



Nottinghamshire & City of Nottingham Fire & Rescue Authority

MINUTES of the meeting held at Joint Fire / Police HQ, Sherwood Lodge, Arnold, Nottingham, NG5 8PP on 26 July 2024 from 10.32 am - 12.36 pm

Membership

Present

Councillor Richard Butler
Councillor Robert Corden
Councillor Sybil Fielding
Councillor Tom Hollis
Councillor Anwar Khan
Councillor Gul Nawaz Khan
Councillor John Lee
Councillor Salma Mumtaz
Councillor Nayab Patel
Councillor Samina Riaz
Councillor Nigel Turner
Councillor Roger Upton

Absent

Councillor Tom Smith
Councillor Jason Zadrozny
Gary Godden – Police and Crime
Commissioner

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

Craig Parkin - Chief Fire Officer
Mick Sharman - Assistant Chief Fire Officer
Tracey Stevenson - Assistant Head of Finance
Malcolm Townroe - Solicitor, Clerk and Monitoring Officer
Laura Wilson - Senior Governance Officer

10 Apologies for Absence

Gary Godden – Police and Crime Commissioner
Councillor Tom Smith
Councillor Jason Zadrozny

11 Declarations of Interest

None.

12 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 May 2024 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

13 Chair's Announcements

The Chair, Councillor Michael Payne, made the following announcements:

- (a) Given the changes to the local MPs in the General Election, a letter will be sent to offer all local MPs a meeting with the Fire Authority Chair and Chief Fire Officer, which is a great opportunity to promote the Service and lay out future challenges, and how our MPs could support the organisation.
- (b) The final report from the Service's recent His Majesty's Inspectorate inspection is due for publication week commencing 12 August. The Chair thanked everyone across the Service who engaged with the inspection team and looks forward to receiving the report, and how that underpins the ambition to be an outstanding fire and rescue service. A link will be circulated to Members for the report once published.
- (c) Dame Diana Johnson is the new Fire Minister and the Chief Fire Officer has written to invite the Minister to Nottinghamshire at the earliest available opportunity. Dame Diana Johnson previously chaired the Home Affairs Select Committee in to fire service culture and the Authority looks forward to a positive reply.
- (d) Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service hosted the summer conference with the Asian Fire Services Association, with over 30 fire and rescue services represented, and approximately 200 delegates. This was a great opportunity to showcase the Service on a national stage, hear from others and learn how the sector can improve together.
- (e) Given the length of the agenda, no Strategic Inclusion Board will take place today, however, following September's Authority, staff networks will be attending to engage with Members and all Members are encouraged to join in.
- (f) The annual Nottingham Pride march is taking place tomorrow. The Chief Fire Officer and many staff will be in attendance and all Members are encouraged to join staff and visibly support the values of the organisation at this event, which starts from 11:00 on Listergate.

14 2023/24 Revenue and Capital Outturn

Tracey Stevenson, Assistant Head of Finance, presented the report detailing the provisional financial performance of the Service for 2023/24, analysing significant variances against the original revenue and capital budgets, and the outturn position provides an overview of the financial position following the completion of the unaudited Statement of Accounts for 2023/24, and highlighted the following points:

- (a) The 2023/24 revenue budget of £49.965m was approved by the Fire Authority in February 2023. The approved budget included a £404k use of the budget pressure support reserve to address the budgeted funding deficit. During the year, additional use of other specific earmarked reserves were approved, increasing the budget to £50.258m. Total expenditure for 2023/24 was £48.931m, representing an underspend by £1.327m (2.64%).

- (b) From this underspend, £327k carry forward requests have been received, where the Service has not been able to complete a specific piece of work in-year and the work and costs will be completed in 2024/25, this reduces the underspend to £1.000m (1.99%). In addition to the carry forwards, £475k is being requested to be moved into earmarked reserves, £300k for future anticipated costs regarding the existing mobilisation system whilst the replacement system is being implemented, and a new reserve of £175k is to be established to support the revenue costs of capital schemes. The £404k use of the budget pressure reserve is not required, and £121k is to be moved to the general fund reserve.
- (c) Expenditure and funding can be summarised as follows:

	Original Budget 2023/24	Revised Budget 2023/24	Actual 2023/24	Variance 2023/24
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Employees	39,939	40,128	39,393	(735)
Premises	4,111	4,318	4,078	(240)
Transport	2,219	2,225	2,420	195
Supplies and Services	4,394	4,573	4,571	(2)
Third Party Payments	950	951	1,024	73
Support Services	172	171	127	(44)
Capital Financing	2,692	3,093	2,979	(114)
Sales Fees and Charges	(425)	(519)	(495)	24
Other Income	(4,087)	(4,682)	(5,166)	(484)
Net Revenue Expenditure	49,965	50,258	48,931	(1,327)
Funding				
Net Expenditure				
Pension Grant	(2,340)	(2,340)	(2,340)	0
Revenue Support Grant	(6,189)	(6,189)	(6,189)	0
Non-Domestic Rates	(11,286)	(11,286)	(11,286)	0
Council Tax	(29,746)	(29,746)	(29,746)	0
Budget Pressure Reserve	(404)	(404)	0	404
Net Contributions to/-from Other Earmarked Reserves		(293)	509	802
Total Funding	(49,965)	(50,258)	(49,052)	1,206
Net General Fund Surplus	0	0	(121)	(121)

- (d) Wholetime pay is underspent by £379k in total as at March 2024, due to vacancies in the establishment. At the end of March 2024, the number of posts was 16 Full Time Equivalent below the approved establishment. There were 11 transferees from other fire and rescue services in year and 20 apprentice firefighters commenced their training in April 2024. Overtime has been used to cover the ridership in the short term, resulting in a £85k overspend against the pre-planned overtime budget.

- (e) The On-call pay budget is underspent by £219k. The largest variances relate to retaining fees (£62k) and training (£55k). On-call pay can vary significantly from month to month depending on levels of activity. The number of mobilisations can be highly variable and activity levels have generally been lower than expected in 2023/24, notwithstanding spikes of activity relating to flood events. Expenditure on training has been lower than budgeted, due to lower levels of recruits requiring training as a result of having dual contract firefighters. Therefore, this budget has been reduced for 2024/25.
- (f) Non-uniformed pay is underspent by £206k overall, due to vacancies in the establishment.
- (g) Premises costs are underspent by £240k. Significant variances include:
- A £151k underspend relating electricity and a £51k overspend relating to gas. Energy costs have fluctuated significantly since the invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, making budget predictions difficult.
 - Business rates are underspent by £89k, due to a revaluation of West Bridgford station.
 - A £148k underspend on planned building maintenance is mainly due to completion of works slipping into 2024/25. Offsetting this is a £90k overspend relating to reactive building repairs and maintenance. The overspend has been driven by a number of activities, including the removal of asbestos from Eastwood station.
- (h) There is an overspend of £195k in transport related costs. Significant variances include:
- A £359k underspend relating to fuel. Fuel prices have reduced during the year, in addition stock levels at year end are adequate.
 - A £371k overspend on unplanned fleet maintenance. This is due to extending the useful life of the fleet, and due to unscheduled repairs to water and foam tanks.
 - A £83k overspend on outsourced vehicle maintenance. This relates to specific repairs that cannot be carried out by the main contracted company.
 - A £18k overspend relating to mileage claims and public transport costs. There are a number of reasons for this, including an increase in detachments resulting from wholtime vacancies, and mileage allowances/public transport costs paid to staff compulsorily transferred to the Joint Headquarters.
 - A £39k overspend on tyres which has arisen due to extending the useful lives of some vehicles.
- (i) There is a surplus of £484k in other income. Significant variances include:
- £87k relating to secondment income not provided for in the budget.
 - £262k relates to a surplus on interest receivable due to increased interest rates and higher than expected level of funds being available for investment, due to slippage in the capital programme.
- (j) As a part of the outturn position it is proposed that £802k be transferred to earmarked reserves:

Earmarked Reserve	Amount £'000
External Audit Fees – carry forward	144
Training Tower Remedial Work – carry forward	130
Fire Cover Review – carry forward	53
Disaggregation of Tri-Service/Existing Mobilisation System	300
Capital Funding Equalisation	175
Total	802

- (k) Including the above earmarked reserve movements, a net total of £509k has been transferred to earmarked reserves during the year, the total earmarked reserve balance as at 31 March 2024 is £5.846m.
- (l) After the proposed contribution of £121k to the general fund reserves for 2023/24, the general fund reserves stand at £5.082m as of 31 March 2024.
- (m) Total general fund and earmarked reserves as at 31 March 2024 are £10.928m. Movement in reserves during 2023/24 are summarised as follows:

Reserves	Balance 01/04/23 £'000	Net Movement 2023/24 £'000	Balance 31/03/24 £'000
Earmarked	5,337	509	5,846
General Fund	4,961	121	5,082
Total	10,298	630	10,928

- (n) Provisional expenditure for the capital programme for 2023/24 is £7.271m, funded by £6.626m borrowing, £513k revenue contribution to capital outlay (RCCO) and £132k from capital grants. This is an underspend within the year of £1.952m against the revised budget of £9.223m.
- (o) The Service Development Centre and the appliances project have exceeded the budget for 2023/24 by £479k and £433k respectively, due to timing of the certification of the projects work crossing over the two financial years.
- (p) Adjusting for the additional £912k budget allocations, increases the in-year underspend to £2.864m. Total slippage on the programme requiring budgets to be transferred into 2024/25 is £2.678m, resulting in an actual underspend of £186k. £41k of this underspend was to be funded by Emergency Services Mobile Communication Programme grant held in earmarked reserve, the grant will remain in earmarked reserves until needed.
- (q) The summary of variances is as follows:

	Revised Budget 2023/24	Actual 2023/24	Variance 2023/24	2024/25 Budget to be Moved into 2023/24	Slippage to 2024/25	(Under)/Over Spend
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Transport	4,782	4,070	(712)	(433)	1,145	0
Operational Equipment	277	108	(169)	0	169	0
Property	1,917	1,927	10	(479)	436	(33)
IT and Communications	2,247	1,166	(1,081)	0	928	(153)
Total	9,223	7,271	(1,952)	(912)	2,678	(186)
Funded by:						
Borrowing	8,554	6,626	(1,928)	(912)	2,578	(145)
Revenue Contribution to Capital and Earmarked Reserves	654	513	(141)	0	100	(41)
Capital Receipts	3	0	(3)	0	0	0
Capital Grants	12	132	120	0	0	0
Total	9,223	7,271	(1,952)	(912)	2,678	(186)

- (r) In relation to appliances (£2.981m in 2023/24, £2.416m in 2024/25), Angloco Ltd issued a revised build programme for the 17 new pumping appliances which resulted in quicker delivery time of the chassis from Scania, therefore there is a need to bring forward capital expenditure from 2024/25 of £433k now the final outturn position is known.
- (s) Due to the process of securing the finance for the access and inclusion project, the construction programme was delayed until January 2024. Works have commenced at Bingham, Harworth, Ashfield, Misterton and Blidworth fire stations. The project is progressing well against the revised programme, however £322k needs to be slipped into 2024/25.
- (t) In relation to the Service Development Centre (SDC) (£660k) 2023/24, (£1m) 2024/25, work is underway to improve and refurbish welfare and training facilities, fire house control system and enhancement of on-site training provision. The budget in 2023/24 is £660k, which includes an additional £160k allocated to install BA wash facilities at SDC and Mansfield fire station for firefighter safety. The work has been completed requiring budget allocated for 2024/25 to be brought forward into 2023/24 (£479k).
- (u) For the replacement mobilising system £567k has been paid in 2023/24. This project spans multiple years in the capital programme and the £403k remaining budget needs to be slipped into 2024/25. Procurement for the numerous elements of this project is progressing, enabling a revised schedule of project expenditure to be established, this will

inform the profiling of the scheme budget. Members will be updated on the profile of the scheme budget in the 2024/25 capital programme budget monitoring.

- (v) There is a need to repurpose the underspend funded by borrowing of £145k in 2024/25:
- £60k to enable further electrical charging points to be allocated throughout the estate;
 - £68k for remedial works to bring the towers up to the required standard for safe working at height training to be undertaken;
 - £17k for an increase to the light vehicle budgets to allow an MTA vehicle to be purchased.

The repurposing of the underspend means there is no increase to the existing overall approved capital programme.

- (w) The following increases to the 2024/25 capital programme are required:
- £100k increase to the Access and Inclusion scheme. The increase is required due to additional costs being incurred and only a small contingency being built into the original budget. This will be funded from the efficiency programme reserve, as the cost includes improvements to Ashfield Fire Station to make it suitable as a wholtime station which is part of the efficiency programme.
 - £367k increase to the Energy Reduction and Decarbonisation scheme for works at Highfields to be funded by the grant from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme as reported to Finance and Policy committee in March 2024.
 - £894k increase to the fire appliances scheme, £367k of this relates to aligning the budget to original approved scheme budget and £527k is due to the increase in the contract pricing linked to CPI. It is anticipated the additional capital funding requirements will be managed in year from slippage in other projects and the funding will be finalised at year end.

During the discussion that followed the following comments were made:

- (x) All underspend has been allocated to reserves, which has strengthened them.
- (y) It would be beneficial for reports to include percentages alongside the figures to make the impact of amounts clearer.
- (z) The delivery of the capital programme is dependent on capacity plus external issues such as delivery of products, etc, but work is being done to bring in more specialised additional capacity for capital programme delivery.

Resolved to approve

(1) The transfer of £802k of underspends to Earmarked Reserves:

Earmarked Reserve	Amount £'000
External Audit Fees – carry forward	144
Training Tower Remedial Work – carry forward	130

Fire Cover Review – carry forward	53
Disaggregation of Tri-Service/Existing Mobilisation System	300
Capital Funding Equalisation	175
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- (2) **The slippage of £2.678m on the capital programme.**
- (3) **The 2024/25 budget for the appliances (£433k) and Service Development Centre (£479k) to be accelerated into 2023/24.**
- (4) **The slippage of £28k on light vehicles to be repurposed for rural firefighting and equipment.**
- (5) **The repurposing of the capital budget underspend that is funded by borrowing of £145k:**
 - **£60k to enable further electrical charging points to be allocated throughout the estate;**
 - **£68k for remedial work to bring the towers up to the required standard for safe working at height training to be undertaken;**
 - **£17k to be utilised to fund any overspends on existing schemes.**
- (6) **The following increases to the 2024/25 capital programme:**
 - **£100k increase to the Access and Inclusion scheme;**
 - **£367k increase to the Energy Reduction and Decarbonisation scheme;**
 - **£894k increase to the fire appliances scheme.**

15 Internal Audit Annual Report 2023/24

Andrew Howarth, Audit Team Manager, Nottinghamshire County Council, presented the Head of Internal Audit's Annual Report for 2023/24, identifying the key outcomes arising from the work of Internal Audit for 2023/24 and providing an audit opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Authority's arrangements for governance, risk management and internal control, the Internal Audit Plan for 2024/25, and the outcome of the 5 audits completed during 2023/24, and highlighted the following points:

- (a) Based on the coverage and detailed outcomes, it is considered that the collective evidence provides Substantial Assurance concerning the arrangements in place for governance, risk management and the control environment.
- (b) In the areas reviewed in 2023/24, the following opinions were given, and the following number and priority level of recommendations were made:

Assurance level	Report	Recommendations	
		Priority 1	Priority 2
Substantial	Workforce Planning & Recruitment	0	0
	Information Security (data and physical)	0	2
	Health & Safety	0	3
	Business Continuity Planning	0	1
Reasonable	No audits were in this category.	-	-
Limited	Contract Management	4	2
Opinion not provided	'Leading the Service' standard – Progress against this national Fire Standard. Because of limited progress the audit has been rescheduled for late 2024/25.	-	-

(c) The recommendations and actions can be summarised as follows:

Reports	Recommendations/Actions
Workforce Planning & Recruitment	All findings were positive and found the controls to be effective, therefore no recommendations were made.
Information Security (data and physical security)	Resume compliance checks at working sites, which lapsed during the Covid lockdown. The register of information sharing agreements to be complete, so that it can help ensure that the agreements are monitored and reflect best practice.
Health & Safety	Consider obtaining the BSI ISO 45001 certification. Consider introducing a Health & Safety Risk Register. Complete the plan to address the shortfall in designated Fire Marshals, at the fire stations.
Business Continuity Planning	Business Continuity Test Report to record when the actions arising from the test have been addressed.
Contract Management	Contracts Register to be up to date with the names of current Contract Managers, to help ensure all are aware of their contract management responsibilities. Ensure that all contracts are included in the Contracts Register Ensure that dates are correct in the Contracts Register (including contract start and end dates). Improve consistency across the Service in holding regular contract management meetings with contractors.

Reports	Recommendations/Actions
	<p>Improve consistency across the Service in Contract Managers maintaining a lessons learnt log.</p> <p>Expired contracts can be removed from the information published about contracts on the website, for transparency purposes.</p>

- (d) There is a high implementation rate of 88% on all actions raised since 2018/19. 63% of the actions from 2022/23, whose dates for implementation have now passed, have been implemented. The new Head of Finance will set up a tracker for all actions so that their implementation can be better monitored by the Assurance Board.
- (e) There is substantial assurance over the Governance arrangements as they are well structured with comprehensive reporting; plans are in place to achieve strategic goals and to identify and realise improvements; and there are regular reviews of performance.
- (f) There is substantial assurance over the Risk Management arrangements as risks are managed through a corporate risk register that is actively maintained, reviewed, updated, and reported; the Community Risk Management Plan is in place, with arrangements to measure progress on its delivery; and emerging national and local risk issues are identified and addressed by local actions. The Finance and Resources Committee will be updated on the progression of the Contract Management recommendations.
- (g) There is substantial assurance over Control arrangements as there is close control over the finances, including current and future spending, and the financial assets held; workforce requirements are identified and acted upon; and workforce performance is managed.

During the discussion that followed the following comments were made:

- (h) It is disappointing that the assurance level is lower than would be liked for contract management, but work is being done at a strategic level to increase the capacity in Procurement, and it is hoped that by the end of the calendar year it will be in a much better place.
- (i) The report and recommendations highlight the value of Internal Audit and the plans to improve are welcomed.

Resolved to note

- (1) The outcome of the Internal Audit Annual Report for 2023/24, including the audit opinion of substantial assurance for the arrangements for governance, risk management and internal control.**
- (2) The outcome of 5 internal audits completed during 2023/2024.**
- (3) The 2024/25 Internal Audit Plan.**

16 Interim Value for Money Reporting 2021/22 and 2022/23

Hassan Rohimum, Partner, Ernst and Young (EY) LLP, presented the External Auditors' interim value for money (VFM) report for Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire and Rescue Authority on the financial years 2021/22 and 2022/23, and highlighted the following points:

- (a) Both the 2021/22 and 2022/23 audits have been delayed due to resourcing issues at EY. This is a national issue caused by the increased amount of regulatory requirement and the lack of audit resources within the public sector. The 2021/22 audit commenced during July 2023 and a substantial amount of the audit had been completed. In February 2024, the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities opened a consultation on 'Addressing the Local Audit Backlog in England'. The consultation proposed a backstop date for all accounts up to and including financial year 2022/23 to be cleared by 30 September 2024 and proposed to allow auditors to issue a modified or disclaimed opinion due to the backstop.
- (b) In light of the consultation, EY is not progressing any further work on the 2021/22 and 2022/23 Statement of Accounts. EY is continuing to progress their work for their commentary on VFM for 2021/22 and 2022/23.
- (c) The response to the consultation or any further guidance has not yet been published and has been delayed by the General Election, it is anticipated the initial proposed backstop date of the 30 September 2024 will be amended to a later date.
- (d) The reporting criteria include financial sustainability, governance, and improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness. There are no risks of significant weaknesses identified in any of the criteria, and no actual significant weaknesses in arrangements identified.

Resolved to note the report.

17 External Audit Plan 2023/24

Richard Walton, Director, KPMG LLP, presented the report detailing the external auditors' audit plan for work which they intend to carry out on the Authority's 2023/24 financial statements and Value for Money arrangements, and highlighted the following points:

- (a) The external auditors are appointed through a national contract via Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA). A new national contract is in place for 2023/24 to 2027/28. The external auditors appointed for the Fire Authority for the period 2023/24 to 2027/28 are KPMG LLP. As part of their responsibilities under the external audit regime, the auditors produce an annual plan setting out the areas that they will cover during their audit.
- (b) The External Audit Plan provides an overview of the planned scope and timing of the statutory audit of Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire and Rescue Authority for those charged with governance, and covers the following areas:
 - scope and materiality;
 - significant risks, audit risks and approach;
 - mandatory communications
 - Value for Money risk assessment and approach;

- the audit team;
 - the audit cycle and timeline;
 - fees;
 - confirmation of independence;
 - the audit quality framework;
 - revised International Standards on Auditing (ISA).
- (c) The plan identifies those risks requiring special audit consideration and procedures to address the likelihood of a material financial statement error as being:
- the presumed risk of management override of control;
 - valuation of pension liability;
 - valuation of land and buildings.
- (d) The external auditors commenced their interim fieldwork in April 2024 and are planning to conclude their interim work and the undertake their final fieldwork in July and August 2024. The plan identifies the external auditors' aim to deliver their audit report by 31 October 2024. However, this is subject to change due to the level of consultation in the sector, regarding the scope and timing of local government audit.
- (e) The contracted audit fee for the 2023/24 Statement of Accounts is £94,838 (£32,648 for 2022/23). There has been a significant increase in audit fees, this is due to additional work being required by the Code of Audit Practice, this additional work has been built into the fees, then fees have been increased further following the PSAA's national auditor appointment procurement for the period 2023/24 to 2027/28, which has resulted in a procurement adjustment of 151% for the new contract rates for audit firms. The increase in the audit fee has been included in the approved budget.

Resolved to note the report.

18 Annual Governance Statement

Tracey Stevenson, Assistant Head of Finance, presented the report detailing the Annual Governance Statement for 2023/24, and highlighted the following points:

- (a) The Annual Governance Statement 2023/24 sets out how the Service has complied with the current local code of corporate governance during the year and meets the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 with regards to the preparation and approval of an Annual Governance Statement. It concludes that the Service has well developed and evolving governance arrangements in place that are fit for purpose.
- (b) The Local Code of Corporate Governance was adopted by the Authority in February 2017 and the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's Financial Management Code was adopted by the Authority in July 2021. The Authority's compliance against the Financial Management Code was reviewed by internal audit in 2021/22 – the report acknowledged that effective controls were in place regarding self-assessment, leadership, accountability, long term sustainability and value for money.
- (c) Whilst the 2021/22 and 2022/23 Statement of Accounts are yet to be audited, the external auditors, Ernst & Young (EY), issued unqualified audits for the first three years of their

contract (2018/19 and 2020/21), which indicates that the financial systems in place are robust.

- (d) Five internal audits have been completed within the year, four being graded as having 'Substantial Assurance' and one having 'Limited Assurance', where limited assurance was received, six recommendations have been agreed by management and actions to implement the recommendations are in progress.
- (e) The Service's second full His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) final inspection report issued in July 2022 provided a rating of 'Good' against all 11 areas of assessment. The Service is currently waiting for the HMICFRS final inspection report and ratings for the third inspection that took place in March and April 2024.
- (f) The Service continues to address any governance issues as they arise and commits to keeping governance arrangements under review.

Resolved to

- (1) Approve the draft Annual Governance Statement 2023/24.**
- (2) Delegate authority to the Chair of the Authority and the Chief Fire Officer to update the final Annual Governance Statement 2023/24 for any retrospective factors that occur between the draft Annual Governance Statement and the publication of the final Annual Governance Statement.**

19 Annual Statement of Assurance

Mick Sharman, Assistant Chief Fire Officer presented the Annual Statement of Assurance for 2023/24, and highlighted the following points:

- (a) The Fire and Rescue Service National Framework places a statutory requirement on fire authorities to provide assurance on financial, governance and operational matters, with due regard to the expectations set out in the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP).
- (b) The production of an Annual Statement of Assurance (ASoA) contributes to the requirement for greater public-sector transparency and accountability and through its publication offers and promotes accessibility to information.
- (c) The ASoA 2023-24 provides a review of how well the Service has performed, in the second year of the CRMP 2022-25, against the stated commitments.
- (d) The ASoA is designed to give the public assurance on performance in key delivery areas, defined as the Service's six strategic goals. An accessible version will be hosted on the Service's website, providing access to all.
- (e) Highlights within the ASoA 2023-24 include:
 - attended 10,595 incidents, a decrease of 7% on last year;
 - 2,804 fires (a decrease of 30%) and 560 road traffic collisions

- 1,335 incidents which involved rescues and humanitarian assistance from either buildings, vehicles, water, confined spaces, or heights
 - on-call appliance availability was 86.47% (against a target of 85%);
 - delivered 15,765 safe and well interventions, (against a target of 14,000) supporting a total of 16,248 people – more than the Service has ever achieved before;
 - delivery of community safety activities including:
 - Safety Zone events to 1,896 Year 5 and 6 pupils from across the City and County;
 - 290 road, fire and water safety initiatives;
 - 44 national safety campaigns;
 - 130 Firesetter safety interventions with young people;
 - delivered 34 Data Intelligence Community Engagement (DICE) activities targeting the most vulnerable in communities;
 - undertook 11 Community Reassurance and Engagement (CRaE) activities throughout Nottinghamshire;
 - completed 1,180 full fire safety audits and 1,039 business safety checks (short fire safety audits) – within business premises. An increase of 96%;
 - the Service delivered 765 training courses, attended by 3,994 delegates, from a portfolio of 140 different training courses;
 - recruited to 93 roles - 39 wholetime firefighters, 25 on-call firefighters and 29 support staff roles;
 - 99.2% of the operational staff successfully passed annual fitness tests;
 - Fire Investigators investigated 87 serious fires across the county.
- (f) The Service responded well when Storm Babet brought exceptional levels of rainfall to Nottinghamshire which resulted in the flooding of some areas of the county. During this period, NFRS attended over 40 flood related incidents, led around 100 people to safety and evacuated over 200 residents from their homes.
- (g) From November 2023, the Service has returned to a wholetime crewing model at Ashfield fire station. This project also saw significant investment in a refurbishment of the station to ensure modern inclusive facilities.
- (h) Improvement building works have been started at nine on-call stations to improve accessibility and provide an inclusive environment for staff and visitors.
- (i) 17 new fire appliances have been purchased which are currently being built with 'clean cabs', which will help protect our firefighters from contaminants and carcinogens following operational incidents and will come into service during 2024/25.
- (j) During 2023/24, the number of female firefighters within the Service increased from 43 to 55 (across both on-call and wholetime), an increase of 27%. Firefighters from BAME backgrounds increased from 37 to 42 (an increase of 13%).
- (k) Work is continuing to empower and engage with staff networks, as well as adding more. These include: Women's Network, LGBT+ Network, Ethnic Minority Alliance Network, Disability Matters Network, Veterans Network and Health Minds Network (new).

During the discussion that followed the following comments were made:

- (l) The hard work of the service is appreciated, and it is hoped it is recognised in the His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services Inspection report.
- (m) As extreme weather is becoming more frequent, it is important to ensure that plans and resources are in place to deal with incidents arising from it.
- (n) More needs to be done to advertise the achievements of the Service publicly.
- (o) The increases in diversity are welcomed.

Resolved to approve the Annual Statement of Assurance 2023-24 for publication.

20 Statement of Pay Policy

Craig Parkin, Chief Fire Officer, presented the Statement of Pay Policy, and highlighted the following points:

- (a) The Localism Act 2011, Section 38(1), places a requirement on 'relevant authorities' to prepare pay statements for each financial year. The Fire Authority is a 'relevant authority' as defined by Section 43(1) of the Act.
- (b) Pay statements must articulate an authority's own policies towards a range of issues relating to the pay of its workforce, particularly those of its senior officers and its lowest paid employees.
- (c) The pay statement must be agreed by the Fire Authority annually and be published and accessible.
- (d) The policy provides a summary of pay policy and practices across the Service, and in particular, details the pay policy for the Chief Fire Officer and other Principal Officers.
- (e) The main changes to the previous Statement of Pay Policy are as follows:
 - reference to the gender pay reporting outcomes which have been introduced from April 2017 under the Gender Pay Gap Reporting Regulations 2017, which shows a gender pay difference in median pay of 7.78% (was 9.49 %);
 - updates to pay information relating to mean average pay and pay multiples. Mean average pay is now £37,974 per annum;
 - confirmation of national annual pay awards applied in 2023/24;
 - increase in national annual rates of pay for Chief Fire Officers based on population band;
 - confirmation that there were no compensation payments agreed in 2022- 23 as a result of compulsory redundancy;
 - confirmation that there were two settlement payments made in 2022-23;
 - confirmation that there was one instance of early payment of pension payments to Local Government Pension Scheme members during 2022- 23 on grounds of efficiency.

Resolved to approve the Statement of Pay Policy.

21 Update on His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services

Mick Sharman, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, presented the report providing an overview of the State of Fire and Rescue 2023 report published by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services and to provide an update on Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service's most recent inspection, and highlighted the following points:

- (a) His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) is, by Royal appointment, the inspectorate body for fire and rescue services in England.
- (b) Each year, His Majesty's Chief Inspector publishes a 'State of Fire and Rescue, Annual Assessment', which summarises the findings from the year's inspections of the sector.
- (c) On 9 May 2024, Andy Cooke QPM DL, published his second report to the Secretary of State under Section 28B of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, based on the inspection reports published by HMICFRS between 20 January 2023 and 31 March 2024.
- (d) In March 2023, HMICFRS commenced the third full round of inspections, aiming to inspect all 44 Fire and Rescue Services (FRSs) within an 18 month period. Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service's (NFRS) inspection took place between 23 February 2024 and 19 April 2024.
- (e) The report is split into two chapters; chapter one sets out the systemic challenges facing the fire and rescue sector and chapter two sets out the interim findings from the Round 3 inspections, identifying some key themes.
- (f) In relation to systemic challenges, there are four main points highlighted:
 - at a national level, the fire and rescue sector has made some good progress, but the Government must press ahead with reforms;
 - values, culture and the management of misconduct needs to 'urgently improve' across the sector;
 - fire and rescue service leaders need to take a strategic approach to service improvements; and
 - HMICFRS requires additional powers to continue to make communities safer.
- (g) In 2019 HMICFRS made six national recommendations covering some of the structural aspects of the fire and rescue sector. The report highlights that three of these have been completed with the outstanding three recommendations – determining roles of FRS and their staff; reviewing and reforming structures for determining pay and conditions; and giving Chief Fire Officers operational independence – being a matter for the Government to resolve. The Inspectorate notes slow progress being made against these three areas and therefore highlights the need for sector reform.
- (h) The report covers in detail the need for the sector to improve its culture, values and misconduct management, citing that despite the focus on this area from HMICFRS, instances of inappropriate behaviour were still commonplace.
- (i) Following the second round of inspections, based on the Inspectorate's findings on values, culture, and fairness and diversity, causes of concern, inadequate grades and areas for

improvement were issued to a significant number of fire services. Members can be assured that the Strategic Leadership Team continues to place the highest priority on ensuring an appropriate and inclusive culture exists at every level within the organisation, and that cultural considerations are embedded within decision making processes.

- (j) The report states that HMICFRS needs more powers so it can continue to make communities safer, and that these powers should be in line with those legislative requirements that govern police forces' response to their inspections. Additionally, the Inspectorate has highlighted that FRSs should be able to request commissioned inspections in the same way as police forces do to fulfil their duty to deliver efficient and effective services to their communities.
- (k) In relation to interim findings, of the 15 Services inspected, seven Services have 12 causes of concern in place, of which eight are new and four have been carried over from Round 2. NFRS has had no causes of concern issued and the four areas of improvement issued following the last inspection were formally signed off at the Fire Authority meeting on 23 February 2024.
- (l) Workplace culture is once again highlighted as an issue for the sector, with HMICFRS stating that whilst progress is being made, some Services are struggling to make improvements. NFRS's biennial staff survey concluded on 14 July and a breakdown of the results and follow up actions will be brought back to the Human Resources Committee, which will provide Members with insight into NFRS's culture and the progress the Service is achieving in this area.
- (m) The report highlights the problems some Services are having with maintaining an effective On-call duty system, citing the difficulties in the recruitment, retention and training for On-call personnel. Members will be aware of the support the On-Call Support Team (OCST) provides to On-call firefighters throughout the Service which, along with the dedication of NFRS On-call personnel, has resulted in On-call appliances being available for 86.5% of the time in 2023/24; one of the highest levels in the sector.
- (n) Protection activities are highlighted within the report as being inconsistently applied across the sector with unsuitable quality assurance processes and a failure to meet audit targets common areas discovered by the Inspectorate. In addition, difficulties in recruiting and retaining suitably experienced protection staff are also highlighted. The Inspectorate raises more effective partnership working and better engagement with businesses as potential methods to mitigate the issues discussed.
- (o) Whilst the full report from NFRS's most recent inspection will not be published until late Summer 2024, initial high-level feedback has been given to the Chief Fire Officer which explicitly outlined the positive manner in which the inspectors were greeted whilst undertaking the inspection, and the high levels of engagement they found from all Service personnel.

Resolved to note the report.

22 Committee Outcomes

The report detailing the business and actions of the Fire Authority committee meetings which took place in March/April 2024 was considered.

Resolved to note the report.

23 Exclusion of the public

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

24 Proposed Compensation Payments - Futures 25 Phase Two Outcomes

Mick Sharman, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, presented the report detailing proposed compensation payments in relation to Futures 25 phase two outcomes

Resolved to approve the recommendations as detailed in the report.