

MINUTES OF FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY MEETING HELD ON 19 JULY 2017

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

CFO P Fuller, ACO Z Evans, DCFO G Ranger, Mr G Chambers, AC D Cook.

At the request of the Chair Members and others present stood for a minute's silence in memory of those who had lost their lives at Grenfell Tower.

17-18/FRA/15 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Khan and McVicar.

17-18/FRA/16 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary and Other Interests

There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary and other interests.

17-18/FRA/17 Communications

Membership of the Service Delivery Policy and Challenge Group

The Secretary and Monitoring Officer advised that following the annual meeting of the Fire and Rescue Authority, Councillor Chapman had decided to stand down from her membership of the Policy and Challenge Group in view of her being Chairperson/Vice Chairperson on two other Groups.

Police and Fire Service Float in the Luton Carnival

The Chief Fire Officer advised that the children of Hillborough Junior School who had accompanied the joint Police and Fire Service Float in the Luton Carnival had been awarded the "Best School" of the Carnival. He added that he had written to the school to thank them for their participation.

Fire Commission Meeting (Attended by the Chair and CFO Fuller)

The Chair and the Chief Fire Officer briefed Members on the Fire Commission meeting. The Fire Minister, Nick Hurd MP had attended and given a speech which had included the following matters:

- Grenfell Tower Fire
- Reinforcement of Direction of Travel for the Fire Service in terms of accountability, transparency, efficiency/collaboration and workforce reform.
- Fire Service Resources and Resilience – noting the need for continuing improvement.
- New Inspection Regime for Standards.
- New National Fire and Rescue Service Website (which would provide general Home Office information and contact details for each Fire Service in the country).
- Benefits of effective procurement.

- Police and Crime Commissioners – there had not been any reference to any impending legislation and any move in responsibility for the Fire Service would be a local decision (however this had to be agreed by all parties. It was reported that Essex County Council and more recently Hertfordshire County Council had published their opposition to the Police and Crime Commissioner taking responsibility for their Fire Service.)

There had been a verbal presentation by Kent County Councillor Nick Chard on pay negotiations and it was reported that the Fire Brigade Union was consulting on the latest pay offer.

The Chief Fire Officer referred to the pay consultation and indicated that the Fire Brigade Union was seeking a substantial pay increase particularly with reference to the Transformation Agenda. Employers had undertaken a regional consultation and the Chief Fire Officer and Councillor Downing had attended the event in London. There had been general support for a pay increase and it was thought that it would be an appropriate time to make the Fire Officer conditions of service more flexible and to remunerate them at the correct level. The offer had been for an immediate 2% increase with a further 3% from April 2018 on the basis of agreement to the Transformation Agenda and subject to the Government meeting the additional cost. The Fire Brigade Union was currently consulting their members, however there had not yet been a response from the Government as to their position.

The Chair reported that there had been a discussion at the Fire Commission meeting concerning the opportunity to raise a local precept to meet additional fire service costs as had been agreed in relation to Adult Social Care. The Chief Fire Officer had suggested that there could be an additional precept of £5 or a 2% cap, whichever was the greater.

The Chair mentioned that she had given a presentation, as portfolio holder, to the Bedford Borough Council meeting held on 12 July 2017 and this had focused on the Grenfell Tower disaster and the work which had been undertaken as a result, in Bedfordshire. She thanked everyone who had had an input to the presentation, which she reported had been very well received. The main area of interest for questions had been the “stay put policy”. Councillor Franks apologised to the Fire Service on behalf of Luton Borough Council as their officer who had been requested to attend a recent Committee meeting had been given an incorrect start time.

Former Chief Constable Alf Hitchcock

The Chair advised that she had arranged for a letter to be issued on behalf of the Fire Authority to the family of the former Chief Constable Alf Hitchcock who, sadly, had passed away recently. She added that the funeral had now taken place and had had been very well attended.

Award to Lorraine Moore

The Chair offered congratulations to Lorraine Moore, for the award she had received as recently reported in the *Bedfordshire on Sunday* newspaper.

17-18/FRA/18 Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 25 May 2017 be confirmed and signed as a true record.

17-18/FRA/19 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/20 Audit and Standards Committee 14 June 2017

Councillor Chapman submitted the draft Minutes of the meeting of the Audit and Standards Committee held on 16 March 2017. The Secretary and Monitoring Officer confirmed that he had issued a letter to Committee Members setting out the proposed revision of paragraphs 5 and 6 of Standing Order 21, however he had not received any objection to the proposal.

Members considered the proposed amendment to Standing Order 21, to add “Monitoring Officer” after “Chairperson” in Item 2.

The Secretary and Monitoring Officer advised that any proposed and seconded change to Standing Orders would stand deferred to the next meeting of the Authority. The reason being was so that there could be not be an immediate change to Standing Orders without the opportunity for due reflection.

Councillor Chapman reported on a typographical error in Appendix B to the report (page 6.12), Standing Order 21: Appointments by the Authority, number 5, whereby reference to “his/her” should be “him/her”.

RESOLVED:

1. That the submitted draft Minutes of the meeting held on 14 June 2017 be approved.
2. That the amendments to Standing Order set out in Appendix B to the Report, be approved subject to:

In Standing Order 21, paragraph 2 – to add “Monitoring Officer” after “Chairperson”

(This resolution would stand referred to the following meeting of the Fire Authority.)

17-18/FRA/21 Service Delivery Policy and Challenge Group 15 June 2017

Councillor Mingay submitted the draft Minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Challenge Group held on 15 June 2017.

In introducing the report and Minutes, Councillor Mingay highlighted the following issues:

- Grenfell Tower – the Chief Fire Officer and the Deputy Chief Fire Officer had visited the scene of the fire to determine whether there were any learning opportunities for Bedfordshire.
- Award from Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce – the Service had been awarded a Certificate of Appreciation from the Chamber as it had been a member for 20 years.
- Customer Satisfaction Survey – for 2016/2017 the Service had received a 99.6% satisfaction rate from survey respondents.
- Deliberate Fires – the Policy and Challenge Group would be discussing this subject at their next meeting.
- Specialist Rescue Unit – the visit to the Unit by Members of the Policy and Challenge Group had been extended to all Members on the Executive.

In response to a question the Chief Fire Officer advised that there had not been any injuries to emergency service personnel during the Grenfell Tower fire however a number were now receiving trauma counselling. He also proposed, and Members agreed, that the congratulations of the Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority should be expressed to all fire fighters who had been involved in the incident.

RESOLVED:

1. That the submitted draft Minutes of the meeting held on 15 June 2017 be approved.
2. That the following amendments to the Terms of Reference for the Service Delivery Policy and Challenge Group: to remove point 8 (to monitor and review matters arising from the former FiReControl project) and the addition of a point to monitor progress of blue light collaboration projects be included, be approved.
3. That the congratulations of the Fire Authority be extended to all fire fighters who had been involved in tackling the Grenfell Tower fire.

17-18/FRA/22 Corporate Services Policy and Challenge Group 21 June 2017

Councillor Headley submitted the draft Minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Challenge Group held on 21 June 2017.

Councillor Headley highlighted the following matters in particular:

- Asset Management Plans – the Group would be reviewing the timings for discussion of the various Plans in order that these could be given full consideration.
- Fire and Rescue Indemnity Company – the Company had started operating on 1 November 2015. In the first year of operation to 31 October 2016 a surplus of £471,000 had been generated.

A Member wished to ask a question in relation to the confidential report concerning the Fraud Update. The Secretary and Monitoring Officer advised that if the question did not relate to a confidential matter then it could be considered with the public in attendance.

Councillor Franks suggested that his question was not confidential, therefore there was no resolution to exclude the Press and public. The Head of Finance and Treasurer advised that the sum in question was around £20,000 and the original Court date had been deferred. A revised date was still awaited, however this was being pursued.

RESOLVED:

1. That the submitted draft Minutes of the meeting held on 21 June 2017 be approved.
2. That all references to a “Director” in the Policy and Challenge Group’s Terms of Reference be replaced to reference to Corporate Services functions.

17-18/FRA/23 Human Resources Policy and Challenge Group 29 June 2017

Councillor Waheed introduced the report of the Human Resources Policy and Challenge Group held on 29 June 2017.

In introducing the report and Minutes, Councillor Waheed highlighted the following matters in relation to the Human Resources Performance Monitoring Year End Report:

- The HR and Payroll system project had been implemented in February 2017.
- All equality indicators had met the target with the exception of EQ2 (recruitment of minority ethnic staff across the whole organisation). Even though the target had not been met there had been a significant amount of work around positive action being undertaken. The Service was also working closely with the Police to learn lessons from their recent successful recruitment of police officers from ethnic minority backgrounds.
- In relation to HR1 (percentage of working time lost due to sickness) this indicator had missed its target by 13% as a result of long term absences, with 28 employees having had an absence of 21 or more days.
- There had been excellence performance against HR3a which was “the percentage of returned appraisal documents to HR within 3 months of the end of the reporting year”.
- Indicator T5 had improved by 7% to reach amber levels at the year end. The target was for 60% of staff at each station and in each Watch to have received relevant training.
- Indicator H1 (number of serious accidents per 1,000 employees) and H2 (number of working days/shifts lost to accidents per 1,000 employees (excluding Retained Duty System employees)) had exceeded their targets.

Councillor Waheed also mentioned that a temporary appointment for the Vice Chair of the Group had been made until a permanent Vice Chair could be appointed for the remainder of the year.

RESOLVED:

1. That the submitted draft Minutes of the meeting held on 29 June 2017 be approved, subject to recording an apology for absence from Councillor Saleem.
2. That, “to approve the annual Corporate Health and Safety Objectives” be included in the Human Resources Policy and Challenge Group’s Terms of Reference.
3. That the Fire and Rescue Authority review the membership of the Policy and Challenge Groups and the Audit and Standards Committee to ensure that a sufficient number of Members was appointed to each Group/Committee

17-18/FRA/24 Blue Light Collaboration Working Group

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer introduced the update of current blue light collaborations and highlighted the following:

- The One Public Estate bid for a joint headquarters was to be submitted later this month.
- The Shefford Fire Station was now operating as a tri-service facility.
- The Leighton Buzzard Fire Station was progressing. The Police intended to use the existing gym as office accommodation and then would provide a replacement gym for the Fire Service. Completion was expected by 31 August 2017.
- Harrold Fire Station was not now being considered for collaboration as the Police did not have a need to share the facility.
- The Barkers Lane, Bedford Fire Station now contained the Community Safety office and the Mid Shires Search and Rescue garaging arrangement. The Road Victims Trust had moved into the North Area Office.
- The Bury Park Community Centre, Luton was now established as a joint community cohesion unit.
- Body Worn Cameras – these had now been issued and an evaluation was being undertaken with a view to extending the use of these cameras.

- Co-Responding could be affected by pay negotiations.
- Forced Entry – the new arrangements in assisting the Ambulance Service were working well and had reduced the workload on the Police.
- Arson Investigation – Councillor Downing was attending meetings on the subject.
- Drones – it was intended to purchase a drone which the Police would also be able to use on request. The cost of purchase of the drone was to be shared between the two authorities.

Councillor Downing mentioned that he understood that the target call-out time for the Ambulance Service could be increased to 3 hours. He also referred to a recent community safety meeting held at Central Bedfordshire Council where it had been reported that there had been 55 linked arson incidents in Leighton Buzzard. He noted that fire officers were taking appropriate action. In addition the new neighbourhood police officer had taken over the investigation and had since arrested 2 youths. There had been no further arson reports in the area since mid-June 2017.

Councillor Franks took the opportunity to thank the author responsible for the report which he had found to be succinct and very informative. The Chief Fire Officer confirmed that the report was a public document and could be circulated to constituent Councils.

The Head of Finance and Treasurer commented that the Ambulance Service currently responded from 4 fire stations in Bedfordshire. ACO Evans also mentioned that the report only related to recent collaboration and did not set out the full range of collaboration which was being undertaken.

RESOLVED:

1. That the content of the report be acknowledged.
2. That it be noted that a formal process of internal audit of BFRS collaboration governance arrangements and project management was due to commence on 24 July 2017 and be of three days' duration.

17-18/FRA/25 Annual Overarching Performance Report Year End 2016/17

ACO Evans introduced the report which provided an overarching performance report including performance data from all policy and challenge groups.

In introducing the report ACO Evans highlighted the following issues:

- The Service had achieved or performed better than the target in 71 of its strategic objective measures during 2016/2017.
- Appendix A set out the Fire and Rescue Service vision and the key documents which comprised the corporate planning framework.
- The performance indicators for the Strategic Objectives were set out for 2016/2017 to compare the target against the actual performance.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Service's performance against delivery of the Authority's strategic objectives for 2016/17, be acknowledged.
2. That subject to any amendments following a review by Members that the Overarching Performance Report be published on the Service's Internet site.

17-18/FRA/26 Inclusive Fire Service Group - Suggested Improvement Strategies

ACO Evans introduced the report which informed Members of the work of the Inclusive Fire Service Group. In introducing the report ACO Evans highlighted the following issues:

- The Inclusive Fire Service Group was independently chaired by Professor Linda Dickins and included employer and employee representation from the National Joint Council, National Fire Chiefs Council, The Fire Officers Association and the Retained Firefighters Union.
- Inclusivity was a key consideration for recruitment, induction, training, knowledge, progression and retention. This was demonstrated through the Service's focus to be an employer of choice, detailed within its People Strategy.
- There was need for a visible senior ownership and leadership to ensure that local strategies and initiatives became a reality.
- The Chief Fire Officer had launched the Service's first Single Equality Scheme in 2012 ensuring the monitoring of cross-organisational equality objectives.
- The internal governance structures included a Corporate Equality Group with functional areas represented to monitor progressing the equality duty and the single equality action plans.
- The Service would continue to work with partners to share good practice for delivering local strategies and initiatives. It was hoped to build on the successful female whole-time recruitment process from last year, into the following year.
- Following the National Fire Chiefs Council's Agreement to a Memorandum of Understanding for Inclusion, the Service would update its actions and issue its own statement.
- The importance and benefit of trade union involvement was recognised by the Service. Facility time had been extended to assist Fire Brigade Union involvement in corporate meetings.
- There was an annual Property Asset Management Plan and a budget round where Station Commanders could put forward budget bids should any additional facilities become necessary. An equality impact assessment had also been completed.
- The Service was fully supportive of the work of the Group and ensuring progress was made against the Inclusion Agenda. It was felt that the strategies, as recommended, did not particularly introduce anything new to existing strategies.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Fire and Rescue Authority receive the strategies suggested by the Inclusive Fire Service Group.
2. That the Fire and Rescue Authority approve that elected Members support the progressing of the strategies and agree continued monitoring through the elected Member chaired Corporate Equality Group.
3. That the Fire and Rescue Authority approve that the detail provided within the report be issued to the Inclusive Fire Service Group.

17-18/FRA/27 Information Bulletin

Members received the information bulletin for the period 1 April – 30 June 2017.

The Chair highlighted the station visit to the Dunstable Community Fire Station immediately following this meeting and to the visit this evening to the Harrold Fire Station.

The Chair also referred to the awards ceremony to take place on 6 September 2017 at Luton and requested that Members advise officers if they would be attending.

It was noted that the next meeting of the Fire and Rescue Authority would take place on 20 October 2017 at 10am at Fire and Rescue Headquarters.

RESOLVED:

That the information bulletin be received.

The meeting ended at 11.19 am