

Minutes of a meeting of the Combined Fire Authority held at County Hall, Glenfield on Wednesday, 22 January 2020.

PRESENT

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

Cllr. S. Barton	Mr. J. Kaufman CC
Mr. I. E. G. Bentley CC	Mr. W. Liquorish JP CC
Cllr. K. Bool	Ms. Betty Newton CC
Mr. G. A. Boulter CC	Mr J. Poland CC
Cllr. L. Fonseca	Mr. R. J. Shepherd CC
Mr. D. Harrison CC	Cllr. A. Thalukdar
Cllr. K. Singh Johal	Mrs. M. Wright CC

In attendance

Rick Taylor, Chief Fire and Rescue Officer
Alison Greenhill, Treasurer
Anthony Cross, representing the Monitoring Officer
Matthew Wallace, Director of Estates and Building Services
Richard Hall, Assistant Chief Fire and Rescue Officer
Callum Faint, Assistant Chief Fire and Rescue Officer
Anna Poole, Democratic Services Officer

49. Apologies for absence.

Apologies were received from Mr. Mullaney CC, Councillor Rae Bhatia and Lauren Haslam the Monitoring Officer.

50. Declarations of Interest.

Mr. N. J. Rushton CC, Cllr. S. Barton, Mr. I. E. G. Bentley CC, Mr. G. A. Boulter CC, Cllr. L. Fonseca, Cllr. R. Govind, Mr. D. Harrison CC, Cllr. K. Singh Johal, Mr. J. Kaufman CC, Mr. W. Liquorish CC, Ms. Betty Newton CC, Mr J. Poland CC, Mr. R. Shepherd CC, Cllr. A. Thalukdar, Mrs. M. Wright CC each declared a personal interest in item 10 on the agenda "Project Update – Training Facility – Service Leadership and Development Centre" as the options being considered include land that is owned by either the City or County Council.

No further declarations were made.

51. Urgent items.

The Chairman advised that there was one urgent item for consideration, an exempt verbal report of the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer on "Day Crewing Plus". The report was urgent because the latest development had occurred after the agenda for this meeting was circulated and a basis for moving forward needed to be agreed before the next meeting.

It was noted that the Chairman had agreed to the report being considered in private session as it related to employment matters and the CFA's legal position.

With the agreement of the CFA the report was taken under item 12 on the agenda (minute 60 and 63 refers).

52. 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:

- Long Service Awards
- Carol Service – Leicester Cathedral
- Hinckley Road Incident
- Conviction for Fire in Leicester
- Introduction of New Service Liaison Lead HMICFRS
- Home Office Meeting
- Publication of 'State of Fire and Rescue: The Annual Assessment of Fire and Rescue Services in England 2019'.

The Chairman also highlighted the LGA's Annual Fire Conference and Exhibition which would be held on 10-11 March 2020, details for which were tabled at the meeting. Members were asked to contact the CFO directly if they were interested in attending.

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

It was reported that no questions had been received.

54. Minutes of the previous meeting.

The minutes of the CFA meeting on 27 September 2019 were considered.

It was moved by Mr. Rushton CC and seconded by all members 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 27 September 2019 be taken as read, confirmed and signed.

55. To consider the minutes of the Corporate Governance Committee meeting held on 18 September 2019.

The minutes of the Corporate Governance Committee meeting held on 18 September 2019 were considered.

It was moved by Mrs. Newton CC and seconded by Councillor Thalukdar that the minutes be noted.

56. 2020/21 Budget Planning Update.

The CFA received a presentation from the Treasurer concerning the draft budget proposals for 2020/21 and a forecast of the outlook for future years. A copy of the presentation is filed with these minutes.

Members were informed that, due to budget uncertainty beyond 2020/21, the inclusion of ongoing commitments in the budget had been avoided and that the budget contained significant risks.

Leicestershire was the lowest funded authority and was also a low tax authority. Should the council tax be increased to the average level for all Fire and Rescue Services, additional income of £3.4m would be generated; an increase of £5 on Council Tax would generate additional income of £1.6 million.

Members were informed that a potential pay award or an increase in pensions could affect the budget assumptions going forward. The level of Fire Fighter pensions was compensated by a Government grant in order to ease the impact on funding; there was no guarantee of future grant levels beyond 2020/21.

The Treasurer concluded that the budget position for 2020/21 was 'manageable' but that there was an uncertain environment going forward with significant risks to the budget on both a local and national level. Costs associated with the outcome of the consultation on the Integrated Risk Management Plan and the inspection by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services had not been built in to the budget forecast.

The Chairman assured members that the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland area was safe, despite the low level of funding.

In response to questions, the following points were raised:

- i. The Treasurer agreed to develop a short briefing note for Leicester and Leicestershire MPs on the budget position and the CFO agreed to invite them to a briefing, in order for them to understand more comprehensively the issues of LFRS.
- ii. The Police and Crime Commissioner was not limited to the same level of maximum increase in Council Tax as LFRS, who were allowed to increase levels by only 2%.
- iii. The funding allocated in the budget to contribute towards the costs of sprinkler systems in high-rise buildings did not negate the landlord's responsibility for providing this. The funding was available to enable the Authority to react to the outcome of the Grenfell enquiry and to respond to vulnerable people should they come forward seeking help.
- iv. The budget forecast did not include the potential for borrowing money, as this required a yearly commitment for many years which the Treasurer was keen to avoid due to the uncertain operating environment.

Regarding the potential development of the kitchen space at Head Quarters into office space, Members were concerned that a business case which detailed evidence, potential tenants, parking options and the predicted return on the investment should be developed in order to consider the predicted development costs of £250,000. It was likely that a potential tenant would be a public sector partner due to security and access issues and was acknowledged that this was a limited market.

RESOLVED:

That

- a. the presentation on the draft budget proposals for 2020/21 and the forecasted outlook for future years, be noted;
- b. the Treasurer would develop a business case for the conversion of the kitchen area at Head Quarters into office facilities for lease for consideration by the CFA;
- c. the Treasurer would develop a briefing note for Leicester and Leicestershire MPs on the budget position and the CFO would invite them to a briefing meeting.

57. External Audit - Annual Audit Letter 2018/19.

The CFA considered a report of the Treasurer which presented the External Auditor's (Mazars) Annual Audit letter 2018/19. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 9', is filed with these minutes.

Following questions, members were informed that the concern raised by the auditors regarding the recording of the pension figures in the financial statements had been addressed; appropriate resources were in place and this was now resolved.

Regarding the errors identified by the current auditors with the previous years' auditors accounts, the Treasurer informed members that she had raised this with the contract managers, PSAA, and it was hoped that they would take this up with KPMG on the CFA's behalf. However, it was unlikely that there would be any recompense.

It was moved by Mr. Rushton and seconded by Mr. Harrison that the External Audit Annual Audit Letter 2018/19 be noted.

RESOLVED:

That the External Audit Annual Audit Letter 2018/19 be noted.

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

The CFA considered a report of the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer, and received a presentation, which gave an update and assurance on the progress made with the design and build of the Service's new training facility. A copy of both the report, marked 'Agenda Item 10' and the presentation, is filed with these minutes.

In response to questions, the following points were raised:

- i. Options had been considered for the joint use of a training facility with a neighbouring FRS, although potential location was vital due to accessibility. It had not been possible to use other FRS facilities, due to the location of those facilities and the cost of transporting fire fighters would increase revenue costs. The CFO acknowledged that there was the possibility of another FRS using the new Leicestershire training facility which could attract new business and generate income, however, he stated that this was not the current business case. He explained that, as the facilities at Derbyshire FRS were new, they would not be seeking the use of alternative facilities and that he was not aware of other FRS looking for new facilities.

- ii. The response capability of appliances was being considered within the options available; the Beaumont Leys site was not the preferred site as it presented an increase in response times.
- iii. Once the project was in development, a full consultation would be undertaken with stakeholders, particularly local residents.
- iv. Regarding the Loughborough site option, discussions were being held with East Midlands Ambulance Service and Western Power to determine whether the land available would be of sufficient size. Members were informed that, although all the facilities required could be accommodated on the site, it would be quite constrained. As an alternative, a hybrid model could be considered, with an aspect of the facilities placed on another site, and the majority of the facilities at Loughborough.
- v. Additional funding for the building of the new training facility was not available from central Government, although this had been requested.

The recommendations were moved by Mr. Rushton and seconded by Councillor Singh Johal.

RESOLVED:

That:

- a. the update provided on the progress and build of the Service's new Training Facility, be noted;
- b. Concept Designs be developed at both the existing Loughborough Learning and Development Centre / Fire Station and the Desford Caterpillar site; and
- c. That a further report will be presented to the CFA at its meeting in the Summer.

59. Integrated Risk Management Plan 2020-2024 - Outcome of Consultation.

The CFA considered a report of the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer which presented the high-level feedback from the consultation on the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) 2002-2024 proposals. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 11', is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion, the following points were raised:

- i. The 'critical friend' referred to in the high-level summary report was Lincolnshire FRS. Members expressed concern that the number of respondents was quite low, despite the activity undertaken to publicise the consultation, although were reassured by the supportive comments from Lincolnshire FRS about the approach taken. It was felt that the timing of the consultation, which coincided with the General Election, may have had an impact.
- ii. The current method of recording the response time of 10 minutes was probably not what would be expected by the public, hence the change detailed in the IRMP proposals. The response time would be recorded from the moment the 999 call was received; an average would be included as some parts of the county could not

be accessed within 10 minutes. The Service would provide increased education to the public in order to reduce the level of life-threatening incidents.

- iii. Members expressed concern about the ethnicity and diversity of respondents to the consultation and were informed that the Service had consulted a vast number of community groups, had asked people to share the consultation documents with their networks, and had paid an additional fee to Facebook to target the consultation at LGBT and ethnic groups. The CFO explained that the Service did not have the resource capacity available to target individual community groups on a one-to-one basis.
- iv. The significant resource commitment by senior and middle management to the consultation totalled 1200 hours of input which equated to approximately £30,000.

In response to concerns expressed by some members regarding the level of engagement with community groups, the CFO agreed to look into the reasons why some community groups had not been visited, even though this had been agreed.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Barton and Mr Harrison for their support to the working group in developing the IRMP proposals.

It was moved by Mr Rushton and seconded by Councillor Singh Johal that the results of the public consultation exercise, attached at Appendix 1 to the report, be noted.

RESOLVED:

That the results of the public consultation exercise attached at Appendix 1 to the report, be noted.

60. Urgent Action.

The Chairman reminded members that the urgent item – Day Crewing Plus – would be considered as an exempt item at the end of the agenda.

61. Date of Next Meeting.

The next meeting of the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Combined Fire Authority will be held on Wednesday 12 February 2020 at 10.00am at Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service Head Quarters, Birstall.

62. Exclusion of the Press and Public.

RESOLVED:

That under Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the meeting on the grounds that it will involve the likely disclosure of exempt information during consideration of the following items of business as defined in paragraphs 1 and 2 of Schedule 12A of the Act; and, in all circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information:-

- Day Crewing Plus.

63. Day Crewing Plus.

The CFA received a verbal update from the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer concerning Day Crewing Plus.

The item was not for publication as it contained information related to consultations or negotiations in connection with labour relations matters.

RESOLVED:

That the update provided on Day Crewing Plus be noted.

10.30 am - 1.15 pm
22 January 2020

CHAIRMAN