

Minutes of a meeting of the Combined Fire Authority held at County Hall, Glenfield on Wednesday, 23 September 2020.

PRESENT

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

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

In attendance

Lauren Haslam, Monitoring Officer
Alison Greenhill, Treasurer
Callum Faint, Interim Chief Fire and Rescue Officer
Paul Weston, Assistant Chief Fire and Rescue Officer
Mick Grewcock, Assistant Chief Fire and Rescue Officer
Matthew Wallace, Director of Estates, Leicester City Council
Amy Oliver, Chief Accountant Leicester City Council
Gavin Barker, Mazars

98. Apologies for absence.

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Mr. T. Parton CC and Mrs. M. Wright CC.

99. 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.

100. Urgent Items.

There were no urgent items.

101. Chair's Announcements.

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

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

It was reported that no questions had been received.

103. Minutes of the Previous Meeting.

The minutes of the CFA meeting held on 29 July 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 29 July 2020 should be taken as read, confirmed and signed.

104. Statement of Accounts and Annual Governance Statement 2019/20.

The CFA considered a report of The Treasurer which presented the External Auditor's audit completion report, the 2019/20 Statement of Accounts for approval and the Annual Governance Statement for approval and publication with the final Statement of Accounts. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 7' is filed with these minutes. Mr. Gavin Barker of Mazars attended the meeting and gave assurance that there had been a marked improvement in the quality of the working papers and the availability of the supporting information that underpinned the disclosures in the financial statements.

It was reported that there were some final checks to complete in relation to the pensions work and assurance was awaited from the pension fund auditor. It would not be possible to issue the audit opinion and VFM conclusion until the pension fund auditor assurance had been received. This was expected towards the end of October. The work in relation to Property, Plant and Equipment valuations and disclosures had now been completed. Group instructions were being awaited from the National Audit Office and it would not be possible to issue the audit certificate to formally conclude and close the audit until this had been completed.

There had been two significant issues relating to accounting for pensions – the ongoing implications of the McCloud Judgement and the Goodwin case. In respect of the McCloud Judgement, the Treasury had launched a consultation in July 2020 on the proposed remedy for public service pensions and MHCLG had released a consultation into the proposed remedy for the LGPS; this had set out the estimation basis for the impact of the judgement. The difference was expected to be material in relation to the Fire Fighters Pension Scheme and as such a revised actuarial report had been produced.

Members commended the work undertaken by officers over the last year. It was moved by Mr. N. J. Rushton and seconded by Councillor K. Singh Johal that the recommendations in the report be approved.

RESOLVED:

That:

- a) the audit completion report presented by the External Auditor, Mazars be noted;
- b) the Statement of Accounts 2019/20 be adopted;
- c) the Annual Governance Statement 2019/20 be approved;
- d) the Letter of Representation be approved; and

- e) the significant improvements made by the Authority in working practices since the presentation of the Accounts in 2019 be noted.

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

The CFA considered a report of the Interim Chief Fire and Rescue Officer which provided an update on the progress of the design and build of the Services' new Training Facility in line with emerging outcomes and future financial uncertainty. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 8' is filed with these minutes. The CFA also received a presentation from the Director of Estates, Leicester City Council, a copy of which is filed with these minutes.

It was moved by Mr. N. J. Rushton and seconded by Councillor K. Singh Johal that the recommendations in the report be approved.

RESOLVED:

That the CFA acknowledge and note:

- a) the scaling back from a single consolidated site for the Training Facility – Service Leadership and Development Centre to a cost-effective split site hybrid solution that incorporates less risks;
- b) the incorporation of Loughborough fire and rescue station in to the project to identify economies of scale and avoid duplication of facilities/effort; and
- c) that a further report will be presented to the CFA in December 2020.

106. Day Crewing Plus Duty System.

The CFA considered a report of the Interim Chief Fire and Rescue Officer which gave an update on the progress made regarding the Day Crewing Plus duty system following the decision taken at the 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 9' is filed with these minutes.

In response to a query around consulting with staff, assurance was given that communication had taken place with all Day Crewing Plus staff. Any proposed change would need to be consulted upon with staff as there would need to be a change in contracts of employment. It was stated that the decision to move away from DCP in preparedness for the next IRMP 2024 would allow staff undertaking DCP some certainty over the next few years and would enable them to consider future implications.

It was moved by Mr. N. J. Rushton and seconded by Councillor K. Singh Johal that the recommendation in the report be approved.

RESOLVED:

That the CFA notes the update provided.

107. Service Identity.

The CFA considered a report of the Interim Chief Fire and Rescue Officer which sought approval for the reintroduction of a Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service Badge/service identity. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 10' is filed with these minutes.

It had been acknowledged that staff had universally supported the reintroduction of service identity. In terms of options, it was recommended that there should be the immediate introduction of the original badge and that additional work would take place on a second badge to ensure the inclusion of a distinct representation of Rutland and submit this to the Heraldry Commission for approval. This would then become the service identity for the long-term future. The cost of embroidering shirts would incur an additional cost and this would be managed by phasing the introduction of the badge. The initial roll out would be to add badge 1 (the original badge) to uniformed shirts only. The final badge would then be added to replacement uniforms when issued.

It was moved by Mr. N. J. Rushton and seconded by Councillor K. Singh Johal that the recommendations in the report be approved.

RESOLVED:

That:

- a) option 3 as set out in paragraphs 28 to 33 of the report, which entails utilising badge 1 as an interim measure whilst work is undertaken on developing badge 2 and obtaining the necessary permissions from the Heraldry Commission, be approved;
- b) the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer be authorised to introduce the Service Badge across the service; and
- c) a report be presented to the CFA for approval of the final badge design prior to use.

108. Service Delivery Update.

The CFA considered a report of the Interim Chief Fire and Rescue Officer which provided an update on the key service delivery matters since the meeting of the CFA on 12 February 2020. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 11' is filed with these minutes.

It was moved by Mr. N. J. Rushton and seconded by Councillor K. Singh Johal that the update on service delivery be noted.

RESOLVED:

That the CFA notes:

- a) the update provided on the key service delivery matters for the financial year 2019/20;
- b) the update provided on the key service delivery matters for the period between 12 February 2020 to September 2020; and
- c) the work undertaken by the Service during the Covid-19 pandemic.

109. Annual Report, Statement of Assurance and Annual Equality Report.

The CFA considered a report of the Interim Chief Fire and Rescue Officer which presented Our Plan 2020-24 and the Annual Report and Statement of Assurance for 2019-20. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 12' is filed with these minutes.

It was moved by Mr. N. J. Rushton and seconded by Councillor K. Singh Johal that the recommendations in the report be approved.

RESOLVED:

That:

- a) Our Plan 2020-24 and the Annual Report and Statement of Assurance for 2019-20 be approved and the Chief Fire and Rescue Office be authorised to make any minor amendments where necessary; and
- b) the Annual Equality Report be presented to the Authority at its meeting on 16 December 2020.

110. Appointment of Independent Persons.

The CFA considered a report of the Monitoring Officer concerning the appointment of Independent Persons to support the Member Conduct Complaints Process as required under Section 28(7) of the Localism Act 2011 and to support the procedures for dealing with the dismissal of the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer, the Monitoring Officer and the Treasurer, as required by the Local Authorities (Standing Order) England Regulations 2001 (as amended).

It was moved by Mr. N. J. Rushton and seconded by Councillor K. Singh Johal that the appointment of Independent Persons be approved.

RESOLVED:

That the appointment of Richard Gough, Gordon Grimes, Tina Herring, Hema Kotecha, Surinder Sharma and Pamela Roberts to serve as Independent Persons for a term of four years ending on 30 September 2024 be approved.

111. Urgent Action.

No urgent action was reported.

112. Date of Next Meeting.

The next meeting of the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Combined Fire Authority will be held on 16 December 2020 at 10.00am via Microsoft Teams.