
CLEVELAND FIRE AUTHORITY

MINUTES OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

22 SEPTEMBER 2017



PRESENT:

VICE CHAIR
Councillor Jean O'Donnell – Stockton on Tees Borough Council

MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL
Councillor Tom Mawston

REDCAR & CLEVELAND BOROUGH COUNCIL
Councillors Ray Goddard, Mary Ovens

STOCKTON ON TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL
Councillor William Woodhead MBE

AUTHORISED OFFICERS
Chief Fire Officer, Director of Corporate Services, Legal Adviser & Monitoring Officer, Treasurer

MAZARS
Ross Woodley, Audit Manager

APOLOGIES: Councillor Rob Cook – Hartlepool Borough Council
Councillor Jan Brunton – Middlesbrough Council

43. DECLARATION OF MEMBERS INTERESTS

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

44. MINUTES

RESOLVED - that the Minutes of the Executive Committee on 7 July 2017 be confirmed.

45. REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

45.1 Community Integrated Risk Management Plan 2014-18 - Progress Report

Members received a comprehensive update on the Authority's current position in relation to the CIRMP 2014-18 and specifically the priorities contained within the Service Plan 2017/18.

The Chief Fire Officer (CFO) noted that it was the final year of the 2014-18 CIRMP and extensive work had already been carried out to inform the planning phases of the Authority's CIRMP 2018-22. He reported that currently the Authority had 57 firefighters on duty at any one time and further cuts to the Authority's budget would require serious decisions to be made.

The CFO referred Members to Appendix 1 which outlined the CIRMP 2014-18 priorities and the progress made against each one, covering the following in detail:

45.1 Community Integrated Risk Management Plan 2014-18 - Progress Report cont.

ER1: Implement Emergency Response: Industrial and Commercial Strategy - the CFO reported that resource planning was previously based on a worst case scenario of having two concurrent 10 pump incidents and an additional pump available for support. He confirmed that the Authority had been working closely with all 15 high hazard sites in the Brigade area to assess the actual resources that would be required to deal with the worst case incident. Based on this new research the CFO confirmed that 12 pumps and 45 firefighters was the worst case and the Authority would also need to balance this with residential risk.

ER3.6 & ER3.7: Refurbishment of Guisborough and Loftus Fire Stations - the CFO confirmed that owing to having a small estates management team it was deemed too ambitious to achieve the refurbishments at Guisborough and Loftus Fire Stations and these priorities were now due for completion in the 2018/19 financial year.

ER9: Prepare for the Introduction of Retained Duty System Arrangements for the Second Fire Engine at Thornaby and Grangetown Fire Stations - the CFO reported that this priority had been put on hold and would be re-visited through the planning process when the resource implication on the CIRMP can be addressed.

The CFO reported that recruitment for retained crews in Redcar & Stockton had not been as successful as it had been in East Cleveland and Headland. Councillor Ovens asked what the impact would be of having to continue to resource these stations whole-time against plans for retained crews. The CFO reported that Billingham and Coulby Newham stations operated with a single pump with five riders however, to cover the staffing deficiencies at Redcar and Stockton retained appliances, this was occasionally reduced to four.

Councillor Mawston asked it was an option for a fire and rescue service to have a retained chief fire officer. The CFO confirmed it would be an option and that a complete review of the structure would be carried out and brought back to a future meeting.

C1: Strategic Planning & Community Integrated Risk Management Plan 2018/19 - 2021/22 - The CFO reported that the Director of Corporate Services had carried out a community risk profile and the Director of Community Protection completed work relating to emergency response standards to inform the draft CIRMP 2018-22 which is scheduled to be presented to the Fire Authority for consideration on 8 December 2017.

EC6: Emergency Medical Responder (EMR) Scheme - Collaboration with North East Ambulance and North East Fire and Rescue Services - the CFO reported that due to implications with the pay claim (which was considered in detail at minute number 49.1) the Brigade was currently only delivering EMR from Loftus, Saltburn and Skelton stations. He confirmed that at a meeting of the Regional Principal Officers it was agreed a collective letter would be written up informing NEAS that unless a standard contract was drawn up they would not be providing the EMR cover.

45.1 Community Integrated Risk Management Plan 2014-18 - Progress Report cont.

Councillor Ovens reported that she had attended a 'Better Health' meeting and had highlighted the lack of acknowledgment of fire and rescue authorities' role in supporting NEAS. The CFO confirmed that Councillor Ray Martin-Wells had written a letter to the Chief Executive of NEAS asking how they are currently dealing with calls in light of the fact that the Brigade attended circa 3,000 calls last year and now were getting just 80% of that number.

Councillor Mawston reported that Middlesbrough was making a move towards putting defibrillators in community areas around the town. Councillor Ovens reported that the Yorkshire Air Ambulance in Wakefield was trialing community responders. The CFO noted the use of community responders was popular in the south of the UK and highlighted the issue with having people available to respond 24/7. He reported that research had shown that when NEAS use the fire and rescue service to attend EMR calls the return is £15 for every £1 invested however a contractual relation would be required for this to continue across the North East.

Councillor O'Donnell thanked the officers for all the work that had gone into achieving the priorities to date. The CFO stated that with a 40% cut in budget and 30% cut in workforce, the Authority may have been over-ambitious with the number of priorities it had set.

RESOLVED - that the progress on the Authority's Community Integrated Risk Management as detailed in section 4 of the report be considered and noted.

45.2 Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy & Strategy

The Director of Corporate Services (DoCS) presented the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy and Strategy to Members and reported that the policy had been reviewed in line with the Authority's Policy Framework arrangements and took account of new legislation including the Equality Act 2010, Public Sector Equality Duty and Gender Pay.

The DoCS informed Members that the policy sets out the Authority's commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in its policy statement and its equality outcomes and objectives in line with its statutory duty and clarifies the roles and responsibilities of elected members, senior officers and staff and trade unions in terms of its implementation.

The DoCS referred Members to pages 6 & 7 of Appendix A which detailed the following Policy Objectives which were:

- Political and Professional Leadership
- Inclusive Culture
- Recruitment, Progression & Retention
- Delivering Services to Diverse Communities
- Positive Purchasing Power

The DoCS reported that currently the Brigade's workforce did not reflect the community of Teesside and work was underway locally to drive this change, as detailed at pages 19 – 25 of the strategy.

45.2 Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy & Strategy cont.

Nationally, the DoCS reported that the LGA had established an Inclusive Fire Service Group to drive equality, diversity and inclusion in Fire and Rescue Services across the country.

The DoCS reported that the policy had been Equality Impact Assessed and subject to consultation with North East Equality, with positive feedback. She reported that the FBU and Unison had also been supportive of the policy and strategy and the next stage was for it to be published on the Brigade website for a consultation period of one month to request feedback from the workforce and the community.

RESOLVED - That the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy attached as Appendix A be approved and the Strategy at Appendix B be noted.

45.3 Secondment Policy & Procedure

The CFO informed Members that the Secondment Policy had been updated to reflect the Authority's recognition of the importance of providing equal opportunities to assist in the ongoing development of individuals, which in turn benefits the organisation.

He reported that while employees do not have a statutory entitlement to request or undertake a secondment the arrangements to manage such a provision in a consistent, fair and reasonable manner was deemed important.

Councillor Mawston asked whether granting secondment opportunities had a detrimental effect on the shrinking workforce. The CFO confirmed that this was constantly under review. Councillor Mawston asked whether secondment contracts could be terminated if that person was needed in their original post. The CFO confirmed there was a clause which covered this for internal secondments.

The CFO confirmed that Unison and the FBU had been consulted on the proposed new Secondment Policy and no major issues had come to light. The revised policy had also been subject to an Equality Impact Assessment.

RESOLVED – That the Authority's Secondment Policy attached at Appendix A be approved.

45.4 Career Break Policy & Procedure

The CFO presented the refreshed Career Break Policy attached at Appendix A of the report and outlined the policy statement, aims and objectives contained within it. He reported that the document was last reviewed in 2009 and listed the material changes made as detailed in section 4 of the report. He confirmed that Unison and the FBU had been consulted on the policy with no issues emerging however he was still in discussions over some slight amendments to the procedures.

RESOLVED – that the Authority's Career Break Policy attached at Appendix A be approved.

46. TO RECEIVE THE REPORTS OF THE TREASURER

46.1 Financial Report 2016/17 (including the Statement of Accounts)

The Vice Chair agreed that this item be taken first on the agenda to allow the Audit Manager (AM) to present the Audit Completion Report (ACR). The Treasurer reminded Members that this Committee had been given delegated powers to approve the Statement of Accounts at the Authority meeting on 28 July 2017.

The AM reported that as presented to the Audit & Governance Committee on 28 August 2017, the ACR found no significant issues and had no material amendments that would affect the Authority's financial position.

He informed Members of a change to the audit timelines for 2018/19 which involved a new deadline of 31 July 2018. He confirmed this had been trialed for the 2016/17 accounts and while all audit work had been completed on time the earlier deadline had proved quite tight. For 2017/18 he confirmed that the Authority would need to hold a meeting as close to 31 July as possible and either deal with the business all in one day or delegate approval to the Audit & Governance committee so it doesn't have to go to the Executive Committee.

The Treasurer confirmed that this issue would be addressed through the meeting planning process and the accounts would be approved by the full Fire Authority at a meeting arranged to meet the statutory deadlines.

(11.25) The AM left the meeting.

RESOLVED:-

- i) That matters raised in Mazars' Audit Completion Report detailed in Appendix A, including the adjustments to the financial statements set out in Appendix A of the Audit Completion Report be noted.**
- ii) That the reasons detailed in the Letter of Representation (Appendix B) for not amending the Statement of Accounts to reflect the unadjusted misstatements in the accounts be approved.**
- iii) That the Letter of Representation attached at Appendix B be signed by the Vice Chair.**
- iv) That the Final Financial Report attached at Appendix C (incorporating the changes agreed with Mazars) be approved using delegated powers given by the Full Authority on 28 July 2017.**

46.2 Local Council Tax Support 2018/19 – Consultation

The Treasurer reported that Middlesbrough Council had provided details of its Local Council Tax Support (LCTS) Consultation for 2018/19 and sought the Authority's view on whether to retain LCTS at 80% or increase to either 82.5% or 85%. He reported that if implemented, the proposed increases would reduce the amount of council tax paid by low income working age households from 20% to either 17.5% or 15%.

46.3 Local Council Tax Support 2018/19 – Consultation continued

The Treasurer referred Members to section 5 of the report outlining financial considerations and noted that the Authority's Medium Term Financial Strategy reflected a prudent assessment of forecast housing growth in the overall Council Tax Base therefore the LCTS changes proposed by Middlesbrough would not result in a reduction in the overall level of forecast Council Tax income for 2018/19.

RESOLVED – that the Treasurer write to Middlesbrough Council to confirm the Authority has no concerns regarding proposed changes to their 2018/19 Local Council Tax Support scheme, as instructed by Members.

46.4 External Auditor Appointment from 2018/19

The Treasurer updated Members on the formal communication received by the CFO and Treasurer from Public Sector Auditor Appointments (PSAA) to consult on the external auditor appointment from 2018/19. PSSA proposed the appointment of Mazars LLP to audit the accounts of Cleveland Fire Authority for five years from 2018/19.

The Treasurer reported that he and the CFO were content with the proposal that Mazars continue as the Fire Authority's external auditor as this arrangement provided continuity and built upon the external auditors' understanding of the Fire Authority and its financial systems.

The Treasurer informed Members that the PSAA would consult on scale fees in due course and publish confirmed scale fees for 2018/19 for opted-in bodies on their website in March 2018, however an approximate reduction of 18 per cent was anticipated based on the individual scale fees applicable for 2016/17.

RESOLVED – that the appointment of Mazars LLP to audit the accounts of Cleveland Fire Authority for five years from 2018/19 be noted.

47. 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 paragraph 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 action taken or to be taken in connection with the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime."

48. CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES

RESOLVED - that the Confidential Minutes of the Executive Committee held on 7 July 2017 be confirmed.

49. CONFIDENTIAL REPORTS OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

49.1 Firefighter Pay Claim update

Members received information on the current position in relation to the Firefighter Pay Claim.

**COUNCILLOR JEAN O'DONNELL
CHAIR**