



## **NOTTINGHAMSHIRE & CITY OF NOTTINGHAM FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY - POLICY & STRATEGY COMMITTEE**

**MINUTES of the meeting held at Fire and Rescue Services HQ Bestwood Lodge  
Arnold Nottingham NG5 8PD on 7 November 2014 from 10.00 am – 11.40 am.**

### **Membership**

#### Present

Councillor Darrell Pulk (Chair)  
Councillor Chris Barnfather  
Councillor John Wilmott

#### Absent

Councillor Brian Grocock  
Councillor Jon Collins  
Councillor Gordon Wheeler

Councillor Roger Jackson (substitute for Councillor Gordon Wheeler)  
Councillor David Smith (substitute for Councillor Jon Collins)

### **Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:**

|                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| John Buckley    | Chief Fire Officer  |
| Peter Hurford   | Treasurer to the Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham Fire and<br>Rescue Authority                    |
| Craig Parkin    | Assistant Chief Fire Officer  |
| Neil Timms      | Strategic Director of Finance and Resources   |
| Malcolm Townroe | Clerk and Monitoring Officer to the Nottinghamshire and City of<br>Nottingham Fire and Rescue Authority |
| Carol Jackson   | Governance Officer, Nottingham City Council   |

## **10 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Councillor Brian Grocock  
Councillor Jon Collins  
Councillor Gordon Wheeler

The Chair welcomed Councillor Roger Jackson both to the meeting and to the Fire Authority.

## **11 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

John Buckley, Chief Fire Officer and Craig Parkin, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, both declared a personal interest in agenda item 4, 'Conditions of Service Questionnaire', in so far as it related to the Gold Book and left the meeting whilst this part of the report was considered.

Councillor Chris Barnfather declared an interest in agenda item 7, 'Complaint from Fire Industry Association' as he is a Director of Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (Trading) Limited.

## **12 MINUTES**

The Committee confirmed the minutes of the meeting held on 18 July 2014 as a correct record and they were signed by the Chair.

## **13 CONDITIONS OF SERVICE QUESTIONNAIRE**

John Buckley, the Chief Fire Officer, introduced his report seeking approval of a formal response to the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) conditions of service questionnaire.

The following points were highlighted for Members;

- the questionnaire is the result of the Government (following the review by Sir Ken Knight) commissioning a consultant to undertake an independent review to establish; 'whether the conditions of service for fire fighters (Grey and Gold Books) are seen as actual or perceived barriers to change that could otherwise provide a more efficient service to the public';
- the consultant undertaking the review has issued separate questionnaires to both Authorities and their employees. The consultant has been offered a face to face meeting with the Authority but has declined the invitation;
- the Consultant is expected to report to Government on the review by February 2015;

Members were invited to comment on the proposed response by the Authority attached to the report. Members approved the proposed responses save for those to question 28. Members agreed that the proposed response to question 28(b) be amended to read;

'It is a fundamental right to withdraw labour. Locally, staff have responded to a life risk incident during a period of industrial action.'

Councillors Barnfather and Jackson did not agree that fire-fighters should have a blanket right to strike.

John Buckley, Chief Fire Officer and Craig Parkin, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, left the meeting whilst the Gold Book element of the report was considered.

The Chair asked the Chief Fire Officer to pass on the Committee's thanks to colleagues in Corporate Services and Human Resources for their work on the questionnaire.

**RESOLVED to approve the final version of the response to the questionnaire as the formal submission of the Fire Authority.**

Councillors Barnfather and Jackson requested that their disagreement with the answer to question 28 be noted in that they did not agree that fire fighters should have a blanket right to strike.

## **14 PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT**

John Buckley, the Chief Fire Officer, introduced his report updating members on the proposed arrangements for performance monitoring following the decision of the Authority to remove the Performance Monitoring Committee.

The proposed arrangements are:

- Finance and Resources Committee currently receives reports on;
  - revenue/capital monitoring;
  - outcomes of financial audits;
  - treasury management;
  - value for money programme;
  - prudential code;
  - risk management;
  - road risk;
  - insurance claims;

and it is intended that it will now also receive reports on;

- expenditure per head;
- % undisputed invoices paid within 30 days;
- Human Resources Committee currently receives reports on;
  - sickness/absence;
  - retirements;
  - establishment figures;
  - disciplines;
  - grievances;
  - redundancies;

and it is intended that it will now also receive reports on;

- staffing equalities issues;
- Policy and Strategy Committee currently receives reports on;
  - statement of assurance;
  - transparency compliance;
  - peer assessment outcomes

and it is intended that it will now also receive reports on;

- organisational assessments;
- community equalities issues;
- IRMP progress;

- Community Safety Committee currently receives reports on;
  - response statistics;
  - prevention statistics;
  - protection statistics;
  - benchmarking

and it is intended that it will now also receive reports on;

- % of Home Safety Checks in high risk properties,
- customer satisfaction;
- operational activity.

**RESOLVED to approve the arrangements set out above.**

## **15 INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND COMPLIANCE**

John Buckley, the Chief Fire Officer, introduced his report providing Members with an overview of the measures in place for effective information management to ensure transparency and compliance.

The following key issues were drawn to the attention of Members;

- the Coalition Government has sought to unburden local government in terms of performance reporting but the requirement for greater transparency about the services being provided is putting increasing demands upon the Service in terms of the publication and provision of information;
- the number of Freedom of Information Act requests received has increased from 56 in 2012 to 112 to date in 2014;
- the Service can charge for the provision of information but only when the time taken to gather it is likely to exceed 18 hours;
- the majority of FOI requests are received from the media, disaffected employees and those being prosecuted by the Service. There are relatively few genuine public enquiries;
- there are procedures in place for dealing with FOI requests once they are received. Nevertheless dealing with them does require resources, including senior officer's time;
- by making greater use of the internet and publishing more information proactively it is hoped that this will lead to a reduction in individual requests and reduce the day to day demands on the Service;

**RESOLVED to note the report.**

## **16 COMPLAINT FROM THE FIRE INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION**

Neil Timms, Strategic Director of Finance and Resources, introduced the Chief Fire Officer's report informing Members of a complaint from the Fire Industry Association (FIA) concerning Fire Authority trading companies.

The key facts are;

- the FIA represents 620 businesses operating in the same areas as the 'arms length trading companies' set up by Fire and Rescue Authorities;
- the FIA complaint is not against any individual Fire Authority but against the UK Government, accusing it of providing unlawful state aid to 'arms length companies' by allowing them the free use of the Fire and Rescue Service 'brand';
- in order to assist the Government in replying to the complaint, the Chief Fire Officer's Association and the Local Government Association, with appropriate legal advice, are drafting a joint paper which the Government may choose to use in their response to the Commission;
- as NFRS have been cited specifically in the complaint it was considered that an individual letter should be written to the Department for Communities and Local Government setting out the NFRS position and this is attached to the report;
- this is a complaint against the UK Government who will have to refute the complaint. There is no suggestion that NFRS have failed to act within the existing legislation. Management will keep a watch for any developments and report them to Members.

**RESOLVED to note the report.**

## **17 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC**

The Committee decided to exclude the public from the meeting during consideration of the remaining agenda item in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 on that basis that, having regard to all the circumstances, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act.

## **18 MULTI CAPABILITY ASSURANCE PROCESS OUTCOMES**

John Buckley, the Chief Fire Officer, introduced his report updating Members and providing them with assurance of the operational capability of Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service in relation to its national resilience role.

**RESOLVED to accept the outcomes of the report and to endorse the steps being taken within Paragraph 2.9 of the report.**