
CLEVELAND FIRE AUTHORITY

MINUTES OF ORDINARY MEETING

24 JULY 2015



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- PRESENT:**
- CHAIR:-** Councillor Jan Brunton – Middlesbrough Council
- HARTLEPOOL BOROUGH COUNCIL**
Cllrs Stephen Akers-Belcher, Rob Cook, Marjorie James, Ray Martin-Wells
- MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL**
Cllrs Ronald Arundale, Shamal Biswas, Teresa Higgins, Naweed Hussain
- REDCAR & CLEVELAND BOROUGH COUNCIL**
Cllrs Billy Ayre, Norah Cooney, Ray Goddard, Mary Lanigan, Bob Norton, Mary Ovens
- STOCKTON ON TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL**
Cllrs John Gardner, Paul Kirton, Jean O'Donnell, Stephen Parry, Mick Stoker, William Woodhead
- AUTHORISED OFFICERS**
Chief Fire Officer, Director of Corporate Services, Legal Adviser and Monitoring Officer, Deputy Treasurer
- BRIGADE OFFICERS**
Democratic & Administration Manager
- APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** Councillor Tom Mawston – Middlesbrough Council
Councillor Gillian Corr – Stockton Borough Council

12. DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS INTEREST

Councillor Akers-Belcher declared a personal interest. Minute no. 16.1 refers.

13. MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Cleveland Fire Authority Annual Meeting on 26 June 2015 be confirmed.

14. COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED BY THE CHAIR

Department of Communities and Local Government - Spending Review
Mhairi Aylott, Ministry of Justice - Victims Code Consultation
Neil O'Connor - Trade Union Bill
Clair Alcock - Local Pensions Board

RESOLVED – that the communications be noted.

15. REPORT OF THE CLERK TO THE AUTHORITY

15.1 Cleveland Fire Authority Governance Review

The Clerk summarised the background to the CFA Governance Review relating to OD2: Review Cleveland Fire Authority's Governance Arrangements which was established as a result of the Authority wanting to demonstrate leadership by remaining 'fit for purpose' with regard to its structure and work contributing to the overall Authority efficiency savings.

15.1 Cleveland Fire Authority Governance Review (continued)

She informed Members that at the Fire Authority meeting on 27 March 2015, Members resolved that the future governance framework of Cleveland Fire Authority be progressed as outlined at paragraph 3.6 of the report, with the number of elected members being reduced to 12 and the Authority underpinned by an Executive Committee and Audit and Governance Committee.

The Clerk reported that a 12 week consultation had taken place from 2 April to 26 June 2015 which included; Leaders of the Borough Councils in Teesside; Chief Executives of the Borough Councils in Teesside; Cleveland's Police and Crime Commissioner; Members of Parliament in Teesside; Chairs of Neighbouring Fire and Rescue Authorities (Durham and Darlington, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear and North Yorkshire). She informed Members that the outcomes of the consultation were outlined within the report at paragraph 5.1 and that Middlesbrough Council's response to the consultation had been tabled which stated that:

“At the Corporate Affairs & Audit Committee on 25 June 2015 it was resolved to support Option 5 and four year appointments to the Authority”. (16 members)

In light of the consultation, the Chair asked Members if they had any comments on the proposal at section 3.6 of the report.

Councillor Akers-Belcher moved that the Authority reduce their Membership to 16 with the new arrangements coming into force at the next Annual Meeting of the Authority (10 June 2016). The motion was seconded by Councillor James.

Councillor Lanigan reported that the Redcar & Cleveland Executive Scrutiny Committee had deemed 16 Fire Authority members 'adequate' but agreed this be deferred to June 2016. Councillor Lanigan said she personally felt that the level of efficiencies to be made by implement the new governance arrangements before this time was relatively small and her Loftus constituents felt it would be detrimental to the Fire Authority.

Councillor Martin-Wells supported Councillor Akers-Belcher's motion and sought clarity that the continued reviewing of governance arrangements would not include further reviewing the numbers. The Chairman confirmed that Members had agreed future Membership to be 16 and that would not be subject to change. Councillor Martin-Wells confirmed that the Conservative Group was supportive of maintaining the status quo until the next Annual Meeting in June 2016.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) That the outcomes from the consultation on the proposed future Cleveland Fire Authority as detailed in section 5 of the report were noted.
- (ii) That the implementation of the CFA proposals as detailed at paragraph 3.6 of the report be approved, with the exception of the number of elected members on the CFA which will now be 16.
- (iii) That the implementation of the new Fire Authority Structure and governance arrangements commence on 10 June 2016, in order to allow time to establish the associated governance arrangements.
- (iv) That the Fire Authority receive further reports where appropriate.

16. REPORTS OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

16.1 Annual Performance and Efficiency Report

The Chief Fire Officer (CFO) gave a presentation outlining the performance of the Brigade for the year ending 31 March 2015 and covered the following 8 key areas in detail:-

1. Strategic Goals & Aims – Performing Well

Safer Communities

- All fire fatalities 2014/15 – 2, decrease of 3 from 2013/14
- All Fire Injuries 2014/15 – 21, increase of 1 from 2013/14
- Accidental Dwelling Fires (ADFs)– 2014/15 – 170, increase of 26 from 2013/14
- ADFs have cost the economy of Cleveland £4.25m in 2014/15
- ADFs change by district compared to 2013/14 – Hartlepool - +13%, Stockton - 2%, Middlesbrough +51% and Redcar & Cleveland +18%
- Deliberate Fires – 2014/15 - 2,753, increase of 67 incidents from 2013/14
- Deliberate Fires have cost the economy of Cleveland £10.907m in 2014/15
- Deliberate Fires change by district compared to 2013/14 – Hartlepool +49%, Stockton +6%, Middlesbrough +3% and Redcar & Cleveland -14%

2. Annual Priorities – Performing Well

- Annual and Corporate Priorities – 21 complete, 2 on-going and 1 deferred

3. Key Service Standards – Performing Well

- Call Handling – target 98% of calls are answered and the appropriate response mobilised within 2 minutes – current performance 92%
- Response Standard – all benchmarks exceeded the 75% target

4. Operational Assurance – Performing Strongly

- Operational Assessment undertaken in 2014 by senior fire professionals and members from other authorities - 7 key areas were assessed and 4 were assessed as being advanced and 3 as established
- In 2014 the National Resilience Audit Team carried out an audit in 7 key areas which were split into 41 sub areas and the Brigade achieved 100% compliance

16.1 Annual Performance and Efficiency Report (continued)

5. Good Corporate Governance – Performing Strongly

- Mazars issued an unqualified opinion on the Authority's financial statements on 30 September 2014
- CLG have confirmed that Cleveland Fire Brigade complied with the national framework in term of the Annual Assurance Statement – 3 July 2014

6. Value for Money – Performing Strongly

- Mazars have concluded that Cleveland Fire Authority has proper arrangements in place to ensure financial resilience
- Mazars have concluded that Cleveland Fire Authority has proper arrangements in place to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness
- The efficiency target for 2014/15 of £1,627,000 was achieved in full
- Staff sickness has increased by 6% in 2014/15 compared to 2013/14

7. Comparison against other Fire and Rescue Services – Performing adequately

- Out of 13 comparable indicators – 3 are in the top, 4 are in the second, 2 are in the third and 4 are in the bottom quartile

8. Customer Care – Performing Strongly

- Overall customer satisfaction rate for 2014/15 – 99%

The CFO confirmed that the overall performance for 2014/15 was assessed as **Good**.

Councillor Biswas noted that year-on-year deliberate fires continued to be a problem for the Brigade despite continued efforts to educate communities and asked where the Brigade was failing to get over the message that this was not acceptable.

The CFO confirmed that the Brigade was working with the University of Teesside to try to establish why the area's social profile produces such high levels of arson. He confirmed that the Summer Arson Campaign had been recently launched and diversionary activities had been programmed to take place. In addition, the Director of Community Protection was targeting arson and seeking community involvement to identify the perpetrators within their estates.

Councillor Ayre referred to the number of fires he had seen on Eston Hills over the past 18 years and questioned whether education was the answer or whether prosecutions would have a greater effect. Mr D Howe, the Fire Brigade's Union (FBU) Secretary confirmed that he had worked at Grangetown Fire Station for 17 years and in his experience education was the only answer. He reported that firefighters worked tirelessly to educate the children in schools in that area and highlighted the problems the police face in getting adequate resources to deal with arson issues around Eston Hills. He added that despite fire crews being equally thin on the ground they continue to go into schools to teach fire prevention. Councillor Ayre suggested resources be targeted towards teenagers rather than younger children.

Councillor Akers Belcher declared an interest (14:42pm) for his involvement in The Rifty voluntary youth project in Hartlepool and requested further scrutiny of the correlation between the reduction of diversionary activities and persistent problems with arson. He requested information relating to how often the MUGA is used and whether structures were in place to deal with diversionary activities.

16.1 Annual Performance and Efficiency Report continued

Councillor Higgins disagreed that education was vital in dealing with arson and instead suggested consequences by way of prosecutions was the key.

The CFO acknowledged the need for a balance between education and prosecution in tackling arson and confirmed that appliances were fitted out with CCTV to enable images to be given to the police to secure prosecutions. The CFO stressed that the Authority, along with all Borough councils, had faced the downsizing of the organisation and the cuts had dissipated the number of people on the street.

Councillor Woodhead reported a lack of respect and the need for stiffer penalties.

The Chairman put on record thanks on behalf of the Authority to all staff and firefighters and applauded them for the continued efforts working under difficult circumstances.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) That the information contained within the Annual Performance & Efficiency Report at Appendix 1, be noted.**
- (ii) That the issue of reduced diversionary activities and the continued problem with arson be scrutinised.**

16.2 Disclosure and Barring Policy and Procedure

The CFO updated Members on the arrangements in place for ensuring the Authority makes safe recruitment decisions to prevent unsuitable people from working with vulnerable adults and children. He reported that in 2012, the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) was established which merged the functions of the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) and the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA). This became the Home Office agency committed to providing access to information about criminal convictions and other police records to help employers make informed decisions when recruiting staff. The CFO informed Members that the Brigade's Disclosure and Barring Policy & Procedure had been established in line with current legislation and good practice and both the FBU and UNISON had been consulted and raised no issues.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) That the Disclosure and Barring Policy, as outlined at Appendix 1, be approved.**
- (ii) That the Disclosure & Barring Procedure, as outlined at Appendix 2, be noted.**

16.3 Reservist Policy and Procedure

The CFO reported that the Brigade had established a Reservist Policy & Procedure to recognise the vital role of Britain's Reserve Forces and the valuable contribution that Reservists make to the defence of the country. He also acknowledged the need to ensure that the operations of the organisation are not adversely affected by Reservist activities and outlined the following legislation that exists to define the rights and liabilities of both parties:

- The Reserve Forces Act 1996
- The Reserve Forces (Safeguard of Employment) Act 1985

16.3 Reservist Policy and Procedure (continued)

The CFO noted that the FBU and UNISON have both been consulted with respect to the Reservist Policy and Procedure and no issues have been raised. Councillors Arundale and Biswas commended the Brigade for its commitment to supporting the Reserve Forces.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) That the Reservist Policy, as outlined at Appendix 1, be approved.**
- (ii) That the Reservist Procedure, as outlined at Appendix 2, be noted.**

16.4 Information Pack – July 2015

16.4.1 Fire & Rescue Service Monthly Bulletins

16.4.2 National Joint Circulars

RESOLVED - That the Information Pack be noted.

**COUNCILLOR JAN BRUNTON
CHAIR**