

CLEVELAND FIRE AUTHORITY

MINUTES OF ORDINARY MEETING

17 OCTOBER 2025



PRESENT:

CHAIR

Cllr David Coupe – Middlesbrough Council

HARTLEPOOL BOROUGH COUNCIL

Cllrs Gary Allen, Bob Buchan, Christopher Wallace

MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL

Cllr Naweed Hussain

REDCAR & CLEVELAND BOROUGH COUNCIL

Cllrs Peter Chaney, Mary Ovens, Steve Kay

STOCKTON ON TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

Cllrs Jim Beall, John Gardner, Stefan Houghton, Andrew Sherris, Mick Stoker

AUTHORISED OFFICERS

Chief Fire Officer, Legal Adviser & Monitoring Officer, Treasurer,

ACFO - Director of Service Delivery

Area Manager – Assistant Director of Community Protection

Area Manager – Assistant Director of Prevention, Protection & Planning

Assistant Director of Assets

Assistant Director of Governance & Assurance

PREVENTION TEAM

GM Alan Turner

Rita Richardson (Fire Safety Education Officer)

Matthew Lidster (Road & Water Safety Team Leader)

Matthew Thompson (Community Safety Advocate)

FIRE BRIGADES UNION

James Sudron – Cleveland Acting Secretary (Observing)

Nick Cain – Cleveland Acting Chair (Observing)

APOLOGIES:

ACFO - Director of Strategic Planning, People & Resources

Cllrs John Kabuye, Dennis McCabe - Middlesbrough Council

43. DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS INTEREST

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

44. MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of proceedings of the Annual meeting on 6 June 2025 and Extraordinary meeting on 1 August 2025 be confirmed, subject to the amendment of Min. No. 25.1.

The Treasurer referred to Min. No. 25.1 of the Extraordinary Meeting on 1 August 2025 and informed Members that since that meeting he had been provided with an updated figure of £69,100.11 as the total amount from the C.I.C. to be written-off. This was an increase from the £66,019.93 previously reported. Members noted this change and agreed that the minutes be amended accordingly.

45. MINUTES OF MEETINGS

RESOLVED - that the Minutes of the Audit & Governance Committee meetings on 27 June and 22 August 2025 and the Executive Committee meetings on 4 July, 29 August (Special) and 19 September 2025 be confirmed.

46. COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED BY THE CHAIR

No communications were received by the Chair.

47. REPORTS OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

47.1 Prevention Departmental Presentation

Members received a presentation by the Prevention Team outlining their roles in delivering community safety across the Brigade area. The Chair thanked the Team for the insightful demonstration of the extensive services they offer. Councillor Chaney praised the Team for their support in Redcar & Cleveland and suggested Members utilise the offer for any issues in their Ward.

RESOLVED - That Members noted the presentation.

47.2 HMICFRS Inspection 2023-25 – Update on Areas for Improvement (AFI)

The Chief Fire Officer (CFO) presented the Brigade's progress to date against the 16 areas for improvement identified in Cleveland's third round HMICFRS Inspection report covering the period 2023-25.

He referred Members to the action plan at Appendix 1 and noted that AFI 7 & 11 were still outstanding but gave assurances that work was underway to ensure they would be progressed as priority.

RESOLVED - That Members noted the progress against the HMICFRS Areas for Improvement (AFIs) detailed at Appendix 1.

47.3 Service Plan Priorities 2025/26 – Update Report

Members received an update on the progress of Service Plan Priorities for 2025/26 which were approved by the Authority on 28 March 2025.

The CFO referred Members to the action log at Appendix 1 and noted that of the 50 priorities:

- 50 were in progress (41 on track and 9 behind schedule)
- 2 had been completed
- 7 had not been started

He confirmed that the Assistant Director of Governance & Assurance would health check the priorities and provide a narrative to the Executive Committee.

RESOLVED – That the progress against the 2025/26 Service Plan Priorities be noted.

47.4 Cleveland Fire Brigade Risk Management Plan (CRMP) 2026-30

The CFO provided a verbal update on the progress of the Brigade's 2026-30 iteration of the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) and reported that to-date 975 survey responses had been received since it was launched on 15 September.

He noted that in 2021, engagement activity for the current CRMP (2022-26) had only attracted 420 survey responses and he praised the pre-consultation work with staff and communities for this outstanding response.

The CFO reported that work was currently underway on establishing new performance metrics and to agree a new 'purpose' which will replace the current vision and mission.

RESOLVED – That the progress of the CRMP 2026-30 be noted.

47.5 Integrated Fire Control Collaboration (IFCC) Project Overview

The ACFO – Service Delivery (ACFO-SD) provided Members with an update on the IFCC project which had encountered technical infrastructure issues causing significant delays to the original go live date of Summer 2025. The report covered:

- Project Governance – a Strategic Board was established with bi-monthly updates with representatives of all four fire and rescue services involved in the collaboration (Cleveland, County Durham & Darlington, Hereford & Worcester and Shropshire). Individual project teams were also established in each FRS to implement the technical and infrastructure solutions required for the system
- Project Progress – slippage caused by technical delays further exacerbated by the four project teams moving at different paces therefore new Go Live Date is December 2026.
- Project Delay: Financial Impact - current overall Capital position is a projected underspend of £224k which includes the recharge income from County Durham & Darlington FRS for the cost of shared digital phone lines comprising of £37k over three years.
- Financial Position: 2025/26 Revenue & Reserves – current overall position projected to be £168k underspend due to delay in licencing costs which only commence when the system goes live.

The Assistant Director of Assets (ADoA) gave members assurance that while the project delays are disappointing, the Brigade's current mobilisation system is still fully functioning.

RESOLVED - That the progress of the Project be noted and further reports be received as required.

47.6 Critical Incidents Update: Grenfell Tower & Manchester Arena

The CFO informed Members of a change to the Brigade's arrangements to manage the recommendations from the Grenfell Tower and Manchester Arena inquiries. He reported that these would now be managed by the newly established 'Critical Incidents' Group which will also encompass the learning from any future large scale incidents.

47.6 Critical Incidents Update: Grenfell Tower & Manchester Arena

RESOLVED:-

- (i) That Members noted the name change of the action group from Grenfell / Manchester Arena to Critical Incidents.**
- (ii) That the Progress against Grenfell Action Plan and Manchester Arena Action Plan be noted.**

47.7 Information Pack

- 47.2.1 National Joint Circulars
- 47.2.2 Employer Circular
- 47.2.3 Campaigns

RESOLVED – that the information pack be noted.

48. JOINT REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER AND TREASURER

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

The Treasurer provided Members with a detailed presentation outlining the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2026/27 to 2028/29 which covered:

- National Policy Issues
- Spending Review
- Fair Funding Review 2 – consultation proposal
- Forecasts 2026/27 to 2028/29
- Asset Management Plan
- Recommended Strategy for Managing Forecast Deficit

The Treasurer reported that the proposed Fair Funding Review 2 changes were extremely disappointing and meant that the Authority was facing total budget cuts of £2.973m, assuming Council Tax is increased in line with forecast referendum limits. This includes the impact of a forecast Government funding reduction of £2.416m which is 81% of the forecast deficit.

The Treasurer provided Members with the following three interdependent proposals to address the budget deficit:

Proposal 1 – Council Tax

The strategy is based on using available Council Tax flexibility to secure recurring local income to reduce the forecast deficit to the lower figure of £2.973m. The Authority needs to recognise that not using available Council Tax flexibility reduces recurring resources and the only viable option for replacing this income is additional recurring service cuts.

Proposal 2 – Use of Budget Support Fund

The Authority has previously earmarked a Budget Support Fund to manage the impact of national funding reforms. In previous years use of the funding has been limited, with £0.294m approved to support the 2025/26 Revenue Budget, leaving £2.563m currently uncommitted. This is a temporary solution to a permanent reduction in recurring funding and simply defers a budget deficit to a later year.

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

Therefore, use of the Budget Support Fund should only be used in the context of also implementing proposals 1 and 3. On the basis of Members approving both these proposals the Treasurer will be able to support the use of £1.345m of this reserve (i.e. 53%) to support the 2026/27 revenue budget.

Adopting both these principles will enable the Treasurer to also discharge his statutory responsibility and confirm to the Authority when the final budget proposals are approved that they are robust.

Proposal 3 – Development of robust savings plan

Adoption of proposal 1 and 2 will enable the 2026/27 budget to be set without requiring service cuts to be implement from April 2026.

The Treasurer reported that if the Authority does not wish to support the budget using available Council Tax flexibility in 2026/27 the reduction on recurring income of £0.995m will need to be replaced by identifying recurring savings from 1 April 2026 to ensure the budget position does not become unmanageable.

He added that at this early stage the forecasts in the report do not include any budget pressures which may emerge as part of the detailed budget review which has not yet commenced. Details of any emerging issues will be reported in the next MTFS update, although given the scale of the forecast deficit every effort will be made to minimise any unavoidable net budget pressures.

Members thanked the Treasurer for the report and asked whether the CFOs robust savings plan would include cuts to services. The CFO reported that he would be looking at all functions to make savings. The Treasurer highlighted that that as services are impacted the financial position of the Authority becomes less resilient. He reiterated the significant risks around pay awards and inflation which were still unknown.

RESOLVED - That as recommended by the Executive Committee on 19 September 2025, Members approved the following proposals, which will be subject to final confirmation as part of the final MTFS report to be considered on 13th February 2026:-

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

49. 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 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.”

50. CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF MEETINGS

RESOLVED – that the Confidential Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting on 1 August 2025 be confirmed.

The Treasurer informed Members that he was liaising with external auditors Forvis Mazars LLP on how the 2024/25 group accounts will be recorded for the C.I.C. and suggested he may need to provide a narrative in the accounts to ensure full transparency to the public. He gave Members assurances that this would not impact future years' accounting.

The Treasurer agreed to keep Members updated on progress.

51. CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF MEETINGS

RESOLVED – that the Confidential Minutes of the Executive Committee meetings on 4 July and 19 September 2025 be confirmed.

**COUNCILLOR DAVID COUPE
CHAIR**