following the findings of the Independent Cultural Review of London Fire Brigade, and concerns raised nationally by HMICFR.

The following points were highlighted, and members' questions responded to:

- a) Members are assured that there is now a new confidential reporting route via the independent organisation 'Say So';
- b) The report sets out:
 - i. how 'Say So' has been procured;
 - ii. the service it provides;
 - iii. staff accessibility;
 - iv. how it has been promoted to staff;
 - v. how the information provided is gathered and forwarded to senior officers;
 - vi. the response requirements/agreement of senior officers;
 - vii. the monitoring and reporting of themes, trends and take-up;

- c) It is noted that existing routes for reporting concerns are still available, including as detailed in the Whistleblowing Policy, through line managers, through the Human Resources Team, or to trade union representatives.

Members welcomed the progress and assured the workforce that members were not complacent in addressing any issues identified.

Resolved to note the report.

14 Candida Brudenell

As this was Assistant Chief Fire Officer Candida Brudenell's last meeting prior to her retirement, the Chair thanked Candida for her work with the Service and wished her well in her retirement.



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

**Minutes of the meeting held at Dunkirk and Beeston Suites - Highfields Fire Station,
Hassocks Lane, Beeston, Nottingham. NG9 2GQ on 17 November 2023 from 10.00 am -
11.15 am**

Membership

Present

Councillor Michael Payne (Chair)
Councillor Patience Uloma Ifediora
Councillor Nigel Turner
Councillor Tom Hollis
Councillor Richard Butler
Councillor Gul Nawaz Khan

Absent

Councillor Sybil Fielding
Councillor Jonathan Wheeler

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

Craig Parkin – Chief Fire Officer
Mick Sharman - Assistant Chief Fire Officer
Damien West – Assistant Chief Fire Officer
Mark Kimberly - Interim Treasurer and Section 151 Officer
Malcolm Townroe – Clerk and Monitoring Officer
Tracey Stevenson - Interim Head of Finance
Nick Linthwaite - Human Resources Manager.
Catherine Ziane-Pryor – Governance Officer

1 Apologies for Absence

Councillor Sybil Fielding (Councillor Gul Khan substituting)
Councillor Jonathan Wheeler (Councillor Richard Butler substituting)

2 Declarations of Interest

None.

3 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 April 2023 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

4 Local Firefighter Pension Annual Report 2022/23

With a temporary vacancy of a Pension Scheme Manager, Craig Parkin, Chief Fire Officer, presented the detailed report with further financial information provided by Mark Kimberley, Interim Treasurer and Section 151 Officer, and Human Resources information by Nick Linthwaite, Human Resources Manager. Tracey Stevenson, (Interim Head of Finance) was also in attendance to respond to any specific queries from members.

The following summarises highlighted points and responses to members' questions:

- a) The report sets out the constitution of the Pensions Board, which has been in place since 2015, including membership and representation, the format of Board meetings and training requirements;
- b) The two main issues for the Board activity are focused on:
 - i. the transitional protection for pension members moving from the 2006 scheme to the 2015 pension scheme, and the McCloud judgement as a result of an employment tribunal, appeals, and High Court Judgement around pension scheme discrimination and following discrimination claims. Tax implications were also raised as a concern, and as a result, the finalised legislation 'Firefighters Pension (Remedial Service) Regulations 2023', came into effect on 1 October 2023;
 - ii. the outcome of the Matthews and O'Brien case, regarding discrimination of On-Call Firefighter pension members now being allowed to retrospectively join the 2006 pension scheme;
- c) New guidance has now been issued by Central Government and is effective from October 2023. Prior to the issuing of that guidance, the Authority had agreed to continue to work to the terms of a Memorandum of Understanding which although agreed by Central Government, was later withdrawn;
- d) It is a concern that historic pension records are not necessarily available for all members of pension schemes due to the changes in pension scheme administrators, changes to data legislation, and required data cleansing exercises. This has resulted in a lot of additional work tracing and confirming the historic employment details of the staff concerned;
- e) The pension scheme discrimination was caused by the National Pensions Regulations, so to lighten the financial burden on Services, including the additional resources now required to gather, collate and recalculate historic data, Central Government has granted Fire Authorities a funding contribution of £125,000, some of which this Service has used to appoint an additional Pensions Manager to work with the Human Recourses Section and assist with implementing the new legislation and ensuring that all scheme members receive their rightful entitlement. The Service holds an earmarked reserve of £200,000 to assist with the cost;
- f) Complications arose with regard to firefighters on the verge of retiring (Category 1) and determining the how their pensions should be calculated on which schemes. The committee had previously decided to continue work on Category 1 pensions. Work has

now commenced on Category 2 cases regarding staff who have already retired. All current staff are now members of the 2015 scheme;

- g) Central Government has since made the offer to settle injury to feelings claims at the rate of £7,250 for those specifically aggrieved, and £3,750 for all others;
- h) The West Yorkshire Pension Fund is the Service's pension scheme administrator, along with 18-20 other Fire and Rescue Services, and provides an excellent Service;
- i) Work to address the O'Brien On-Call discrimination cases is ongoing;
- j) The report outlines recent Scheme Manager activity and the important role of the Scheme Advisory Board, the cost of which to the Service is £3,705 per year;
- k) The final remedy costs from the McCloud case will be substantial and potentially in the region of £2.5 million annually, with £2.3 million annually expected contribution from Central Government until 2024, when the value of any future reimbursement is uncertain;
- l) Pension funds are placed into a central pot without any gains or costs. The top-up grant may be different from that shown in the appendices, but this is a timing issue and there is in fact, overall, neither a cost or gain;
- m) With regard to the 'injury to feelings' settlement, this has been arrived at nationally with the Unions, whereby the Unions have identified those most affected to receive the higher-level compensation and it will be for the individuals who have not been identified to demonstrate if they too have been affected. This will be dealt with by the Scheme Provider and not the Service;
- n) The multiple different schemes had different benefits and mechanisms varying from final salary scheme, tapered to transition and career average and tiered schemes. As of April 2022, all members would have transferred to the current scheme.

Members commented as follows:

- o) Members still have concerns regarding ethical investment routes when there are very few investment options available for public pension funds and no other pension schemes available;
- p) As the top-up grant from Central Government is not covering the full cost of the National Pensions Board's mistake it is effectively financially penalising the Fire Service Sector which could use these funds elsewhere for the benefit of the community.

Resolved to note the activity of the Pension Board and Pension Scheme Manager along with the update on current pension issues.

5 Exclusion of the Public

Resolved to exclude the public from the meeting during consideration of the following item in accordance with Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 (under

Schedule 12A, Part 1, Paragraphs 3) 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.

6 Resilience Update

Damien West, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, presented the report which provides the committee with an update on resilience arrangements.

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

7 Refurbishment of facilities at the Service Development Centre

The Chair of the Committee agreed that this item, although not on the agenda, could be considered as a matter of urgency in accordance with Section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972, because to delay a decision could incur a significant financial cost to the Service.

Craig Parkin, Chief Fire Officer, presented the report.

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



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

**Minutes of the meeting held at Joint Fire / Police HQ, Sherwood Lodge, Arnold,
Nottingham, NG5 8PP on 2 February 2024 from 10.00 am - 10.24 am**

Membership

Present

Councillor Michael Payne (Chair)
Councillor Callum Bailey
Councillor Sybil Fielding
Councillor Patience Uloma Ifediora
Councillor Jonathan Wheeler

Absent

Councillor Nigel Turner

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

Craig Parkin -Chief Fire Officer
Leila Berry - Assistant Chief Fire Officer
Mick Sharman -Assistant Chief Fire Officer
Damien West - Assistant Chief Fire Officer
Malcolm Townroe - Clerk and Monitoring Officer to the Authority
Catherine Ziane-Pryor - Governance Officer

8 Apologies for Absence

Councillor Nigel Turner (Councillor Callum Bailey substituting).

9 Declarations of Interest

None.

10 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 November 2023 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

11 His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services, Areas For Improvement

Leila Berry, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, presented the report which informs the committee of the progress against the areas for improvement (AFI), and seeks the committee's approval to close AFI 3, relating to provision of well-being support.

The following points were highlighted and members' questions responded to:

- a) This report would normally be submitted to the Human Resources Committee for scrutiny, but as the last meeting was cancelled, the report is submitted to the Policy and Strategy Committee;
- b) AFI 3 required that 'the Service should assure itself that staff understand how to get well-being support';
- c) The report sets out the action taken to address the HMICFRS concern, and whilst it is recognised that the Service already provided substantial well-being support, concern had been expressed that not all staff were aware of the facilities and support available and how to access them;
- d) Following the initial highlighting of this AFI, the Service undertook an evaluation and acted on the results, the success of which will be gauged through the staff survey;
- e) The following is a summary of some of the actions taken to improve and more broadly promote the support available:
 - i. A review of post-critical incident support (PIS), with a dedicated PIS Liaison Officer from the Crisis Team overseeing activity;
 - ii. Trauma awareness and support training will be provided to all duty officers;
 - iii. Face-to-face psychological assessments and psychological therapy will be available where appropriate, alongside confidential counselling provided by the Employee Assistance Programme;
 - iv. The Occupational Health team have been promoting the wide range of support available through a dedicated site on the intranet, including a 'walk and talk' initiative specifically targeted to improve men's mental health and combat loneliness. This initiative is considered particularly valuable as it originated from the workforce;
 - v. Managers will be mandatorily briefed on an annual basis on their role in supporting mental health awareness for their teams and themselves;
 - vi. The expertise of the University of Derby Mental Health Hub was engaged to help improve current provision, including the establishment of the Mental Health Network of employees willing to support the mental health of colleagues, and other peer support mechanisms as alternatives to accessing clinical routes;
 - vii. Developed through a joint collaboration of the National Fire Chiefs Council and the Firefighters Charity, the Service is a funding partner of the Suicide Prevention Crisis Line;
 - viii. Employees have access to the review of the Well-Being Policy which also includes family friendly provisions such as maternity and menopause advice and support;

- ix. 'Your Care' is a personal health portal providing access to a broad variety of personal health and fitness plans, support, and tools.

Craig Parkin, Chief Fire Officer, praised the work undertaken in developing and establishing an overall staff wellbeing strategy, stating that the last couple of years had been difficult for all staff and that he was very proud of what had been achieved to support staff wellbeing, including for out-of-work issues, but emphasising that staff needed to self-motivate to access the support available.

Members comments included:

- f) This is an excellent piece of work with a broad response including a range of support and shows that the Service takes the well-being of staff very seriously in a job where staff can experience trauma;
- g) It's reassuring to see the workforce ownership of some elements, and particularly the staff initiation and shared responsibility of some schemes;
- h) Thank you to everyone who has worked on improving staff well-being support, which provides members with reassurance that staff are supported;
- i) This is an excellent report illustrating excellent work, which is endorsed;
- j) The broad variety of support mechanisms available is welcomed, including those which are family focused and those which recognise the need for managers and colleagues to be aware of potential delayed trauma response to fatal and distressing incidents, both in themselves and colleagues.

Resolved to approve the closure of Area For Improvement 3, relating to the provision of staff well-being support.

12 People Strategy Update

Leila Berry, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, presented the report which provides an update on the People Strategy 2023-2025.

Highlighted points and responses to members' questions included:

- a) The People Strategy forms part of the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) and sets out key workforce issues, recognising that people are the Service's greatest asset in delivering the Service's strategic objectives;
- b) The report summarises progress against the following areas:
 - i. Shaping our workforce to deliver our services (including the workforce plan, and the Futures 25 agenda);
 - ii. Leadership and employee development (including training to ensure that core skills and knowledge are maintained, emerging challenges can be dealt with, and developing leadership qualities and abilities;

- iii. Positive workplace and culture (ensuring a positive working environment where all staff feel engaged, valued and listen to);
 - iv. Inclusion (understanding and respecting the equality and diversity of all communities);
 - v. Health and well-being (ensuring the physical, emotional and mental health of the workforce);
- c) Feedback received, including from the staff survey, is assessed, and so far has been very positive.

Craig Parkin, Chief Fire Officer, added that although there is a perceived cultural issue across the sector, but there is a focus on leadership actively addressing what's right and what isn't. The quality of the People Strategy continues to improve but there is no complacency and it's recognised that there is still work to be done. It is important that member's and employees have confidence that staff are supported going forward.

Members commented that it was a thorough report containing a lot of helpfully articulated information.

Resolved to note the report.

13 Exclusion of the Public

Resolved to exclude the public from the meeting during consideration of the following item in accordance with Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 (under Schedule 12A, Part 1, Paragraphs 3) 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.

14 Exempt Minutes

Exempt minutes of the meeting held on 17 November 2023 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.