

Minutes of a meeting of the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Combined Fire Authority held at County Hall, Glenfield on Wednesday, 28 July 2021.

PRESENT

Mr. N. J. Rushton CC (in the Chair)

Mr. N. D. Bannister CC	Cllr. L. Fonseca
Cllr. S. Barton	Mr. M. Frisby CC
Cllr. Hemant Rae Bhatia	Mr. K. Ghattoraya CC
Cllr. K. Bool	Mr. R. Hills CC
Mr. G. A. Boulter CC	Ms. Betty Newton CC
Mr. S. L. Bray CC	Mr. J. T. Orson JP CC
Mr. B. Champion CC	Cllr. Elaine Pantling

In attendance

Callum Faint, Chief Fire and Rescue Officer
 Lauren Haslam, Monitoring Officer
 Colin Sharpe, Deputy Director of Finance, Leicester City Council
 Paul Weston, Interim Assistant Chief Fire and Rescue Officer
 Mick Grewcock, Interim Assistant Chief Fire and Rescue Officer
 Anna Poole, Democratic Services Officer

22. Apologies for absence.

Apologies were received from Mr Grimley CC, Mr Lovegrove CC and Councillor Valand.

23. Declarations of interest.

The Chairman invited members who wished to do so to declare an interest in respect of items on the agenda.

No declarations were made.

24. Urgent items.

There were no urgent items.

25. Chairman's Announcements.

The Chairman's announcements were circulated in advance of the meeting, a copy of which is filed with these minutes. The announcements covered the following matters:

- New Firefighters
- Staff Absences.

26. Public Participation/ CFA Rules of Procedure Rule 9 - Member Questions.

It was reported that no questions had been received.

27. Minutes of the previous meeting.

The minutes of the CFA meeting held on 16 June 2021 were considered.

It was moved by Mr. N. Rushton CC and seconded by Councillor E. Pantling that the minutes of the CFA meeting held on 16 June 2021 should be taken as read, confirmed and signed.

The motion was put and carried unanimously.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the CFA meeting held on 16 June 2021 should be taken as read, confirmed and signed.

28. To consider the minutes of the Corporate Governance Committee meeting held on 10 March 2021.

The minutes of the Corporate Governance Committee meeting held on 10 March 2021 were considered.

It was moved by Councillor K. Bool and seconded by Mrs. M. E. Newton CC that the minutes of the Corporate Governance meeting held on 10 March 2021 be noted.

The motion was put and carried unanimously.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Corporate Governance meeting held on 10 March 2021 be noted.

29. Revenue and Capital Outturn 2020-21

The CFA considered a report of the Treasurer concerning the final revenue and capital outturn figures for 2020/21 and seeking approval to carry forward funds for specific purposes, which were detailed in paragraphs 8-15 of the report. A copy of the report marked "Agenda Item 8" is filed with these minutes.

Members were informed that, given the delays to the external audit that had recently been reported to the CFA, it was expected that the draft Statement of Accounts would be presented to the Corporate Governance Committee in September, and the final Statement of Accounts and Annual Governance Statement to the CFA in December.

The CFO assured members that although the reserve figures detailed in the report appeared to be high, there were plans in place to utilise the funds to deliver capital programmes and particularly to offset the expected financial increases as the Service moved away from the Day Crewing Plus Duty System.

The Chairman supported the comments made by the Treasurer and recognised the challenge presented by the last year. He echoed the comments made by the CFO and added that most of the reserves were earmarked for specific expenditure.

In response to questions, members were informed that:

- i. The funding in reserves was 'one-off' funding, and therefore could not be used for ongoing expenditure, for example, the continued employment of staff. As the organisational structure was very lean, the reserves would be used to alleviate pressure on the establishment, and fixed term contracts would be used where necessary.
- ii. Plans for the canteen space at the Headquarters building were still being considered. The East Midlands Ambulance Service had been approached but did not wish to take extra accommodation. Other options were being explored as part of the project to build a new Learning and Development Facility with the potential to use the space as a training suite.
- iii. The position with any outstanding challenges to the business rates 2017 revaluations would need to be clarified. Information would be circulated to members following the meeting.

The Deputy Director of Finance has since provided the following update:

The business rates revaluations appeals on all LFRS properties are reflected in the 2020/21 accounts. We have the definite numbers for the majority and have estimated the remainder that are still subject to confirmation.

It was moved by Mr. N. J. Rushton CC and seconded by Councillor E. Pantling that:

- a) the revenue and capital outturn position for 2020/21 (which is subject to the external audit), be noted;
- b) the carry forward of £3,372,000 of capital funding into 2021/22, be approved;
- c) the transfer of the revenue underspend and one-off monies totalling £1,336,000 to the Budget Strategy and COVID-19 Reserve to support future budgets, be approved; and
- d) the transfer of £1,622,000 of government grant accounted for in 2020/21 to an accounting reserve to enable the offsetting of collection fund deficits that are recognised in 2021/22 and future years, be approved.

The Motion was put and carried unanimously.

RESOLVED:

That

- a) the revenue and capital outturn position for 2020/21 (which is subject to the external audit), be noted;
- b) the carry forward of £3,372,000 of capital funding into 2021/22, be approved;
- c) the transfer of the revenue underspend and one-off monies totalling £1,336,000 to the Budget Strategy and COVID-19 Reserve to support future budgets, be approved; and

- d) the transfer of £1,622,000 of government grant accounted for in 2020/21 to an accounting reserve to enable the offsetting of collection fund deficits that are recognised in 2021/22 and future years, be approved.

30. Our Plan 2020-2024 (2021 Refresh), Annual Report and Statement of Assurance 2020-21.

The CFA considered a report of the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer concerning Our Plan 2020-2024 (2021 Refresh) and the Annual Report and Statement of Assurance for 2020-2021. A copy of the report marked "Agenda Item 9" is filed with these minutes.

Members commended the report and the work of staff during the Covid-19 pandemic. Mrs Newton also commended the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion work within the recruitment plan.

In response to questions, the CFO informed members that

- i. the corporate photos included in publicity and recruitment literature were being updated to better reflect the communities served. An equalities update would be presented to the CFA at its meeting in September.
- ii. The Service's social media profile would be changed to be less formal and more personal to attract more interest.
- iii. Many changes had been put in place following the HMICFRS Inspection in 2018, particularly to address issues raised under the 'people' strand. Development of and engagement with staff was key to addressing the concerns raised in the inspection. The issues with the people strand were seen across the FR sector, and there were many reasons for the poor performance including austerity where the people elements had been greatly reduced. The next inspection was planned for the Spring 2022.

It was moved by Mr. N. J. Rushton CC and seconded by Councillor E. Pantling that

- a) the refreshed version of Our Plan 2020-2024 and the Annual Report and Statement of Assurance for 2020-2021 be noted, and that the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer be authorised to make any minor amendments where necessary; and
- b) all staff be thanked for their good work, diligence and dedication.

The Motion was put and carried unanimously.

RESOLVED:

That the

- a) the refreshed version of Our Plan 2020-2024 and the Annual Report and Statement of Assurance for 2020-2021 be noted, and that the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer be authorised to make any minor amendments where necessary; and
- b) all staff be thanked for their good work, diligence and dedication.

31. Service Delivery Update.

The CFA considered a report of the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer concerning the key service delivery performance for the period 1 April – 30 June 2021. A copy of the report marked “Agenda Item 10” is filed with these minutes.

The CFO informed members that paragraph 13 of the report should be amended to show that for the *entire* financial year of 2020/21, there were six fire deaths in the area, and to date for 2021/22, there had been one fire death reported.

In responding to questions about Home Fire Safety Checks and the installation of smoke alarms, the CFO recognised that it should be a landlord’s responsibility to install such alarms but added that not all landlords follow these responsibilities. As such, the CFO was happy for the Service to fit alarms when someone needed one in order to prevent a death in the event of an incident. In terms of who was legally responsible for maintaining the alarms, and the need for the FRS to notify landlords that an alarm had been fitted, the CFO agreed to clarify with the Fire Protection Team and inform members.

Since the meeting, the CFO has clarified:

Under the Fire Safety (Regulatory Reform) Order, Fire and Rescue Services have no responsibility with regards to installing detection alarms in a domestic dwelling. However, this is complicated in HMOs and the common areas of shared accommodation such as high-rise buildings. In rented accommodation, the responsibility sits completely with the landlord to ensure that a smoke detector is fitted on each level of the accommodation. This is enforced by the Local Authority (LA) through the Private Sector Housing Department under the Housing Act.

Approximately 5yrs ago, the Government refreshed the legislation and gave landlords the opportunity to have detection fitted within their properties to ensure compliance. To support the approach, funding was arranged for LAs to buy large quantities of smoke detectors. It was agreed within LLR that these detectors be handed over to LFRS as the gatekeepers. Landlords then contacted either the LAs, or LFRS, and arranged to collect these from Service Headquarters.

Regarding attendance times for life critical incidents in rural areas, the CFO explained that the target arrival time of 10 minutes was an average time calculated across all incidents attended and recognised that this may not be possible to achieve in some of the more rural areas of the LLR area. The CFO added that the 10 minutes timing included the call handling time and mobilisation of fire engines and agreed to provide specific timings for rural areas to Mr. J. T. Orson CC.

It was moved by Mr. N. J. Rushton CC and seconded by Councillor E. Pantling that the update provided on the key service delivery matters for the period April – June 2021, be noted, particularly:

- a) The positive increase in both fire safety and fire protection activities;
- b) The establishment of the Premises Risk Reduction Group;
- c) The flexible use of appliances to meet the 10-minute attendance time to life critical incidents.

The Motion was put and carried unanimously.

RESOLVED:

That the update provided on the key service delivery matters for the period April – June 2021, be noted, particularly:

- a) The positive increase in both fire safety and fire protection activities;
- b) The establishment of the Premises Risk Reduction Group;
- c) The flexible use of appliances to meet the 10-minute attendance time to life critical incidents.

32. Date of Next Meeting.

The next meeting of the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Combined Fire Authority will be held on Wednesday 22 September 2021 at 10:00am.

10.00 - 10.47 am
28 July 2021

CHAIRMAN