
CLEVELAND FIRE AUTHORITY

MINUTES OF ORDINARY MEETING

9 DECEMBER 2022



PRESENT:

CHAIR

Cllr Paul Kirton – Stockton on Tees Borough Council

HARTLEPOOL BOROUGH COUNCIL

Cllrs Ben Clayton, Angela Falconer

MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL

Cllrs Teresa Higgins, Tom Mawston

REDCAR & CLEVELAND BOROUGH COUNCIL

Cllrs Billy Ayre, Julie Craig, Martin Fletcher, Mary Ovens

STOCKTON ON TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

Cllrs Lynn Hall, Jean O'Donnell

AUTHORISED OFFICERS

Chief Fire Officer, Legal Adviser and Monitoring Officer, Treasurer,
Assistant Chief Fire Officer – Community Protection

APOLOGIES:

Assistant Chief Fire Officer - Strategic Planning & Resources

Councillor Leisa Smith – Hartlepool Borough Council

Councillor Jon Rathmell, Naweed Hussain, Middlesbrough Council

Councillor Steve Matthews, Luke Frost - Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council

75. DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS INTEREST

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

76. MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of proceedings of the Ordinary Meeting of 14 October 2022 be confirmed.

77. MINUTES OF MEETINGS

RESOLVED - that the Minutes of the Audit & Governance Committee on 18 November and Executive Committee on 25 November 2022 be confirmed.

78. COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED BY THE CHAIR

- FBU – Notice of Ballot
- LGA – Grey Book Pay Offer

RESOLVED – that the communications be noted.

79. REPORTS OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

79.1 Public Sector Equality Duty Report 2021/22

The CFO presented this annual report which highlights the Authority's work, and reinforces its commitment towards, complying with the Public Sector Equality Duty. The report includes:

- Gender Pay Gap Reporting
- Workforce Profile
- Creating an Inclusive Culture
- Staff Networks
- Activities

This Report was considered by the Executive Leadership Team on 5 December 2022 and circulated to the Brigades' Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Board. Members welcomed the extensive work being undertaken towards making the Brigade a diverse and inclusive organisation.

RESOLVED – that the Public Sector Equality Duty 2021/22 be approved.

79.2 Independent Culture Review of London Fire Brigade 2022

The CFO reported that this independent review of the culture of London Fire Brigade (LFB) was established by the London Fire Commissioner in response to the death of Firefighter Jaden Matthews Francois-Esprit who took his own life following alleged racial bullying.

The CFO noted that the review aimed to assess the existing culture of LFB and consider the extent the Brigade and its employees have created a culture free from discrimination and unfairness. He referred Members to the key findings detailed at Appendix 1 which painted a picture of poor behaviour and painful experiences over many years with women, Black, Asian and minority ethnic, LGBTQ+ and neurodiverse staff experiencing poor treatment and less career progression.

The CFO referred Members to the recommendations at Appendix 2 and confirmed that learning from LFB's culture review would be used to drive continual improvement at Cleveland and the recommendations would be reviewed in detail and improvements implemented where appropriate.

Councillor Craig acknowledged that workplace bullying was highly concerning and a difficult challenge for organisations to ensure support mechanisms are in place. Councillor Ovens highlighted Cleveland's key strength is that the Brigade is seen as part of the community and highly valued and has systems in place including occupational health, HR and due process to tackle issues.

RESOLVED – That Members noted:

- (i) the contents of the Independent Culture Review of London Fire Brigade November 2022 Report at Appendix 1;**
- (ii) that the Chief Fire Officer will review the London Fire Brigade Report and its recommendations in detail and look to implement improvements to the local arrangements where appropriate; and**
- (iii) that further reports will be provided as necessary.**

79.3 Manchester Arena Inquiry Publication

Members considered the summary of findings from the second volume of the Manchester Arena Inquiry which examined the emergency response following the attack on the Manchester Arena on 22 May 2017 that killed 22 people.

The CFO reported that this statutory public inquiry was published by the Hon. Sir John Saunders who was Chairman of the Inquiry and referred Members to the conclusions and recommendations at Appendix 1.

The CFO gave Members assurance that he would review the report's findings and recommendations and work with other emergency services and wider public sector partners to ensure that any learning is captured and areas for improvement are developed into prioritised into local action plans.

Councillor Mawston asked whether police, fire and ambulance work well in Cleveland. The CFO gave assurance that monthly tactical exercises were conducted on various scenarios up to and including terrorism and that the Brigade had systems in place aligned to the Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Programme (JESIP).

RESOLVED – That Members noted:

- (i) the publication of the Manchester Arena Inquiry Volume 2: Emergency Response Report November 2022;**
- (ii) the Inquiry's summary of findings and the 149 recommendations attached as Appendix 1; and**
- (iii) that the Chief Fire Officer would review the report and its recommendations in detail and look to implement improvements to local arrangements where appropriate.**

79.4 Information Pack

79.4.1 Employers Circulars

79.4.3 Campaigns

RESOLVED – that the information pack be noted.

80. JOINT REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER AND TREASURER

80.1 Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2023/24 – 2025/26

The Treasurer presented a detailed update on the Authority's MTFS which integrates the revenue budget, Asset Management Plan, and Reserves Strategy and underpins the delivery of the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP). The report covered:

- Changes in recurring funding 2013/14 to 2022/23
- Low council tax base
- Impact of previous budget reductions
- Impact of Economic Environment on MTFS Forecasts
- Update of MTFS Forecasts
- Local Government Funding Settlement and Fair Funding Review
- National Pay Awards
- Government funding 2023/24 onwards
- Pension Grant

80.1 Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2023/24 – 2025/26 cont.

- Council Tax Referendum Limits
- Revised forecast deficits based on core planning assumptions 2023/24 to 2025/26
- Core planning assumptions 2022/23 to 2025/26
- Planning scenarios – Alternative potential budget deficits 2023/24 to 2025/26
- Asset Management Plan (AMP)

The Treasurer confirmed that this was without doubt the most difficult and uncertain budget position the Authority had ever faced with potentially two unsettled pay awards at the point of budget setting and a deficit of between £1.8 and £2.4m for 2023/24.

As reported to the Executive Committee on 25 November 2022, he confirmed that at this stage of budget setting there was too much uncertainty and variability regarding the actual deficit to be faced by the Authority to enable a detailed strategy to be developed and put forward for Members consideration. The announcement of the provisional 2023/24 Local Government Finance Settlement, including confirmation of the actual Council Tax referendum limit, will be a key milestone and provide funding certainty. Detailed proposals to address the budget deficit will then be developed and reported in line with the budget timetable as follows:

- 20 Jan 2023 - Executive Committee to receive the updated MTFS to reflect the 2023/24 Local Government Settlement and to determine proposals to be referred to the Full Authority.
- 10 Feb 2023 – Full Authority to consider recommendations from the Executive

The Treasurer confirmed that the strategy to address the deficit will be based on a combination of identification of budget saving which can be implemented over the period 2023/24 to 2025/26; use of interest income; and use of the Budget Support Fund. Work is ongoing to update the AMP as inflation will increase the cost of the approved programme and details will be reported in line with the budget timetable

He reported that additional costs will need to be funded from a combination of value engineering, re-assessing priorities and potentially additional prudential borrowing. This includes the additional £191k required to fund the Drill Towers due to the impact of construction industry inflation.

Councillor Hall acknowledged that Cleveland was one of the smallest authorities with the biggest challenges and asked what impact the £5 Council Tax referendum limit would actually have. The Treasurer confirmed this would provide the Authority with £1.7m recurring income over 3 years and would represent 0.3% of the total Council Tax bill people pay.

Councillor Clayton stated that it was a depressing outlook financially for the Brigade, which despite being a small authority consistently out-performs other fire services. He acknowledged that the funding formula was broken.

RESOLVED – That Members noted the report.

- 81. 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, 4 and 7 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; namely information relating to any action taken or to be taken in connection with the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime.”
- 82. CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES**
RESOLVED – that the Confidential Minutes of proceedings of the Ordinary Meeting of 14 October 2022 be confirmed.
- 83. CONFIDENTIAL REPORTS OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER**
- 83.1 Firefighters Pay Claim 2022**
Members received details on the latest position in relation to the ongoing Pay Claim and Business Continuity Arrangements.
- 83.2 Health & Safety Executive – Accident Investigation Outcome**
The CFO provided Members with an update on the outcome of the Accident Investigation.

**COUNCILLOR PAUL KIRTON
CHAIR**