



**NOTTINGHAMSHIRE AND CITY OF NOTTINGHAM
FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**

**MINUTES of the meeting held at Fire and Rescue Services HQ, Bestwood Lodge, Arnold
Nottingham NG5 8PD on 27 September 2019 from 10:32am to 11:50am**

Membership

Present

Councillor Michael Payne (Chair)
Councillor Toby Neal (Vice Chair)
Councillor Andrew Brown
Councillor John Clarke
Councillor Sybil Fielding
Councillor Jawaid Khalil
Councillor Gul Nawaz Khan
Councillor John Longdon
Councillor Salma Mumtaz (items 21-30,
33-37)
Councillor Shuguftah Quddoos
Councillor Mike Quigley MBE
Councillor Nick Raine
Councillor Sue Saddington
Councillor Parry Tsimbridis
Councillor Stuart Wallace
Councillor Jonathan Wheeler
Councillor Jason Zadrozny

Absent

Councillor Vaughan Hopewell

Also in attendance

Paddy Tipping, Nottinghamshire Police
and Crime Commissioner

Colleagues, partners and others in attendance:

John Buckley	- Chief Fire Officer
Neil Harris	- External Auditor, Ernst & Young
Aileen Macpherson	- Human Resources
Adrian Mann	- Governance Officer
Craig Parkin	- Deputy Chief Fire Officer
Charlotte Radford	- Treasurer
Becky Smeathers	- Head of Finance
Malcolm Townroe	- Clerk and Monitoring Officer

21 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillor Vaughan Hopewell - unwell

22 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

In relation to item 37, in the interests of transparency, Councillor Andrew Brown, Councillor Toby Neal, Councillor Michael Payne, Councillor Mike Quigley MBE and Councillor Jonathan Wheeler stated that they are the directors of Nottinghamshire Fire Safety Limited.

23 MINUTES

The Committee confirmed the minutes of the meeting held on 26 July 2019 as a correct record and they were signed by the Chair.

24 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair made the following announcements:

- (a) the discussion seminar on 4 September was very productive and the attendance of Authority members was welcomed. Following on, the Chair wrote to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government on the issues of Fire Protection, and to encourage the Government to reference the sector more explicitly in its policies (fire and rescue was not mentioned specifically in the most recent Budget). A recent meeting for Chief Fire Officers and Authority Chairs was held in London and suggestions were made that, as part of future inspections of the sector, the inspectors should also talk to the elected members of the individual fire authorities;
- (b) although the standard of this year's external audit itself was very good, the final report is still not ready for sign-off by the Authority. The Chair has written to the Local Government Association (LGA) to raise concerns about the process through which Ernst & Young (EY) was appointed, and the LGA will report back on the actions that it will take. The experience has been very disappointing and has damaged the reputation of both the Authority and EY, as its external auditor. Clearly, steps should be taken to ensure that a situation like this does not occur again, in the future;
- (c) collaboration is progressing well with the Police and other emergency services, with projects such as the Joint Control Centre in Derbyshire and the development of new operational equipment, including drones;
- (d) unfortunately, the Authority's current pensions administrator has decided to not renew its contract, so this issue will be addressed at the next meeting of the Authority;
- (e) 14 members of Service staff will be running the Robin Hood Half Marathon on 29 September and any support from members will be very welcome.

25 TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REPORT 2018/19

Becky Smeathers, Head of Finance, presented a report on treasury management activity during the 2018/19 financial year. The following points were discussed:

- (a) the Authority aims to limit its investments with any single counter-party to £2million. However, this limit was exceeded during 2018/19 when a £2.3million pension grant came in earlier than expected. As such, a total of £3.5million was invested with Barclays during April and May 2018, due to a lack of suitable counter-parties. The limit was increased to £4million in the 2019/20 Treasury Management Strategy while an alternative investment location is agreed;
- (b) compliance has been achieved with all treasury and prudential indicators and limits. Due to advantageous interest rates, there was a borrowing total of £29million on 31 March 2019, to help to manage cash flow across year-end.

RESOLVED to note the report.

26 UPDATE REPORT ON AUDIT OF FINAL ACCOUNTS 2018/19

Neil Harris, Associate Partner of Ernst & Young (EY) as the External Auditor, presented a report on the progress of the audit of the Fire Authority's 2018/19 final accounts. The following points were discussed:

- (a) EY acknowledges the concerns raised by the Authority in relation to the audit process and apologises that it was not possible to complete the audit by 31 July. Unfortunately, EY did not have enough staff resources to deliver a thorough audit on time, so its completion was delayed, to ensure that it was of high quality and accuracy. EY is now taking steps to recruit to a sufficient capacity and is now in a much stronger position. Of over 200 public organisations whose external audits were not completed by 31 July, EY was the external auditor for 95. The Authority's concerns relating to the audit will be raised in the wider context of the Sir Tony Redmond's independent review of local authority financial reporting and external audit, and the National Audit Office's second-stage consultation on the best practice for external audits;
- (b) the audit is now nearly complete. Work is being concluded on the value of assets, following a sampling of assets and assumptions. Some differences were found on the fixed assets note when compared against the fixed assets register, as not everything in the accounts was found to be in operational use. This issue has now been largely resolved;
- (c) actuarial work is underway as a consequence of the McCloud judgement on age discrimination relating to the pensions of fire-fighters. This is likely to have a significant impact on Service pensions and has changed current assumptions, with £24.4million now included in the overall pension liability. The pension membership profile is being reviewed as part of forming a final position but, although the judgement has established that there will be some form of obligation as a consequence, it is not yet clear what this will be. Currently, the situation represents an accounting issue, until the Government confirms the actual cash implications. Although any new shortfall in the pension scheme will be met by a national grant, there could be an increase in future employer contributions to the scheme;
- (d) due to a strong mid-term financial plan and savings policy, along with good joint and collaborative decision-making and working with other emergency services, there are no concerns relating to value for money, which is very positive for the Authority. However, the audit did raise some cautionary comments regarding future savings, reserves and overspends.

RESOLVED to note the report.

27 ANNUAL STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE 2018/19

John Buckley, Chief Fire Officer, presented a report on the Annual Statement of Assurance for 2018/19. The following points were discussed:

- (a) the Statement provides an overview of organisational performance, to give confidence to local communities and central Government that the Service is carrying out its statutory functions to a high standard. The Statement signposts information in which there is a public interest on the Authority's website;
- (b) the Statement sets out the financial performance of the Service, explains how it manages its governance and internal control measures, provides progress against the priorities set out within the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP), demonstrates how the Service has met the requirements as set out in the National Framework 2012, provides a forward-looking aspect for the year in support of the IRMP priorities, and forms part of the arrangements for transparency and how further information and feedback will be dealt with by the Service.

RESOLVED to approve the Annual Statement of Assurance for 2018/19.

28 SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY 2020 OUTCOME REPORT

John Buckley, Chief Fire Officer, presented a report on the outcomes of the Sustainability Strategy 2020 objectives and the future staffing establishment. The following points were discussed:

- (a) it has been necessary to create £2.5million in efficiency savings over the last two years as a result of the latest savings review. Alternative and mixed crewing is in place and wider collaboration is in place with other emergency services, including the significant establishment of the Joint Control Centre with Derbyshire. A project is also underway to upgrade the Service's radio equipment;
- (b) engagement with voluntary secondary arrangements to support on-call availability has had limited success, so other strategies will be considered. A Watch Manager and two Crew Manager posts have been created to provide additional support to on-call stations in terms of recruitment, training and operational cover;
- (c) the Authority has worked in partnership with its local communities, citizens, businesses, societies and others to address the important operational matters, going forward. Fire Protection work will be carried out in relation to the Grenfall Tower disaster's impact on legislation relating to the built environment. Managerial capacity is being increased on a permanent basis to engage with new legislative requirements, following a period of cover by temporary roles;
- (d) in terms of the permanent staff establishment, it is proposed to have 431 full-time fire-fighters (reducing from 470), 204 units of on-call fire-fighters (increasing from 192), no Control Operators (decreasing from 25, due to the creation of the Joint Control Centre with Derbyshire) and 158 Support Staff (increasing from 156).

RESOLVED to approve the proposed staff establishment figures of 431 full-time fire-fighters, 204 units of on-call fire-fighters and 158 Support Staff.

29 SERVICE RESPONSE TO HER MAJESTY'S INSPECTORATE OF CONSTABULARY AND FIRE & RESCUE SERVICES INSPECTION

John Buckley, Chief Fire Officer, presented a report on the Service's response to the outcomes of the recent inspection by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services. The following points were discussed:

- (a) a full report has been produced to address the 25 areas of improvement identified by the inspection. Each area has been allocated a specific action, responsible officer, timescale and committee reporting route. Many of the actions fall under the remit of the Deputy Chief Fire Officer, with his responsibilities for Human Resources and service delivery, who will coordinate the other senior staff in these areas to respond to the issues;
- (b) the Authority felt that the document represented a positive and transparent means of holding senior staff to account, and that it showed the great deal of hard work undertaken by the Service to address the findings of the inspection. Many of the recommendations made arose from the Service's own self-assessment, which has informed its overall Corporate Plan and departmental business plans. As such, the areas of improvement identified by the inspectors are integrated into the Service's existing actions to meet its statutory duties and wider responsibilities, so they should be achievable without detracting from staff capacity to carry out core functions;
- (c) a new inspection of the sector is expected to start during Spring 2020, so it is likely that the Service will be inspected again around this time, next year.

RESOLVED to endorse the approach proposed by the Chief Fire Officer to address Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services' areas of concern, and to receive progress reports at the relevant committee level.

30 ASSISTANT CHIEF FIRE OFFICER VACANCY

John Buckley, Chief Fire Officer, presented a report on the proposed recruitment to the vacancy of Assistant Chief Fire Officer, following the successful appointment of the previous incumbent to the role of Deputy Chief Fire Officer. The following points were discussed:

- (a) the previous Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO) was appointed as the Deputy Chief Fire Officer in February 2019, resulting in a vacancy for Assistant being created. The vacancy has been filled on an internal, temporary basis, to enable a full review process of the role to be carried out;
- (b) the ACFO role has three distinct facets: direct leadership and responsibility for a significant number of functions within the organisation; the provision of strategic operational cover as part of the Brigade Manager on-call rota; and to provide advice and support to Members of the Authority as part of the Strategic Team;
- (c) the number of applicants for Principal Officer roles like ACFO can be small, as the traditional requirement to seek 'uniform' candidates from purely operational backgrounds limits the number of potential applicants considerably, as they must come from within the sector. More

recently, a number of Services have appointed to Principal Officer roles from outside of the sector. Although the individuals do not have the tactical operational experience to manage an incident on scene, they are able to develop the competences to provide strategic command within the context of a Strategic Co-ordinating Group;

- (d) this range of competences is the main area of command undertaken by Principal Officers and is similar to the requirements placed on all senior leaders in Local Authorities who provide strategic cover. With a structured training and development programme, senior leaders from outside of the sector are able to satisfy the operational rota requirements;
- (e) the Authority recommended that, as the current membership of the Appointments Committee is exclusively male, at least one of the positions should be filled by a female member of the Authority. Councillor Toby Neal agreed to step down from the Appointments Committee, and Councillor Shuguftah Quddoos agreed to fill the vacancy.

RESOLVED to:

- (1) task the Chief Fire Officer and the Clerk to the Fire Authority to start the recruitment process for the Assistant Chief Fire Officer vacancy;**
- (2) appoint Councillor Shuguftah Quddoos to the Appointments Committee, in replacement of Councillor Toby Neal.**

31 REVIEW OF STATEMENT OF INTENT

Craig Parkin, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, presented a report on the recent review of the Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service's Safety Policy Statement of Intent. The following points were discussed:

- (a) the aim of the Statement is to ensure that it reflects accurately the Service's approach to discharging its duty of care to both its employees and others affected by its work activities). The document is underpinned by the Service's Safety Policy, with the two documents forming an auditable approach to achieving and maintaining safe systems of work.

RESOLVED to endorse the Safety Policy Statement of Intent.

32 ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY POLICY STATEMENT

Craig Parkin, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, presented a report on the recent review of the Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service's Environment and Sustainability Policy Statement. The following points were discussed:

- (a) the Statement communicates the Service's commitment, and reflects its approach, to discharging its duty of care to minimise its impact on the environment. The Statement is underpinned by the Service's Safety Policy, with the two documents forming an auditable approach to achieving and maintaining safe systems of work.

RESOLVED to endorse the Environment and Sustainability Policy Statement.

33 ANNUAL REPORT ON INFORMATION GOVERNANCE

John Buckley, Chief Fire Officer, presented a report on information governance at the Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service. The following points were discussed:

- (a) between April 2018 and March 2019, the Service received 124 Freedom of Information (Fol) requests. These covered a wide range of information, including the inspection of schools, animal rescues and ICT contracts. Of the Fol requests, 97% were replied to within 20 working days, which is within the Information Commissioner's target of 90%. The Service publishes a selection of Fol replies on its public website, as well as information about performance and finance;
- (b) no data breaches occurred in the period that required reporting to the Information Commissioner's Office, and no situations arose where the Service needed to undertake directed surveillance.

RESOLVED to note the report.

34 COMMITTEE OUTCOMES

John Buckley, Chief Fire Officer, presented a report on the business and actions of the Fire Authority sub-committee meetings that took place during June and July 2019, which constituted meetings of the Community Safety Committee, the Finance and Resources Committee, the Human Resources Committee and the Policy and Strategy Committee.

RESOLVED to note the report.

35 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED to exclude the public from the meeting during consideration of the remaining item 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 outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

36 RESILIENCE AND BUSINESS CONTINUITY UPDATE

John Buckley, Chief Fire Officer, presented a report on the ongoing work to enhance the resilience of operational fire cover, and the wider programme of work to ensure effective business continuity management arrangements in the Service.

RESOLVED to endorse the Chief Fire Officer's proposed approach to ensure resilience and business continuity for the Service in the event of industrial action.

37 TRADING COMPANY REVIEW

Councillor Mike Quigley MBE presented a report on the future options for the Fire Authority's trading company, Nottinghamshire Fire Safety Limited.

RESOLVED to approve the recommendations as set out in the exempt report.