CLEVELAND FIRE AUTHORITY

MINUTES OF ORDINARY MEETING

18 OCTOBER 2019

PRESENT:

CHAIR
Cllr Paul Kirton – Stockton on Tees Borough Council
HARTLEPOOL BOROUGH COUNCIL
Cllrs Tim Fleming, Marjorie James, Stephen Thomas
MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL
Cllrs Teresa Higgins, Naweed Hussain,
REDCAR & CLEVELAND BOROUGH COUNCIL
Cllrs Billy Ayre, Norah Cooney, Mary Ovens
STOCKTON ON TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL
Cllrs Luke Frost, Jean O'Donnell, Andrew Stephenson
AUTHORISED OFFICERS
Chief Fire Officer, Director of Corporate Services/Clerk, Legal Adviser and Monitoring Officer, Treasurer
BRIGADE OFFICERS
Director of Technical Services

APOLOGIES:
Councillor Ashley Waters; Jon Rathmell - Middlesbrough Council
Councillor Adam Brook - Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council
Councillor William Woodhead MBE– Stockton Borough Council

51. DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS INTEREST

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

52. MINUTES

RESOLVED - that the Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting on 26 July 2019 be confirmed.

53. MINUTES OF MEETINGS

RESOLVED - that the Minutes of the Audit & Governance Meeting on 23 August 2019 and Executive Committee Meeting on 4 October 2019 be confirmed.

54. COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED BY THE CHAIR

ZOE BILLINGHAM	Fire & Rescue Inspection Updates
LGA	Circular NJC/4/19 – Continual Professional Development Payments
	Circular NJC/3/19 – Pay Award
	EMP/6/19 – Pay Update
	EMP/5/19 – Pay Update
HOME OFFICE	Kit Malthouse MP, Minister of State for Policing

RESOLVED – that the communications be noted.

55. REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

55.1 Information Pack

55.1.1 Employers / National Joint Council Circulars

55.1.2 Campaigns

55.1.3 Events – Councillor Frost requested that the Chair provides an update on the LGA Fire Commission meeting and Combined Fire Authority Conference at the Authority meeting on 13 December 2019.

Hate Crime Awareness Week

The Chief Fire Officer (CFO) informed Members that the Brigade had hosted Hart Gables 'Hate Crime Awareness' event on 14 October 2019. The event, opened by the CFO, was attended by the Chair, the PCC Barry Coppinger and was aimed at encouraging greater reporting of hate crimes across Cleveland.

Firework Safety Campaign

Cllr Thomas reported that Sainsbury's had banned the sale of fireworks. He commended this move and hoped other Supermarkets would follow the trend. The CFO supported Sainsbury's commitment and reported that the Brigade was working with other agencies to eradicate the sale of fireworks from illegal outlets as well as encouraging people to attend one of the main council-organised events.

Councillor James suggested the Authority issue a press release in support of Sainsbury's ban on firework sales and encouraging other supermarkets to follow the trend. Councillor Ovens stated a need for legislation to prevent fireworks being launched in communities. The CFO stated that the Community Safety Teams would be carrying out audits on the safe storage of bulk fireworks and the number of fireworks coming through the ports.

RESOLVED:-

(i) that the information pack be noted.

(ii) that a press release be distributed showing the Authority's support for Sainsbury's ban on fireworks sales.

(iii) That the Chair provides an update on the LGA Fire Commission meeting and the Combined Fire Authority Conference at the Authority meeting on 13 December 2019.

56. JOINT REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER AND TREASURER

56.1 Contingency Plan to Meet the Fire Authority's Forecasted Medium Term Financial Deficits 2020/21 – 2022/23

Members considered the Contingency Plan for meeting the Authority's medium term deficits 2020/21 – 2022/23, as recommended by the Executive Committee at its meeting on 4 October 2019.

The Treasurer covered the background of the report at section 3 and noted that in February 2019 the Authority approved a Medium Term Financial Strategy which anticipated:

- A three year spending review covering 2020/21 – 2022/23
- Government Proposals to implement a Fair Funding Review
- Government Proposals to increase Business Rates Retention from 50% to 75%

56.1 Contingency Plan to Meet the Fire Authority's Forecasted Medium Term Financial Deficits 2020/21 – 2022/23 cont.

The Authority instructed the CFO to develop a contingency savings plan based on potential deficits of up to £2.297 (with recurring fire pensions grant in 2020/21) and £3.841m (without recurring fire pensions grant in 2020/21), as detailed in the table at paragraph 3.5 of the report.

At the Executive Committee meeting on 4 October 2019 Members were verbally advised that the Government issued technical consultation proposals the previous day in relation to the Local Government Finance settlement for 2020/21. These proposals include a proposed 2% Council Tax referendum covering all types of authorities, including Fire and Police. The only proposed exceptions are an additional 2% Adult Social Care precept, and for district councils a limit of either 2% or £5, whichever is greater. The previous budget forecasts were based on a Council Tax Referendum of 3% and have been updated to reflect a 2% limit.

The Treasurer reported that the Government's one year Spending Review would provide greater certainty for 2020/21. In addition it was anticipated that when the provisional 2020/21 Local Government Finance Settlement is announced that the Authority will receive a small grant increase, compared to a forecast cut. However, significant uncertainty remains in relation to funding for 2021/22 and 2022/23, therefore it remains appropriate for the Fire Authority to continue to plan for future budget deficits until future funding is certain.

The CFO referred Members to section 4 of the report which set out the Contingency Plan to meet the Authority's Forecasted Medium Term Financial Deficits 2020/21 - 2022/23, comprising of :-

- lobbying Government for a fairer distribution of funding
- using reserves
- reviewing 'non-pay' budgets
- reviewing enabling services
- re-designing the Brigade's service delivery model
- exploring other efficiency opportunities

The CFO outlined each component in detail and reported that Members would have the opportunity to consider the outcomes of these ongoing priorities by Summer 2020. He informed Members that to reflect the Authority's current financial position and to address the complexity of some of the projects it was proposed that the following Corporate Priorities 2019/20 be subsumed into and/or aligned to those associated within the Contingency Plan above: SSC3: Introduce a Strategic Reserve to sustain the optimum operational configuration of 18 fire appliances; UOR2: Review of Flexi-Duty System; UOR10: Undertake an Interim Review of CIRMP

Councillor James expressed disappointment that the MPs of Cleveland had failed to respond to requests to support the Authority in lobbying parliament for fairer funding.

Councillor Stephenson asked what level of savings could be made from merging support staff. The CFO said this was difficult to estimate but could be in the region of £350k from £3.5m support staff costs, based on previous work to explore opportunities to collaborate with Cleveland Police. Councillor Stephenson suggested there may be locality issues merging with regional partners and he did not consider this viable for 5–7% saving. The CFO agreed that merging regionally would not support employment issues in Teesside.

56.1 Contingency Plan to Meet the Fire Authority's Forecasted Medium Term Financial Deficits 2020/21 – 2022/23 cont.

RESOLVED:-

(i) That Members noted that the one year Spending Review only provides certainty for 2020/21 and the Authority may face continuing budget deficits in 2021/22 and future years, therefore it remains appropriate to plan for potential deficit of up to £2.938m.

(ii) That Members considered and approved the Contingency Plan for meeting the Authority's medium term financial deficits as fully detailed in section 4 of this report; in brief these are:-

- **lobbying Government for a fairer distribution of funding**
- **using reserves**
- **reviewing 'non-pay' budgets**
- **reviewing enabling services**
- **re-designing the Brigade's service delivery model**
- **exploring other efficiency opportunities**

(iii) That Members noted the amendments to the Corporate Priorities 2019/20 as detailed in section 5 of this report.

(iv) That Members noted that further regular reports will be received by the Executive Committee on any changes to the agreed financial and strategic plans.

57. REPORT OF THE TREASURER

57.1 Members Allowance Scheme - Tabled

Members considered the tabled report of the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) in relation to the level of Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances paid by the Authority.

The Treasurer reported that the current Members Allowance Scheme was approved by the Authority on 4 June 2010 as follows:-

- Basic Allowance - £2,194
  <u>Special Responsibility Allowances</u>
- Chair of Authority - £8,776
- Vice Chair of Authority - £4,388
- Chair of Audit and Governance Committee - £2,742

At the Authority meeting on 13 October 2017, Members approved the recommendation for an Independent Remuneration panel to be established to review the Authority's Members Allowance Scheme. The outcomes of this review were detailed at Appendix 1 of the report to enable Members to consider the proposals in the context of the ongoing financial challenges facing the Authority and the national position regarding the Firefighter Pay Award.

The Treasurer acknowledged the delay in completing the review and the subsequent change in implementation date to 1 April 2019.

57.1 Members Allowance Scheme – Tabled cont.

Councillor Frost proposed:

- 2% increase to basic allowance - frozen for 4 years
- Reduce Chair's Special Responsibility Allowance by 30%
- Remove Vice Chair's Special Responsibility Allowance
- Remove the Audit & Governance Chair's Special Responsibility Allowance
- These changes would bring savings of £11k per annum to the Authority

This was seconded by Councillor James.

Councillor Higgins proposed the following amendment to the original motion, seconded by Councillor Ayre:-

- 2% increase to both basic and special responsibility allowances to be implemented from 1 April 2019
- This would be index linked in line with staff on 1 April 2020,2021 and 2022
- These changes would make Cleveland one of the lowest paid UK Fire Authorities

Members voted on Councillor Frost's proposal, 3 votes for and 8 votes against, with one abstention.

Members voted on Councillor Higgins' amendment, 6 votes for and 5 votes against, with one abstention.

Members then voted on the substantive motion for a 2% increase to both basic and special responsibility allowances to be implemented from 1 April 2019 and index linked in line with staff on 1 April 2020, 2021 and 2022. Members voted 6 for and 6 against. The Chair had the casting vote and voted in favour of the substantive motion.

Councillor Fleming asked for clarification on what the additional cost would be to the Authority and the Treasurer confirmed that it would be approximately an additional £1k per annum.

RESOLVED:-

(i) That following consideration of the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) report at Appendix A, Members approved a 2% increase to both basic and special responsibility allowances to be implemented from 1 April 2019 and index linked in line with staff on 1 April 2020,2021 and 2022.

(ii) That the details of the new Members Allowance Scheme be published in accordance with statutory requirements.

58. 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 an individual; information relating to any financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority) holding that information; and information in relation 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.

59. CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the confidential minutes the Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting on 26 July 2019 be confirmed.

60. CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF MEETINGS

RESOLVED – that the confidential minutes of the Executive Committee on 4 October 2019 be confirmed.

61. CONFIDENTIAL VERBAL REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

61.1 SSI Incident Update

Members received an update on the ongoing incident at the former steelworks site in South Bank, Redcar.

COUNCILLOR PAUL KIRTON
CHAIR