

Minutes of a meeting of the Combined Fire Authority held at County Hall, Glenfield on Wednesday, 10 February 2021.

PRESENT

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

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

In attendance

Callum Faint, Interim Chief Fire and Rescue Officer  
 Lauren Haslam, Monitoring Officer  
 Alison Greenhill, Treasurer  
 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

129. Apologies for absence.

Apologies for absence were received from Mr. D. Harrison CC and Councillor H. Rae Bhatia.

130. 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.

131. Urgent items.

There were no urgent items.

132. Chairman'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:

- Retirement of Richard Hall, Assistant Chief Fire and Rescue Officer;
- Introduction of the Service Badge; and
- Promotions within the Service.

The Chairman also congratulated Alison Greenhill, the Treasurer, who had been promoted to the Chief Operating Officer at Leicester City Council.

133. Member questions.

It was reported that no questions had been received.

134. Minutes of the previous meeting.

The minutes of the CFA meeting held on 16 December 2020 were considered.

It was moved by Mr. N. Rushton CC and seconded by Councillor K. Singh Johal that the minutes of the CFA meeting held on 16 December 2020 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 December 2020 should be taken as read, confirmed and signed.

135. Minutes of the Corporate Governance Committee meeting held on 18 November 2020.

The minutes of the Corporate Governance Committee meeting held on 18 November 2020 be noted.

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 18 November 2020 be noted.

The motion was put and carried unanimously.

**RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the Corporate Governance meeting held on 18 November 2020 be noted.

136. Revenue Budget and Capital programme 2021/22.

The Committee considered a report of the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer and the Treasurer seeking approval for the budget for 2021/22, and the proposed budget strategy and capital programme for the period to 2022/23. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 8' is filed with these minutes.

Members were informed that, at the time of setting the budget in December 2020, the level of Council Tax and Business Rates were unknown so were estimated. It had now been confirmed that the Council Tax collection for 2021/22 would be lower than originally forecast, and Business Rates would be slightly higher. The Council Tax precept of £69.29 for a Band D property would remain. Overall, the financial position for 2021/22 was slightly better than was originally forecast. There were no further changes to the forecast released as part of the budget consultation.

In response to questions, the following points were raised:

- i. The main budget report also included a draft financial position for the 2022/23 financial year. This would be updated next year when more accurate figures were available for Government funding and any changes to Council Tax or Business Rates;
- ii. Although the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Combined Fire Authority did not undertake commercial investment, it was a Government requirement that a statement be included in the budget to this effect;
- iii. The growth detailed in the Fire Protection Team was necessary in order to respond effectively to the potential change in legislation as a result of the Grenfell enquiry, and the likely increase in demand on the Team due to the number of high-rise buildings in Leicester City; and
- iv. The growth detailed in the Human Resources team was necessary in order to manage increased demand on the service due to the need for increased recruitment and general HR work.

Members were concerned that Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Combined Fire Authority remained the lowest funded fire authority in the country and discussed the potential for requesting permission from the Treasury to have the flexibility to increase the Council Tax Precept by 2% or £5 (whichever is higher) so to bring it more in line with other FRAs. The CFO explained that the National Fire Chiefs Council had written to the Treasury asking that such flexibility be given to lower funded FRS, as had been afforded to other precepting authorities including the Police and district councils. He added that it would be beneficial for the CFA to make such representations to the Treasury in support of this request. Some members expressed concern about raising the Council Tax Precept level, and the potential impact this would have on lower income households, particularly if a flat rate increase was agreed. The Treasurer reassured members that a lot of lower income households were receiving Council Tax support this year and explained that, as one of the lowest precepting authorities in the country, funding would increase by £3.2m if the precept was set at the level of Derbyshire FRA and by £4.4m if set at Nottinghamshire FRA level.

The recommendations contained within the report were moved by Mr. N. Rushton CC and seconded by Councillor K. Bool, subject to the inclusion of an additional clause that the CFA would write to the Treasury to request flexibility to increase the Council Tax Precept by 2% or £5 (whichever is higher) in 2022/23. The Chairman requested that the CFO draft a form of words for the additional clause which mirrored the wording of the NFCC request and for this to be included in the minutes.

The motion was put and carried unanimously.

**RESOLVED:**

That

- a) the budget for 2021/22, and the budget strategy described in the report be approved, subject to changes which reflect final rates figures notified by billing authorities, as now reported by the Treasurer (and which are reflected in this resolution).

- b) it be noted that the final position had improved due to receipt of rates figures for 2021/22 from billing authorities. Therefore, it had been possible to add a further £238,000 to the budget, which would be added to the budget strategy reserve to support future financial pressures.
- c) the capital programme described at paragraph 9 of the report be approved, and the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer be authorised to commit expenditure on schemes;
- d) the earmarked reserves described at paragraph 11 of the report be noted;
- e) it be noted that no comments had been received on the draft budget from consultees;
- f) it be noted that the aggregate of the taxbases communicated by billing authorities for 2021/22 is 329,286.36. [Item T in the formula in Section 42B of the Act];
- g) the following amounts be calculated for the year 2021/22 in accordance with Section 42A and Section 42B of the Act:
  - i. £41,915,000 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Authority estimates for the items set out in Section 42A(2) of the Act.
  - ii. £19,098,748 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Authority estimates for the items set out in Section 42A(3) of the Act.
  - iii. £22,816,252 being the amount by which (i) above exceeds (ii) above, calculated by the Authority in accordance with Section 42A(4) of the Act as its Council Tax Requirement for the year. [Item R in the formula in Section 42B of the Act].
  - iv. £69.2900 being the amount at (iii) above (Item R) divided by the amount at (f) above (Item T), calculated by the Authority in accordance with Section 42B of the Act as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year.
- h) the Authority, in accordance with section 40 of the Act, issues precepts to each billing authority stating:
  - i. the amounts shown in the appendix to the resolution in the supplementary report as the tax payable for each band;
  - ii. the amounts shown in the appendix to the supplementary report as the precept payable by each authority.
- i) the view of the Treasurer that reserves are adequate during 2021/22, and that estimates used to prepare the budget are robust be noted;
- j) the treasury strategy and prudential indicators described in paragraph 14 of the report, and Appendices 3 and 4, be approved;

- k) the proposed capital strategy described in paragraph 15 of the report and Appendix 4 be approved, and that it be confirmed that the CFA would not wish to undertake commercial investment;
- l) the equality implications arising from the budget, as described at paragraph 16 of the report be noted;
- m) the scheme of virement described at Appendix 5 to the report be approved;
- n) under Section 52ZB of the Act, it be determined that the relevant basic amount of council tax for 2021/22 was not excessive in accordance with principles issued under section 52ZC of the Act and expected to be approved by Parliament (being an increase of less than 2%); and that in the event that the local government finance settlement had not been approved by 10 February, delegate the making of this determination to the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer;
- o) should the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer not be able to make the determination referred in (n) above, that resolutions (a) to (m) above shall be deemed not to be approved, and that an emergency meeting of the CFA shall be convened.
- p) That a letter be sent to the Treasury from the CFA requesting flexibility to increase the Council Tax Precept for Fire and Rescue Services by up to 2% or £5 per year on a Band D property (whichever is higher) in 2022/23.

137. Day Crewing Plus Duty System.

The Committee 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 9', is filed with these minutes.

Members were informed that, as the Working Group met every two weeks, and were conducting research and analysis into the shift systems used by other FRS which would take some time, then six-monthly reporting to the CFA would be more appropriate, rather than to every meeting.

Members welcomed the start of the Working Group and the fact that the membership included both officers and representative bodies.

In response to questions, the following issues were raised:

- i. The overarching principles set out in the appendix to the report had been drafted by the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer, the Assistant Chief Fire and Rescue Officers and the representative bodies;
- ii. 74 staff were currently working under the DCP duty system; it was estimated that 30 would retire before the change to the duty system came into effect in readiness for the next Integrated Risk Management Plan. However, potentially this figure could increase depending on the outcome of the national pension dispute.

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

- a) 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; and
- b) Further updates on DCP be received on a six-monthly basis in September and February each year.

The motion was put and carried unanimously.

**RESOLVED:**

I move that

- a) 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; and
- b) Further updates on DCP be received on a six-monthly basis in September and February each year.

138. Pay Policy Statement 2021/22.

The Committee considered a report of the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer seeking approval for the Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service's Pay Policy Statement for 2021-22 for subsequent publication on the Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service website. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 10' is filed with these minutes.

It was moved by Mr. N. Rushton CC and seconded by Councillor K. Singh Johal that the Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service Pay Policy Statement 2021-22 be approved for subsequent publication on the Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service website.

The motion was put and carried unanimously.

**RESOLVED:**

That the Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service Pay Policy Statement 2021-22 be approved for subsequent publication on the Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service website.

139. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services - Covid-19 Inspection Outcome.

The Committee considered a report of the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer concerning the outcome from the recent Covid-19 related inspection by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, Fire and Rescue Services. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 11' is filed with these minutes.

Members asked that the CFA's appreciation and congratulations be sent to all staff for the work done to receive such a positive outcome for the Authority.

In response to questions, members were informed that the suggestion by HMICFRS that the organisation update the 'community risk profiles' was a comment included in the feedback to all FAs. As a result, the risk profiles, methodology and resource allocation

would be reviewed and updated to reflect the increased number of people working from home, and the reduction in people working in office buildings. The risk profiles would need to be reviewed continuously especially at the end of the Covid-19 pandemic when it was expected that there would be some shift back to normality.

It was moved by Mr. N. Rushton CC and seconded by Councillor K. Singh Johal that the outcome of the Covid-19 specific inspection from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, Fire and Rescue Services, appended to the report, be noted.

The motion was put and carried unanimously.

**RESOLVED:**

That the outcome of the Covid-19 specific inspection from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, Fire and Rescue Services, appended to the report, be noted.

*Callum Faint, Interim Chief Fire and Rescue Officer, left the meeting for discussion of the next item of business.*

140. Recruitment of the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer.

The Committee considered a report of the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer concerning the proposed arrangements to recruit on a permanent basis to the post of Chief Fire and Rescue Officer. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 12' is filed with these minutes.

Members agreed that the Employment Panel should consist of the following members - 2 Conservative, 2 Labour and 1 Liberal Democrat. The Chairman said that he would sit on the Panel along with Councillor Ken Bool to represent the Conservatives. The Labour and Liberal Democrat members would agree their representatives following the meeting.

The recommendations in the report were moved by Mr. N. Rushton CC and seconded by Councillor K. Singh Johal.

The motion was put and carried unanimously.

**RESOLVED:**

That

- a) the proposed arrangements for the recruitment and appointment of a new Chief Fire and Rescue Officer (CFO) be noted; and
- b) a panel of 5 members be appointed drawn from the membership of the CFA Employment Committee to serve on the Employment Panel (Appointment of CFO) with delegated powers to consider and agree the following:
  - i. A revised job description and person specification for the post;
  - ii. The terms and conditions for the post;
  - iii. The interview process including the type of tests and assessments to be undertaken; and

- iv. To make recommendations to the CFA regarding the appointment of a new CFO.

*Callum Faint, Interim Chief Fire and Rescue Officer, returned to the meeting.*

141. Whole-time Recruitment.

The Committee considered a report of the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer concerning the whole-time recruitment campaign. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 13' is filed with these minutes.

Members were informed that recent recruitment activity had resulted in a good improvement in ethnicity and diversity, with slightly over 20% of candidates identifying as BAME. However, there was further improvement needed to balance the gender breakdown. All interviews had been completed, and final employment checks were currently being carried out. It was expected that offers of employment would be made in early May. The outcome of the pension remedy may generate a need to recruit a higher number of candidates.

Mrs Newton, the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Champion, offered to work with the CFO to examine the recruitment process to explore what else could be done to better encourage applications from across the community.

Members said that the low number of female applicants was concerning, although acknowledged that the increase in the level of BAME candidates was reassuring. They recognised that the pandemic and resultant lockdown had affected officers' ability to directly engage with communities. The CFO agreed to let members have an analysis of the breakdown of applicants compared to the demographics of the area served.

In response to questions, the following issues were raised:

- i. The recruitment process was designed to test individuals to ensure their suitability for the firefighter role. It included testing of competency as well as physical skills to ensure an individuals' ability to cope with a variety of environments, including working at height and entering confined spaces;
- ii. The data compiled illustrated that the selection methods used were non-discriminatory to those with protected characteristics, although it was recognised that more needed to be done. A Watch Manager would be seconded to the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Team to address this;
- iii. The recruitment of fire fighters was time consuming and resource intensive, so a waiting list would be compiled from this current recruitment process which would be drawn from as vacancies arose in the future;
- iv. A great deal of work was underway in communities, and particularly the youth environment, to encourage females to apply for positions in all areas of the Fire Service and not just the firefighter role. Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Service had seen significant success in this area and LFRS would be consulting them to learn lessons and replicate processes.



It was moved by Mr. N. Rushton and seconded by Counsellor Singh Johal that the update provided on the Whole-time Recruitment campaign, particularly that recorded data shows that selection methods have not negatively impacted on diversity statistics, be noted.

The motion was put and carried unanimously.

**RESOLVED:**

That the update provided on the Whole-time Recruitment campaign, particularly that recorded data shows that selection methods have not negatively impacted on diversity statistics, be noted.

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

The Committee considered a report of the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer concerning progress made with the design and build of the Service's new Training Facility – Leadership and Development Centre. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 14' is filed with these minutes.

Members were informed that officers were refining their requirements for the training site and would be considering the potential repurposing of existing facilities. Alternative training methods, for example the use of virtual reality training and headsets to train firefighters during the Covid pandemic, had shown the potential for this media and the continued use of this going forward would be considered. The negotiations with Caterpillar regarding the Desford site were ongoing. An agent had been engaged to seek a smaller site for the 'dirty training' which could be at less cost than had been previously highlighted to the CFA. The project had been paused temporally so that requirements and options could be reconsidered to ensure that the training facility was fit for the future.

In response to questions, the following issues were raised:

- i. Officers were trying to enhance the site at Loughborough and also acquire an additional site for the 'dirty' training. There were many options being considered currently;
- ii. Sites identified by the Agent would be considered by the CFO and the CFA in order to select the most suitable option for the Service; and
- iii. The Service would ensure that all staff were recently up to date with the necessary firefighter accreditations in readiness for the time when the 'dirty' training site was being located/built and would, therefore, not be available. This allowed sufficient timing, however, if necessary, the Service would use the training facilities in neighbouring FRS, or those at the Fire Service College, to ensure that firefighters were properly accredited to do their role.

The recommendations detailed in the report were moved by Mr. N. Rushton CC and seconded by Councillor K. Singh Johal.

The motion was put and carried unanimously.

**RESOLVED:**

That the

- a) The time it will take to review the utilisation of the operational estate for training purposes means that progress with the Training Facility – Service Leadership and Development Centre project will appear to have slowed, be noted; and
- b) The need to consider alternative sites for fire behaviour training and support functions only, be noted; and
- c) A further progress update be presented to the CFA at its meeting on 16 June 2021.

#### 143. Service Delivery Update.

The CFA considered a report of the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer which gave an update on the key service delivery matters since the CFA meeting on 16 December 2020. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 15' is filed with these minutes.

Members were concerned to hear that there had been a total of five fire-related fatalities since April 2020 and that the number of road traffic and other fatalities had also increased. They asked that a message of support and appreciation be sent to firefighters for their continued service to communities alongside additional work related to the pandemic.

In responding to questions, the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer informed members that On-Call availability had significantly increased due to the increase in the number of people working from home in their main jobs during the pandemic and explained that:

- i. More safety checks had been completed during the reporting period than was completed for the same period last year, as staff had been creative in identifying alternative ways to engage with communities during the pandemic. For example, they had worked with partners at vaccination centres to engage with vulnerable people in the community to give home fire safety advice.
- ii. The performance figures compared well with the previous three years, apart from an increase in the number of special services incidents attended. This was due to the fact that this role had previously been undertaken by the Police and had now transferred to FRS.
- iii. Data detailing the number of times LFRS had been called upon to gain entry to premises on behalf of other agencies would be circulated to members.

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 October – December 2020, be noted, particularly:

- a) The innovative ways the Service is addressing Community Safety during the Covid-19 pandemic which is leading to increased Home Safety Checks and the additional work with the Fire Safety department;
- b) The additional work being completed by the Fire Protection team as part of the National building risk review;

- c) The significant increase in On-Call appliance availability compared to previous years; and
- d) The hard work of the firefighters during the Covid pandemic, and that the following note of appreciation be sent to all staff on behalf of the CFA:

“Thank you for all the work that you are doing and continue to do on our behalf. We can’t imagine how hard and how difficult it is for you in these Covid-times. Please take care and be safe”.

The motion was put and carried unanimously.

**RESOLVED:**

That the update provided on the key service delivery matters for the period October – December 2020, be noted, particularly:

- a) The innovative ways the Service is addressing Community Safety during the Covid-19 pandemic which is leading to increased Home Safety Checks and the additional work with the Fire Safety department;
- b) The additional work being completed by the Fire Protection team as part of the National building risk review;
- c) The significant increase in On-Call appliance availability compared to previous years; and
- d) The hard work of the firefighters during the Covid-19 pandemic, and that the following note of appreciation be sent to all staff on behalf of the CFA:

“Thank you for all the work that you are doing and continue to do on our behalf. We can’t imagine how hard and how difficult it is for you in these Covid-times. Please take care and be safe”.

144. Calendar of meetings 2021/22.

The CFA considered a report of the Monitoring Officer seeking approval for the proposed dates for meetings of the Combined Fire Authority, the Corporate Governance Committee and the Local Pension Board for 2021-22 (as set out in the Appendix to the report). A copy of the report marked ‘Agenda Item 16’ is filed with these minutes.

It was moved by Mr. N. Rushton CC and seconded by Councillor K. Singh Johal that the calendar of meetings 2021-22 (appended to the report), which sets out the dates for meetings of the Combined Fire Authority, the Corporate Governance Committee and the Local Pension Board for 2021-22, be approved.

The motion was put and carried unanimously.

**RESOLVED:**

That the calendar of meetings 2021-22 (appended to the report), which sets out the dates for meetings of the Combined Fire Authority, the Corporate Governance Committee and the Local Pension Board for 2021-22, be approved.

145. Date of Next Meeting.

The next meeting of the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Combined Fire Authority will be held on 16 June 2021 at 10:00am via Microsoft Teams.

10.00 - 11.34 am  
10 February 2021

CHAIRMAN