
CLEVELAND FIRE AUTHORITY

MINUTES OF ORDINARY MEETING

22 MARCH 2024



PRESENT:

CHAIR

Cllr David Coupe – Middlesbrough Council

HARTLEPOOL BOROUGH COUNCIL

Cllr Ben Clayton

MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL

Cllr Dennis McCabe, Naweed Hussain

REDCAR & CLEVELAND BOROUGH COUNCIL

Cllrs Peter Chaney, Steve Kay, Mary Ovens

STOCKTON ON TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

Councillors Jim Beall, Stefan Houghton, Sufi Mubeen, Mick Stoker

AUTHORISED OFFICERS

Chief Fire Officer, Legal Adviser & Monitoring Officer, Treasurer

Assistant Chief Fire Officer - Strategic Planning & Resources

Acting Assistant Chief Fire Officer - Community Protection

Area Manager – Prevention, Protection and Engagement

APOLOGIES:

Cllr John Leedham - Hartlepool Borough Council

Cllr John Kabuye - Middlesbrough Council

Cllr John Gardner - Stockton Borough Council

96. WELCOME NEW MEMBER

The Chair informed Members that Hartlepool Borough Council had appointed Councillor John Leedham to the Authority to replace Councillor Tom Cassidy. He placed on record thanks to Councillor Cassidy for the support he had given during his time with the Authority.

RESOLVED – That the change of Membership to the Cleveland Fire Authority be noted.

97. DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS INTERESTS

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

98. MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of proceedings of the Ordinary Meeting of 9 February 2024 be confirmed.

99. MINUTES OF MEETINGS

RESOLVED - that the Minutes of the Executive (Appeals) Committee on 19 February 2024, Audit & Governance Committee on 23 February 2024 and Executive Committee on 15 March 2024 be confirmed.

100. COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED BY THE CHAIR

There were no items of Communication received.

101. REPORTS OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

101.1 Efficiency and Productivity Plan 2024/25

The Chief Fire Officer (CFO) presented Members with the Efficiency and Productivity Plan which sets out how the Authority will achieve 2% non-pay efficiencies and increase productivity by 3% over the period 2024/25. These targets were agreed by the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) and Local Government Association (LGA) as part of the 2021/22 Spending Review and the CFO and Treasurer are directly responsible for ensuring the targets are achieved.

Members thanked officers for providing a comprehensive report and acknowledged the difficulties of constantly trying to achieve more with less funding. They also suggested the preventative work carried out by firefighters be more widely promoted.

RESOLVED - that Members approved that Authority's Efficiency and Productivity Plan 2024/25 and noted that it will be published on the Brigade website by 31 March 2024.

101.2 Service Plan Priorities 2024/25

Members received the corporate priorities for 2024/25 which were the result of strategic planning and integrated risk management activities by the Executive Leadership Team to ensure the strategic direction remains appropriate. The outcomes from this work were presented to the Executive Committee on 19 January 2024 as a suite of priorities for inclusion in the Service Plan 2024/25 to support the delivery of the Authority's Community Risk, People and Resource plans for 2022-26.

Members asked how the public holds the Authority to account on delivering these priorities. The CFO confirmed that there is constant interaction with the public through social media which is picked up by the Communications Teams. In addition, the public is regularly consulted as part of the Brigade's Community Engagement Strategy.

RESOLVED – That Members approved the corporate priorities for 2024/25 at Appendix 1, as recommended by the Executive Committee on 19 January 2024, to be set out in the Authority's Service Plan 2024/25.

101.3 Information Pack cont.

101.3 Campaigns

Spring Campaign 2024

The CFO introduced the Area Manager for Prevention, Protection and Engagement (AM-PPE) to the meeting. He circulated a copy of the Brigade's Spring Campaign brochure and outlined the key prevention activities to be undertaken by operational crews and Community Liaison Officers, specifically over the school holiday period.

101.3 Information Pack cont.

Members thanked the AM-PPE for sharing the brochure and suggested increasing engagement with ward councillors in advance to promote activities via their newsletters to residents.

RESOLVED – that the information pack be noted.

102. REPORT OF THE CLERK

102.1 Calendar of Meetings 2024/25

Members considered the proposed schedule of Cleveland Fire Authority meetings for the municipal year of 2024/25. The Clerk 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 7 June 2024.

Members discussed the start time of the Executive Committee meeting which was currently being trialled at 10.15am and agreed to change to 11.00am to align with the start time of the Audit & Governance Committee.

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

103. REPORT OF THE LEGAL ADVISER AND MONITORING OFFICER

103.1 Pay Policy Statement 2024/25

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 2024/25 at Appendix 1, which had been considered by the Executive Committee on 15 March 2024, and outlined the key changes as highlighted in yellow which included:

- Firefighter (Development) - £28,310 (pay award pending 1 July 2024)
- Non-operational employees Grade B (Development) - £23,114 (pay award pending 1 April 2024)

He reported that the Government's National Living Wage sets a minimum wage for all workers aged 25 years and over of £11.44 per hour, which equates to an annual salary of £22,067.76, which was lower than the Authority's lowest paid employees Grade B (Development) which is currently £22,737 (pay award pending 1 April 2024).

RESOLVED - That Members approved Cleveland Fire Authority's Pay Policy Statement 2024/25 for publication.

104. REPORT OF THE TREASURER

104.1 Treasury Management Strategy 2024/25

Members considered the Treasury Management Strategy report which had been scrutinised by the Audit & Governance Committee on 23 February 2024. The report covered:

- Economic Background and Outlook for Interest Rates
- Treasury Management Strategy 2023/24 – 3rd Quarter Review
- Treasury Management Strategy 2024/25
- Borrowing Strategy 2024/25
- Investment Strategy 2023/24
- Minimum Revenue Provision and Interest Costs and other Regulatory Information 2024/25

The Treasurer informed Members that the Bank of England decision to retain the Base Rate at 5.25% suggested this would be the peak level and provided inflation continued to reduce during 2024 interest rates should begin to reduce. He reported that the timing of this would be critical to the Authority's borrowing for the AMP and for securing interest income to support the MTFs up to and beyond 2026/27.

RESOLVED – That Members approved the following recommendations made by the Audit & Governance Committee at its meeting on 23 February 2024:

- i) **The 2023/24 Treasury Management third quarter position detailed in section 5 be noted.**
- ii) **The prudential indicators outlined in Appendix A be approved.**
- iii) **Borrowing Strategy 2024/25**
Members noted that in the event of a change in economic circumstances that the Treasurer may take out additional borrowing in advance of need if this secures the lowest long term interest cost.
- iv) **Investment Strategy 2024/25**
Members approved the Counterparty limits as set out in paragraph 8.7.
- i) **Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Statement**
Members approved the following MRP statement:
 - For capital expenditure incurred before 1st 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 except where the Authority makes Voluntary Revenue Payments (VRP) 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;
 - The Treasurer may determine to make Voluntary Revenue Provision payments to reduce the Authority's overall CFR if it is in the best financial interests of the Authority.

- 105. 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 1, 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 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.”**
- 106. CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF MEETINGS
RESOLVED – that the Confidential Minutes of the Executive (Appeals) Committee on 19 February 2024 and Executive Committee on 15 March 2024 be confirmed.**

**COUNCILLOR DAVID COUPE
CHAIR**