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# CLEVELAND FIRE AUTHORITY

## MINUTES OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

23 JANUARY 2026

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**PRESENT:**

**CHAIR**

Councillor David Coupe – Middlesbrough Council

**HARTLEPOOL BOROUGH COUNCIL**

Councillor Gary Allen

**REDCAR & CLEVELAND BOROUGH COUNCIL**

Councillors Mary Ovens

**STOCKTON ON TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL**

Councillor Mick Stoker

**AUTHORISED OFFICERS**

Treasurer, Legal Adviser and Monitoring Officer

ACFO - Director of Strategic Planning, People & Resources

ACFO - Director of Service Delivery

**BRIGADE OFFICERS**

Area Manager - Assistant Director of Community Protection

Area Manager - Assistant Director of Prevention, Protection & Planning

**APOLOGIES:**

Chief Fire Officer

Councillor Bob Buchan - Hartlepool Borough Council

Councillor Peter Chaney - Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council

**75. DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

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

**76. MINUTES**

**RESOLVED - that the Minutes of the Executive Committee on 28 November 2025 be confirmed.**

**77. REPORTS OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER**

**77.1 Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) 2026-30 – Development and Agreement of a new purpose for Cleveland Fire Brigade**

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer – Strategic Planning, People & Resources (ACFO – SPPR) provided Members with details outlining the engagement process undertaken with the workforce to develop a new purpose for the organisation for inclusion in the next CRMP covering 1 April 2026 to 31 March 2030.

**77.1 Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) 2026-30 – Development and Agreement of a new purpose for Cleveland Fire Brigade cont.**

This was to replace the existing Vision and Mission which staff feedback considered too wordy and difficult to recall. A two-stage engagement approach was taken with a survey launched on 5 December inviting colleagues to propose ideas for the Brigade's new Purpose with 28 high level responses submitted. The next stage was to ask staff to vote for their preferred Purpose with 247 votes cast and the clear overall favourite being 'Protecting, People, Places and Futures', which the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) agreed was aligned with the strategic direction of the new CRMP and was clear, memorable and easy to communicate.

**RESOLVED – That Members noted process undertaken and endorsed the new Purpose for Cleveland Fire Brigade: 'Protecting People, Places and Futures'.**

**77.2 Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)**

Members received details relating to the Government publication Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy, the NFCC Guidance: Statement of Commitment and the Authority's commitment to White Ribbon.

The ACFO-SPPR confirmed her role as the Brigade's VAWG lead officer feeding back into the NFCC and the role of the CFO as a White Ribbon advocate supporting the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Cleveland's #16DaysOfActivism to challenge and eliminate violence against women and girls.

She reported that the Brigade's own White Ribbon Steering Group had requested that the Authority received a presentation of the work being done and considered becoming champions / ambassadors.

Councillor Allen asked what processes were in place regarding safeguarding and whether there was a forum for crews to forward on any concerns. The ACFO - Director of Service Delivery confirmed that all firefighters were trained to recognise safeguarding signs and there was a clear referral pathway in place. He reiterated that even when multi-agencies were involved the Brigade would always make a referral to ensure concerns are not overlooked.

The Area Manager – Prevention, Protection & Planning (AM-PPP) added that he represented CFB on the Teeswide Safeguarding Adults Board (TSAB) which required biennial submissions on referrals made the Brigade. He gave assurances that feedback around the quality of these submissions was positive and he was comfortable with the current arrangements.

**RESOLVED:-**

- (i) That the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Guidance: Statement of Commitment and development of guidance be noted.**
- (ii) That the update on the Government's Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy be noted.**

## **77.2 Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) cont.**

- (iii) **That Members agreed to receive further information from the Brigade's White Ribbon Steering Group and consider becoming ambassadors or champions.**

## **77.3 HR Policy Updates**

The ACFO-SPPR presented the following HR policies which had been considered by the Executive Leadership Team in December 2025.

- Sexual Harassment Policy - this has been newly developed to meet the requirements of the Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023 for employers to have a legal duty to take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment of its workers and employees, including third parties and members of the public. This policy has been considered and supported by the Health, Fitness & Wellbeing and the Womens Network groups.

In addition, the trade unions were consulted and both made recommendations that employees raising issues regarding sexual harassment should contact their unions at the earliest opportunity to allow appropriate support and internal investigation at an early stage. This addition is included at paragraph 7.7 of the policy.

- Promotion & Appointments Policy – this policy has been reviewed to incorporate changes to the Station Manager process which was trialed to address staff concerns relating to fairness and transparency. It was also aligned with Recommendation 3 of the 2024 HMICFRS Standards of Behaviour report that required CFOs to ensure firefighters who are promoted are posted to a different watch/station for a minimum of two months to address risks of reinforcing negative cultures. This policy aims to provide a clear, fair and consistent framework for the appointment of leaders ensuring all decisions are based on merit and aligned with service values and strategic objectives. The trade unions had been consulted and agreed the policy was clear and concise and welcomed the inclusion of reasonable adjustments for neurodivergent candidates.

The ACFO-SPPR confirmed that both policies had been equality impact assessed with no issues raised and would be communicated with staff.

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

- (i) **Sexual Harassment Policy**
- (ii) **Promotion & Appointments Policy**

## **80. JOINT REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER AND TREASURER**

### **80.1 Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2026/27 – 2028/29**

The Treasurer provided Members with an update to the MTFS 2026/27 - 2028/29 which included the impact of the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement 2026/27 and the final 2026/27 budget and council tax proposals to be considered by the Authority on 13 February 2026.

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

He informed Members that the early approval of the 3 interdependent principles, detailed at section 3 of the report, had supported a clear strategic direction to address the significant budget deficit for 2026/27-2028/29. The updated report covered:

- Provisional 2026/27 Local Government Finance Settlement
- Impact of Settlement on the Authority
- Impact of Settlement on the MTFS
- Financial Outlook 2029/30
- Reserves Strategy
- Asset Management Plan (AMP)
- Conclusion and Robustness Advice

The Treasurer reported that while the Settlement was not as bad as forecast the Authority still faced a net budget deficit of £1.770m which would increase to £4.318m without annual £5 Council Tax increases. He proposed that the net deficit for 2026/27 of £0.973m should be funded from the Budget Support Fund and the CFO would need to develop detailed proposals to achieve the cuts deferred from 2026/27 (£0.973m) plus forecast deficits for 2027/28 (£0.306m) totalling £1.279m to be implemented no later than April 2027. The remaining savings of £0.491m would need to be implemented in April 2028.

He highlighted the impact of the settlement on the Authority's Core Spending Power (CSP) which will increase by just 6.3% over the next three years against a national average increase of 12.5% with four authorities gaining increases over 20%.

For Cleveland, this low increase in CSP is due to a reduction in Government funding of £1m between 2025/26 and 2028/29 and the forecast increase in Council Tax income reflecting the £5 Band D Referendum Limit. This leaves the Authority at risk from managing the uncertainty of national pay awards and inflation and the Treasurer noted that a 10% CSP would have given the Authority an additional CSP increase of £1.3m, which would have reduced the next three-year deficit of £1.770m by 73%.

The Treasurer referred Members to the tables at section 6 which set out the annual deficits 2026/27 to 2028/29 to reflect the impact of the settlement, with and without the £5 Council Tax increase, and the scenarios for identifying those savings against the added risks of national pay awards for Grey and Green Book staff and non-pay inflation.

He stressed to Members that fundamental changes to the national funding system from 2026 creates uncertainty around the Fair Funding Allocations from 2029/30 and the Floor Funding Grant, a new grant from 2026 to support five fire and rescue services (including Cleveland), to manage the transition to the new national funding system which by 2028/29 will be £2.1m (5.4%) of the Authority's CSP.

Members discussed the impact of the settlement on the Asset Management Plan (AMP) covering capital expenditure from 2025/26 to 2029/30 which includes the reduction of the number of fire appliances to be re-phased from 6 to 5 and these savings be used to address the capital funding shortfall for Fire Behaviour Training Units (FBTU).

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

The Treasurer reported that additional funding of circa £170,000 from collection fund surpluses from the four councils could be allocated as a Revenue Contribution to Capital potentially reducing the FBTU shortfall to from £320,000 to £150,000. This additional allocation will be confirmed late January and the funding shortfall when the tenders are received.

Councillor Ovens queried the unfairness of the new funding allocation on the Authority which she viewed as clearly flawed taking account of Cleveland's demographic and high hazard industries. The Treasurer agreed that the funding formula, based on population numbers, did not work for the Authority and it had been recognised by the NFCC that the North-East fire and rescue services are clearly disadvantaged, which has driven a national response. He added that there needs to be a more sophisticated formula that recognises deprivation and COMAH sites and not just population and he would welcome a visit from government to experience first hand the risks across the area.

The Treasurer confirmed that as the final settlement was expected on 9 February 2026 he anticipated tabling some of the final calculations at the Authority meeting on 13 February.

**RECOMMENDED – That the Fire Authority approve the following proposals at its meeting on 13 February 2026:**

- i) **Note the national reliance on Council Tax increases to fund 75% of the forecast national Core Spending Power increase over the next three years (detailed in paragraph 4.4).**
- ii) **Note the detrimental impact of the 2026/27 settlement on the Authority's grant allocation and reliance on Council Tax to partly mitigate the impact on Core Spending Power over the next three years (detailed in paragraph 5.4).**
- iii) **Confirm the previously approved strategy to reduce the gross forecast deficit from £4.318m to £1.770m which is based on the following measures:**
  - **Implementing a 2026/27 Band D Council Tax increase of £5, with the same increases being approved in future years for 2027/28 and 2028/29 (subject to annual confirmation of the Council Tax referendum limit by the Government);**
  - **Using £0.973m of the Budget Support Fund to balance the 2026/27 budget, noting this measure defers this deficit to 2027/28;**
  - **Instruct the Chief Fire Officer to submit a savings plan by July 2026 to identify cuts of £1.770m, with £1.279m to be implemented from April 2027 and the remaining £0.491m from April 2028.**
  - **To note that implementation of the savings plan may need to be supported by using the Budget Support Fund in either 2027/28 or 2028/29 to manage the phasing of retirements / leavers to achieve the necessary permanent savings. This issue will be addressed in the July report.**

**80.1 Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2026/27 – 2028/29 cont.****iv) Approve the following detailed Council Tax amounts for 2026/27**

<b>Council Tax Band</b>	<b>2026/27 Council Tax</b>	<b>Annual increase</b>	<b>Weekly increase (approximate)</b>	<b>% households</b>
<b>A</b>	<b>£66.31</b>	<b>£3.33</b>	<b>6p</b>	<b>45.1%</b>
<b>B</b>	<b>£77.36</b>	<b>£3.89</b>	<b>7p</b>	<b>18.7%</b>
<b>C</b>	<b>£88.41</b>	<b>£4.44</b>	<b>9p</b>	<b>18.3%</b>
<b>D</b>	<b>£99.46</b>	<b>£5.00</b>	<b>10p</b>	<b>9.3%</b>
<b>E</b>	<b>£121.56</b>	<b>£6.11</b>	<b>12p</b>	<b>5.3%</b>
<b>F</b>	<b>£143.66</b>	<b>£7.22</b>	<b>14p</b>	<b>2.1%</b>
<b>G</b>	<b>£165.77</b>	<b>£8.33</b>	<b>16p</b>	<b>1.1%</b>
<b>H</b>	<b>£198.92</b>	<b>£10.00</b>	<b>20p</b>	<b>0.1%</b>

- v) Approve the proposal to manage any 2026/27 changes in resources between the provisional and final settlement, plus any changes in the final notifications from the four councils, by increasing / decreasing use of the Budget Support Fund. To note these details will be reported to the Authority on 13<sup>th</sup> February.**
- vi) Note the risk scenarios to the revenue budget 2026/27 to 2028/29 detailed in section 6 and the financial outlook for 2029/30 detailed in section 7.**
- vii) Confirm the Reserves Strategy detailed in section 8 which underpins the MTFS, AMP and ongoing financial planning.**
- viii) Approve the Asset Management Plan amendments detailed in section 9, which reduce the number of fire appliances to be rephased from 6 to 5, with the resulting capital saving being allocated towards the Fire Behaviour Training Units (FBTUs). To also approve the allocation of the Collection Fund surplus (once confirmed) as a revenue contribution towards the remaining FBTUs capital funding shortfall.**
- ix) Note the Treasurers statutory robust advice detailed in paragraphs 10.8 to 10.10.**

- 81. 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 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.”

- 82. CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES**  
**RESOLVED - that the Confidential Minutes of the Executive Committee on 28 November 2025 be confirmed.**

**83. CONFIDENTIAL REPORTS OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER**

**83.1 Procurement Update Report**

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

**COUNCILLOR DAVID COUPE**  
**CHAIR**