

CLEVELAND FIRE AUTHORITY

MINUTES OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

20 JANUARY 2023



PRESENT

CHAIR

Councillor Paul Kirton – Stockton on Tees Borough Council

HARTLEPOOL BOROUGH COUNCIL

Councillor Ben Clayton

MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL

Councillor Tom Mawston

STOCKTON ON TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

Councillor Lynn Hall, Councillor Jean O'Donnell

REDCAR & CLEVELAND BOROUGH COUNCIL

Councillor Billy Ayre (Sub), Mary Ovens

AUTHORISED OFFICERS

Chief Fire Officer, Legal Adviser & Monitoring Officer, Treasurer

ACFO – Strategic Planning & Resources

ACFO – Community Protection

APOLOGIES:

Councillor Naweed Hussain – Middlesbrough Council

In accordance with Standing Order No. 35 Councillor Billy Ayre substituted for Councillor Naweed Hussain.

84. DECLARATION OF MEMBERS INTERESTS

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

85. MINUTES

RESOLVED - that the Minutes of the Executive Committee on 25 November 2022 be confirmed.

86. REPORTS OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

86.1 Serious Violence Duty

The ACFO-Community Protection (ACFO-CP) outlined the Authority's responsibilities under the new Government legislation 'Serious Violence Duty', aimed at ensuring relevant services work together to share data and knowledge and target interventions to prevent serious violence.

He informed Members that Cleveland had been identified as having the third highest level of violent crime in England and Wales and suffers the highest knife crime in the country. To tackle this, the Duty guidance requires the Authority to work in partnership with Cleveland's Unit for Violence Reduction (CURV).

86.1 Serious Violence Duty cont.

The main aims of the CURV are to:-

- Develop a multi-year violence reduction strategy
- Implement a system wide approach to preventing and reducing serious violence in Cleveland
- Provide support for initiatives and risk reduction measures through grant allocation
- Ensure its response is place-based and bespoke to the challenges in each local authority area

The ACFO-CP informed Members that there was an expectation that much of the CURV activity would focus on early intervention and leading and coordinating the local response to serious violence.

RESOLVED:-

- That Members noted the Authority's responsibilities under the Serious Violence Duty.**
- That the work the Authority is undertaken through the Cleveland's Unit for the Reduction of Violence (CURV) Governance Group to support the duty be endorsed.**

86.2 Service Plan Priorities 2023/24

The Chief Fire Officer (CFO) informed Members that the annual key strategic and integrated risk management and financial planning activities had been completed by the Executive Leadership Team on 9 January 2023. This resulted in a review and clarification of the Authority's priorities for 2023/24 contained within the Corporate, Community Risk Management, People and Resource Plans 2022-2026.

The CFO referred Members to Appendix 1 which outlined the associated key actions to deliver those priorities, including the additional actions required to reflect the management of new events within the Brigade's new operating environment. These will be presented within the Service Plan 2023/24 and presented to the Authority for approval at its meeting on 24 March 2023.

RESOLVED:-

- That the Chief Fire Officer's strategic planning activities and the intended key actions for 2023/24 to deliver the Authority's priorities as set out in the Corporate, Community Risk Management, People and Resource Plans 2022-2026, be noted.**
- That Members noted that the reviewed key actions against the Authority's priorities will be set out within the Service Plan 2023/24 that will be presented to the Fire Authority for approval on 24 March 2023.**

86.3 HMICFRS Fire & Rescue Service Inspection 2021/22: Tranche 3 Outcomes

The Chief Fire Officer (CFO) tabled the outcome report from Cleveland's second round of inspections which had been released that day. He reported that the Authority had maintained a strong 'Good' across all three pillars of inspection which covered People, Efficiencies and Effectiveness. The Brigade remained one of the highest performing fire and rescue services in the UK which was an outstanding achievement considering Cleveland's unparalleled socio-economic disadvantage and £11.3m reduction in government funding over the last decade.

The CFO confirmed that the Authority had made significant improvement since the last HMICFRS inspection in 2018/19, which was also rated 'Good' across all three pillars, with very few areas requiring improvement this time round. He passed on sincere thanks to all staff for their outstanding performance which has driven the Brigade's continuous improvement. Members echoed these thanks and asked that staff be congratulated on the Authority's behalf for their hard work and achievements.

The CFO confirmed that a full report would be presented to the Authority on 10 February 2023 for consideration.

RESOLVED – that Members noted the tabled report.

87. JOINT REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER AND TREASURER

87.1 Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2023/24 - 2025/26

The Treasurer provided Members with a detailed update on the Authority's MTFS which had been considered by the Authority at the meeting on 9 December 2022, pending confirmation of the Local Government Financial Settlement for 2023/24 and Council Tax referendum limits.

He confirmed that this information had now been received and presented a revised MTFS based on the updated planning assumptions which covered:

- Changes in recurring funding 2013/14 to 2022/23
- Low council tax base
- Impact of previous budget reductions
- Impact of Economic Environment on MTFS Forecasts
- Update of MTFS Forecasts
- Local Government Funding Settlement and Fair Funding Review
- National Pay Awards
- Government funding 2023/24 onwards
- Pension Grant
- Council Tax Referendum Limits
- Revised forecast deficits based on core planning assumptions 2023/24 to 2025/26
- Asset Management Plan (AMP)

87.1 Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2023/24 - 2025/26 cont.

The Treasurer confirmed that based on this new information the Authority was able to reduce the previously forecast 2023/24 budget deficit from £1.841m to £0.425m through the increase of net resources of £1.416m, detailed within the revised budget deficit table at paragraph 6.10 of the report. This was on the basis of Members approving a £5 Band D Council tax increase and the use of temporary investment income to defer the £0.425m deficit from 2023/24 to 2024/25 to allow time for inflation to fall and pay awards to be settled.

The Treasurer also noted that the approval of a £5 Band D Council Tax increase would provide the Authority with £0.552m recurring funding which, alongside the increase in grant funding of £0.593m, would provide a significantly more robust position for the 2023/24 and 2024/25 budgets than forecast.

Members thanked the Treasurer for providing clear information on the updated MTFS. Councillor Clayton stated that he considered the CFA to represent excellent value for money, however he acknowledged that the council tax flexibility was shifting the burden onto people already struggling and piling more pressure on those who cannot afford it.

RECOMMENDED – That the following proposals be referred to the Authority on 10 February 2023:-

- i) to note the provisional 2023/24 Local Government Finance Settlement provides an increase in Core Spending Power, which at a national level assumes 38% of this increase will be achieved by all authorities using the available Council Tax flexibility;
- ii) to note the Government has set a Band D Council Tax Referendum limit of £5 for Fire and Rescue Authorities for 2023/24;
- iii) recommend the full Authority approves a £5 Band D Council Tax increase for 2023/24, which will provide additional recurring resources of £0.552m to help sustain services;
- iv) to note that approving recommendation (iii) will in result 168,344 households (63.8%) having to pay a weekly increase of 7p or less, as highlighted in the following table:

| 2022/23 | | 2023/24 | | | | | |
|--------------------|---------------|--------------------|--------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|-------------------|--------------|
| Annual Council Tax | Property Band | Annual Council Tax | Weekly Council Tax | Annual Increase | Weekly Increase (pence) | Number households | % households |
| £54.57 | A | £57.91 | £1.11 | £3.34 | 6p | 119,016.0 | 45.1% |
| £63.67 | B | £67.56 | £1.30 | £3.89 | 7p | 49,328.0 | 18.7% |
| £72.76 | C | £77.21 | £1.48 | £4.45 | 9p | 48,132.0 | 18.3% |
| £81.86 | D | £86.86 | £1.67 | £5.00 | 10p | 24,563.0 | 9.3% |
| £100.05 | E | £106.16 | £2.04 | £6.11 | 12p | 13,999.0 | 5.3% |
| £118.24 | F | £125.46 | £2.41 | £7.22 | 14p | 5,419.0 | 2.1% |
| £136.43 | G | £144.77 | £2.78 | £8.34 | 16p | 2,949.0 | 1.1% |
| £163.72 | H | £173.72 | £3.34 | £10.00 | 20p | 296.0 | 0.1% |
| | | | | | | 263,702.0 | 100.0% |

87.1 Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2023/24 - 2025/26 cont.

- v) to note that on the basis of recommendation (iii) being approved the 2023/24 budget will be balanced by using £0.425m of temporary investment income which will defer this deficit until 2024/25 and provide a longer lead time to address this position;
- vi) approve the updated AMP detailed in Appendix A and delegate authority to the Treasurer, in consultation with the Chair of the Authority and Chief Fire Officer, to finalise the 2022/23 and 2023/24 funding strategy to maximise future financial flexibility and resilience of the Authority, within the Prudential Borrowing limits approved by the Authority;
- vii) to note the forecast deficits for 2024/25 to 2025/26 detailed in paragraph 6.20 and to note that once the 2022 and 2023 national pay awards for Fire fighters are agreed an update of the forecasts will be presented to a future meeting to enable work to commence on developing a strategy to address the updated budget position.

88. 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.”

89. CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES

RESOLVED - that the Confidential Minutes of the Executive Committee on 25 November 2022 be confirmed.

89.1 Matters Arising

- 89.1.1 Pay Claim - Members received details on the ongoing pay claim.
- 89.1.2 Accident Investigation - the CFO provided an update on this issue.

90. CONFIDENTIAL REPORTS OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

90.1 Procurement Report

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

COUNCILLOR PAUL KIRTON
CHAIR