CLEVELAND FIRE AUTHORITY

MINUTES OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

31 JANUARY 2020

PRESENT:

CHAIR
Councillor Paul Kirton – Stockton on Tees Borough Council
HARTLEPOOL BOROUGH COUNCIL
Councillor Tim Fleming
STOCKTON ON TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL
Councillors Luke Frost, Jean O'Donnell
REDCAR & CLEVELAND BOROUGH COUNCIL
Councillor Mary Ovens
AUTHORISED OFFICERS
Chief Fire Officer, Director of Corporate Services, Legal Adviser & Monitoring Officer, Treasurer

APOLOGIES: Councillor Teresa Higgins - Middlesbrough Council

91. DECLARATION OF MEMBERS INTERESTS
It was noted no Declarations of Interests were submitted to the meeting.

92. MINUTES
RESOLVED - that the Minutes of the Executive Committee on 22 November 2019 be confirmed.

93. REPORTS OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER
93.1 Arson Reduction Strategy 2020-24
The Chief Fire Officer (CFO) presented Members with the Brigade's Arson Reduction Strategy 2020-24 which had been produced in response to the high levels of arson across Cleveland.

He reported that in 2018-19, arson had a direct calculable cost to the economy of Cleveland of over £17.9m and of the 3,656 deliberate fires attended by the Brigade during 2018-19, 84.9% were arson. He reported that these stark figures against a national average of 50.5% for other Fire and Rescue Services (FRS) made Cleveland's arson problem unique.

The CFO informed Members that arson presents itself throughout the 'ladder of crime', from anti-social behaviour up to serious and organised crime. As a fire and rescue service, the Brigade has no powers that can be used to reduce arson however it recognises that the most effective way to have a sustainable approach to reducing arson, and its impact on people and local communities, is through collaboration and partnership working.

93.1 Arson Reduction Strategy 2020-24 cont.

The CFO referred Members to the Arson Strategy at Appendix 1 which clearly detailed the Brigade's current position, where it wants to be by 2024 and the strategic objectives and outcomes required to achieve this.

He reported that the Brigade would be holding an arson reduction conference in March 2020 which would culminate in the official launch of this strategy and seek partnership agreements with the four local authority Safer Partnerships to develop and drive localised plans.

The Chair urged Members to contact their own councils to support the Brigade's efforts to reduce arson in Cleveland.

RESOLVED – that the Arson Reduction Strategy 2020-24 be noted.

93.2 Health & Safety Policy

Members considered the Brigade's refreshed Health & Safety Policy which aims to achieve the strategic goal of having a proud, passionate, professional and inclusive workforce. The Policy sets out how to achieve this by supporting and promoting health, safety and wellbeing across the workforce by ensuring the Brigade:

- remains legally compliant with Health and Safety legislation and guidance;
- ensures staff competency and safety by providing the necessary health and safety information, instruction and training;
- maintains a proactive safety culture which focuses on the prevention of accidents, injuries and negative impacts on staff.

The CFO referred Members to section 1.5 of the Policy which outlined the specific obligations of the Authority which needed to be signed annually by the Chair. He reported that the Policy had been reviewed by the Executive Leadership Team on 19 December 2019 with no significant changes.

RESOLVED – that the revised Health & Safety Policy be noted and signed by the Chair.

94. JOINT REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER AND TREASURER

94.1 Medium Term Financial Strategy 2020/21 – 2022/23

Members considered the arrangements for determining the Statutory 2020/21 Budget and Council Tax and the updated capital programme proposals for 2020/21 - 2025/26.

The Treasurer reported that the Authority had agreed the 2020/21 budget and council tax levels at its meeting on 13 December 2019 and agreed that any variation in the final 2020/21 Government Grant allocation, Council Tax base or final collection fund figures would be managed via the Budget Support Fund with details reported to the Authority on 14 February 2020.

94.1 Medium Term Financial Strategy 2020/21 – 2022/23 cont.

The Treasurer provided Members with details of the:

- Provisional 2020/21 Local Government Financial Settlement and Impact on the Authority
- 2020/21 Government Spending Power Increases for FRA's
- Budget 2021/22 onwards
- Forecast Budget Deficit with / without Fire Pension Grant Sustained
- Asset Management Plan

The Chair referred Members to paragraph 3.3 of the report which outlined the impact of nine years of reductions in Government funding up to 2019/20 and Members discussed how the formula for distributing the grant, combined with Cleveland's high level of housing in low council tax bands, kept the Authority at the bottom of the table for Core Spending Power across all FRSs (as detailed at the table at paragraph 4.8).

The CFO informed Members that the Authority had written to local MPs in a bid to gain their support in seeking a fair funding formula and there were a number of meetings lined up to take this forward. Nationally, the National Fire Chiefs Council had seconded staff into the Treasury to ensure fire and rescue services are represented.

RESOLVED:-

(i) That the provisional 2020/21 Local Government Finance Settlement, confirming a proposed 2% Council Tax Referendum Limit for Fire and Rescue Authorities, be noted.

(ii) That Members noted that once the final 2020/21 Local Government Financial Settlement is issued those details will be included in the 2020/21 statutory calculations to support the December 2019 Council Tax decision for completion for referral to the Authority on 14 February 2020.

(iii) That Members approved the updated Asset Management Plan for 2020/21 to 2025/26 to be referred to the Authority on 14 February for noting.

95. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

95.1 Retirement of the Director of Technical Services

The Chair made a presentation to Mr Ray Khaliq on behalf of the Authority and thanked him for his 30 years' service to the Brigade. Mr Khaliq reciprocated the appreciation to the Authority for supporting him in his role and stated that it had been a huge privilege to work for Cleveland Fire Brigade.

96. 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 paragraph 3 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 any financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority) holding that information."

97. CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES

RESOLVED - that the Confidential Minutes of the Executive Committee held on 22 November 2019 be confirmed.

98. CONFIDENTIAL REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

98.1 Procurement Progress Report

Members received details relating to contract letting procedures, exemptions to contract procedure rules and future procurement plans.

COUNCILLOR PAUL KIRTON
CHAIR