

CLEVELAND FIRE AUTHORITY

MINUTES OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

23 SEPTEMBER 2022



PRESENT

CHAIR

Councillor Paul Kirton – Stockton on Tees Borough Council

MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL

Councillor Teresa Higgins (Sub)

STOCKTON ON TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

Councillor Steve Matthews (Sub)

REDCAR & CLEVELAND BOROUGH COUNCIL

Councillor Mary Ovens

AUTHORISED OFFICERS

Chief Fire Officer, ACFO – Strategic Planning & Resources, ACFO – Community Protection, Treasurer

Andy Perrin – Director, Proving Services Ltd (Min. No.41 only)

APOLOGIES:

Councillor Ben Clayton – Hartlepool Borough Council

Councillors Naweed Hussain, Tom Mawston – Middlesbrough Council

Councillors Lynn Hall, Jean O'Donnell – Stockton on Tees Council

Legal Adviser & Monitoring Officer

In accordance with Standing Order No. 35 Councillor Higgins substituted for Councillor Hussain and Councillor Matthews substituted for Councillor Hall.

39. DECLARATION OF MEMBERS INTERESTS

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

40. MINUTES

RESOLVED - that the Minutes of the Executive Committee on 8 July 2022 and Executive (Appeal) Committees on 22 July and 5 September 2022 be confirmed.

41. REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

41.1 Value For Money Presentation

Members welcomed Andy Perrin, Director of Proving Services Ltd who presented the outcomes of a Value for Money (VFM) assessment of Cleveland Fire Brigade (CFB). He outlined the processes and toolkits which had been endorsed by CIPFA and accredited to Gold Standard by APMG. The assessment looked at the Brigade's current activities and future service options based on the recognised VFM criteria of Economy, Efficiency and Effectiveness, Stakeholder Value and Strategic Value.

41.1 Value For Money Presentation cont.

Mr Perrin outlined the following ten key findings from the VFM's assessment of CFB:

- 1) CFB delivers good value for money. The service manages costs very well and is lean, agile and resilient. CFB was rated 'Good' by HMIFRS following its inaugural inspection and is currently awaiting the formal outcomes of its second inspection.
- 2) Through the preparations that preceded the launch of its 2022-26 suite of strategic plans, CFB developed an excellent understanding of current and projected risk and has a comprehensive strategic planning framework that is clearly aligned to budgets. The service has delivered substantial efficiency savings over a number of years and is self-aware of the opportunities for further improvement, with robust plans in place for delivery.
- 3) CFB is well thought of by customers and other primary stakeholders, although as is common across the sector, this view is sometimes based on a limited understanding of the breadth and depth of the service offer. The service acknowledges there is still more it could do in terms of stakeholder engagement.
- 4) CFB has a comprehensive suite of productivity and outcome measures and a sophisticated performance management framework. Performance against target was mixed across the suite of metrics in 2021-22, although in certain areas the service delivers sector leading performance. Going forward, CFB does need to ensure each of the seven newly adopted corporate objectives is supported by a holistic set of performance measures. Certain measures could also be better stated to be more easily comparable with peers.
- 5) The service has a good track record of collaboration, which is now embedded in the culture, and has recently recruited additional resource to be able to better evaluate the benefits achieved. There is still much more that could be achieved through collaboration however, and in terms of making full use of volunteer resource. Both areas are critical for development in the context of scarce financial and human resource.
- 6) The service does some very good work around the contemporary social value agenda, with the Community Interest Company being an innovative but just one example. CFB does acknowledge a need to up the pace and scale of activity around sustainability and has recently launched a four-year carbon reduction strategy.
- 7) Within the context of the current service configuration, perhaps the biggest opportunity to improve value for money is the digitisation of many of the current manual and paper-based systems and processes and a digital transformation plan is now in place to effect this. In addition, whilst CFB has an excellent, data driven understanding of the capacity and productivity of its workforce, and all teams are productive, there are plans in place to further improve workforce efficiency in several areas.

41.1 Value For Money Presentation cont.

- 8) With so many ambitious change initiatives and plans in flight, a key challenge will be to ensure robust, fully resourced programme and project management arrangements are maintained such that milestones, targets and benefits are achieved within planned timeframes.
- 9) Relative to the eight other fire and rescue services that have undertaken a VFM assessment, CFB performs better than its peers in terms of economy and efficiency and as well as the other top performers in terms of effectiveness.
- 10) Going forward, the primary barriers to CFB making further improvement are the sector wide challenges of uncertainty around the level and sustainability of future funding and recruitment and retention. There are no easy answers to either challenge and CFB will need to continuously review its service delivery model to ensure the optimum blend of inhouse, outsourced and shared services.

Members thanked Mr Perrin for the detailed presentation and passed on thanks to all staff for achieving these positive outcomes. The CFO stated that while the Brigade was on a journey of continuous improvement it was positive for Members and Managers to have this favourable position confirmed by an independent professional.

RESOLVED – That the outcomes of the presentation be noted and further reports be received as appropriate.

41.2 Disciplinary, Capability and Sickness Absence Management Policies

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer – Strategic Planning and Resources (ACFO-SPR) informed Members that the Disciplinary Policy had been routinely reviewed in line with the Authority's Key Document Framework with the changes highlighted in yellow at Appendix A. The review also took into account feedback from consultation with the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) and these changes were highlighted in blue.

The ACFO-SPR informed Members that the reference to 'performance' has been removed from the policy and this is now addressed in the new Capability Policy (Appendix B), which was supported by the trade unions. The amendments to the Sickness Absence Management Policy were listed at Appendix C and all three policies have been Equality Impact Assessed with no detrimental impact on any protected characteristics.

Councillor Matthews asked if there was a shared database with other fire and rescue services to record staff who had been dismissed. The CFO confirmed that there was no national register and sanctions were restricted to the Authority.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) **That the Disciplinary Policy (Appendix A) and Capability Policy (Appendix B) be approved.**
- (ii) **That the amendments to the Authority's Sickness Absence Management Procedure (Appendix C) be noted.**

41.3 Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) 2022-26 – Progress Report

Members received a progress update on the priorities detailed within the Authority's Service Plan 2022/23. The CFO highlighted the new format for this regular report which reflected the progress made towards digitalisation and it was the intention to present this 'live' document on the screen at future meetings.

The CFO noted the volume of work for each directorate to progress throughout the 2022-23 financial year, against the strategic goals, and highlighted the progress to date. Members agreed that the Brigade faced an exceptional workload, supported the new format for monitoring progress and acknowledged that excellent 'performance management' had been recognised by the Inspectorate and in the Value for Money assessment (Min. No. 41.1 refers).

RESOLVED – That the progress on the Corporate Priorities set out in the Authority's CRMP 2022-26 and Service Plan 2022/23 (Appendix 1) be noted.

41.4 Ethnicity Pay Gap Report 2021

The ACFO-SPR presented the Authority's first Ethnicity Pay Gap Report which had been considered and endorsed by the Brigade's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Board chaired by Councillor Kirton.

The report provided a snapshot of the Brigade's ethnicity pay data as at 31 March 2021 and while this is not a statutory requirement it is considered an important step towards being an Inclusive Employer of Choice.

The ACFO-SPR outlined CFBs mean/median overall ethnicity pay gap using the same methodology set out in the Government regulations for gender pay gap reporting. The results were:

- Mixed (mean 12% median 3%)
- Asian (mean 8.81% median 6%)
- Black (mean -6.67% median -10%)

Members thanked the ACFO-SPR for the report and acknowledged the difficulties in recruiting ethnic minority employees and the ongoing efforts of the Brigade to address this.

RESOLVED – that the Authority's Ethnicity Pay Gap Report 2021 be noted.

42. LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) (VARIATION ORDER)

2006 "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 1, 3, 4 and 7 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 individual; 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; namely information relating to any action taken or to be taken in connection with the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime."

43. CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES

RESOLVED - that the Confidential Minutes of the Executive Committee on 8 July 2022 and Executive (Appeals) Committees on 22 July and 5 September 2022 be confirmed.

44. CONFIDENTIAL REPORTS OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

44.1 Industrial Action – Business Continuity Planning

The CFO updated Members on the ongoing pay negotiations and the Authority's Business Continuity Planning arrangements.

44.2 Procurement Update Report

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

44.3 Police Fleet Maintenance Proposal

Members considered a collaborative opportunity with Cleveland Police.

44.4 Confidential Verbal Update

The CFO and Chair provided a verbal update to Members on an ongoing issue.

45. CONFIDENTIAL JOINT REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER & TREASURER

45.1 Disposal of Assets

Members received details of the Brigade's plans to dispose of assets that were surplus to requirements.

**COUNCILLOR PAUL KIRTON
CHAIR**