



NOTTINGHAMSHIRE AND CITY OF NOTTINGHAM FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

POLICY AND STRATEGY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting held at Fire and Rescue Services HQ, Bestwood Lodge, Arnold Nottingham NG5 8PD on 11 May 2018 from 10.00am - 11.26am

Membership

Present

Councillor Brian Grocock (Chair)
Councillor Andrew Brown
Councillor Sybil Fielding
Councillor Michael Payne
Councillor Jonathan Wheeler
Councillor Malcolm Wood

Absent

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

John Buckley	- Chief Fire Officer
Craig Parkin	- Assistant Chief Fire Officer
Becky Smeathers	- Head of Finance
Vic McMillen	- Area Manager
Malcolm Townroe	- Clerk and Monitoring Officer
Catherine Ziane-Pryor	- Governance Officer

29 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None.

30 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

None.

31 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 February 2018 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

It is noted that whilst a cross party working group had been requested by members regarding commercial opportunities, officers are actively gathering information to ensure that members of the important and an update will be provided to the next meeting.

32 LOCAL FIREFIGHTER PENSION BOARD ANNUAL REPORT 2017/18

Becky Smeathers, Head of Finance, presented the report which updates members on the activities of the Local Firefighter Pension Board up to 31st March 2018 and requests approval of the Board's revised constitution.

The Local Pensions Board (LPB) was set up in 2015 and activity is reported annually to the Policy and Strategy Committee.

The Board recently approved some amendments to its constitution which are outlined within the report and summarised as follows:

- (i) the addition of substitute members;
- (ii) opening consideration of non-confidential items to the public;
- (iii) clarifying the relationship between the Board and National Scheme Advisory Board.

New legislation now requires a membership of at least 4, to include two scheme member representatives and two employer representatives. This is reflected in the revised constitution of the Board.

Members commented that:

- (a) the topic of pensions is complicated and whilst excellent training is provided by the Service, it is important that members of the Board keep up to date with all requirements and legislation;
- (b) although there are relatively few LPB meetings each year, it would not be efficient or effective for any members retiring at the end of the 2018/19 municipal year to be considered for nomination to the Board due to the training investment required;
- (c) there are members on the Authority who have a vast experience and understanding of pensions and would be ideal for the role but members should be asked to volunteer for the Board and then if none are forthcoming, the Chief Fire Officer could nominate an officer.

RESOLVED

- (1) to note the report;**
- (2) to approve the change to the Local Firefighters' Pension Board Constitution including to increase the required number of members present for the Board to be quorate to four as set out in Section 2.2 of the report.**

33 INSPECTORATE UPDATE REPORT

John Buckley, Chief Fire Officer, presented a brief update on Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabularies and Fire and Rescue Services inspection framework and preparations.

A copy of the inspection programme and framework is attached to the report and it is anticipated that the Service will be examined during the winter of 2018. The Service has already submitted the required data ahead of the inspection.

RESOLVED

- (1) to note the report;**
- (2) for further update reports on the progress being made in readiness for the inspection to be submitted.**

34 COLLABORATION UPDATE

Craig Parkin, Assistant Chief Fire Officer presented the report which updates members on the progress to date in identifying savings and efficiencies through a collaborative approach with the Police and other emergency services.

The following points were highlighted and responses given to members' questions:

- (a) a good relationship has been established between partners which has enabled beneficial progress to be made, including the procurement of welfare vehicles which are silver (not red), will be shared with Police and carry the emblems of both the Police and Fire and Rescue Service. This collaboration has saved approximately £70,000 with further opportunities identified;
- (b) opportunities have been made available to other emergency services to co-locate estates with NFRS , but not all have been acted upon. The Fire Authority has already approved the Collaboration Framework and the estates review of current property is ongoing and is anticipated to be completed at the end of the Summer with a report presented to members at the full Fire Authority meeting in September;
- (c) the initial stage of collaborative working to save resources has been fairly easy, but identifying further options will become more complex;
- (d) the public profile of how NFRS is working collaboratively to make mutual savings needs to be raised further so officers are working proactively to highlight the willingness of the Service to collaborate, and the achievements to date;
- (e) NFRS is active within the National Collaboration Working Group, whilst the Collaboration Board consists of Senior NFRS and Police officers and elected members, the Delivery Board consists of high level Officers from both Services;
- (f) NFRS is not yet realising significant collaborative savings, but as the relationships with other services strengthens and there is improved understanding of each other's needs and requirements, this will change;
- (g) there are some logistic aspects where the Police have difficulties but which NFRS can easily provide, such as the flood lighting of incidents. There are discussions that an arrangement may be possible whereby the Police are happy to cover the cost to the Fire and Rescue Service to provide and man such equipment when required;

- (h) a Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire joint Members Seminar will be held on 5 June 2018, the details of which will be sent to members shortly.

Members of the Committee expressed disappointed that the Police and Crime Commissioner, had publicly announced that there are several potential options to consider with regard to the estates, including joint Police and NFRS Head Quarters. This statement was made prior to completion of the estates review and without any specific discussion taking place with members of the Authority. It is suggested that, in the spirit of collaboration, the Police and Crime Commissioner should be asked to respond to members' concerns on this approach and liaise with members/officers of the Authority/Service before any further significant statements affecting NFRS are made. It is also suggested that the leaders of both the City and County Councils are consulted prior to any further significant public announcements.

John Buckley, Chief Fire Officer, commented that he had not been made aware of the Police and Crime Commissioner's intention to make a public statement of that nature and that if he had been, it would be discussed with members first. .

Other members confirmed that the Authority has approved the Collaboration Framework which included potential collaboration of estates and that there may be potential for a joint Head Quarters of Police and Fire and Rescue but it is the responsibility of members to ensure that such a move is undoubtedly in the interest of the Fire and Rescue Service.

RESOLVED to note the report.

35 EMERGENCY SERVICES NETWORK (ESN) UPDATE

Craig Parkin, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, presented the report which updates the committee on the current position regarding the Emergency Services Network (ESN).

The current emergency service and public safety communications contract is due to expire in 2020. In March 2016 NFRS agreed to join the Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme (ESMCP), a Central Government initiative whereby participating emergency services worked together to model and create a new, more efficient and secure communications system which meets their specific needs. Initially it was anticipated the transition to a new system would take place during the summer of 2018, and this was reflected in the funding received from Central Government. However, the task is very complex and there have been several delays, including a Central Government review of its original business case which it now considers to be undeliverable, the outcome of which and recommendations are expected to be released towards the end of year.

By taking part in the work around ESMCP, NFRS committed resources which aligned with the government funding. However, as progress is delayed but the cost of maintaining dedicated specialist officers and facilities is on-going, a significant financial risk has been identified for NFRS in that there is no clear indication from Central Government that it will cover the cost of the extending schedule of the programme.

It is anticipated that the review will recommend an incremental transition to a new communications system, as per the requests from individual services but this could take several years for all services to transition.

As the current system, Airwave, was due to become obsolete, manufacturers of the equipment which supports this system have been phasing out production which means that repair and maintenance is becoming very difficult. Although this may raise concerns for public confidence in the service, NFRS can provide assurance that there is currently no risk to the service as a result. This position will be regularly reviewed and updated.

Member's questions were responded to as follows:

- (a) Central Government will allocate some funding to cover the cost of the delay, the amount of which will be dependent on a value for money extension assessment based on the CIPFA value for money tool which will examine how NFRS has spent the grant money so far. Senior Officers are confident that the Service will not be challenged on value for money but it is currently unclear how Central Government will apportion the additional cost. The Policy and Strategy Committee and Finance and Resources Committee will receive full reports;
- (b) the new system will be based on 4G technology but negotiations with potential providers are ongoing.

It is recognised that technology develops quickly but Members of the committee commented that it is very frustrating that this program is taking so long and has become so complicated. The dedicated ESN team should be congratulated on their work so far.

Members of the committee suggested that a message should be sent to Central Government that the Authority is not happy that tax payers' money appears to have been wasted on the initial work undertaken.

RESOLVED to note the report and agree to receive further updates as the project develops.

36 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED to exclude the public from the meeting during consideration of the remaining item in accordance with section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 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.

37 RESILIENCE UPDATE REPORT

John Buckley, Chief Fire Officer, presented the report which updates members on service resilience.

RESOLVED to approve the recommendations within the report.