

CLEVELAND FIRE AUTHORITY

MINUTES OF ORDINARY MEETING

5 DECEMBER 2025



PRESENT:

CHAIR

Cllr David Coupe – Middlesbrough Council

HARTLEPOOL BOROUGH COUNCIL

Cllrs Gary Allen, Bob Buchan

MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL

Cllr Naweed Hussain

REDCAR & CLEVELAND BOROUGH COUNCIL

Cllrs Peter Chaney, Mary Ovens, Steve Kay, David Taylor

STOCKTON ON TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

Cllrs Jim Beall, John Gardner, Stefan Houghton, Andrew Sherris, Mick Stoker

AUTHORISED OFFICERS

Chief Fire Officer, Legal Adviser & Monitoring Officer, Treasurer,

ACFO - Director of Strategic Planning, People & Resources

Area Manager – Assistant Director of Community Protection

Area Manager – Assistant Director of Prevention, Protection & Planning

Assistant Director of Assets

PROTECTION TEAM

Joe Boardman – Fire Safety Inspector

FIRE BRIGADES UNION

James Sudron – Cleveland Acting Secretary (Observing)

Chris Porter – Cleveland Acting Chair (Observing)

APOLOGIES:

ACFO - Director of Service Delivery

Cllr Chris Wallace - Hartlepool Borough Council

Cllrs Naweed Hussain, Dennis McCabe - Middlesbrough Council

67. DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS INTEREST

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

68. MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of proceedings of the Ordinary meeting on 17 October 2025 be confirmed.

69. MINUTES OF MEETINGS

RESOLVED - that the Minutes of the Audit & Governance Committee meeting on 21 November 2025 and the Executive Committee meetings on 28 November 2025 be confirmed.

70. COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED BY THE CHAIR

No communications were received by the Chair.

71. REPORTS OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

71.1 Protection Departmental Presentation

Members received a presentation outlining the roles in the Fire Safety Team and took the opportunity to ask question specifically relating to the Authority's Risk Based Inspection Programme, Building Regulations and Enforcements.

The Chair thanked the Area Manager - Prevention, Protection & Planning (AM-PPP) and Fire Safety Inspector Joe Boardman for attending the meeting.

RESOLVED - That Members noted the presentation.

71.2 Cyber Security Presentation

The Assistant Director of Assets (ADA) provided Members with a Cyber Security presentation outlining the latest guidance from NFCC and information on keeping data secure. He also gave assurance that the Authority was 100% compliant following the Cyber Assessment Framework recent assessment.

The ACFO-SPPR informed Members that the Brigade hoped to see efficiencies from moving towards paperless meeting from April 2026 which for the Authority would include electronic payslips and reports. Following discussion, Members supported the cost benefits from being paperless but were reluctant to have a Brigade email address to access MyView and SharePoint.

The ADA agreed to look into providing access to electronic papers and payslips using local authority email addresses and report to a future meeting.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) That the Cyber Security Presentation be noted.**
- (ii) That Members receive a further report on accessing MyView / SharePoint using local authority email addresses to support the Brigade's move towards becoming paperless by April 2026.**

71.3 Annual Statement of Assurance 2024/25

The Chief Fire Officer (CFO) presented the Authority's Annual Statement of Assurance 2024/25 containing details relating to financial, governance and operational matters.

This document is a statutory requirement produced in line with the requirements of the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England 2012 and had been scrutinised by the Audit & Governance Committee on 21 November 2025.

He referred Members to the one-page infographic on page 13 capturing the Brigade's key performance for 2024/25, which Members had requested the previous year when the new style document was launched. He also referred Members to CRMP priority 3 which highlighted that arson remained a massive issue for the Brigade with rates 548% higher than the national average and a concerning 25% year on year increase. Members discussed the on-going efforts to address arson across the four districts and the CFO confirmed the Arson Strategy would be reviewed in the new year.

RESOLVED – That, as recommended by the Audit & Governance Committee on 21 November 2025, the Annual Statement of Assurance 2024/25 be approved.

71.4 Cleveland Fire Brigade Risk Management Plan (CRMP) 2026-30

The ACFO – SPPR provided an update on the progress of the Brigade's 2026-30 Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) which was nearing the end of the 12-week consultation period (7 December 2025).

She reported that as of that date 1,937 survey responses had been received since it was launched on 15 September which was over four times the response of previous years. Staff were currently being consulted on a new 'purpose' statement to replace the previous Vision and Mission and a working group had been established to develop an action plan to replace the annual Service Plan and detail how each priority will be delivered.

RESOLVED – That the progress of the CRMP 2026-30 be noted.

71.5 Principles for Responding to Bullying, Harassment, Discrimination & Victimisation

Members considered a National Joint Council circular providing a set of principles for raising and responding to bullying, harassment, discrimination and victimisation misconduct claims and received details of the Brigade's current approach and future steps.

Circular NJC6/2026 was published by the National Joint Council (NJC) on 11 November 2025 and outlines a set of principles established by the Inclusive Fire Service Group (IFSG) to be used by fire and rescue services responding to bullying, harassment, discrimination and victimisation claims. These include:

- Leadership accountability
- Collective responsibility
- Working together
- Effective training
- Robust processes
- Identify recurring patterns
- Providing support for everyone
- Balancing confidentiality with victim communication
- Continuous improvement
- Legal compliance

The CFO gave Members assurance that the Brigade's Values & Ethical Behaviours Framework and Dignity at Work Policy set clear expectation for all staff and confirmed that clear reporting routes, impartial investigations and confidential reporting were already in place. Future plans include the launch of the Dignity at Work and Culture training programme for all staff and managers in 2026 which aims to strengthen existing arrangements.

RESOLVED –

- (i) **That the National Joint Council circular on Bullying, Harassment, Discrimination and Victimisation at Appendix 1 be noted,**
- (ii) **That Members noted the Brigade's current arrangements for dealing with Bullying, Harassment, Discrimination and Victimisation and the future plans to strengthen how claims are handled.**

71.6 Information Pack

71.6.1 National Joint Circulars

71.6.2 Campaigns

RESOLVED – that the information pack be noted.

72. JOINT REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER AND TREASURER

72.1 Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2026/27 – 2028/29

The Treasurer provided Members with an update to the Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2026/27 – 2028/29 which had been considered by the Executive Committee on 28 November and detailed a forecast budget deficit of between £6.014m and £2.973m for the next three years, dependent on the level of council tax increase, and three interdependent proposals for managing the deficit. The updated report covered:

- Key Dates & Funding Announcements Impacting on 2026/27 budget
- Chancellors Budget 26 November 2025
- Treasury Management Strategy 2026/27
- Reserves Strategy
- Asset Management Plan (AMP)

The Treasurer reported that since the last report to the Authority on 13 October 2025 the Chancellors budget had taken place and while there was no direct mention of the fire service the 4.1% increase on the national living wage puts immediate financial pressure on pay spines and pay awards. He informed Members that they may need to consider increasing the pay award provision in the budget.

He also confirmed that the Local Government Finance Policy Statement 2026/27 to 2028/29 had now been published confirming the £5 Band D Council Tax referendum limit and £58m additional funding for the fire service nationally as a result of the new funding floor. In addition, a review of the Fire Funding Formula is expected to take place ahead of the next Spending Review which would hopefully see Cleveland receive a fairer settlement.

The Treasurer referred Members to para 6.10 and highlighted the additional one-off income of £0.863m from the investment strategy which he proposed be earmarked as a Voluntary Revenue Provision (VRP) for 2025/26 to provide greater financial resilience for the Authority.

He also reported that the AMP had been re-phased to identify savings of £630,000 towards the upgrades to the fire behaviour training units estimated at £1m by removing schemes to provide new towers at Stockton, Hartlepool, Loftus, Coulby and Yarm. He confirmed that £100k remained in the AMP for the repair of existing towers at Hartlepool and Stockton.

The Treasurer informed Members that as the 2025/26 Local Government Finance Settlement was not expected until week commencing 15 December 2025, he would be holding a Budget Seminar on 16 January 2026 to provide a detailed update to Members. He acknowledged that the Authority's early strategic planning decisions (detailed in Appendix 1) had been incredibly helpful and he gave assurance that the Authority was in good place to manage whatever comes out in the settlement.

72.1 Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2026/27 – 2028/29 cont.

RESOLVED - That as recommended by the Executive Committee on 28 November 2025 Members approved the following proposals, subject to final confirmation as part of the final MTFS report to be considered on 13 February 2026:

- (i) That the Voluntary Revenue Provision strategy detailed in paragraphs 6.10 to 6.14 be approved.
- (ii) That the Reserves Strategy detailed at section 7 be approved.
- (iii) That the Asset Management Plan changes detailed in section 8 approved.

73. 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 item of business, on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 3 and 4 of Part 1 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 and namely information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holders under, the authority.”

74. CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF MEETINGS

RESOLVED – that the Confidential Minutes of the Executive Committee meeting on 28 November 2025 be confirmed.

The CFO provided Members with a confidential update relating to the complaint referenced at Min. No. 65.1.

**COUNCILLOR DAVID COUPE
CHAIR**