
CLEVELAND FIRE AUTHORITY

MINUTES OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

28 NOVEMBER 2025



PRESENT:

CHAIR

Councillor David Coupe – Middlesbrough Council

HARTLEPOOL BOROUGH COUNCIL

Councillor 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, Legal Adviser and Monitoring Officer

ACFO - Director of Strategic Planning, People & Resources (Teams)

ACFO - Director of Service Delivery

BRIGADE OFFICERS

Assistant Director - Assets

Assistant Director - Governance & Assurance

APOLOGIES:

Councillor Gary Allen – Hartlepool Borough Council

59. DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

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

60. MINUTES

RESOLVED - that the Minutes of the Executive Committee on 19 September 2025 be confirmed.

61. REPORTS OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

61.1 HMICFRS Inspection 2023-25 – Update on Areas for Improvement (AFIs)

Members considered a report outlining the Brigade's progress to date against the sixteen areas for improvement identified in Cleveland's third round HMICFRS Inspection report covering the period 2023-25.

The Chief Fire Officer (CFO) reported that the Assistant Director - Governance & Assurance (ADGA) had health checked all 16 AFIs carrying out comprehensive scrutiny of the progress to date against the following detailed categories:

61.1 HMICFRS Inspection 2023-25 – Update on Areas for Improvement (AFIs) cont.

- Not yet started
- Progressing to plan
- Progressing with issues
- Progressing with significant issues
- On hold/suspended
- Action is complete

This resulted in one AFI being re-opened in relation to Senior Managers demonstrating Brigade values and behaviors, therefore out of the 16 AFIs, 8 were categorised as progressing to plan and 8 progressing with issues.

As part of the detailed Health Check, the ADGA also scrutinised the Brigade's HMICFRS 2023-25 report and eleven additional areas were identified as potential AFIs in the future. These have also been captured for future action.

The CFO gave Members assurance that the team was working to understand what had occurred historically to lead to the Brigade getting the AFIs and will engage national learning to ensure continuous improvement.

RESOLVED – That progress against the HMICFRS Areas for Improvement be noted.

61.2 Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) 2026-30 update

The Assistant CFO – Strategic Planning, People & Resources (ACFO - SPPR) tabled a report capturing the progress of the draft CRMP consultation to date and thanked Members and staff for their ongoing support.

She informed Members that the co-creation of the CRMP with staff and communities signalled the beginning of a change in culture for the organisation and the number of responses to the pre-consultation survey and ongoing consultation was an outstanding achievement.

The CFO reported that while the consultation was underway, work was ongoing to establish performance metrics and agree a 'purpose' to replace the current vision and goals.

The Chair praised staff for truly engaging the community in writing this draft plan which he considered to be an excellent document.

RESOLVED - That Members noted the verbal update.

61.3 HR Policy Updates

The ACFO-SPPR presented the following new HR policies which had been considered by the Executive Leadership Team on 30 September:

- Menopause Policy – this has been newly developed in conjunction with the Women's Network and the trade unions to signify the Brigade's commitment to understanding Menopause and supporting affected staff with reasonable adjustments.

61.3 HR Policy Updates cont.

- Probationary Policy – this was previously included in the Recruitment & Selection Policy but is now a standalone document in line with the requirements of the HMICFRS Standards of Behaviour recommendations. Trade unions were consulted and the FBU suggested Green Book probation be increased from 3 to 6 months in line with Grey Book. However, the ACFO-SPPR informed Members that this was not included as a national statutory probation period was expected to be implemented in Autumn 2026.
- Transfer Policy – this new policy consolidates the voluntary transfers section of the Recruitment & Selection Policy and the non-voluntary transfers section of Local Agreement 3 to provide a clear dedicated document. It was developed in consultation with staff groups and trade unions and aligns with the requirements of the HMICFRS Standards of Behaviour recommendation relating to moving operational staff from a wholetime watch to another watch or station.

Members welcomed the introduction of the Menopause Policy for the Brigade. The ACFO-SPPR confirmed that all policies would be communicated with staff.

RESOLVED – That the following HR policies be approved and circulated to staff:

- (i) **Menopause Policy**
- (ii) **Transfer Policy**
- (iii) **Probationary Policy**

61.4 Safeguarding Children, Young People & Adults Policy

Members considered this policy, which had been reviewed in line with the Key Document Framework and is underpinned by the following procedures which had also been revised:

- Safeguarding Children and Young People
- Safeguarding Adults
- Safe places
- Duty to refer
- Melearning user guide

The CFO reported that the policy applied to all employees, including Members of the Authority, and encompassed both strategic and tactical levels to ensure that safeguarding responsibilities were understood and upheld across all roles and functions.

RESOLVED – That the Safeguarding Children, Young People and Adults Policy be approved.

62. JOINT REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER AND TREASURER

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

The Treasurer provided Members with an update to the MTFS report considered by the full Authority on 17 October which 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.

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

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 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.

Members discussed the rephrasing of the AMP 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. The Assistant Director - Assets (ADA) provided Members with detailed assurance relating to the assessment of the operational and structural requirements of the existing towers and confirmed £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.

The ACFO-SPPR gave a presentation outlining the savings proposals put forward by staff in the leaders forum in October which had been considered by the Executive Leadership Team.

The Treasurer reminded Members that the savings proposals were at an early stage and would be presented to the Authority by the CFO in July 2026.

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

RECOMMENDED – That Members noted the report and referred the following proposals to the full Authority for approval, subject to final confirmation as part of the final MTFS report to be considered on 13 February 2026:

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

64. CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES

RESOLVED - that the Confidential Minutes of the Executive Committee on 19 September 2025 be confirmed.

65. CONFIDENTIAL REPORTS OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

65.1 Procurement Update Report

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

65.2 Provision of Liquid Fuels

The ADA presented the outcomes of the procurement exercise for the provision of liquid fuels.

66. ANY OTHER CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS

66.1 Complaint

The CFO provided Members with a confidential update.

**COUNCILLOR DAVID COUPE
CHAIR**