
CLEVELAND FIRE AUTHORITY

MINUTES OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

4 JULY 2025



PRESENT:

CHAIR

Councillor David Coupe – Middlesbrough Council

HARTLEPOOL BOROUGH COUNCIL

Councillors Gary Allen, Bob Buchan

REDCAR & CLEVELAND BOROUGH COUNCIL

Councillors Peter Chaney, Mary Ovens

STOCKTON ON TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

Councillor Mick Stoker

AUTHORISED OFFICERS

Chief Fire Officer, Treasurer

ACFO - Director Strategic Planning, People & Resources

ACFO - Director Service Delivery

APOLOGIES:

Councillor David Taylor – Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council

Legal Adviser and Monitoring Officer

18. DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

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

19. MINUTES

RESOLVED - that the Minutes of the Executive Committee on 17 May 2025 be confirmed.

20. REPORTS OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

20.1 Cleveland Fire Brigade's HMICFRS Inspection 2023-25 - verbal update

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer - Director Strategic Planning, People and Resources (ACFO-DSPPR) outlined the progress against the areas for improvement and recommendations detailed in the Brigade's third round HMICFRS Inspection report.

The Chief Fire Officer (CFO) reported that he had attended a HMICFRS workshop on positive practices on culture and misconduct where the focus was on services getting to the root of problems. He had also met with the service liaison lead earlier that week to discuss progress to date against the areas for improvement.

20.1 Cleveland Fire Brigade's HMICFRS Inspection 2023-25 - verbal update cont.

The Chair acknowledged the concerns of the Inspectorate detailed in the report and was satisfied that the current leadership team had an action plan in place to work through the issues. The ACFO – DSPPR gave assurances to Members that the action plan would be monitored at the monthly joint directorate meeting with regular progress reports to this committee.

She added that the Brigade was on a cultural journey to empower staff to have ownership over their work and accepted that this may take 4 or 5 years to embed.

RESOLVED – That progress against Cleveland's HMICFRS Inspection 2023-25 actions be noted.

20.2 Wholetime Duty System Evaluation

The CFO provided Members with the outcomes of the evaluation of the Whole Time Duty System which was implemented on 1 January 2024 with the aim of increasing efficiency, effectiveness, resilience, productivity, morale and reducing sickness.

The new duty system was agreed with the Fire Brigade's Union to run as a 12-month pilot and following full evaluation by the Risk & Performance Team was found to have met all objectives with the following recommendations:

- Continue operating under the new duty system working arrangements
- Implement improvements to Brigade systems to ensure the service is equipped with accurate data to inform operational and strategic decision making
- Reconsider procedure for utilisation of Resilience Pool staff

The Executive Leadership Team (ELT) considered the evaluation report on 10 June 2025 and approved the recommendations for implementation with the FBU and staff being notified over subsequent weeks.

Members recognised the importance of having a duty system which supports better health and wellbeing for staff by having shorter days and removing the uncertainties of the old system, helping staff to achieve their contracted hours.

RESOLVED - That Members noted the report.

20.3 Unwanted Fire Signals (UwFS) Policy

The CFO informed Members that this policy had been reviewed to reflect changes in legislation meaning more businesses are now covered by Automatic Fire Detection Systems. This has led to a steady increase in UwFS since the policy was introduced in 2017 which costs the Brigade circa £225k and 10 days of productivity per year.

20.3 Unwanted Fire Signals (UwFS) Policy cont.

Following a review of the policy the following key actions were approved for implementation:

- Non-Response to AFAs for non-domestic premises unless supported by a confirmation call from the site or 'double knock' activation.
- Conduct stakeholder engagement to ensure clear communication and understanding of the revised policy.
- Carry out a review of and update key documents including the UwFS strategy and policy.
- Inform parties through Letters, Press, Radio, Social Media etc.
- Implement mandatory call challenge fields in the new control system to eliminate previous discrepancies encountered and standardise recording.

The CFO confirmed that there would be a three-month period of engagement with local businesses affected by the policy changes.

Members asked if there was a cost recovery mechanism in place and how much has actually been recovered. The ACFO – Director Service Delivery (ACFO-DSD) confirmed that the Authority had this in place and circa £7k was recovered in the last financial year although the preferred approach is to work with businesses to prevent repeat occurrences.

RESOLVED – That the changes to the Unwanted Fire Signals Policy be noted.

20.4 Fire Investigation Policy

The Fire Investigation Policy had been reviewed and updated to align with national guidance, the principles of ISO Standard 12720 and reflect the requirements of the NFCC Competency Framework to have two tiers of fire investigation, and the levels of training required to achieve these.

The Brigade's previous version of this policy recognised three levels of fire investigation. These are now reduced to two levels and defined as:

- Tier One - non-complex investigations conducted on scene by the officer in charge
- Tier Two - prolonged investigations with a criminal element or serious injury

The CFO referred Members to the changes detailed at section 5 of the report which had been approved by the Executive Leadership Team on 24 June 2025. He informed Members that the policy had been equality impact assessed with no issues highlighted and would be shared with staff.

RESOLVED - That Members noted the changes to the Fire Investigation Policy.

20.5 HR Policies Update

The ACFO-DSPPR presented Members with a suite of HR policies which had been updated to reflect changes to legislation, software, personnel and contact details. The policies which had been reviewed were:

- Whistleblowing Policy & Procedure (Appendix 1)
- Flexible Working Policy & Procedure (Appendix 2)
- Sickness Absence Management Policy & Procedure (Appendix 3)
- Maternity, Paternity and Adoption Policy & Procedure (Appendix 4)

The ACFO-DSPPR reported that long term the plan was to implement a new, more succinct, policy format.

Councillor Owens asked whether fostering was covered under the Maternity, Paternity and Adoption Policy. The ACFO-DSPPR confirmed that like most services this was not included in a specific policy but the Brigade's Special Leave Policy provided flexibility to accommodate this.

RESOLVED – That Members noted the updated Management Structure.

20.6 Public Sector Equality Duty Report 2024

The ACFO - DSPPR presented this annual report which highlighted the Authority's work and reinforces its commitment towards complying with the Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Advance equality of opportunity for people with protected characteristics
- Foster good relations between people who have a protected characteristic and those who do not

The report at Appendix 1 covered: EDI Strategy; Gender Pay Gap; Diversifying our workforce; workforce profile; staff networks and activities. The ACFO-DSPPR confirmed that she was currently looking to establish a new health and wellbeing group which could be consulted on policy changes before ELT and CFA.

The CFO noted that the report referred to the HMICFRS inspection result for 2020/21 which would need to be updated.

RESOLVED - That the Public Sector Equality Duty Report 2024 be noted.

20.7 Voluntary Disability, Mental Health and Wellbeing Report 2024

The ACFO – DSPPR update Members on the Brigade's voluntary reporting of Disability, Mental Health and Wellbeing information, as detailed at Appendix 1, which outlines key actions undertaken over the period up to 31 March 2024.

20.7 Voluntary Disability, Mental Health and Wellbeing Report 2024 cont.

She reported her intention to publish future reports to align to the Brigade's Gender and Ethnicity Pay Gap and Public Sector Equality Duty reporting in the format of one collective report.

RESOLVED – That the Brigade's Disability, Mental Health and Wellbeing Report 2024, be noted.

20.8 Ethnicity Pay Gap Report

The ACFO - DSPPR presented the Brigade's fourth Ethnicity Pay Gap report which is produced as a voluntary requirement and deemed good practice by the Government. This report uses data up to 31 March 2024 and measures the difference in average earnings between employees identifying as 'White British' compared to those identifying within other ethnicity groups.

The report highlighted that analysis for 2024 using the 'mean' calculation indicated a negative pay gap of 17.8% for those staff identifying as 'white other' and negative gap of 7.8% for Asian. Those who identified as Black had a positive pay gap of 48.2% and 0.5% for 'Mixed'. There was a similar picture using the Median calculation. The ACFO-DSPPR reported that while this reads as positive the reality is that Brigade still has work to do to increase the diversity of its workforce to reflect the community.

RESOLVED - That the Ethnicity Pay Gap Report 2024 be noted.

21. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

21.1 Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) 2026-30 - verbal update

The ACFO-DSPPR provided Members with an update on the CRMP 2026-30 planning work underway and reported that 1040 responses to the pre-consultation survey had been received in four weeks which was considered a tremendous response. These results were currently being analysed along with feedback from the trade unions and focus groups and would be used to inform the key priorities under each of the five pillars – Prevention, Protection, Response, People and Resources. A draft of the CRMP is to be presented at the Special Executive Committee on 29 August 2025 prior to public consultation.

RESOLVED – That the CRMP 2026-30 verbal update be noted.

- 22. 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 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.”
- 23. CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES**
RESOLVED - that the Confidential Minutes of the Executive Committee on 16 May 2025 be confirmed.
- 24. CONFIDENTIAL REPORTS OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER**
- 24.1 Procurement Update Report**
Members received details relating to contract letting procedures, exemptions to contract procedure rules and future procurement plans.
- 24.2 Provision of Electricity – Tender Acceptance**
The CFO presented the outcomes of the procurement exercise for the provision of electricity for the Brigade’s estate.
- 24.3 Cleveland Fire Brigade Risk Management Services C.I.C**
The CFO provided Members with a verbal update on changes associated with the community interest company.

COUNCILLOR DAVID COUPE
CHAIR