C L E V E L A N D F I R E A U T H O R I T Y

MINUTES OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

22 NOVEMBER 2019

PRESENT:

CHAIR
Councillor Paul Kirton – Stockton on Tees Borough Council
HARTLEPOOL BOROUGH COUNCIL
Councillor Tim Fleming
STOCKTON ON TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL
Councillors Luke Frost, Jean O'Donnell, William Woodhead (Sub)
AUTHORISED OFFICERS
Chief Fire Officer, Director of Corporate Services, Legal Adviser & Monitoring Officer, Treasurer

APOLOGIES:

Councillors Teresa Higgins, Jon Rathmell - Middlesbrough Council
Councillor Mary Ovens – Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council

In accordance with Standing Order No. 35 Councillor Woodhead substituted for Councillor Higgins.

66. DECLARATION OF MEMBERS INTERESTS

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

67. MINUTES

RESOLVED - that the Minutes of the Executive Committee on 4 October 2019 be confirmed.

69. REPORTS OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

69.1 Building Fire Emergency Response Standards Evaluation 2018/19

The Chief Fire Officer (CFO) informed Members of the outcome of the evaluation of the Building Fire Emergency Response Standards following their first year in operation.

He reported that the new standards were introduced as part of a new suite of emergency response standards for building fires contained within the Community Integrated Risk Management Plan (CIRMP) 2018/22 implemented on 1 April 2018.

The CFO referred Members to Appendix 1 which provided a detailed analysis of how the former and new emergency response standards evolved over time and included a comparison of the main characteristics of the standards, as detailed in the table below:-

69.1 Building Fire Emergency Response Standards Evaluation 2018/19 cont.

Population	Former ER Standard		Revised ER Standard	
3122 (1%) 1 Ward	High Risk 1st Appliance	5 Minutes	1st Appliance 2nd Appliance	7 Minutes 10 Minutes
	High Risk 2nd Appliance	8 Minutes		
172651 (31%) 21 Wards	Medium Risk 1st Appliance	8 Minutes		
	Medium Risk 2nd Appliance	11 Minutes		
381995 (68%) 57 Wards	High Risk 1st Appliance	10 Minutes		
	High Risk 2nd Appliance	13 Minutes		

The CFO confirmed that whilst emergency response standards existed as a means of measuring performance it would always be the Authority's priority to get resources to a building at the earliest opportunity. He added that whilst there will always be rural parts of East Cleveland which prove harder to reach, 99% of properties in Cleveland now get a faster response.

Councillor Frost suggested the Brigade uses social media to get this positive message across. The CFO confirmed that an engagement strategy for staff and the community was being developed to help promote key messages.

Councillor O'Donnell asked how Cleveland's response times compared with other Brigades. The CFO confirmed that the Home Office compares these annually and Cleveland is fastest for Building Safety and Road Traffic Collisions (RTCs) and comes second to London Fire Brigade on the 2nd appliance response time. He added that the Inspectorate noted the inconsistencies of response standards across the Fire and Rescue Service.

RESOLVED :-

(i) That the contents of the report on Building Fire Emergency Response Standards at Appendix 1 be noted.

(ii) That following the success of the trial during 2018/19, Members approved the adoption of the Building Fire Emergency Response standards.

69.2 Annual Statement of Assurance 2018/19

The Director of Corporate Services (DoCS) informed Members that the Annual Statement of Assurance 2018-19 was a statutory requirement produced in line with the requirements of the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England 2012. She referred Members to Appendix 1 which outlined:

- Operational Assurance
- Financial Assurance
- Corporate Governance
- Performance

69.2 Annual Statement of Assurance 2018/19 cont.

The DoCS reported that the Audit & Governance Committee had scrutinised this report at its meeting on 15 November 2019 and it would be published on the Brigade website.

RESOLVED - That the Annual Statement of Assurance 2018/19 be approved.

69.3 Grenfell Tower Inquiry: Phase 1 Report Overview

Members considered the Executive Summary Report and the Inquiry Chair's important findings and recommendations (Appendix 1) contained within the Phase 1 Inquiry report on the fire at Grenfell Tower, London on 14 June 2017 which claimed the lives of 72 people.

The CFO reported that whilst fire and rescue services were trained to respond to fires in residential high rise buildings, this incident was of a scale and rapidity that was exceptional; preceded and precipitated by an apparent complete failure of the building's fire safety measures to perform effectively.

He added that those failures created a set of conditions not previously experienced by the Fire and Rescue Service and provided a unique challenge for the London Fire Brigade and its partner emergency services who responded on the night.

The CFO reported that the Inquiry was damning of the 'stay put' evacuation plan followed by London Fire Brigade (LFB), which was the recommended plan of the building designer, and for not trying to implement simultaneous evacuation.

LFB received further criticism for the way its Control Room handled the calls and for the lack of communication between emergency services and the failure to implement its Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles (JESIP) plan successfully.

Councillor Fleming asked if Cleveland's JESIP plan worked well. The CFO confirmed a long established good working relationship with neighbouring emergency services. This was evidenced during the recent SSI incident which saw a highly effective multi agency cross border response to a 'major incident'.

The Chair agreed for the meeting to go into a confidential session for the CFO to provide Members with an update on local issues related to high rise buildings (minute no. 73.1 refers).

The CFO referred Members to section 5 of the report which detailed the immediate action required by Cleveland in response to the recommendations. This included commissioning the Operational Assurance Team (OAT) to identify operational and organisational learning and recommend improvements where appropriate. Once complete, Authority Members will be asked to consider the wider implications of the Inquiry exercise.

Nationally, the CFO confirmed he is working with the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) to ensure a collective and consistent response to the recommendations.

69.3 Grenfell Tower Inquiry: Phase 1 Report Overview cont.

RESOLVED:-

(i) That the Grenfell Tower Inquiry's Phase 1 Executive Summary report and the Inquiry Chair's important findings and recommendations (Appendix 1) be noted.

(ii) That Members receive further reports once consideration be given to the wider implications of the recommendations in relation to Cleveland Fire Brigade.

(iii) That Members endorsed the Chief Fire Officer to work with the National Fire Chiefs Council to address all of the operational matters raised in the report.

70. JOINT REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER & TREASURER

70.1 Medium Term Financial Strategy 2020/21 – 2022/23

Members considered the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2020/21 – 2022/23, including the 2020/21 Council Tax level, which covered:

- Government Funding - 2013/14 & 2019/20 cash budget comparison
- Spending Review 2020/21
- 2020/21 Council Tax Referendum Limits
- Firefighter Pension Funding
- Financial Position 2021/22 and 2022/23
- Fire Pension Grant impact on Forecast Budget Deficits
- 2020/21 Budget
- 2021/22 and 2022/23 Budget
- Reserves Strategy
- Asset Management Plan (AMP)
- Robustness Advice

The Treasurer acknowledged the degree of certainty from the one year spending review for 2020/21 and noted that this was now subject to the outcome of the General Election. The position for 2021/22 and future years remains uncertain with the CFOs Contingency Plan, supported by the Budget Support Fund, providing longer lead times to manage this situation.

The Treasurer highlighted the Authority's difficulty to fund local services from Council Tax and acknowledged that while it was high risk, it had a low ability to fund services from Council Tax owing to the low Council Tax base (i.e. higher than average proportion of properties in Council Tax bands A and B).

He reported that a meeting had been arranged with the Home Office finance lead to discuss the possibility of Cleveland being used as a 'test' Authority to highlight how the decisions the Government makes on future funding are more critical for this Authority than they are for FRAs with lower risk and a higher Council Tax base.

70.1 Medium Term Financial Strategy 2020/21 – 2022/23 cont

The CFO reinforced the level of financial uncertainty for the future and the impact of the Pension Grant coming back as an Authority liability. He acknowledged that resources were already being stretched trying to meet an expanding workload.

Councillor O'Donnell asked if the Authority had reached the bottom line. The CFO reported that a review of the prevention, protection and response delivery models was currently underway and the outcome would determine what resources were required as a minimum to deliver the service required.

Councillor Frost asked if the Authority was limited to 1.9% for council tax increase. The Treasurer confirmed this was capped for technical reasons to avoid getting too close to 2% and triggering a referendum.

RESOLVED:- that Members:

(i) Noted the report;

(ii) Noted that 2020/21 Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement will not be issued until after the General Election, which it is anticipated will confirm indicative grant funding and the 2% Council Tax referendum limit set out in the Government's Technical Consultation for 2020/21;

(iii) Recommended for approval by the Fire Authority at its meeting on 13 December 2019 a 2020/21 Council Tax increases of 1.9% increase, which is below the 2% Government Council Tax referendum limit, and noted that this provides recurring addition funding of £237,000, which permanently protects whole time firefighter posts, and will result in the following Council Tax levels:

2019/20		2020/21		
Weekly Council Tax £	Property Band	Annual Council Tax £	Weekly Council Tax £	Annual increase £
0.99	A	52.55	1.01	0.98
1.16	B	61.31	1.18	1.14
1.32	C	70.07	1.35	1.31
1.49	D	78.83	1.52	1.47
1.82	E	96.35	1.85	1.80
2.15	F	113.87	2.19	2.13
2.48	G	131.38	2.53	2.45
2.98	H	157.66	3.03	2.94

63% of households are in Band A or B

70.1 Medium Term Financial Strategy 2020/21 – 2022/23 cont.

(iv) Noted that recurring savings of £221,000 will be achieved through contract negotiations in relation to ICT hardware and software and building security and cleaning to address the residual 2020/21 forecast deficit;

(v) Noted that any variation in the final 2020/21 Government Grant allocation, Council Tax base, or final Collection Fund figures will be managed via the Budget Support Fund and details will be reported to the full Authority on 14 February 2020;

(vi) Noted the significant financial risks and uncertainties facing the Authority from 2021/22 and that further updates will be provided when more information is available;

(vii) Noted the robustness advice detailed in section 8.

71. 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 and 3 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 an individual; and information relating to any financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority) holding that information ."

72. CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES

RESOLVED - that the Confidential Minutes of the Executive Committee held on 4 October 2019 be confirmed.

73. CONFIDENTIAL SESSION

Members received a confidential update on local issues in connection with high rise buildings, minute no. 69.3 refers.

74. CONFIDENTIAL REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

74.1 Procurement Progress Report

Members received details relating to contract letting procedures, exemptions to contract procure rules and future procurement plans.

COUNCILLOR PAUL KIRTON
CHAIR