



Nottinghamshire & City of Nottingham Fire & Rescue Authority

MINUTES of the meeting held at Joint Fire / Police HQ, Sherwood Lodge, Arnold, Nottingham, NG5 8PP on 20 September 2024 from 10.30 am - 12.21 pm

Membership

Present

Councillor Michael Payne (Chair)
Councillor Audra Wynter (Vice Chair)
Councillor Callum Bailey
Councillor John Clarke MBE
Councillor Sybil Fielding
Councillor Tom Hollis
Councillor Anwar Khan
Councillor John Lee
Councillor Salma Mumtaz
Councillor Nayab Patel
Councillor Nick Raine
Councillor Samina Riaz
Councillor Tom Smith
Councillor Roger Upton

Absent

Councillor Richard Butler
Councillor Robert Corden
Councillor Nigel Turner
Councillor Jason Zadrozny
Gary Godden

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

Bev Bull - Head of Finance and Treasurer
Craig Parkin - Chief Fire Officer
Mick Sharman - Assistant Chief Fire Officer
Malcolm Townroe - Solicitor, Clerk and Monitoring Officer
Damien West - Assistant Chief Fire Officer
Laura Wilson - Senior Governance Officer

25 Membership

The following membership changes were noted:

- (a) Councillor Nick Raine had been appointed to replace Councillor Gul Khan;
- (b) Councillor Audra Wynter has stood down as the Chair of the HR Committee.

Resolved to appoint Councillor Nick Raine as the Chair of the HR Committee for the remainder of the municipal year.

26 Apologies for Absence

Councillor Richard Butler – personal reasons
Councillor Robert Corden
Councillor Jason Zadrozny

Police and Crime Commissioner Gary Godden

27 Declarations of Interest

None.

28 Minutes

Subject to the inclusion of Councillors Callum Bailey, John Clarke, Michael Payne, and Audra Wynter's attendance being recorded, the minutes of the meeting held on 26 July 2024 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

29 Chair's Announcements

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

- (a) The Service has received two letters from Dame Diana Johnson recently, these focus upon the culture of the Fire and Rescue Sector and the remediation plans for buildings following the Grenfell tragedy and issues relating to cladding. The Service is considering both letters and how they will integrate in to current and future plans, updates will be provided to the Human Resources and Community Safety Committees in due course.
- (b) The Service has recently completed its 2 yearly staff survey. The questions mirrored those asked in the previous survey to accurately benchmark progress and, as a result, 68% of the workforce completed the survey, which shows improvement in all areas measured. This reflects the hard work that is ongoing at all levels to ensure the Service is an inclusive and healthy environment. Future updates of the actions will be provided to the Human Resources Committee.
- (c) Members are reminded of the seminar which will be taking place on 31 January 2025 at the rising of the Policy and Strategy Committee, to focus on the Community Risk Management Plan and financial position of the Authority. Invites have already been sent out to allow time to plan diaries. As the Authority is currently projected continued financial challenges in coming years, best attendance is key.
- (d) The Service awards night will be taking place on 13 November 2024 at the Crowne Plaza, Nottingham. All Members are welcome and have been invited to book tickets to secure their places at the event. The evening is a great opportunity to celebrate and hear first hand a range of amazing things staff do day in and day out.

30 Treasury Management Annual Report 2023/24

Bev Bull, Head of Finance and Treasurer, presented the report providing an update on treasury management activity during the 2023/24 financial year, and highlighted the following points:

- (a) The Fire Authority is required by regulations issued under the Local Government Act 2003 to produce an annual treasury management review of activities and the actual prudential and treasury indicators for 2023/24. The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy’s (CIPFA) Code of Practice on Treasury Management (revised in 2021) was adopted by the Fire Authority on 9 April 2010.
- (b) Against a backdrop of stubborn inflationary pressures and wars in Ukraine and the Middle East, UK interest rates continued to be volatile right across the yield curve during 2023/24. They have also remained stubbornly high, with the Bank of England Base Rate beginning the year at 4.25% and ending at 5.25%.
- (c) Inflation has eased throughout 2023/24. The 12-month Consumer Price Index (CPI) rate had fallen to 2.3% by April 2024, largely due to reductions in the gas and electricity price caps. The Bank of England’s communications suggest that the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) is gaining confidence that inflation will fall sustainably back to the 2.0% target. However, although the MPC noted that “the restrictive stance of monetary policy is weighing on activity in the real economy, and is leading to a looser labour market and is bearing down on inflationary pressures”, conversely it also noted that key indicators of inflation persistence remain elevated and that policy will be “restrictive for sufficiently long” and “restrictive for an extended period”. Core CPI (excluding energy, food, alcohol and tobacco) was 3.9% in April.
- (d) Actual capital expenditure forms one of the required prudential indicators. The table below shows actual capital expenditure in the year and how this was financed:

	2022/23 Actual Expenditure	2023/24 Revised Budget	2023/24 Actual Expenditure
	£'000	£'000	£'000
Capital Expenditure	2,265	9,223	7,271
Resourced by:			
Capital grants	57	12	132
Capital receipts	513	3	0
Revenue contributions/earmarked reserves	298	513	513
Total capital expenditure financed in year	868	528	645
Unfinanced capital expenditure to be funded by borrowing	1,397	8,695	6,626

- (e) The Authority’s 2023/24 Minimum Revenue Provision Policy was approved as part of the Treasury Management Strategy Report for 2023/24 on 24/02/23. The Capital Financing Requirement for the year is shown below and represents a key prudential indicator:

Capital Financing Requirement	31/03/23 Actual	31/03/24 Estimate*	31/03/24 Actual
Opening balance	30,735	31,680	30,533
Add unfunded capital expenditure	1,397	685	6,627
Less MRP/VRP	(1,599)	(1,719)	(1,522)
Closing balance	30,533	30,646	35,638

- (f) The difference between the 31/03/24 estimated and actual figures for unfunded capital expenditure arose for two reasons: a significant increase in actual levels of capital expenditure due to slippage of the capital programme, and a delay in securing a capital receipt (budgeted at £3m) for the sale of the former headquarters due to the original offer falling through.
- (g) The Treasury Management Strategy approved by the Authority set out the policies for managing investments and for giving priority to the security and liquidity of those investments. The risk appetite of this Authority is low in order to give priority to security of its investments. Accordingly, the following types of low risk specified investments may be made:
- Deposits with the Debt Management Agency (Government);
 - Term deposits with Banks and Building Societies;
 - Term Deposits with English and Welsh local authority bodies;
 - Call deposits with Banks and Building Societies;
 - Triple-A rated Money Market Funds;
 - UK Treasury Bills;
 - Certificates of Deposit.
- During the year, investments were made with banks or building societies (term deposits or call deposits) and a Police Authority.
- (h) At 31 March 2024, the Authority held £1.5m of principal as short-term investments on the Balance Sheet and £5.0m of principal as shorter dated “cash equivalent” investments.
- (i) The average 90 days backward looking Sterling Overnight Index Average (SONIA) compounded benchmark rate for the year was 4.74%. The SONIA is a risk-free sterling interest rate that is identified as the investment yield benchmark in the Treasury Management Strategy. The Authority’s investments earned an average rate of 4.74% during the year. This is in line with the SONIA benchmark. This resulted in investment income of £637k, against a budget of £374k.
- (j) At 31 March 2024, the value of the Authority’s useable reserves totalled £11.072m. The balance sheet at the same date shows that the Authority held short-term investments totalling £1.745m and £7.394m in cash and cash equivalents. This means that £1.9m of cash balances were being used to support capital expenditure. The Treasury Management Strategy recognises that whilst the use of cash balances in this way (known as “internal borrowing”) can be prudent, it is not without risk. This is because internal borrowing is

effectively variable rate debt. The Authority therefore has a local indicator that limits the level of internal borrowing to 20% of the underlying borrowing requirement. At 31 March 2024, internal borrowing was 5.4% of the underlying borrowing requirement.

Members commended the work of the team to protect the reserves and the achievement in the rate of return.

Resolved to note the update on treasury management activity during the 2023/24 financial year as required under the Local Government Act 2003.

31 His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services 2024 Inspection Findings

Craig Parkin, Chief Fire Officer, presented the report detailing the outcomes from the report regarding the recent inspection of Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS), and highlighted the following points:

- (a) As part of round three of fire service inspections HMICFRS introduced a new grading of 'adequate'. HMICFRS grading framework is now as follows:
 - Outstanding – the Service has substantially exceeded the characteristics of good performance.
 - Good – is the 'expected' graded judgment, based on policy, practice or performance that meets pre-defined grading criteria that are informed by any relevant national operational guidance or standards.
 - Adequate – the Service has demonstrated some of the characteristics of good performance, but identified areas where the Service should make improvements.
 - Requires Improvement – the Service has demonstrated few, if any, of the characteristics of good performance and a substantial number of areas where the Service needs to make improvements have been identified.
 - Inadequate – there are causes for concern and recommendations are made to the Service to address these findings.
- (b) HMI Lee Freeman KPM, thanked the Service for the "positive and constructive way" the Service engaged with the inspection and commented "the Service has made progress since our previous inspection, we found it had maintained or improved performance in almost all areas."
- (c) Nottinghamshire is one of only two Services to be inspected so far (totalling 18 inspections to date), to receive a grading of 'Good' in 10 areas of inspection.
- (d) In the 2024 Nottinghamshire inspection report just one area for improvement (AFI) was given. This is the lowest number of AFIs to be issued to any Service to date in round three of the inspections. The average number of AFIs being received by Services is 17.
- (e) To oversee the required improvement it is proposed that the same, robust governance and scrutiny arrangements are adopted as with the previous AFIs from the round two inspection. This would involve the adoption of the AFI by Members of the Fire Authority, and progress and management of the AFI being discharged to the Community Safety Committee.

- (f) The Service did not receive any 'Causes for Concern' (CfC). So far in round three inspections, eight Services have received a total of 36 CfCs.

During the discussion that followed, the following comments were made:

- (g) The report is excellent, and the hard work of the Service is recognised in achieving the outcomes it has. The journey from 2018 to now is remarkable and demonstrates what can be achieved through hard work and commitment. The positive working culture should be a hallmark and badge of pride.
- (h) The media need balance in the news they report. The report has been sent out to news channels, but has not been a media focus.
- (i) All members of staff should be written to thank them for their hard work and congratulate them on the outcomes achieved.

Resolved to

- (1) Note the outcome of the HMICFRS inspection report and the progress made by the Service.**
- (2) Acknowledge the area for improvement highlighted by HMICFRS and approve governance and scrutiny through the Fire Authority Community Safety Committee.**
- (3) Request that the Chief Fire Officer write to all members of staff to thank them for their hard work and congratulate them on the outcomes achieved.**

32 Community Risk Management Plan 2025-28

Mick Sharman, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, presented the report detailing the draft Community Risk Management Plan 2025-28, and highlighted the following points:

- (a) The Fire and Rescue National Framework for England (National Framework document) states that fire and rescue authorities are required to produce a Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP).
- (b) A CRMP is a high-level business plan, designed specifically for a public audience, to inform interested parties of the Service's mid-term priorities, and key deliverables over the defined period.
- (c) The Service's current CRMP covers the period from 1 April 2022 until 31 March 2025. This means the new plan is required to be published that takes effect from 1 April 2025.
- (d) In developing the draft plan, the Service has updated its Strategic Assessment of Risk (SAoR) and again commissioned an independent specialist to undertake a detailed community risk and fire cover review (FCR). This ensures the CRMP is developed against a thorough understanding of all foreseeable fire and rescue related risks which could affect the area of the Authority.

- (e) In the CRMP 2022-25, the Authority adopted a long-term ambition to be one of the best fire and rescue services in England, with a principle that everything the Service does is guided by a core purpose of 'Creating Safer Communities'. It remains NFRS's intention to be an 'Outstanding Service' that delivers exceptional outcomes for its communities.
- (f) The CRMP 2022-25 was built around six strategic goals. These are:
- We will help people stay safe from fires and other emergencies;
 - We will improve fire safety in the buildings people live and work in;
 - We will respond immediately and effectively to emergency incidents;
 - We will continue to support and develop our workforce and promote an inclusive Service;
 - We will continue our improvement journey to deliver an outstanding Service;
 - We will manage and invest in our Service to ensure it is fit for the future
- (g) The concept of having six strategic goals, relating to key business and improvement areas, has served the Service well over the last two and a half years, and has provided the overarching context for the Service's continual improvement programme. The six strategic goals remain relevant and have therefore been adopted in the CRMP 2025-28. This will ensure a continuity of understanding as well as ensuring momentum is maintained across core service improvement areas.
- (h) Previously, services to conduct the public consultation on the draft CRMP have been commissioned from an external consultation company. This year the Service will undertake consultation using its internal resources. This decision has been taken based on previous feedback from Members, with the aim of providing greater community reach and exceeding previous consultation efficacy, whilst also being more financially efficient.
- (i) On approval of the draft CRMP, a nine-week consultation will be undertaken in line with the Service's Consultation Framework. The provisional dates for this are Monday 30 September to Sunday 1 December 2024.
- (j) The consultation objectives are:
- Measurably 'raise awareness' of the consultation process through communication with key stakeholder groups;
 - Engage with as many of the stakeholder groups as possible, generating meaningful responses that help shape planning;
 - Provide the transparency required by reporting back on the results of the consultation and the impact that it has made.
- (k) The consultation will utilise various approaches including, but not limited to:
- Digital and paper questionnaires;
 - Direct engagement with service users (persons who have had an incident, or a prevention or protection intervention);
 - Public focus groups;
 - Stakeholders focus groups;
 - Community advisory groups;
 - Analysis of social media channels (reach and engagement).

- (l) Outcomes of the consultation and a final CRMP will be presented to Members at the February 2025 Fire Authority meeting, with the aim of agreeing a final Community Risk Management Plan for implementation from 1 April 2025.

Members commented that they welcomed the consultation being carried out in-house, but that it was important to ensure the consultation questions are available in different languages and paper copies are available for those who won't access it electronically.

Resolved to approve

- (1) **The content of the draft Community Risk Management Plan 2025-28.**
- (2) **The approach for consultation on the draft Community Risk Management Plan 2025-28.**

33 His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services Standards of Behaviour Report

Mick Sharman, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, presented the report detailing the recent publication by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services of the Standards of Behaviour report and outline the steps being taken by the Service to address the recommendations, and highlighted the following points:

- (a) Following reports of misconduct, and the findings of the Independent Cultural Review of London Fire Brigade, the Minister of State for Crime, Policing and Fire commissioned His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabularies and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) to publish a spotlight report into the values and culture of fire and rescue services (FRSs). This report, containing 35 recommendations for improvement, was published in March 2023. A paper outlining the report was presented to Human Resources Committee in April 2023. A further update report, detailing progress made against the recommendations, was presented to the Human Resources Committee in April 2024.
- (b) Building on some of the findings of the spotlight report, between October 2023 and January 2024, HMICFRS carried out further research into the handling of misconduct in FRSs. Data and staff surveys from 44 FRSs were analysed, along with 10 thematic onsite inspections. Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (NFRS) was not one of the 10 FRSs inspected.
- (c) Some of the key findings within the HMICFRS Standards of Behaviour report include:
- Improvement is happening but unacceptable behaviours remain – the report states HMICFRS is “pleased to see the beginning of improvements”. With awareness of the Core Code of Ethics (CCoE) being raised, “but pockets of unacceptable behaviour remain, and future progress is needed, particularly in parts of the misconduct process”.
 - Staff are experiencing misconduct – 10% of the FRSs workforce responded to staff surveys as part of the thematic inspection on standards of behaviour. Of these, 41% had witnessed misconduct in the previous 12 months and 34% had experienced misconduct in the same period.
 - Watch culture – the impacts of “negative watch cultures”, are noted within the report stating that although attitudes and behaviours are showing signs of improvement,

these changes are too slow, built on poor foundations, and are not being made consistently across England.

A lack of confidence in the processes for raising concerns – the report identifies that while staff felt the process for raising concerns was clear, there was some confusion about different reporting mechanisms. The report also highlights a perception by respondents that issues raised, “wouldn't be treated confidentially or impartially,” emphasising that such perceptions are a serious problem.

- Inadequate training for those undertaking investigations – the report identifies “the inadequacy of training” as the most common and significant root cause of issues related to misconduct investigations. This shortfall is also evident among those who hear appeals, as they “rarely had training to do so” and overly relied on human resources support.
- Scrutiny of misconduct cases is ineffective – the report found limited evidence of oversight and scrutiny in misconduct cases across most of the inspected FRs. The report indicates the need for better organisational learning and the development of practical solutions at a service level.

- (d) The report presents 15 recommendations to improve the sector. The recommendations are broken down into the areas of:
- The culture in fire and rescue services;
 - The extent to which services are identifying misconduct;
 - The effectiveness of misconduct processes;
 - Understanding misconduct and sharing lessons learned.
- (e) Each recommendation has a timeframe allocated to it by which HMICFRS state that they expect to see implementation. One of the recommendations is for immediate implementation, while the others are spread over a timeframe of 12 months.
- (f) The Service is reviewing each of the recommendations and is in the process of undertaking a gap analysis to define the actions required to complete the recommendations. An action plan will then be produced.
- (g) Scrutiny of the delivery of this action plan will be through the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) Assurance Board which is chaired by the Chief Fire Officer.
- (h) The Standards of Behaviour report does not make for positive reading for the sector. NFRS recognises the effect that this could have on local trust and confidence in the Service.

Members were assured that NFRS is a progressive organisation and, although it wasn't part of the inspection, it won't be complacent in addressing the recommendations.

Resolved to

- (1) Note the contents of the report.**
- (2) Agree to receive further updates via the Human Resources Committee.**

34 Annual Report of Information Governance

Mick Sharman, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, presented the report providing an update on information governance at Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service for the year 2023/24, and highlighted the following points:

- (a) In 2017 the Policy and Strategy Committee agreed that NFRS would provide an information governance report annually to the full Fire Authority, covering:
 - Overview of Freedom of Information requests;
 - Overview of Environmental Information requests;
 - Overview of data protection areas of interest; and
 - Report on Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA) activity or inactivity.
- (b) Between April 2023 and March 2024, NFRS received 142 Freedom of Information requests. Of these, 135 (95.1%) were completed within the statutory time limit, up from 70% in 2022/23 and well above the Information Commissioner's target of 90%. Continued monitoring of the compliance rate is ongoing with any significant concerns to be reported to the Protective Security Group.
- (c) One information request received between April 2023 - March 2024 was classified as an environmental information request and was responded to within the statutory time period.
- (d) Over the last year, NFRS has focused on continuing to develop a robust methodology for incorporating information governance in line with the NFCC Data Management Fire Standard and the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) expectations.
- (e) Part of NFRS's obligations under the UK GDPR is to respond to the rights of data subjects where the Service processes their personal data. The right of access by the data subject to their personal data held by NFRS comprises part of this obligation. For the financial year 2023/24, NFRS received 43 requests for information from a data subject; of those, 42 (97.67%) were completed within the statutory timeframe of one month, or where NFRS has extended the deadline, due to complexity, by a further two months.
- (f) No incidents recorded by NFRS required the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) to be notified in the year 2023/24.
- (g) There were no applications for covert investigations at NFRS under Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 from April 2023 to March 2024.

Members commented that it is important to ensure measures are in place to identify any persistent requests as they are costly.

Resolved to note the contents of the report.

35 Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 2 Report

Craig Parkin, Chief Fire Officer, presented the report updating Members in relation to the Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 2 report, and highlighted the following points:

- (a) On 14 June 2017, a fire occurred at Grenfell Tower, London, which destroyed the 24-storey block of 129 residential flats. 72 people lost their lives at the incident.
- (b) Phase 2 of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry started in March 2020 and was focussed on the circumstances leading up to the fire, including the Tower's design, construction, composition, modifications and fire safety measures within the building.
- (c) In order to effectively respond to the Grenfell Tower Phase 2 Inquiry recommendations, the Service will undertake a detailed analysis of the report and its recommendations, working alongside the National Fire Chief Council (NFCC) and other stakeholders to fully understand any requirements and implications. A future report will be presented to Fire Authority detailing the Service's approach to meeting the recommendations.
- (d) Whilst on first review, only a minority of the recommendations directly relate to fire and rescue services direct activities and responsibilities, a number of the recommendations will require a multi-disciplinary approach to resolve. Complex interdependencies exist both between internal departments and with regional fire and rescue partners. An example being the continued collaboration with Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Service in the provision of a joint control room and its required and continued effectiveness.
- (e) Whilst the Government is yet to respond to the recommendations, it is expected that the routine reporting of progress against the recommendations will be required to the Home Office and NFCC. The Service needs to be able to respond in an assured and constructive manner to these consultations.
- (f) The Chief Fire Officer will be writing to the Chief Executives of the relevant local authorities to highlight their responsibilities in addressing the recommendations, and will be happy to meet with local authorities to discuss the actions required.

During the discussion that followed, the following points were made:

- (g) The tragedy is a source of national shame and the Government should provide more resources to ensure cladding can be removed.
- (h) There are 22 high risk buildings in Nottinghamshire.
- (i) Medium and low rise buildings haven't been looked at as part of the report, but are just as important if they are at risk, but aren't covered by the remediation grant, which makes it difficult to do any remediation work.
- (a) The investigation is not progressing quickly enough, and the Authority needs to express its concern and call for more urgency in addressing at risk buildings.

Resolved to

- (1) Note the publication of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 2 report.**
- (2) Agree to receive updates in relation to further actions, associated with the Grenfell Inquiry Phase 2 report.**

- (3) Endorse and support the Chief Fire Officer and Chair of the Authority to write to the Government expressing its concern on the length of time taken on the investigation and call for more urgency in addressing at risk buildings.**

36 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, Paragraphs 1 and 3, on the basis that, having regard to all the circumstances, the public interest in maintaining an exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

37 Changes to the Establishment Annual Report

Craig Parkin, Chief Fire Officer, presented the exempt report.

Resolved to approve the recommendations, as detailed in the report.