

CLEVELAND FIRE AUTHORITY

MINUTES OF ORDINARY MEETING

24 MARCH 2023



PRESENT:

CHAIR

Cllr Paul Kirton – Stockton on Tees Borough Council

HARTLEPOOL BOROUGH COUNCIL

Cllrs Ben Clayton, Angela Falconer, Leisa Smith

MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL

Cllrs Naweed Hussain, Tom Mawston

REDCAR & CLEVELAND BOROUGH COUNCIL

Cllrs Julie Craig, Mary Ovens

STOCKTON ON TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

Cllrs Lynn Hall, Jean O'Donnell, Steve Matthews

AUTHORISED OFFICERS

Chief Fire Officer, Legal Adviser and Monitoring Officer, Treasurer

Assistant Chief Fire Officer - Strategic Planning & Resources

Assistant Chief Fire Officer - Community Protection

APOLOGIES:

Councillor Teresa Higgins - Middlesbrough Council

Councillor Billy Ayre – Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council

114. DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS INTEREST

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

115. MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of proceedings of the Ordinary Meeting of 10 February 2023 be confirmed.

116. MINUTES OF MEETINGS

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Audit & Governance Committee on 24 February 2023 and Executive Committee on 3 March 2023 be confirmed.

117. COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED BY THE CHAIR

- Gill Gittins – Pay Updates
- Home Office – Industrial Action Assurance

RESOLVED – that the communications be noted.

118. REPORTS OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

118.1 Service Plan 2023/24

The Chief Fire Officer (CFO) presented the Service Plan 2023/24 which contained the priorities for the forthcoming year and reflected the second year of the Authority's Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) 2022-26.

He reported that the annual strategic planning activities had been undertaken by the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) in January 2023. This included a review of the Community Risk Management, People and Resources plans to ensure they were still relevant and the actions were updated accordingly to support delivery into 2023/24, as summarised in the Service Plan 2023/24 at Appendix 1.

The CFO confirmed that the progress against the priorities will be reported to and monitored by ELT and the Authority's Executive Committee.

RESOLVED – That the Service Plan 2023/24 be noted.

118.2 Information Pack

- 118.2.1 National Joint Circulars
- 118.2.2 Employers' Circulars
- 118.2.3 Campaigns

RESOLVED – that the information pack be noted.

119. REPORT OF THE CLERK

119.1 Calendar of Meetings 2023/24

Members considered the proposed schedule of Cleveland Fire Authority meetings for the municipal year of 2023/24. 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 9 June 2023.

RESOLVED – That the Cleveland Fire Authority meeting schedule for 2023/24 be approved.

120. REPORT OF THE TREASURER

120.1 Treasury Management Strategy 2023/24

The Treasurer reported that the Strategy had been scrutinised by the Audit & Governance Committee on 24 February 2023 and no issues had been raised. He outlined the report in detail, which included:

- Economic Background and Outlook for Interest Rates
- Interest Rate Forecasts up to March 2026
- Treasury Management Strategy 2023/24
- Borrowing Strategy 2022/23
- Investment Strategy 2023/24
- Minimum Revenue Provision and Interest Costs / Regulatory Information 2023/24
- Borrowing and Prudential Indicators

120.1 Treasury Management Strategy 2023/24 cont.

The Treasurer concluded that this Strategy sets out how the Authority will comply with the regulatory framework to ensure it achieves the lowest borrowing costs and security for any temporary cash investments made by the Authority. He added that within this framework and the more uncertain / volatile financial environment officers would continue to actively manage borrowing and investments to support the overall financial position of the Authority.

RESOLVED - That as recommended by the Audit & Governance Committee on 24 February 2023, the following recommendations be approved:

- (i) **That the 2021/22 Treasury Management outturn detailed in Section 5 and Appendix A be noted.**
- (ii) **That the 2022/23 Treasury Management mid-year position detailed in section 6 be noted.**
- (iii) **That the prudential indicators outlined in Appendix B be approved.**
- (iv) **Borrowing Strategy 2023/24**
That Members note 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.
- (v) **Investment Strategy 2023/24**
That the Counterparty limits as set out in paragraph 9.8. be approved.
- (i) **Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Statement**
That Members approve 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 CLG Regulations. This is 4% of the Capital Financing Requirement except where the Authority makes Voluntary Revenue Payments 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.

121. REPORT OF THE LEGAL ADVISER AND MONITORING OFFICER

121.1 Pay Policy Statement 2023/24

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

121.1 Pay Policy Statement 2023/24 cont.

The LAMO outlined the Pay Policy Statement 2023/24 at Appendix 1 and highlighted the remuneration of the lowest paid employees, which assumed the latest settlement offer of a 7% pay rise in 2022/23 and 5% for 2023/24. This was:

- Firefighter (Development) - £28,310
- Non-operational employees Grade B (Development) - £20,812 (£21,852 estimated 5% for 2023/24).

He reported that the Government's National Living Wage sets a minimum wage for all workers aged 25 years and over which equates to £18,325.50, which was lower than the Authority's lowest paid employees Grade B (Development) which is currently £20,812 (£21,852 estimated 5% for 2023/24).

The LAMO confirmed that the Pay Policy Statement for 2023/24, which had been considered by the Executive Committee on 3 March 2023, was based on the current pay offer and would be updated as required should any further changes occur.

RESOLVED - That the Pay Policy Statement 2023/24 be approved and published, as recommended by the Executive Committee on 3 March 2023.

122. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

122.1 Farewell to Members

The CFO noted that due to local elections taking place on 4 May 2023, this would be the final meeting for some Authority Members who were not standing for re-election. He extended sincere thanks to longtime Authority supporter Councillor Tom Mawston who had served a total of 18 years with the Authority since 1996. He also recognised the support of Councillor Teresa Higgins who had been on the Authority since 2015 and served as Chair of the Local Pension Board.

The CFO recognised the Vice-Chair Councillor Jean O'Donnell for her 21 years' consecutive service and the past 8 years as Vice Chair. He thanked Councillor O'Donnell for her guidance, wisdom and direction and for representing the Authority at national events. Councillor O'Donnell said she had enjoyed being part of the innovative journey of growth the Authority had been on and considered it to be a beacon of light among local government.

The CFO also recognised the Chair, Councillor Paul Kirton and thanked him for his 18 years' service. He praised the Chair for leading the Authority through some unprecedented times over the past four years and for his consistent support. Councillor Kirton thanked Members and Officers for their continued commitment and said he was proud to have had the opportunity to lead the Authority and be part of its outstanding achievements.

- 123. 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.”
- 124. CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES**
RESOLVED – that the Confidential Minutes of proceedings of the Ordinary Meeting of 10 February 2023 be confirmed.
- 125. CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF MEETINGS**
RESOLVED – that the Confidential Minutes of the Executive Committee on 3 March 2023 be confirmed.

The Treasurer left the meeting.

126. CONFIDENTIAL REPORT OF THE CLERK

126.1 Future Treasurers Role

Members considered the arrangements for the future provision of a Section 151 Officer to the Authority.

COUNCILLOR PAUL KIRTON
CHAIR