

MINUTES OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 5 JANUARY 2024

Present: Councillors J Burnett (Chair), R Goodchild, M Headley (Vice-Chair) and A Sultan

CFO A Hopkinson, ACO G Chambers, Mr G Britten and Mrs N Upton

23-24/EC/29 Apologies

An apology for absence was received from Councillor S Hussain.

23-24/EC/30 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary and Other Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

23-24/EC/31 Communications

Independent Culture Review of South Wales Fire and Rescue Service

The Chief Fire Officer referred to the briefing note which had been prepared for Members of the Authority following the publication of the Independent Culture Review of South Wales Fire and Rescue Service, which had identified serious failings and a culture of tolerating problematic behaviours. The temporary Assistant Chief Fire Officer was currently undertaking a gap analysis of the report's recommendations against the Service's cultural improvement action plans. This was also cognisant of the current HMICFRS thematic review on how fire and rescue services handled cases of misconduct and how people and culture issues may inform the fourth round of inspections.

The Chief Fire Officer and Chair had discussed how best to address this at a local level.

The Chair suggested that a Combined Fire Authority conference be held before the LGA Conference to discuss people and culture.

Cause of Concern

The Chief Fire Officer reported that he met with HMI Roy Wilster to discuss the outcome of their review of the cause of concern relating to firefighter fitness tests. It was hoped that the letter would publish the outcome no later than January.

Government response to consultation on the Fire Service Reform White Paper

The Chief Fire Officer advised that there were proposals to make it easier for Police and Crime Commissioners to subsume responsibility for the governance of fire and rescue services, such as the possible removal of the requirement of a business case to be submitted. The information required during this process was very demanding on the fire and rescue service. At present, there was no collective view from fire and rescue services and it was important to “fill the void”.

Councillor Goodchild reported that his group had submitted a Notice of Motion to the next meeting of Central Bedfordshire Council to remove the Police and Crime Commissioner and replace with a body similar to the previous Police Authority due to various concerns about the role of the Police and Crime Commissioner, including appropriate governance arrangements and operational effectiveness.

The Chair emphasised that authorities, including this one, must be proactive and put forward their views and concerns about changes to the governance arrangements for fire and rescue services. This would involve working with and supporting other fire and rescue authorities and services.

23-24/EC/32 Minutes

Following a suggestion from the Monitoring Officer, confirmation of the Minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 23 November 2023 were deferred to the next meeting.

The Chief Fire Officer recommended that the Executive meet more frequently on an informal basis. He already met on a weekly basis with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Authority and suggested that the full Committee meet informally once a month.

Members supported this idea, subject to these meetings being held virtually and for Members to be given as much notice as possible of meeting dates so that they could accommodate these along with their other commitments.

23-24/EC/33 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).

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACTION 1972, SCHEDULE 12A, PARAGRAPHS 1 to 3 PART 1: EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

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 items on the grounds that the matters to be discussed involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1-3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act (as amended):

Item:

23-24/EC/34 ACFO Recruitment and Succession Planning

The meeting ended at 11.36 am