
CLEVELAND FIRE AUTHORITY

MINUTES OF ORDINARY MEETING

11 FEBRUARY 2022



PRESENT:

CHAIR

Cllr Paul Kirton – Stockton on Tees Borough Council

HARTLEPOOL BOROUGH COUNCIL

Cllrs Ben Clayton, Tim Fleming

MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL

Cllrs Teresa Higgins, Naweed Hussain, Tom Mawston

REDCAR & CLEVELAND BOROUGH COUNCIL

Cllrs Billy Ayre, Cliff Foggo, Mary Owens

STOCKTON ON TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

Cllrs Steve Matthews, Jean O'Donnell,

AUTHORISED OFFICERS

ACFO – Strategic Planning & Finance, ACFO - Community Protection, Legal Adviser and Monitoring Officer, Treasurer

APOLOGIES:

Chief Fire Officer

Cllr Tom Cassidy - Hartlepool Borough Council

Cllr Adam Brook - Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council

Cllrs Luke Frost, Lynn Hall - Stockton on Tees Borough Council

98. DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS INTEREST

It was noted no Declarations of Interest were submitted to the meeting.

99. MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the Ordinary meeting of 10 December 2021 be confirmed.

100. MINUTES OF MEETINGS

RESOLVED - that the Minutes of the Executive Committee on 21 January 2022 be confirmed.

101. COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED BY THE CHAIR

No communications had been received by the Chair.

RESOLVED – that Members noted that no communications had been received.

102. REPORTS OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

102.1 Draft People Plan 2022-26

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer-Strategic Planning and Resources (ACFO-SPR) presented the Draft People Plan 2022-26 for consideration. This, alongside the Corporate Risk Management and Resource plans, sits under the Corporate Plan which was approved by the Authority in July 2021.

102.1 Draft People Plan 2022-26 cont.

The ACFO-SP reported that the Plan is based on the new Integrated Talent Management Framework and covers the following four themes: Talent Management; Health & Safety; Health and Wellbeing; and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

In line with the requirements of the Fire and Rescue National Framework, the Plan has been shaped in collaboration with the workforce through insight from a number of sources. These include the Brigade's Health & Wellbeing Board, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Board and the Health & Safety Committee and their associated committees and networks. It was presented to the Executive Committee on 21 January 2022 who recommended its approval for publication and implementation.

The Plan has been Equality Impact Assessed and considered to have no detrimental effect on any group of staff. In addition it has been subject to extensive consultation with all staff and representative bodies and no issues have been reported.

RESOLVED – That the People Plan 2022-26 be approved, as recommended by the Executive Committee on 21 January 2022, for implementation and publication with effect from 1 April 2022.

102.2 HMICFRS Annual Assessment of Fire & Rescue Services in England 2021

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer – Community Protection (ACFO-CP) provided Members with an overview of the key findings of the HMICFRS State of Fire and Rescue Services in England Report 2021 included at Appendix 1. In addition, he outlined the Summary of Outcomes from the first tranche of 2021/22 inspections and presented the timelines for the Authority's own inspection scheduled for May 2022.

Councillor Ovens noted the advantages of the Brigade being inspected in the third tranche and acknowledged the direction of travel of the outcomes from Tranche 1, detailed at Appendix 2.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the report be noted**
- (ii) That Members noted that the CFO will review the Report and ensure any new areas for development are captured within the Authority's corporate planning processes and documented in the Internal Operating Plan for 2022/23 onwards.**
- (iii) That Members noted that in line with current arrangements the CFO will continue to provide the Executive Committee with update reports in regard to the next round of Inspection**

102.3 Information Pack

102.3.1 Campaigns

Councillor Mawston asked how the rise in fuel costs was expected to impact communities. The ACFO-CP confirmed that a rise in fuel poverty was likely to increase risks within households and crews had been trained to identify hazards and signpost residents to partner agencies for support where needed. Councillor Mawston thanked the Brigade for taking a pro-active approach.

102.3 Information Pack cont.

Members raised the issue of attacks on firefighters, noting that there had been 20 attacks reported to date in 2022. The ACFO-CP reported that this was a national issue that affected all emergency services. The Brigade was working closely with Cleveland Police and neighbourhood teams to tackle this growing problem.

RESOLVED – That the Information Pack be noted.

103. JOINT REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER AND TREASURER

103.1 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2022/23 – 2025/26

The Legal Adviser and Monitoring Officer (LAMO) reminded Members that the Authority was required to record a formal vote on budget decisions on statutory calculations and council tax precepts.

The Treasurer presented the Authority's Medium Term Financial Strategy for the period 2022/23 to 25/26 which integrates the revenue budget, Asset Management Plan and Reserves Strategy and underpins the delivery of the Community Integrated Risk Management Plan (CRMP) 2022-26. The report had been considered by the Executive Committee at its meeting on 21 January 2022 and covered:

- Changes in recurring funding 2013/14 to 2021/22
- Budget Requirement 2022/23
- Summary of 2022/23 Forecast Resources
- 2022/23 Revised Budget Deficit
- Financial Outlook 2023/24 to 2025/26
- Forecast Budget Scenarios 2023/24 to 2025/26
- Reserves
- Asset Management Plan
- Robustness Advice

The Treasurer reported that the budget forecast for 2022/23 had been reviewed to reflect the impact of: National Pay Awards; Non Pay Inflation; National Insurance increase and the Capital Programme resulting in a revised budget requirement of £30.621m.

The Treasurer reported that the one-year settlement for 2022/23 provides increased government funding of £0.809m, including the new Services Grant of £0.646m. This does not address the recurring grant reductions up to 2021/22 of £5.7m, so previous funding cuts are locked into the base funding.

Overall, the 2022/23 Government Grant Settlement and approval off a 1.9% Council Tax would reduce the budget deficit to £184,000. The Treasurer referred Members to the tabled Appendices E and F detailing the final figures for the 2022/23 Council Tax base. He reported that due to the actual Section 31 grants being higher than forecast the budget was now balance with no residual deficit requirement from the Budget Support Fund.

A range of budget scenarios have been detailed for 2023/24 to 2025/26 which show a potential deficit of between £0.551m and £1.467m. At this stage the Treasurer recommends the CFO is instructed to develop a contingency plan to address the lower figure. The risk of higher deficit could be managed from the temporary use of the budget support fund in 2023/24 to allow plans to be developed and implemented in 2024/25 to address a higher deficit.

103.1 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2022/23 – 2025/26 cont.

Councillor Clayton highlighted the issue with utility price rises and asked if the £160k built into the budget to cover the extra was sufficient. The Treasurer confirmed fuel for appliances was the biggest concern but gave assurance that reasonable provision had been made and could be revisited in-year should additional funds were required.

Members thanked the Treasurer for the report and welcomed the positive financial position. A formal vote was taken and Members unanimously voted in favour of the Statutory Budget and Council Tax Calculations for 2022/23 and the Asset Management Plan for 2021/22 to 2026/27.

RESOLVED – That as recommended by the Executive Committee on 21 January 2022, Members:

- (i) **Noted the 2022/23 Government’s forecast Spending Power increases are predicated on most FRAs increasing Council Tax by the 2% referendum limit;**
- (ii) **Approved the proposal to balance the 2022/23 budget from a combination of a 1.9% Council Tax increase and increase in Government funding and approved the supporting statutory calculations detailed in the Appendix E and 2022/23 Revenue Budget detailed in Appendix F (tabled).**

2021/22		2022/23			
Annual Council Tax	Property Band	Annual Council Tax	Weekly Council Tax	Annual Increase	Weekly Increase (pence)
£53.55	A	£54.57	£1.05	£1.02	2.0
£62.48	B	£63.67	£1.22	£1.19	2.3
£71.40	C	£72.76	£1.40	£1.36	2.6
£80.33	D	£81.86	£1.57	£1.53	2.9
£98.18	E	£100.05	£1.92	£1.87	3.6
£116.03	F	£118.24	£2.27	£2.21	4.2
£133.88	G	£136.43	£2.62	£2.55	4.9
£160.66	H	£163.72	£3.15	£3.06	5.9

Approximately 64% of

- (iii) **Agreed that to address the forecast deficit for 2023/24 to 2025/26 of £551,000 the Chief Fire Officer would be instructed to develop a contingency plan to address the potential deficit;**
- (iv) **Noted that the forecast deficits detailed in recommendation (iii) may increase if national pay awards are greater than 2% per annum, or the Pension Grant does not continue at the same level;**

103.1 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2022/23 – 2025/26 cont.

- (v) **Approved the Reserve Strategy detailed in section 7, including noting the reduction in financial risks and uncertainty, and approved the reduction in the Budget Support Fund from £5.706m to £2.876m, with the resources released of £2.830m being allocated to fund the AMP and reduce the level of Prudential Borrowing.**
- (vi) **Approved that as a fall back Prudential Borrowing limits include £2.830m be set for the AMP to enable the Budget Support Fund to be reinstated in 2023/24 if the forecast budget deficits increase and noted if these limits need to be used details will be reported to a future meeting.**
- (vii) **Approved the updated Asset Management Plan detailed in Appendix C.**

104. LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) (VARIATION ORDER) 2006 RESOLVED - “That under Section 100(A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business, on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of the Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006, namely information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority) holding that information.”

105. MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the Ordinary meeting of 10 December 2021 be confirmed.

106. CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF MEETINGS

RESOLVED – that the Confidential Minutes of the Executive (Appeals) Committee on 8 November 2021 and Executive Committee on 26 November 2021 be confirmed.

**COUNCILLOR PAUL KIRTON
CHAIR**