

MINUTES OF FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY MEETING HELD ON 26 APRIL 2018

Present: Councillors C Atkins (Chair), F Chapman, J Chatterley, P Downing (Vice-Chair), P Duckett, D Franks, M Headley, T Khan, D McVicar, J Mingay, R Saleem and Y Waheed

Also Present: Anna Akerman, Director of Policy, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Bedfordshire

17-18/FRA/73 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from the Police and Crime Commissioner for Bedfordshire, Kathryn Holloway.

17-18/FRA/74 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary and Other Interests

There were none.

17-18/FRA/75 Communications

LGA Membership

The Chief Fire Officer reported on the letter received from the LGA setting out the major areas of work in the fire and rescue sector during the previous year and requesting the renewal of membership.

Deputy Chief Fire Officer

The Authority was advised that Andy Hopkinson from County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service had been appointed as Deputy Chief Fire Officer after an extensive selection process and would commence in post on 1 May 2018.

The Chair, on behalf of the Authority, thanked Assistant Chief Fire Officer Evans for his contribution to the Service since he had acted up in the post from August 2017. She particularly highlighted the support he offered her as Chair and the Service Delivery Policy and Challenge Group as lead Officer to that Group during that time.

HMRC issue on use of Pool Cars by Response Officers

Following national discussions, it had been agreed that there would be no additional tax charged for the use of cars for operational response. Therefore, provision that had been made to cover the tax liabilities for affected staff for the current tax year would no longer be required. Changes to the tax regulations would not be implemented until 2019 at the earliest.

Fire at Bedfordshire Growers in Biggleswade

The Chief Fire Officer reported on the large incident that had taken place on 19 April 2018. Over 75 Service personnel had been mobilised to the incident, with crews drafted in from

Cambridgeshire. Specific reference was made to the assistance provided by the Rapid Relief Team (RRT) of the Plymouth Brethren. The RRT would also be supporting the Cadet Challenge on 28 April 2018.

The Chair advised that she had sent her thanks, on behalf of the Authority, to all the staff involved in the incident. She highlighted the efforts of the Control staff, who had been mobilising to simultaneous incidents, including a fire at the Village Hall in Sandy and assistance to the Police search for two 8 year old children missing in Bedford.

The Chief Fire Officer commented that the Service would have benefited from having a drone available to provide an overview of the incident from above. A drone had not yet been procured as it had been identified as an area for collaboration with Bedfordshire Police.

Installation of New High Sheriff

Assistant Chief Fire Officer Evans had represented the Fire and Rescue Authority at the High Sheriff's installation ceremony.

Live Water Rescue Demonstration

A live water rescue had taken place at Wixams on 13 April 2018 as part of the National Fire Chiefs Council's Drowning Prevention and Water Safety Week. Part of the demonstration was to teach members of the public to throw devices into the water rather than to enter the water themselves in a rescue attempt.

17-18/FRA/76 Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 8 February 2018 be confirmed and signed as a true record.

17-18/FRA/77 Public Participation

Members noted that no questions had been received in accordance with the public participation scheme approved at the meeting of the Fire and Rescue Authority held on 5 April 2000 (Minute 99/fa/94 refers).

17-18/FRA/78 Corporate Services Policy and Challenge Group 12 March 2018

Councillor Headley submitted the draft Minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Services Policy and Challenge Group held on 12 March 2018. The meeting had been inquorate and recommendations to approve the Treasury Management documents and the Asset Management Strategy were being forwarded directly to the Authority.

Councillor Headley highlighted two of the minor changes that had been made to the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Treasury Management Practices: the addition of consideration of inter-authority lending and clarification of the role of the Policy and Challenge Group, in that it was not a decision making body and could only make recommendations to full Authority.

Councillor McVicar, the other Member present at the meeting, expressed disappointment that the meeting had not been quorate.

RESOLVED:

1. That the submitted notes of the meeting of the Corporate Services Policy and Challenge Group held on 12 March 2018 be received.
2. That the updated documents be adopted:
 - (i) Treasury Management Strategy Statement
 - (ii) Minimum Revenue Provision Policy and Annual Investment Strategy
 - (iii) Treasury Management Practices
3. That the Asset Management Strategy be approved.
4. That the Asset Management Strategy be reviewed every three years and the individual Asset Management Plans be reviewed annually.

17-18/FRA/79 Service Delivery Policy and Challenge Group 15 March 2018

Councillor Mingay submitted the draft Minutes of the meeting of the Service Delivery Policy and Challenge Group held on 15 March 2018.

Councillor Mingay highlighted the following:

- The Service, as part of national collaborative project with 27 other Fire and Rescue Services, had procured new Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for its fire fighters and this would be delivered in 2019. "Show and tell" sessions were being arranged to demonstrate the new PPE that would be lighter, safer and available in a wider variety of shapes and sizes.
- There had been a significant increase in deliberate fires during the year. This was largely the result of a large spike in the first quarter of the year of an increase in vehicle fires related to criminal activity.
- An evaluation of the effecting entry pilot had been completed. The Service had been called for assistance 527 times and attended 375 incidents. On 82 occasions the Service had been first on the scene and Service crews had provided or assisted with the provision of medical care in 79 cases.
- During the period between 1 October and 31 December 2017, 100% of 121 respondents were very (113) or fairly satisfied (8) with the Service.
- The Service would continue to support Hazard Alley; however due to the costs of admission and transport, this would be limited to promotion rather than through sending groups of children to the facility.

Assistant Chief Fire Officer Evans reported that, in light of the recent chemical attack in Salisbury, the Service had reviewed its arrangements and ability to respond to chemical attacks, including the Mass Casualty Decontamination Unit. The arrangements had received a high level of internal and external assurance.

Councillor Downing referred to an article in Bedford Today on 20 April 2018 about the significant increase in arson incidents and questioned whether the Service had been contacted prior to its publication.

RESOLVED:

That the submitted draft Minutes of the meeting held on 15 March 2018 be received, subject to the amendment of Minute 46.5 to refer to fire related injuries, rather than fatalities.

17-18/FRA/80 Audit and Standards Committee 28 March 2018

Councillor Chapman submitted the draft Minutes of the meeting of the Audit and Standards Committee held on 28 March 2018.

The Committee had recommended the approval of a revised Code of Conduct and the 2017/18 Review of Effectiveness and associated action plan for incorporation into the Annual Governance Statement.

The record of Member attendance on Station Visits 2017/18 had been amended and the updated version had been circulated to Members electronically.

RESOLVED:

1. That the submitted draft Minutes of the meeting held on 6 December 2017 be received, subject to the amendment of the materiality limit referred to in Minute 48.3 to £29,000.
2. That the revised Code of Conduct be approved.
3. That the 2017/18 Review of Effectiveness and associated action plan be approved and incorporated into the Annual Governance Statement.

17-18/FRA/81 Human Resources Policy and Challenge Group 29 March 2018

Councillor Waheed submitted the draft Minutes of the meeting of the Human Resources Policy and Challenge Group held on 29 March 2018 and highlighted the following:

- Good progress had been made against all projects.
- New performance targets had been set for 2018/19.
- The Authority was required to have a Pension Board with its associated framework. The internal audit of the Pension Board had resulted in an opinion of substantial assurance.
- The Group had reviewed progress against the Corporate Health and Safety Objectives for 2017/18 and agreed new objectives for 2018/19.
- A RoSPA Audit would be undertaken in 2018 as it had been four years since the last RoSPA Audit, which had resulted in the Service being awarded Level 4 out of 5.
- The Group had received a presentation on the Service's Functional Fitness Testing and Drill Ground Assessment. This was based on a system of testing supported by the Fire Brigades Union, FireFit, University of Bath and the Chief Fire Officers Association.

In response to a question on the position relating to the ongoing pensions dispute, the Assistant Chief Officer advised that the case had been referred back to the Employment Tribunal. The legal costs of this action were being split between all affected Fire and Rescue Services.

In relation to the pay award for fire fighters, the Assistant Chief Officer reported that 1% had been awarded, backdated to July 2017. Initially a 2% pay offer had been made with ongoing discussion regarding the broadening of role for a FF with a stage 2 increase of 3%, subject to the Government providing funding. The Fire Brigades Union national conference would be held in June and it was likely that the pay dispute would be discussed at that time.

RESOLVED:

That the submitted draft Minutes of the meeting of the Human Resources Policy and Challenge Group held on 29 March 2018 be received.

17-18/FRA/82 Draft Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP)

Assistant Chief Fire Officer Evans introduced a report providing an update on the production of a new Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP). An initial draft had originally been presented to a meeting of the Service Delivery Policy and Challenge Group in June 2017; however, a number of significant developments had occurred since then including the implementation of a new Fire and Rescue Service Framework, the commencement of an

intelligence led response project, the award of funding for a feasibility study into a joint Headquarters with Bedfordshire Police and the introduction of a new inspection regime.

As a result of these developments, the CRMP would be revisited to ensure that it was fit for purpose and that it took the changing context into account and more accurately reflect future delivery of fire and rescue services in Bedfordshire.

In response to a comment on the engagement of the Ambulance Service in blue light collaboration projects, both the Chief Fire Officer and the Assistant Chief Fire Officer confirmed that the engagement of the Ambulance Service had increased and it had become a more active partner in the Collaboration Working Group.

In terms of risk, Councillor Downing expressed the view that more work should be undertaken at a Community Safety Partnership level to prioritise arson as an issue affecting the communities of Bedfordshire.

He also reported on the work of Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group in looking to further develop primary care in order to reduce the demand for emergency and acute services.

RESOLVED:

That the contents of the report be received and the strategic direction outlined in the report regarding the development of a new Community Risk Management Plan be supported.

17-18/FRA/83 Disposal of Assets under the Scheme of Delegated Authority

The Chief Fire Officer presented the annual report on the disposal of obsolete vehicles and equipment assets and detailed the assets that could achieve values over the threshold of £10,000 for Officer delegation.

In response to a question, the Chief Fire Officer advised that the rescue pumps and equipment that had been donated by the Service to Kenya in the past had been successfully introduced and feedback had been received that demonstrated that the donated equipment had been effective in both rescuing individuals and preventing damage to property.

It was noted that assets were assessed to determine if the life of those assets could be extended prior to disposal. Ancillary vehicles were regularly kept in service after the proposed date of disposal and a number of factors, such as residual value and ongoing maintenance costs, were considered prior to the disposal of any vehicle.

Assistant Chief Fire Officer Evans advised that three electric vehicles were being procured to provide courier services between the Service's properties. As the vehicles had a range of approximately 150 miles, they would be able to complete their rounds and be charged overnight, so would not require additional charging points to be installed.

RESOLVED:

1. That the contents of the report be acknowledged.
2. That the disposal of the 12 assets detailed in the report which individually have the potential to achieve income over the £10,000 threshold allowed under the scheme of delegated authority be authorised.

17-18/FRA/84 Fire Pensions Administration

The Assistant Chief Officer submitted a report seeking approval to continue with the existing firefighter pension administration services from London Pensions Fund Authority (LPFA) through a discharge agreement under section 104 of the Local Government Act 1972.

The current pension administrator, LPFA, had merged with Lancashire County Council (LCC) to create a joint venture structure for the administration of pension funds. This was a not for profit organisation and any surplus was reinvested or returned to customers through a rebate mechanism. It was proposed that the Service enter into a discharge agreement with LCC for the continuation of the pension fund administration for a fee of £36,000 per annum. A discharge agreement was similar to a shared service agreement and negated the requirement for a full procurement exercise.

The Assistant Chief Officer confirmed that the team administering the Service's pensions would remain the same, and that the office would remain in the south, with specialist fire pension support available at the LCC base in Preston. In entering into an agreement with LCC, the Service would retain the skills, experience and expertise of its current pension administrators. Kent Fire and Rescue Service had recently entered into a discharge agreement with LCC.

The Service had received extensive legal advice from LGSS Law in the development of the agreement.

It was noted that the Local Government Pensions Scheme (LGPS) was still administered by Bedford Borough Council.

RESOLVED:

1. That the discharge of firefighter pension administration functions to Lancashire County Council under section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972 be agreed.
2. That the Head of Human Resources be authorised to enter into any necessary agreements to effect this change and for the Authority's seal to be affixed to any documents required to give effect to this decision.

17-18/FRA/85 Blue Light Collaboration

Assistant Chief Fire Officer Evans presented his report which provided an update on the current status of 'Blue Light' collaboration workstreams.

Assistant Chief Officer Philip Wells had been nominated as the Senior Responsible Officer for the Joint Headquarters. Members and staff had been involved in meetings with the consultant undertaking the feasibility study as part of the scoping exercise. Governance arrangements were currently being considered.

Evaluations on the co-location of Ampthill and Leighton Buzzard Fire Stations had been undertaken. Additional female toilets were required at Leighton Buzzard as the current facilities were not adequate for the current gender profile of staff at the Station. Investigations into how this could be resolved, given the age and footprint of the building, were progressing. Sites were available for access by Police staff on a 24/7 basis.

Bury Park Community Centre had been made available for collaborative use from 5 April 2018.

An evaluation of the missing vulnerable person searches had resulted in the Memorandum of Understanding being rewritten.

The evaluation report of the effecting entry pilot had been presented at the Blue Light Collaboration Programme Board and it had been recognised that this had been successful and led to lives being saved and damage to property being reduced as the Service had been able to provide a quicker response. Work was in progress to identify better arrangements for making premises secure following forced entry, including consideration of this being undertaken by fire crews themselves.

In relation to the purchase of a drone, Bedfordshire Police had purchased drones due to urgent operational need and the Service was now considering collaborative opportunities with Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service.

Control staff now had access to Bedfordshire Police's STORM incident monitoring system which enabled them to access real time incident monitoring and risk management information.

Discussions had commenced regarding the sharing of a specialist GDPR Officer. Improvements had been made to the cross service data sharing arrangements and process enhancements to share Bedfordshire Police risk flags with the Community Safety team and the frequency of arson reporting by Bedfordshire Police to the Service is to be increased to expedite fire investigations.

Members expressed concern about the delay of the procurement of a drone, as it could have been used at the incident in Biggleswade.

Assistant Chief Fire Officer Evans reported that the procurement of the drone had been delayed as the bids received through the tendering exercise had been too expensive. Whilst recognising that any drone procured would need to be compatible with national asset capability requirement, Hertfordshire's experience had led to consideration of a lower specification drone.

The increasing amount of collaboration work was recognised and Officers were thanked for their efforts in driving this forward.

RESOLVED:

That the contents of the report be acknowledged.

17-18/FRA/86 Information Bulletin

Members received the information bulletin for the period 1 January – 31 March 2018.

Councillor Mingay referred to a fatality resulting from a road traffic collision and requested that the number of road traffic collision fatalities be reported to the Service Delivery Policy and Challenge Group for information.

The Chief Fire Officer reported that this could be provided, but the Service was not always notified if an individual rescued by the Service later passed away so the information may not be accurate.

As it was the last meeting of the Municipal Year, the Chair thanked all Members for their hard work on behalf of the Authority and the people of Bedfordshire during the year. She noted that Luton Borough Council appointed its Authority representatives on an annual basis.

She also thanked Officers and support staff for their assistance and made particular reference to the support she had received from Councillor Downing in his role as Vice-Chair.

RESOLVED:

That the information bulletin be received.

17-18/FRA/87 Future Mobilising System Recommendation

RESOLVED:

That, pursuant to Sections 100A(2) and 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the discussion of the following item on the grounds that the matters to be discussed involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act (as amended):

Items

Future Mobilising System Mobilisation

The meeting ended at 11.45 am

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Following the completion of the Authority's formal business, the Chair invited Members to consider some proposals that she had developed regarding the allocation of places on the Policy and Challenge Groups and the Audit Committee and suggested that these new arrangements should be adopted at the forthcoming Annual Meeting. It was noted that one of Central Bedfordshire Council's committees was due to take place at the same time as the FRA's Annual Meeting and that four Members of the FRA would be attending that meeting. A request was made to change the time of the Annual Meeting to 2.30 pm so that the members affected could attend both meetings.

The Secretary/Monitoring Officer advised that it was possible for the Authority to change the time of the Annual Meeting provided that public notice was given of the change.

It was agreed that the Authority's Annual Meeting would take place at 2.30 pm on Thursday 31 May 2018 to accommodate the fact that some Members were involved in a meeting at Central Bedfordshire Council which was being held in the morning of that day.