

Minutes of a meeting of the Combined Fire Authority held via Microsoft Teams on Wednesday, 16 December 2020.

PRESENT

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

Cllr. S. Barton	Cllr. K. Singh Johal
Mr. I. E. G. Bentley CC	Mr. J. Kaufman CC
Cllr. Hemant Rae Bhatia	Mr. W. Liquorish JP CC
Cllr. K. Bool	Mr. M. T. Mullaney CC
Mr. G. A. Boulter CC	Ms. Betty Newton CC
Mr. J. G. Coxon CC	Mr T. Parton CC
Cllr. L. Fonseca	Cllr. A. Thalukdar
Mr. D. Harrison CC	Mrs. M. Wright CC

In attendance

Lauren Haslam, Monitoring Officer
Alison Greenhill, Treasurer
Callum Faint, Interim Chief Fire and Rescue Officer
Paul Weston, Interim Assistant Chief Fire and Rescue Officer
Mick Grewcock, Interim Assistant Chief Fire and Rescue Officer
Matthew Wallace, Director of Estates, Leicester City Council
Colin Sharpe, Deputy Director of Finance, Leicester City Council
Amy Oliver, Chief Accountant Leicester City Council
Leanne McMahon, Service Liaison Lead, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services

113. Apologies for absence.

No apologies were received.

114. Declarations of interests.

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

No declarations were made.

115. Urgent items.

There were no urgent items.

116. Chair's Announcements.

The Chairman's Announcements were tabled at the meeting, a copy of which is filed with these minutes. The announcements covered the following matters:

- Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services;
- The Covid Inspection by HMICFRS;
- Prosecution;
- Shoe Box Initiative.

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

It was reported that no questions had been received.

118. Minutes of the previous meeting.

The minutes of the CFA meeting held on 23 September 2020 were considered.

It was moved by Mr. N. J. Rushton and seconded by Councillor K. Singh Johal that the minutes should be taken as read, confirmed and signed.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting of the Combined Fire Authority held on 23 September 2020 should be taken as read, confirmed and signed.

119. Minutes of the Corporate Governance Committee meetings held on 11 March and 16 September 2020.

The minutes of the Corporate Governance Committees held on 11 March and 16 September 2020 were considered.

It was moved by Councillor K. Bool and seconded by Mrs. Betty Newton CC that the minutes should be noted.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Corporate Governance Committees held on 11 March and 16 September 2020 be noted.

120. Whole-time Recruitment - Urgent Action taken by the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer.

The CFA considered a report of the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer which advised of urgent action taken by the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer, following consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair, to commence whole-time recruitment on the earlier date of 25 November 2020 due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and related social distancing restrictions. The report also updated the Authority on action required to recruit firefighters to meet the needs of the Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service up to 2021/22. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 8', is filed with these minutes.

In response to member questions, the following points were raised:

- i. The establishment numbers were sufficient to continue to deliver a service. The uncertainty around when individuals may choose to retire was something experienced across the country by other Fire and Rescue Services (FRS) due to a

period of industrial action in the 1970s, which led to a new four-watch duty system and the recruitment of more firefighters to manage the system. It was from now, and over the next four years, that those recruited at that time would be due to retire. The McLeod/Sargeant case presented additional uncertainty as it may lead to more retirements. The Police and Ambulance Service did not experience the same issues.

- ii. There had been 382 applications in the current recruitment exercise, which included new applicants, transfers in from other FRS and migrations of on-call firefighters. A maximum of 25 would be appointed. Training would commence in May 2021, and would be tailored to the needs of the individual and whether they had previously been a serving firefighter.
- iii. The overall cost of the training of new recruits would be significantly reduced as the Service participated in the apprenticeship scheme. The Service had received a Government grant of £950,000 to cover increased expenditure caused by Covid; so far £300,000-350,000 had been spent.
- iv. A targeted social media campaign had been conducted to promote the Service and opportunities available to under-represented groups. The Chief Fire and Rescue Officer agreed to share further details of this targeted recruitment with members outside of the meeting. Mrs. Newton CC, the Equalities and Diversity Champion, assured members that officers were firmly committed to increasing the diversity of the workforce and added that a great deal of activity had been undertaken to attract under-represented groups. She reminded members that the Service had received an award earlier in the year for the positive action undertaken.
- v. There were no national requirements to include qualifications in the entry requirements to join the FRS, although the Service had included the requirement for GCSEs in the recent recruitment. The skills test would relate to the skills required to do the job as research had shown that this would attract a wider and more diverse range of applicants.

It was moved by Mr. N. Rushton CC and seconded by Councillor K. Singh Johal that

- a) the urgent action taken by the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer to commence whole-time recruitment on the earlier date of 25 November 2020 due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and related social distancing restrictions be noted; and
- b) the suggested approach to the recruitment of firefighters, set out in the Firefighter Recruitment Plan for 2020/21 attached as the appendix to the report, be endorsed.

RESOLVED:

That

- a) the urgent action taken by the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer to commence whole-time recruitment on the earlier date of 25 November 2020 due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and related social distancing restrictions be noted; and
- b) the suggested approach to the recruitment of firefighters, set out in the Firefighter Recruitment Plan for 2020/21 attached as the appendix to the report, be endorsed.

121. Amendment to Statement of Accounts 2019-20 - Urgent Action taken by the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer and the Treasurer.

The CFA considered a report of the Treasurer which advised of urgent action taken by the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer and the Treasurer, following consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair, to make a minor amendment to the Statement of Accounts. In addition, the report sought delegated authority for the Treasurer to approve any further minor amendments to the Annual Accounts and Annual Governance Statement. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 9', is filed with these minutes.

Members were assured that the delay with the audit of the Pension Scheme did not materially affect the financial position of the Fire Authority. All Pension Schemes were facing the same issue, and it was expected that it would be resolved imminently.

It was moved by Mr. N. Rushton CC and seconded by Councillor K. Singh Johal that

- a. the urgent action taken by the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer and the Treasurer to make a minor amendment to the Authority's Statement of Accounts 2019/20 be noted; and
- b. the Treasurer be authorised to approve any further minor amendments to the Annual Accounts and Annual Governance Statement, subject to a report to the CFA at its next meeting.

RESOLVED:

That

- a. the urgent action taken by the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer and the Treasurer to make a minor amendment to the Authority's Statement of Accounts 2019/20 be noted; and
- b. the Treasurer be authorised to approve any further minor amendments to the Annual Accounts and Annual Governance Statement, subject to a report to the CFA at its next meeting.

122. Covid-19 and Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service.

The CFA considered a report of the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer concerning actions taken by the Service in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 10', is filed with these minutes.

Members commended the Service and staff for the work undertaken to respond to the pandemic in order to support the communities of Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland.

In response to questions, members were informed that the grant paid to the Service to cover Covid-related work totalled £950,000 which had been paid in two separate instalments. All costs associated with Covid totalled £300,000-£350,000 so far. The remaining grant would be used to cover the continuing impact of Covid on the Service, which was expected to last for a number of months.

It was moved by Mr. N. Rushton CC and seconded by Councillor K. Singh Johal that the report and the Appendix detailing the high level of work undertaken in the pandemic above and beyond the normal requirements of a Fire and Rescue Service, be noted and the Fire Authority's thanks to all concerned be recorded.

RESOLVED:

That the report and the Appendix detailing the high level of work undertaken in the pandemic above and beyond the normal requirements of a Fire and Rescue Service, be noted and the Fire Authority's thanks to all concerned be recorded.

123. Day Crewing Plus Duty System.

The CFA considered a report of the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer concerning the identification of an alternative duty system following the decision taken at its meeting on 29 July 2020 to move away from the current DCP system in preparedness for the next IRMP 2024. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 11', is filed with these minutes.

Members were informed that officers were working jointly with the Fire Brigades Union and Fire Officers Association to identify an alternative duty system.

In response to questions, the following points were raised:

- i. The first meeting of the joint Working Group to agree the Terms of Reference had been delayed due to Covid; the first formal meeting would be held on 22 January 2021.
- ii. A response from the Health and Safety Executive to the submission of a joint statement as an agreed way forward had not been expected, as the statement reduced the risk of enforcement action being taken;
- iii. The representative bodies that would be involved in the joint working group included Unison, the Fire Brigades Union, the Fire Officers Association, and the Fire and Rescue Services Association, which demonstrated the significant progress made in improving relationships.

It was moved by Mr. N. Rushton CC and seconded by Councillor K. Singh Johal that the progress made to identify an alternative duty system following the decision taken at its meeting on 29 July 2020 to move away from Day Crewing Plus in preparedness for the next IRMP 2024, be noted.

RESOLVED:

That the progress made to identify an alternative duty system following the decision taken at its meeting on 29 July 2020 to move away from Day Crewing Plus in preparedness for the next IRMP 2024, be noted.

124. Training Facility - Service Leadership and Development Centre: Project Update.

The CFA considered a report of the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer concerning the design and build of the Service's new Training Facility – Leadership and Development Centre. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 12', is filed with these minutes.

Members were informed that there would be a 'tactical pause' in the project while a concurrent review of the estate was undertaken. Negotiations with Caterpillar regarding the site at Desford would continue during this time.

It was moved by Mr. N. Rushton CC and seconded by Councillor K. Singh Johal that:

- a) The detail of the final project would take into account the timing presented by the concurrent review of the estate and that negotiations with Caterpillar would continue;
- b) The risk around the acquisition of land owned by Caterpillar at Desford be noted;
- c) The need to consider alternative sites for dirty training be noted; and
- d) a further progress update be made to the CFA at its meeting on the 10 February 2021.

RESOLVED:

That:

- a) The detail of the final project would take into account the timing presented by the concurrent review of the estate and that negotiations with Caterpillar would continue;
- b) The risk around the acquisition of land owned by Caterpillar at Desford be noted;
- c) The need to consider alternative sites for dirty training be noted; and
- d) a further progress update be made to the CFA at its meeting on the 10 February 2021.

125. Service Identity.

The CFA considered a report of the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer seeking approval for the introduction of a new Service identity/badge, detailed at Figure 1 in the report, that incorporated symbols of Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 13', is filed with these minutes.

Members commended the design for the new Service badge.

In response to questions, members were informed that the whole Service would be issued with shirts detailing the new badge at a cost of £20,000. Thereafter, jackets, jumpers, engines and building signage would be replaced as needed. The delayed delivery time of 4-6 months was at the behest of the suppliers.

It was moved by Mr. N. Rushton CC and seconded by Councillor K. Singh Johal that:

- a) the new service identity that incorporates Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland shown in Figure 1 of the report, be approved; and
- b) the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer be authorised to introduce the Service Badge across the Service with immediate effect.

RESOLVED:

That:

- a) the new service identity that incorporates Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland shown in Figure 1 of the report, be approved; and
- b) the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer be authorised to introduce the Service Badge across the Service with immediate effect.

126. Equalities Annual Progress Report 2019-20.

The CFA considered a report of the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer seeking approval for the draft Annual Equalities report for 2019 - 20. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 14', is filed with these minutes.

Members were informed that progress was being made to improve the diversity of the workforce, although this was slower than would be hoped. A Watch Manager would be temporarily moved to the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Team in order to increase resources and focus on this area.

Mrs. Newton CC, the Equalities and Diversity Champion, informed members that the Strategic Equalities and Diversity Board, of which she was a member, had conducted an annual progress review of the activity undertaken by the Service to increase the diversity of the workforce. She reminded members that the Service had won an award earlier in the year for the positive action undertaken, although it was recognised that more activity was needed to improve diversity in the workforce.

It was moved by Mrs. Betty Newton CC and seconded by Mr. T. Parton CC that the draft Annual Equalities Report for 2019-20 be approved.

RESOLVED:

That the draft Annual Equalities Report for 2019-20 be approved.

127. Service Delivery Update.

The CFA considered a report of the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer which provided an update on the key service delivery matters since the meeting of the CFA on 23 September 2020. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 15' is filed with these minutes

Members were appalled to hear that a fire engine and fire fighters attending an incident in Braunstone on the previous evening were attacked by a group of people and a bottle was thrown at the fire engine breaking the windscreen. This resulted in the removal of the fire engine from service, and a replacement being deployed. Councillor K. Singh Johal, as Councillor for Braunstone, apologised for the incident.

The Chairman asked that it be recorded that the number of incidents involving fatalities had increased in recent months, caused by an increase in the number of requests to gain entry to premises for the ambulance service. Fire fighters were often the first to arrive at the scene and dealt with some quite upsetting incidents. The Chief Fire and Rescue

Officer assured members that details of fire related incidents would be notified to the relevant CFA member.

Performance for reaching life critical incidents had risen slightly above the target, caused by deliberate fires in HMP Stocken, the travel distance for which was longer than the target of 10 minutes. Members were reassured that the prison had excellent fire protection measures, and the fires had usually been extinguished before the fire fighters arrived. However, it was still recorded as a life risk incident due to the nature of the fire and therefore affected performance.

It was moved by Mr. N. Rushton CC and seconded by Councillor K. Singh Johal that the update provided on the key Service delivery matters for the period between August to October 2020, particularly the increased exposure of fire crews to fatalities either through fire related incidents or in support of assisting other agencies, and the support in place for crews following such incidents, be noted. Additionally, that the Fire Authority's disgust at the event in Braunstone on the previous evening be recorded.

RESOLVED:

That the update provided on the key Service delivery matters for the period between August to October 2020, particularly the increased exposure of fire crews to fatalities either through fire related incidents or in support of assisting other agencies, and the support in place for crews following such incidents, be noted. Additionally, that the Fire Authority's disgust at the event in Braunstone on the previous evening be recorded.

128. Date of Next Meeting.

The next meeting of the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Combined Fire Authority will be held on 10 February 2021 at 10:00am via Microsoft Teams.

10.00 - 11.36 am
16 December 2020

CHAIRMAN