C L E V E L A N D F I R E A U T H O R I T Y

MINUTES OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

4 OCTOBER 2019

PRESENT:

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

APOLOGIES:

Councillor Teresa Higgins - Middlesbrough Council
Councillor Jean O'Donnell - Stockton Borough Council

In accordance with Standing Order No. 35 Councillor Woodhead substituted for Councillor Higgins.

43. DECLARATION OF MEMBERS INTERESTS

Councillor Ovens declared an interest as a Redcar & Cleveland cabinet member (Minute No. 50.3 refers).

44. MINUTES

RESOLVED - that the Minutes of the Executive Committee on 5 July 2019 be confirmed.

45. JOINT REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER & TREASURER

45.1 Outline plan to meet the Fire Authority's Forecasted Medium Term Financial Deficits 2020/21 – 2022/23

Members considered the outline plan for meeting the Authority's medium term deficits 2020/21 – 2022/23 which took into account recent government announcements.

The Treasurer reported that back in February 2019, the Authority approved a Medium Term Financial Strategy which anticipated:

45.1 Outline plan to meet the Fire Authority's Forecasted Medium Term Financial Deficits 2020/21 – 2022/23 cont.

- A three year spending review covering 2020/21 – 2022/23
- Government Proposals to implement a Fair Funding Review
- Government Proposals to increase Business Rates Retention from 50% to 75%

The Authority instructed the CFO to develop a contingency savings plan based on potential deficits of between £2.297m (with recurring fire pensions grant in 2020/21) and £3.841m (without recurring fire pensions grant in 2020/21), as detailed in the table at paragraph 3.5 of the report.

The Treasurer reported that on 4 September 2019, the Government announced a one year Spending Review for 2020/21 entailing an inflation increase in Settlement Funding Assessment (SFA) for Fire and Rescue Services. This represented the first increase in government funding for 9 years which for this Authority increases the forecast level from £11.927m to £12.742m in 2020/21.

In addition, on 3 October 2019, the Government issued technical consultation proposals for a 2% referendum for all authorities, against the Authority's forecasts based on 3%.

The Treasurer reported that the 2020/21 settlement may provide a new base line for future years and if this level of funding is sustained in 2021/22 and 2022/23 this would significantly reduce the budget cuts required over the next three years. However, if funding cuts re-commence in 2021/22 the position will be less favourable, as detailed in the tables at paragraph 3.

The CFO reported that while the expectation is that there will be more funding for FRSs going forward this Authority was concerned with the fair distribution of that funding. He referred Members to Section 4 of the report which detailed the outline plan to meet the Authority's forecasted medium term financial deficits 2020/21 – 2022/23. Members discussed each option in detail:-

<u>Lobbying Government for a fairer distribution of funding</u> - Members suggested it would be timely to pursue this option post-Brexit early 2020.

<u>Use of Reserves</u> – the Budget Support Fund Reserve currently stands at £3.698m and could be used to phase the implementation of budget cuts but does not provide a permanent solution to addressing recurring cuts.

<u>Reviewing 'non-pay' budgets</u> – will aim to ensure the efficient and effective use of 'non-pay' resources by analysing historic spend and challenging the expenditure of each budget holder.

<u>Reviewing enabling services</u> – the current business case with Cleveland Police has been paused in light of the appointment of a new Chief Constable and current issues in the force. The Authority is currently looking to expand this collaboration work and explore options with regional partners.

45.1 Outline plan to meet the Fire Authority's Forecasted Medium Term Financial Deficits 2020/21 – 2022/23 cont.

Re-designing the Brigade's service delivery model - The Director of Technical Services (DoTS) has commenced a full service review to ensure the Authority is working in the optimal way with the right number of staff in the right roles.

Exploring other efficiency opportunities - these include exploring opportunities through other activities, including income generation and reviewing local agreements.

The CFO informed Members that the following Corporate Priorities for 2019/20 would be subsumed into, or aligned with, those associated with the outline plan:- SSC3: Introduce a Strategic Reserve to sustain the optimum operational configuration of 18 fire appliances; UOR2: Review of Flexi-Duty System; UOR10: Undertake an Interim Review of CIRMP

Councillor Ovens noted that the Authority had very little opportunity to build up reserves and asked whether the current level was sufficient. The Treasurer stated that the prudent management of the budget in-year by the CFO has helped build up the Budget Support Fund but equally the Authority faces greater risks. He added that the Reserves give the Authority the flexibility to implement cuts with longer lead-in times.

Councillor Woodhead noted that the Authority has been lobbying parliament for many years and congratulated the CFO and his staff for managing the difficult budgets, maintaining the fastest response times and being innovative.

RESOLVED:-

(i) That Members noted that the one year Spending Review only provides certainty for 2020/21 and the Authority may face continuing budget deficits in 2021/22 and future years, therefore it remains appropriate to plan for potential deficit of between £2.247m and £3.841m

(ii) That Members considered and recommended the approval of the Outline Plan for meeting the Authority's medium term financial deficits as fully detailed in section 4 of this report; in brief these are:

- **lobbying Government for a fairer distribution of funding**
- **using reserves**
- **reviewing 'non-pay' budgets**
- **reviewing enabling services**
- **re-designing the Brigade's service delivery model**
- **exploring other efficiency opportunities**

(iii) That Members noted the amendments to the Corporate Priorities 2019/20 as detailed in section 5 of this report

(iv) That Members noted that further regular reports will be received by the Executive Committee on any changes to the agreed financial and strategic plans

46. REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

46.1 Community Integrated Risk Management Plan 2019/20 – Progress Report

The Chief Fire Officer (CFO) updated Members on the progress on the implementation of the Community Integrated Risk Management Plan (CIRMP) 2018-22 and specifically the priorities detailed within the Fire Authority's Service Plan 2019/20.

He reported that the priorities were set to achieve the Authority's three goals of: safer, stronger communities; a proud, passionate, professional and inclusive workforce; and efficient use of resources. He referred Members to the Corporate Internal Operating Plan 2019/20 at Appendix 1 and highlighted the following priorities:

SSC6.1: Evaluate the Impact of the Potential Introduction of the 'Broadening Role' to the Fire and Rescue Sector

The CFO reported that on 11 July 2019 a joint circular (NJC/2/19) was issued outlining the NJC intentions to pause the national broadening the role negotiations, despite both sides remaining committed to the principles of broadening the role.

He reported that the downside of this current situation for the Authority was that the Emergency Medical Response (EMR) was not able to continue. Councillor Ovens expressed understanding with why this service was no longer being offered by the Brigade but noted the knock-on effect to the people of East Cleveland.

SSC7: Evaluate the impact of our new approach to reducing the number of unwanted fire signals

Following the implementation of the Unwanted Fire Signals Strategy in October 2017, the CFO confirmed that there had been a 52% reduction in the number of automatic fire alarms activating between the hours of 0800 – 1730 compared to 2017/18. The excellent results have paved the way for the expansion of the criteria set within the strategy in terms of timescales and days of operation and it was agreed this should be piloted for a further year.

Councillor Frost commended the success of the strategy in reducing AFAs and said his view would be to charge repeat offenders. The CFO stated that the Authority has the statutory powers to charge for AFAs but the current policy is not to charge but to work with businesses to reduce them. He added that a consultation exercise was currently underway with local businesses, the outcomes of which will be reported back to the Executive Committee, to discuss whether the policy should be changed.

SSC18 – Body Worn Video for Operational Personnel

Following the trial of body worn cameras a full evaluation report was considered by the Executive Leadership Team in July 2019 where it was agreed these should be made available for all personnel wanting to wear them on a voluntary basis. A procurement exercise was currently underway. Councillor Woodhead stated that the sentences given by Magistrates for violence to firefighters were too lenient.

UOR14: Explore Collaborative Opportunities for Enabling Services

The CFO reported that due to the recent changes within Cleveland Police, as discussed in detail at item 47.1, this priority has been paused.

46.1 Community Integrated Risk Management Plan 2019/20 – Progress Report cont.

UOR35: HMIICFRS Inspection

This priority was now complete and the pre-publication report from HMICFRS was expected in October 2019. This would be presented to the Executive Committee on 22 November 2019 for consideration.

RESOLVED – that Members noted the progress on the corporate priorities set out in the CIRMP 2018-22 and on the Directorate Priorities as agreed by the Chief Fire Officer for progression within the Brigade.

47. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

47.1 Retirement of Director of Technical Services

The CFO informed Members that the Director of Technical Services would be retiring on 31 January 2020 and in line with the National Framework this would need to be an external recruitment process with the Executive Committee having responsibility for making the appointment.

RESOLVED – that process and timeframes for recruiting and appointing a new Director of Technical Services be brought back to the Executive Committee.

48. 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 1 and 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 an individual; and information relating to any financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority) holding that information ."

49. CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES

RESOLVED - that the Confidential Minutes of the Executive Committee held on 5 July 2019 be confirmed.

50. CONFIDENTIAL REPORTS OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

50.1 Procurement Progress Report

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

50.2 Accident Investigation Report – Bravo 4

Members considered the accident investigation report relating to the road traffic collision involving one of the Brigade's hydraulic platforms.

50.3 SSI Incident – Verbal Briefing

The Director of Technical Services provided Members with an update in respect of the ongoing incident at the former steelworks site in South Bank, Redcar.

COUNCILLOR PAUL KIRTON
CHAIR