

CLEVELAND FIRE AUTHORITY

MINUTES OF RECONVENED ORDINARY MEETING

16 APRIL 2021



PRESENT:

CHAIR

Cllr Paul Kirton – Stockton on Tees Borough Council

HARTLEPOOL BOROUGH COUNCIL

Cllr Marjorie James

MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL

Cllrs Teresa Higgins, Naweed Hussain, Ashley Waters

REDCAR & CLEVELAND BOROUGH COUNCIL

Cllrs Billy Ayre, Adam Brook, Cliff Foggo, Mary Ovens

STOCKTON ON TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

Cllrs Luke Frost, Lynn Hall, Jean O'Donnell, William Woodhead MBE

AUTHORISED OFFICERS

Chief Fire Officer, ACFO – Strategy, Policy & Resources, ACFO – Community Protection, Treasurer, Legal Adviser and Monitoring Officer

APOLOGIES:

Cllr Stephen Thomas – Hartlepool Borough Council

This meeting was deferred from 26 March 2021 – min. no. 195. refers.

196. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

197. MINUTES

RESOLVED - that the Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting on 12 February 2021 be confirmed.

198. MINUTES OF MEETINGS

RESOLVED - that the Minutes of the Audit & Governance Committee on 26 February 2021 and the Executive Committee on 5 March 2021 be confirmed.

199. COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED BY THE CHAIR

Home Office

Leadership Changes

Grant Funding for Fire Safety Officers

Response to the Fire Safety Consultation

RESOLVED – that the communications be noted.

200. REPORTS OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

200.1 COVID-19 Briefing – Presentation

The Chief Fire Officer (CFO) provided Members with a detailed presentation on the latest position of the Covid-19 pandemic which covered:-

- National Infection / Death rate over last 7 days
- Covid cases for Brigade area last 7 days
- National / Regional Vaccinations to date
- Brigade support to regional vaccination programme
- Staff wellbeing / sickness absence rates

The CFO reported that the Brigade had moved from Response to a Recovery position in relation to the pandemic and all services will continue to be delivered within covid-secure guidelines. The Queens Meadow Complex at Hartlepool continues to be used to deliver lateral flow testing to staff and it is anticipated this will be replaced by home testing kits in the near future.

RESOLVED – That the presentation be noted.

200.2 HMICFRS State of Fire and Rescue: Annual Assessment of Fire and Rescue Services (FRS) in England 2020

Members received details of the annual HMICFRS report on the state of the fire service in England, attached at Appendix 1, which was produced by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Fire and Rescue Services, Sir Thomas Winsor.

The CFO referred Members to section 4 of the report which stated that 'the practical implications of outdated and inflexible working arrangements' in the fire service had become apparent during the COVID-19 pandemic and reinforced the need for national reform.

The six recommendations for national reform previously made by Sir Thomas Winsor were confirmed as necessary and needing to accelerate in particular in connection with the lack of race and gender diversity, need for operational independence for Chief Fire Officers and a review of the allocation of government funding.

Positives recognised within the report included the building safety progress in the wake of the Grenfell Tower fire and the introduction of a code of ethics.

Councillor Frost expressed disappointment that despite Sir Thomas' previous call for the fire service to improve in areas of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion his report failed to reference neurodiversity or any disability. He called on the Chair and CFO to write to Sir Thomas to highlight this failure. The CFO agreed to raise this issue with the new inspector for the northern region Andrew Cooke at his meeting on 22 April and agreed to write to Sir Thomas.

Councillor James supported Councillor Frost's view and highlighted that the region had a greater proportion of disabled residents than other areas of the country.

200.2 HMICFRS State of Fire and Rescue: Annual Assessment of Fire and Rescue Services in England 2020 cont.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) That Members noted the report and further reports be received as necessary.**
- (ii) That Members noted that any areas for development identified by the CFO would be captured within the Authority's Internal Operating Plan for 2021/22 onwards.**
- (iii) That Members noted that the Chief Fire Officer would provide updates on the HMICFRS second round of inspections to the Executive Committee, in line with current arrangements.**
- (iv) That the Chief Fire Officer write to Sir Thomas Winsor on behalf of the Authority, to express their disappointment at the absence of any reference to disability in his State of Fire in England 2020 report.**

200.3 Service Plan 2021/22

Members considered the Service Plan 2021/22 which contained the improvement priorities for implementation to complete the final year of the Authority's four-year Community Integrated Risk Management Plan (CIRMP) 2018-22. The CFO reported that these priorities were the result of strategic, risk and financial planning activities undertaken by the Executive Leadership Team which would also monitor their progress and report back to the Executive Committee for further review.

RESOLVED – that Members considered and approved the 2021/22 priorities for inclusion in the Service Plan 2021/22, to be published on the Brigade website with immediate effect.

200.4 Information Pack

- 200.4.1 Campaigns
- 200.4.2 LGA Fire Conference 2021

RESOLVED – That the information pack be noted.

201. REPORT OF THE CLERK

201.1 Calendar of Meetings 2021/22

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer – Strategic Planning and Resources (ACFO – SPR) sought Members views on the proposed Cleveland Fire Authority (CFA) meeting schedule for 2021/22, attached at Appendix 1.

Members discussed the issue of dates coinciding with LGA Fire Commission meetings. The Chair noted that the CFA dates were set to align with the business calendar of the Brigade and the diaries of the four constituent councils. This view was supported with Members suggesting should dates clash in the future, only one representative of the Authority should attend the LGA Fire Commission meeting to minimise any disruption to CFA business.

201.1 Calendar of Meetings 2021/22 cont.

The Legal Adviser and Monitoring Officer (LAMO) addressed concerns about the return of face-to-face meetings following the expiration on 6 May 2021 of the current legislation allowing local authorities to hold meetings virtually. He agreed to write to Members informing them of the decision of the High Court on this matter following the hearing on 21 April 2021.

RESOLVED:–

- (i) That the Cleveland Fire Authority Calendar of Meetings for 2021/22 be deferred to the Annual Meeting**
- (ii) That the Legal Adviser and Monitoring Officer writes to Members informing them of the High Court judgement on local authorities continuing to hold virtual meetings, to be held on 21 April 2021.**

202. REPORT OF THE TREASURER

202.1 Treasury Management Strategy 2021/21

Members considered the Treasury Management Strategy for 2021/22 which had been scrutinised by the Audit and Governance Committee on 26 February 2021 and recommended for approval by the Authority (Appendix A refers).

The Strategy included:

- Economic background and outlook for interest rates
- Treasury Management Outturn Position 2019/20
- Treasury Management Strategy 2020/21 Mid-Year Review
- Treasury Management Strategy 2021/22
- Borrowing Strategy 2021/22
- Investment Strategy 2021/22
- Minimum Revenue Provision and Interest Costs and Regulatory Information 2021/22

The Treasurer reported that this confirms the previously approved strategy for managing interest risks to ensure borrowing can be funded from the available revenue budget of £0.87m and capital funding reserve. In addition he recommended a very prudent approach to manage investment strategy aligned to the one adopted by the Authority over recent years.

RESOLVED – Members approved the following recommendations from the Audit & Governance Committee on 26 February 2021:

- (i) That the 2019/20 Treasury Management outturn detailed in Section 5 and Appendix A be noted.**
- (ii) That the 2020/21 Treasury Management mid-year position detailed in section 6 be noted.**
- (iii) That the prudential indicators outlined in Appendix B be approved.**
- (iv) Borrowing Strategy 2021/22
That in the event of a change in economic circumstances Members noted that the Treasurer may take out additional borrowing in advance of need if this secures the lowest long term interest cost.**
- (v) Investment Strategy 2021/22
That the Counterparty limits as set out in paragraph 9.8 be approved.**

202.1 Treasury Management Strategy 2021/22 cont.

(vi) Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Statement

That the following MRP statement be approved:

- For capital expenditure incurred before 1st April, 2008 the Authority's MRP policy is to calculate MRP in accordance with former CLG Regulations. This is 4% of the Capital Financing Requirement except where the Authority makes Voluntary Revenue Payments which is in excess of the amount required by these regulations, based on asset life;
- From 1st April, 2008 the Authority calculates MRP based on asset life for all assets or where prudential borrowing is financed by a specific annuity loan, MRP will be calculated according to the actual annuity loan repayments.

203. REPORT OF THE LEGAL ADVISER AND MONITORING OFFICER

203.1 Pay Policy Statement 2021/22

The LAMO reported that in line with the provisions set out in the Localism Act 2011, the Authority had a statutory duty to prepare a Pay Policy Statement for each financial year relating to:

- the remuneration of its chief officers
- the remuneration of its lowest paid employees
- the relationship between:
 - the remuneration of its chief officers and
 - the remuneration of its employees who are not chief officers

The LAMO outlined the Pay Policy Statement 2021/22 at Appendix 1 and highlighted the remuneration of the lowest paid employees which was:

- Firefighter (Development) - £25,323
- Non-operational employees Grade B (Development) - £18,933

He reported that the Government's National Living Wage sets a minimum wage for all workers aged 25 years and over which equates to £17,191, which was lower than the Authority's lowest paid employees Grade B (Development) which was £18,933.

The LAMO noted that the Pay Policy Statement 2021/22 had been considered by the Executive Committee on 5 March 2021.

RESOLVED - That Cleveland Fire Authority's Pay Policy Statement 2021/22 be approved, as recommended by the Executive Committee on 5 March 2021, and published on the website.

204. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

204.1 Retirement of Councillor Marjorie James

Members and officers congratulated Councillor James on her retirement and gave thanks for her outstanding support and contribution to the Authority spanning many years. Councillor James thanked the Authority and officers for the support she has received and acknowledged the very worthwhile work of the Brigade in making a difference to its communities. On behalf of the leadership team and staff, the CFO recognised Councillor James' contribution in challenging the Brigade to strive to improve and thanked her for her commitment.

- 205. 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 items of business, on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 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 to any financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority) holding that information.”**
- 206. CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF COMMITTEES
RESOLVED – that the confidential minutes of the Executive Committee on 5 March 2021 be confirmed.**

**COUNCILLOR PAUL KIRTON
CHAIR**