
CLEVELAND FIRE AUTHORITY

MINUTES OF ORDINARY MEETING

14 OCTOBER 2016



PRESENT:

HARTLEPOOL BOROUGH COUNCIL
Cllrs Rob Cook, Marjorie James, Ray Martin-Wells

MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL
Cllrs Jan Brunton, Teresa Higgins, Naweed Hussain

REDCAR & CLEVELAND BOROUGH COUNCIL
Cllrs Neil Bendelow, Norah Cooney, Brian Dennis, Mary Ovens

STOCKTON ON TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL
Cllrs Gillian Corr, Paul Kirton, Jean O'Donnell, Mick Stoker, William Woodhead MBE

AUTHORISED OFFICERS
Chief Fire Officer, Legal Adviser and Monitoring Officer, Treasurer

APOLOGIES: Director of Corporate Services

45. DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS INTEREST

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

46. MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Cleveland Fire Authority Meeting on 29 July 2016 be confirmed.

47. COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED BY THE CHAIR

<u>Daniel Greaves</u>	- Funding & Budget Assumptions Template
	- New Head of Strategy & Reform
<u>Brandon Lewis</u>	- Introduction as new Minister of State for Policing & the Fire Service at the Home Office
	- Fire Procurement Data
<u>Gill Gittins</u>	- Mandatory Gender Pay Reporting for Public Sector Employers
<u>Clair Alcock</u>	- HMRC Annual Allowance Calculator Contributions Holiday
<u>Peter Holland</u>	- Fire Safety in Custodial Premises

RESOLVED – that the communications be noted.

48. MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the Executive Committee Meeting on 19 August 2016, Audit & Governance Committee Meeting on 26 August 2016, Executive Committee Tender Awarding Meeting on 2 September 2016 be confirmed and the Executive Committee Meeting on 30 September 2016 be confirmed, subject to an amendment to reflect the departure of Councillor James after Minute No. 41.2.

49. REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

49.1 Information Pack

49.1.1 National Joint Circulars

49.1.2 Campaigns - Bonfire Strategy

RESOLVED – that the information pack be noted

50. JOINT REPORTS OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER AND TREASURER

50.1 Self Sufficient Local Government: 100% Business Rates Retention Consultation

The Treasurer provided Members with an overview of the Government's consultation proposals regarding the 100% retention of business rates by local government and the potential implications for Cleveland Fire Authority, as considered by the Executive Committee on 30 September.

He reported the current funding system was from four main sources: Council Tax Income; Revenue Support Grant; Business Rates Income; Top-up Grant or Tariff Payments and included a 'safety net' regime to protect individual authorities from excessive reductions in Business Rates Income which for 2016/17 is a threshold of £638,000 for the Authority.

The Treasurer referred Members to the table at para 4.7 and reported a potential Income Reduction of £3.25m by 2020/21 based on fire authorities receiving an increase from 1% to 2% of Retained Business Rates Income.

The Treasurer referred to the Chair's response on behalf of the Authority, detailed at Appendix 1, which addressed the 36 consultation questions and the covering letter which highlighted the specific risks for the Cleveland area. He noted that a further consultation was issued by the Government on 15 September 2016 with a deadline of 28 October 2016 and it was agreed he would formulate a response in consultation with the Chair.

Councillor Kirton expressed concerns that the Authority had already reduced its establishment to 265 firefighters and was not convinced that 'fair funding' would encompass the specific risks Teesside faced with a nuclear power station and 33 COMAH sites. The CFO reported that from an operation perspective, the four year multi-settlement figures extended beyond the current CIRMP, which expires in 2018. He confirmed that work was already underway to look at the risk profile of the area and he would be informing the Authority of the safety thresholds when this was completed. He reported that by 2019/20 the Authority's operational capacity would be 10 whole time appliances and 11 retained appliances with a maximum 40 professional firefighters available at any one time.

The Treasurer informed Members that he was still awaiting full details, but his rationale was for the Authority to put itself in the best position to mitigate the risk and manage the budget in relation to the earmarking resolution.

Councillor James suggested the Authority should be asking the Government whether it intends to continue to subsidise the London Boroughs and whether Cleveland Fire Authority will get a 'fair review'. The Treasurer reported that the Government had shied away from council tax evaluation and the Chair suggested these questions should be fielded via the local authorities.

50.1 Self Sufficient Local Government: 100% Business Rates Retention Consultation cont.

Councillor Cook expressed concern that Authority's successful preventative work and subsequent reduction in fires could be misinterpreted as needing fewer firefighters in the future, which would leave the area exposed in the event of a major incident.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) That the report and Chair's response to the consultation to meet the submission deadline of 26 September 2016, be noted.**
- (ii) That a response to the Government consultation issued on 15 September 2016 be submitted by the Treasurer in consultation with the Chair to meet the 28 October 2016 deadline.**
- (iii) That the provision of further update reports to Members when more information becomes available, be noted.**
- (iv) Members noted that in view of the financial uncertainty arising from the changes proposed by the Government it may be appropriate to begin to earmark one-off resources from achieving a 2016/17 managed underspend to support the budget when these changes are implemented. This issue will need to be considered as part of the 2017/18 budget process.**

50.2 Multi Year Government Funding Offer 2016/17 – 2019/20 and Efficiency Plan

The Treasurer provided Members with a brief update on the Government's offer to provide a firm four-year funding allocation to 2019/20 for single purpose FRAs in return for robust and transparent efficiency plans. He reported that the report had been considered by the Executive Committee on 30 September 2016 and referred Members to the Efficiency Plan at Appendix B.

RESOLVED:-

- (i) That Members approved the Executive Committee recommendation that an application for a four-year settlement to 2019/20 be submitted to the Home Office, based on the Efficiency Plan detailed at Appendix B, which reflects the Medium Term Financial Strategy approved by the Authority on 12 February 2016.**
- (ii) That the annual review of the Efficiency Plan as part of the process for updating the Medium Term Financial Strategy be approved and any proposed changes be reported to the full Authority for consideration and approval as part of the annual budget process.**
- (iii) That the Efficiency Plan be published on the Authority's website.**

51 REPORT OF THE TREASURER

51.1 Local Audit & Accountability Act Update

The Treasurer updated Members on progress relating to the application of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and that this report had been presented to the Audit & Governance Committee on 26 August 2016. He advised Members that the Government were making a series of changes on how external auditors are to be appointed and that by taking advantage of national procurement, the Authority would be likely to benefit from a lower price.

51.1 Local Audit & Accountability Act Update continued

The sector-led body, Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd (PSAA), have now been appointed by DCLG to operate the national scheme for appointing external auditors. Given the size of the Authority the Audit and Governance Committee felt that it would be taking a risk trying to appoint a suitably qualified External Auditor due to the complexity of the role and recommended that the Authority “opt in” to the PSAA.

RESOLVED – That the Audit & Governance Committee recommendation that the Authority becomes an ‘opted in’ Authority giving a firm commitment to Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) as outlined within the report, be approved.

52. 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 items of business, on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1, 3 and 4 below 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 and namely information relating to any 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.

53. CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the Confidential Minutes of the Cleveland Fire Authority Ordinary Meeting on 29 July be confirmed.

54. CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF COMMITTEES

RESOLVED – that the confidential minutes of the Executive Committee meetings on 19 August and 30 September 2016 and the Executive Committee Tender Awarding meeting on 2 September 2016 be confirmed.

55. ANY OTHER CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS

55.1 Access to Training & Administration Hub

**COUNCILLOR JAN BRUNTON
CHAIR**