
CLEVELAND FIRE AUTHORITY

MINUTES OF ORDINARY MEETING

28 MARCH 2025



PRESENT:

CHAIR

Cllr David Coupe – Middlesbrough Council

HARTLEPOOL BOROUGH COUNCIL

Cllrs Gary Allen, Bob Buchan, Ben Clayton

MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL

Cllrs Naweed Hussain, John Kabuye, Dennis McCabe

REDCAR & CLEVELAND BOROUGH COUNCIL

Cllrs Peter Chaney, Steve Kay, Mary Ovens

STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

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

AUTHORISED OFFICERS

Chief Fire Officer, Legal Adviser & Monitoring Officer,

Assistant Chief Fire Officer - Strategic Planning & Resources

Assistant Chief Fire Officer - Community Protection

APOLOGIES:

Councillor David Taylor – Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council

Councillor Sufi Mubeen – Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council

Chris Little - Treasurer

109. DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS INTEREST

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

110. MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of proceedings of the Ordinary Meeting of 14 February 2025 be confirmed.

111. MINUTES OF MEETINGS

RESOLVED - that the Minutes of the Audit & Governance Meeting on 21 February 2025 and the Executive Committee on 7 March 2025 be confirmed.

112. COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED BY THE CHAIR

No communications were received by the Chair.

113. REPORTS OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

113.1 Service Plan Priorities 2025/26

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer Strategic Planning & Resources (ACFO-SPR) presented the Service Plan which outlined the proposed corporate priorities for 2025/26 and aligned to the Authority's corporate goals as set out within its Community Risk Management, People and Resources Plans for the period 2022-26. The proposed Service Plan had been considered by the Executive Committee at their meeting on 7 March 2025 who recommended to CFA its approval.

The ACFO-SPR reported that the Service's previous priorities and key actions had been reviewed both by ELT and the wider workforce removing any duplications, streamlining key actions where appropriate and ensuring that all strategic priorities were captured. She advised that this had significantly reduced the number of priorities which will be tracked and progress will be reported quarterly to the Executive Committee.

Councillor Kabuye referenced the Cleveland People Awards night and asked if staff would be involved in the process. The ACFO-SPR confirmed that this would be both led and voted by staff

Councillor Kay highlighted the Staff Cultural Survey seeking clarification as to whether this would be an external health check. The Chief Fire Officer (CFO) explained that this will be an internal survey to provide a valuable benchmark across the workforce. He explained that carrying out the survey internally will not only save money, but it will also present the new Executive Leadership Team with an opportunity to engage openly with staff.

Councillor Chaney requested that consideration should be given to the reference to the language used when outlining pay as a pressure on the budget. He also asked if the graphic detailing our Priorities for 2025/26 could be amended to move People to the top of the page.

Councillor Stefan Houghton joined the meeting

Following discussion on the impact of the nationally negotiated pay awards on the CFA Budget, it was agreed that the CFO would review the wording relating to pay and would circulate the suggested rewording to Members via e-mail for agreement. The ACFO-SPR highlighted the need for a swift response as the Service Plan was due for publication on 1 April.

It was agreed that the People Priority would appear at the top of the key areas of focus.

Councillor Ovens requested clarification as to the expansion and streamlining of the Fire Service Rota system highlighted in the Service Plan. The Assistant Chief Fire Officer Community Protection (ACFO-CP) explained that we are currently only using Fire Service Rota at a very basic level and that there are more advance features that would enable us to be better schedule on-call availability informing us of our gaps in provision which we could use when recruiting.

Members raised the vision statement relating to 'future is 'greener and brighter' and suggested this should be less vague. The CFO advised that the vision will be revisited as part of the next CRMP and the ACFO-SPR confirmed that Members will be invited to a workshop to consider the vision post 2026.

113.1 Service Plan Priorities 2025/26 cont.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the proposed Service Plan 2025/26 be noted.**
- (ii) That the corporate priorities and the Service Plan 2025/26 be approved in principle subject to confirmation of the changes in layout moving people to the top of the key areas of focus and circulation and subsequent CFA approval of the revised wording surrounding 'pay'.**

113.2 Information Pack

Volunteers

The CFO advised that we have welcomed 8 new Befriending Volunteers who have undergone their induction and safeguarding training earlier in the week. The Befriending Volunteers make a huge difference to those accessing the service and have been described as 'brightening people's day' to service users who often don't have any other visitors.

Campaigns

The CFO reported that 403 Stay Safe and Warm visits have been carried out to date with the campaign concluding on 31 March 2025. Councillor Beall requested that further analysis be provided when available. The ACFO-CP confirmed that once evaluation has been completed we will be in a position to provide further details to Members but he was able to confirm that of the 403 visits to date 120 had been undertaken within the Stockton Borough Council boundary.

Following discussion regarding the long list of national campaigns and awareness days it was agreed that only those being actively undertaken by the Brigade would be reported to the Authority in future Information Packs but this this information would be more comprehensive.

Workers Memorial Day

The CFO confirmed that we will again be supporting Workers Memorial Day on 28 April 2025 and the service at which a wreath will be laid on behalf of the Authority will commence at 12:30pm at the Workers Memorial in Church Square, Hartlepool.

LGA Conference

The ACFO-SPR provided an update on the conference which had taken place on 11-12 March. The Workshops had been particularly interesting and a request has been made for Ben Ryder of Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service who delivered the workshop on the role of the Fire Service in Community Cohesion to visit Cleveland Fire Brigade and deliver the session to our staff.

Councillor Kabuye, who has been working on a Community Cohesion project for Middlesbrough Council offered his assistance to share his experience.

Councillor Chaney highlighted three areas in which he had involvement; Child Safety, Boat Fire Safety and Dementia Action Week and started that he would welcome further involvement by the Brigade.

RESOLVED:–

- (i) That the information pack be noted.**
- (ii) That in future only those campaigns undertaken by Cleveland Fire Brigade would be reported to the Authority in the CFO's Information Pack.**

114. REPORT OF THE CLERK

114.1 Calendar of Meetings 2025/26

Members considered the proposed schedule of Cleveland Fire Authority meetings for the municipal year of 2025/26. The ACFO-SPR confirmed that the dates were aligned to the Authority's business planning calendar and would be presented to the Annual Meeting of the Authority on 6 June 2025.

RESOLVED – That Members approved the Cleveland Fire Authority meeting schedule for 2024/25 at Appendix 1.

115. REPORT OF THE LEGAL ADVISER AND MONITORING OFFICER

115.1 Pay Policy Statement 2025/26

The Legal Adviser and Monitoring Officer (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 referred to the Pay Policy Statement 2025/26 at Appendix 1, which had been considered by the Executive Committee on 7 March 2025, and outlined the key changes which included:

- Firefighter (Development) - £29,442 (pay award pending 1 July 2025).
- Non-operational employees Grade B (Development) - £24,027 (pay award pending 1 April 2025).

He reported that the Government's National Living Wage sets a minimum wage for all workers aged 25 years and over of £12.21 per hour, which equated to an annual salary of £23,556.64, which was lower than the Authority's lowest paid employees Grade B (Development) which is currently £24,027.

The LAMO stated that the annual salaries for the CFO and ACFOs which had previously been only available in the Statement of Accounts are now contained within the Pay Policy Statement.

RESOLVED - That Members approved Cleveland Fire Authority's Pay Policy Statement 2025/26 for publication.

116. REPORT OF THE TREASURER

116.1 Treasury Management Strategy 2025/26 and Third Quarter Review 2024/25

The ACFO-SPR presented the Treasury Management Strategy 2025/26 and Third Quarter Review 2024/25 on behalf of the Treasurer. She reported that the report had been considered by the Audit and Governance Committee on 21 February 2025 who had recommended it for approval by CFA.

116.1 Treasury Management Strategy 2025/26 and Third Quarter Review 2024/25 cont.

She advised that the Executive Committee on 7 March 2025 had also had sight of the report as the Treasurer was aware that he was unable to attend the CFA Meeting on 28 March and wanted to provide Members the opportunity to fully consider the report which covered:

- Economic Background and Outlook for Interest Rates
- Treasury Management Strategy 2024/25 – 3rd Quarter Review
- Treasury Management Strategy 2025/26
- Borrowing Strategy 2025/26
- Investment Strategy 2025/26

- Minimum Revenue Provision and Interest Costs and Other Regulatory Information 2025/26
- Regulatory Information and Prudential Indicators 2025/26 (Appendix A)

Councillor Ovens referred to the Lender Option, Borrower Option loan call date of 29 March 2025 and asked if it was likely that a new rate would be accepted. The ACFO-SPR explained that this would be dependent upon the rate offered although if it was more than 4.5% we would likely not extend.

RESOLVED:–

- (i) **That the 2024/25 Treasury Management third quarter position detailed in section 5 of the report be noted.**
- (ii) **That the Prudential Indicators outlined in Appendix A of the report be approved.**
- (iii) **Borrowing Strategy 2025/26**
That the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) i.e. capital borrowing requirement is funded from short-term borrowing until such time as long term interest rates reduce to a sustainable level be approved.

That the proposal to use any temporary revenue budget savings arising from temporary budget savings arising from temporary borrowing interest being less than budgeted to reduce the CFR, which will help mitigate potential higher longer term costs be approved.

- (iv) **Investment Strategy 2025/26**
That the Counterparty limits as set out in paragraph 8.7 of the report be approved.
- (v) **Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Statement**
That the following MRP statement be approved:
 - **For capital expenditure incurred before 1 April 2008, the Authority's MRP policy is to calculate MRP in accordance with former DCLG (Department for Communities and Local Government) Regulations. This is 4% of the Capital Financing Requirement expect where the Authority makes Voluntary Revenue Payments (VRP) which is in excess of the amount required by these regulations, based on asset life;**
 - **From 1 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;**

116.1 Treasury Management Strategy 2025/26 and Third Quarter Review 2024/25 cont.

- **The Treasurer may determine to make Voluntary Revenue Provision payments to reduce the Authority's overall CFR if it is in the best financial interest of the Authority.**

117. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The CFO advised Members that after nearly 49 years of dedicated service in the FRS (23 years in Cleveland Fire Brigade), it was the last day for our Senior Head of People, Chris Chisholm. The CFO and Members wished Chris the very best in her well deserved retirement.

118. 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."

119. CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

That the Confidential Minutes of the Cleveland Fire Authority Ordinary Meeting on 14 February 2025 be confirmed.

120. CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF MEETINGS

That the Confidential Minutes of the Executive Committee on 7 March 2025 be confirmed.

**COUNCILLOR DAVID COUPE
CHAIR**