



Minutes of a meeting of the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Combined Fire Authority held at County Hall, Glenfield on Wednesday, 14 February 2024.

PRESENT

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

Mr. R. G. Allen CC	Mr. D. A. Gamble CC
Mr. N. D. Bannister CC	Mr. K. Ghattoraya CC
Cllr. S. Barton	Mr. D. J. Grimley CC
Cllr. Hemant Rae Bhatia	Mr. B. Harrison-Rushton CC
Mr. B. Champion CC	Cllr. S. Harvey
Mr. J. G. Coxon CC	Ms. Betty Newton CC
Cllr. M. March	

In attendance

Callum Faint, Chief Fire and Rescue Officer
 Paul Weston, Assistant Chief Fire and Rescue Officer
 Judi Beresford, Assistant Chief Fire and Rescue Officer
 Amy Oliver, Treasurer
 Lauren Haslam, Solicitor and Monitoring Officer
 Katerina Herrgott-Penter, Finance Manager, LFRS
 Gemma Duckworth, Senior Democratic Services Officer

65. Apologies for absence.

Apologies were received from Mr. S. Bray CC.

66. 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.

67. Urgent Items.

The Chairman reported that there would be one urgent item to receive an update from the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer on two serious incidents which Firefighters had recently had to attend. Due to the sensitive nature of these incidents, it was agreed that these would be discussed as an exempt update at the end of the meeting.

68. 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:

- Variable Response Vehicles
- Flooding across Leicestershire

- Digital Transformation Project
- New Member of Staff

The CFA wished to record its thanks to Jane Moore, Director of Children and Family Services at Leicestershire County Council, who led the Local Resilience Forum response to the flooding across Leicestershire.

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

It was reported that no questions had been received.

70. Minutes.

The minutes of the CFA meeting held on 29 November 2023 were considered.

It was moved by Mr. N. J. Rushton CC and seconded by Mrs. M. E. Newton CC that the minutes of the CFA meeting held on 29 November 2023 be taken as read, confirmed and signed.

The motion was put and carried unanimously.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the CFA meeting held on 29 November 2023 be taken as read, confirmed and signed.

71. Budget Strategy 2024/25 to 2026/27.

The CFA considered a report of the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer and the Treasurer which sought approval of the budget for 2024/25, and the proposed budget strategy and capital programme for the period to 2026/27. The formal technical resolution was presented at the meeting for approval. A copy of the report, marked 'Agenda Item 7', is filed with these minutes.

The Treasurer reported that, whilst a balanced revenue budget could be set for 2024/25, the medium term outlook was difficult, partly due to service growth which had been included in the budget. This principally arose from the dismantling of the Day Crewing Plus system and the implementation of the new mobilisation system. It was anticipated that reserves would need to be used to support the budget in 2025/26 and 2026/27. There would be a significant transformation and efficiency programme over the next 18 months.

A three year capital programme was proposed for Fleet, ICT and Equipment, with a one year programme for estates. A revised estates strategy plan was currently being produced and would be presented to the CFA later in the year. Borrowing to fund the long-term estates strategy plan would be considered as part of this.

The CFA was reminded that the Authority's Council Tax remained amongst the lowest of all Combined Fire Authorities, even after the £5 increase at Council Tax Band D. Following the final local government finance settlement for 2024/25, FRAs could not increase Band D taxes by 3% or more in 2024/25 without a referendum. It was proposed to set the full increase of just less than 3% in order to make the financial position more sustainable.

The CFA had a number of earmarked reserves, including to fund the future capital programme of £10.8m and the budget strategy reserve of £1.3m.

The recommendations contained within the report were moved by Mr Rushton CC and seconded by Mrs Newton CC. The motion was put and carried unanimously.

RESOLVED:

- a) That the budget for 2024/25, 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) To note that the final position is now showing a budget surplus of £161,000 following the notification of increased rates estimates for 2024/25 and a council tax collection surplus from billing authorities. It is proposed that this overall surplus be added to the Capital Fund in 2024/25;
- c) That the capital programme described at paragraphs 23-30 be approved, and the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer be authorised to commit expenditure on schemes;
- d) To note that no comments have been received from stakeholders on the draft budget;
- e) To note that the aggregate of the taxbases communicated by billing authorities for 2024/25 is 344,283.88. [Item T in the formula in Section 42B of the Act];
- f) To agree the following amounts be calculated for the year 2024/25 in accordance with Section 42A and Section 42B of the Act:
 - (i) £51,142,229 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Authority estimates for the items set out in Section 42A(2) of the Act;
 - (ii) £23,030,486 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Authority estimates for the items set out in Section 42A(3) of the Act;
 - (iii) £28,111,743 being the amount by which (a) above exceeds (b) 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) £81.6528 being the amount at (c) above (Item R) divided by the amount at 2.5 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;
- g) To agree that 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 this resolution as the tax payable for each band;
 - (ii) the amounts shown in the appendix as the precept payable by each authority;

- h) To note the view of the Treasurer that reserves are adequate during 2024/25, and that estimates used to prepare the budget are robust;
- i) To note the medium-term financial outlook and forecasts presented at Appendix Six, and the financial challenges ahead;
- j) To approve the treasury strategy and prudential indicators described in paragraphs 60-62 of the report, and Appendices 3 and 4, including that the new upper threshold for locally held bank accounts shall take immediate effect;
- k) To approve the proposed capital strategy described in paragraphs 63-65 of the report and Appendix 4, and confirm that the CFA would not wish to undertake commercial investment;
- l) To note the equality implications arising from the budget, as described at paragraph 66-73;
- m) To approve the scheme of virement described at Appendix 5 to the report;
- n) To determine under Section 52ZB of the Act, that the relevant basic amount of Council Tax for 2024/25 is not excessive in accordance with principles issued under section 52ZC of the Act and approved by Parliament on 7th February 2024 (being an increase of less than 5%).

72. Pay Policy Statement 2024-25.

The CFA considered a report of the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer which presented the Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service's Pay Policy Statement for 2024/25, for subsequent publication on the CFA's website. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 8' is filed with these minutes.

The recommendation contained within the report was moved by Mr Rushton CC and seconded by Mrs Newton CC. The motion was put and carried unanimously.

RESOLVED:

That the Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service Pay Policy Statement 2024/25 be approved, for subsequent publication on the CFA's website.

73. Service Delivery Update.

The CFA considered a report of the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer which gave an update on the key service delivery performance for the period April to December 2023. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 9' is filed with these minutes.

Arising from the discussion, the following points were raised:

- i) There had been a continued increase in the number of home safety checks, with a significant number of referrals from partner agencies. During the period, the Service had also installed over 4,000 alarms, including for those with hearing impairments. Individuals were now being targeted who had previously been missed.
- ii) There had been a 67% increase in enforcement action, following the completion of Fire Safety Audits. This underscored the effectiveness of the risk based inspection

programme in focussing on the appropriate premises as part of the Service's commitment to achieving Safer People, Safer Places.

- iii) The Service had attended over 7,000 incidents during the period, of which 2,782 were non-fire incidents, 2,570 were fire false alarms and 1,674 were fire incidents. This was an increase in incidents attended and could be explained by an 84% increase in the number of occurrences that the Service responded to, specifically related to gaining entry to premises.
- iv) The Service had introduced two Variable Response Vehicles into operation and this had resulted in increased availability, rising to 90% in November and December.

Members commended the excellent performance over the period.

The recommendation in the report was moved by Mr Rushton CC and seconded by Mrs Newton CC. The motion was put and carried unanimously.

RESOLVED:

That the excellent performance in the report be noted.

74. Community Risk Management Plan Public Consultation Results.

The CFA considered a report of the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer which presented the final results of the public consultation in relation to the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) 2024-28. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 10' is filed with these minutes.

It was noted that the most significant changes to the Plan were the completion of the Day Crewing Plus system, an uplift in the provision of water rescue, and a change in the response time to 12 minutes for life-critical related incidents.

Arising from the discussion, the following points were raised:

- i) It was noted that there was somewhat of a changing role for Firefighters, for example, water rescue. There would be an expectation that significant training would be required in certain areas to enable Firefighters to deal with the incidents appropriately.
- ii) Firefighters were now also attending incidents which were not part of the FRS's statutory duties. However, the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer stated that, currently, the Service had capacity to respond to issues in the local community and felt that it was important to assist where possible. It was acknowledged that Firefighters were now exposed to more, but there was confidence that the current welfare support was good. However, this was a situation that would continue to be monitored.
- iii) The relatively low response rate to the consultation was noted, and it was suggested that this was something which could be promoted by elected members and at parish council meetings. The Chief Fire and Rescue Officer stated that Parish Clerks did receive details of the consultation, but this would be looked at again for the next review.

- iv) A query was raised around the interaction with the voluntary sector in relation to the response to flooding incidents. The Chief Fire and Rescue Officer reported that when the FRS was responding to an incident, he was responsible for everything and everyone within the inner cordon. There was often a reluctance to bring volunteers into this due to safety. Once the Multi-Agency Local Resilience Forum became involved, the use of volunteers would be determined.

The recommendation contained within the report was moved by Mr Rushton CC and seconded by Mrs Newton CC. The motion was put and carried unanimously.

RESOLVED:

That the report and the supporting appendices be noted, and the 2024-2028 CRMP be approved.

75. Attendance at "Special Service" Incidents.

The CFA considered a report of the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer which provided an update on the number and type on non-fire (Special Service) incidents that were attended by Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service along with a breakdown of the impact of the incidents attended. The report also provided details of Leicestershire Police's 'Most Appropriate Agency' initiative, which could impact on call demand placed upon the Service. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 11' is filed with these minutes.

In response to a query around how discussions were being managed around the Most Appropriate Agency approach, the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer confirmed that LFRS had not changed its approach in terms of attending incidents. No impact had yet been seen from Leicestershire Police's change of approach, but this would continue to be monitored, particularly from the potential increase in staff exposure to traumatic incidents.

It was noted that, in the event of spate conditions and/or a major incident, the decision may be taken by the Chief or Assistant Chief Fire and Rescue Officer to cease any non-statutory functions to ensure that resources were appropriately focussed to discharge functions appropriately. The CFA had a duty under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 to ensure the health, safety and welfare at work of all its employees and to conduct its business in such a way as to ensure that its employees were not exposed to risks to their health and safety.

The recommendation contained within the report was moved by Mr Rushton CC and seconded by Mrs Newton CC. The motion was put and carried unanimously.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted and the Most Appropriate Agency initiative being deployed by Leicestershire Police be acknowledged.

76. Review of Members' Allowance Scheme - Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel.

The CFA considered a report of the Solicitor and Monitoring Officer which presented the report of the Independent Remuneration Panel, established to review the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Combined Fire Authority's Members' Allowance Scheme.

Approval of the recommendations made by the Panel was sought. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 12' is filed with these minutes.

The recommendation contained within the report was moved by Mr Rushton CC and seconded by Mrs Newton CC. The motion was put and carried unanimously.

RESOLVED:

That the report of the Independent Remuneration Panel, established to review the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Combined Fire Authority's Members' Allowance Scheme, be noted.

77. Calendar of Meetings 2024/25.

The CFA considered a report of the Solicitor and Monitoring Officer seeking approval for the proposed dates for meetings of the Combined Fire Authority, Corporate Governance Committee and the Local Pension Board for 2024-25. A copy of the report marked 'Agenda Item 13' is filed with these minutes.

It was noted that the date of the next meeting of the Combined Fire Authority would need to be changed. Members would be advised of the revised date.

The recommendation contained within the report was moved by Mr Rushton CC and seconded by Mrs Newton CC. The motion was put and carried unanimously.

RESOLVED:

That the calendar of meetings for 2024-25, which sets out the dates for meetings of the Combined Fire Authority, Corporate Governance Committee and the Local Pension Board be approved, subject to the change of date for the next meeting of the Combined Fire Authority.

78. Date of Next Meeting.

The next meeting of the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Combined Fire Authority will be held on the *revised* date of Monday 24 June 2024 at 10am at County Hall, Glenfield.

79. Exclusion of the Press and Public.

It was moved by Mr Rushton CC and seconded by Mrs Newton CC 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 item of business as defined in the paragraphs of Schedule 12A of the Act detailed below:

- Urgent Item – Recent Incidents attended by LFRS

That in all circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

The motion was put and carried unanimously.

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 item of business as defined in the paragraphs of Schedule 12A of the Act detailed below:

- Urgent Item – Recent Incidents attended by LFRS

That in all circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

80. Urgent item - Recent Incidents Attended by LFRS.

The Chief Fire and Rescue Officer provided a verbal update on two serious incidents which LFRS had recently attended.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.

10.00 - 11.15 am
14 February 2024

CHAIRMAN