

MINUTES OF FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY MEETING HELD ON 19 JULY 2018

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

CFO P Fuller and ACO Z Evans

Kathryn Holloway, the Police and Crime Commissioner for Bedfordshire

18-19/FRA/14 Apologies

An apology for lateness was received from Councillor Saleem.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer and the Head of Finance and Treasurer were unable to attend the meeting.

18-19/FRA/15 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary and Other Interests

There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary and other interests.

18-19/FRA/16 Communications

Spirit of Fire Awards

The Chief Fire Officer reported that the Service had been nominated in two categories for the Spirit of Fire Awards: Supporter of the Year – Dependant (Cameron Moore) and Team of the Year (Leighton Buzzard Fire Cadets). The nominees had attended the awards ceremony in London and had met the Home Secretary.

River Festival

The Chief Fire Officer advised that there had been no major incidents at the River Festival. The Service's Positive Action Team had been in attendance handing out leaflets to interested individuals.

Review of Governance

The terms of reference for the review of governance had been received from the internal auditors and agreed internally. The audit report, when completed, would be submitted to the Corporate Services Policy and Challenge Group.

Incident at Fire Service College

The Chief Fire Officer reported that one of the instructors overseeing the recruits at the Fire Service College had been hospitalised with heat stroke following his collapse during a Breathing Apparatus exercise. He had been discharged on 16 July after a week in hospital and had travelled back to Bedfordshire on 17 July 2018. The Authority was advised that support had been provided to the recruits following the incident.

A letter would be signed by the Chair on behalf of the Authority wishing the individual a speedy recovery.

The Chair commented that a number of Members had not been present on the visit to the Fire Service College, which was unfortunate as both the Service and the College had gone to great lengths to organise the visit and it had been very informative. It was suggested that a similar visit should be arranged in two years' time to allow other Members the chance to visit the College. This should be arranged to take place when new recruits were being trained at the site.

The Police and Crime Commissioner commented that she would have liked to have been invited as she recognised there was potential for police training to be undertaken at that site.

Members were reminded that the passing out parade for the new recruits would be held on 30 August 2018 and were invited to attend in support of the Service's new fire fighters.

Home Office Consultation

The Chief Fire Officer advised that he had received a letter the previous day requesting a response by 7 August 2018 to a Home Office consultation on recognising longer lengths of service as a result of changes to the pensionable age. Previously, only 20 years of service had been recognised. Recognition of 30 years of service and 40 years of service with additional bars was being proposed. The recognition of 40 years of service only would be retrospective.

He suggested that it may be appropriate for someone with more than 30 years of service to have that length of service recognised retrospectively if they were still in employment, as the last time their length of service would have been rewarded would have been upon completion of 20 years of service.

It was agreed that the Chief and Chair respond on behalf of the Authority as Members had not been given sufficient time to consider the consultation proposals.

The Chair requested that the letter be circulated to all Members of the Authority for information.

HMICFRS Inspection

The Chair reported that the Principal Officers had given a detailed presentation to the HMICFRS inspection team the previous day and suggested that the presentation could be given to Members at a forthcoming Member Development Day.

18-19/FRA/17 Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 31 May 2018 be confirmed and signed as a true record.

18-19/FRA/18 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).

There were no members of the public present at the meeting.

18-19/FRA/19 Corporate Services Policy and Challenge Group 21 June 2018

Councillor Chapman introduced the draft Minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Services Policy and Challenge Group held on 21 June 2018. She reported that recommendations had been made relating to amendments to the Group's terms of reference and the approval of the Asset Management Plans for Fleet & Transport and Information & Communications Technology.

Councillor Chapman advised that a Vice-Chair had not been appointed at the meeting as no one had volunteered to take on the role.

Councillor McVicar stated that he would put himself up for that position if no one else came forward.

In response to a question, the Chief Fire Officer confirmed that the installation of the red diesel storage tanks at Bedford and Luton Fire Stations would pay for themselves as the Aerial Platforms were quite new and had many years of service remaining.

The Police and Crime Commissioner commented on the disposal of assets and volunteered to assist with communications if vehicles were being donated for use abroad.

RESOLVED:

1. That the submitted draft Minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Services Policy and Challenge Group held on 21 June 2018 be received.
2. That the following amendment to the Corporate Services Policy and Challenge Group's terms of reference be approved: that all references to the Corporate Services Directorate be replaced with references to Corporate Services functions.
3. That, following the Annual General meeting and completion of the current audit, a further review of the Terms of Reference be undertaken.
4. That the updated Asset Management Plans for Fleet & Transport and Information & Communications Technology be approved.

18-19/FRA/20 Service Delivery Policy and Challenge Group 26 June 2018

Councillor Mingay submitted the draft Minutes of the meeting of the Service Delivery Policy and Challenge Group that was held on 26 June 2018, at which there had been a detailed discussion of the procurement of a replacement mobilising system.

Councillor Mingay reported that there had been a significant increase in the number and rate of deliberate fires and some of this was attributable to an increase in criminal activity. Vehicle fires had accounted for approximately 200 of the 874 fires, an increase of 7% from 2016/17. Two prolific arsonists from the Leighton Buzzard area had been successfully prosecuted as a result of collaborative working between the Police and Fire Service.

Councillor Mingay referred to the 99% customer satisfaction rate and the low number of complaints (8) that had been received about the Service during 2017/18.

An update on the feasibility study that had been undertaken into the provision of a joint Police and Fire and Rescue Service had been provided at the meeting.

In this respect, the Police and Crime Commissioner reported that she had been advised by the Carbon Trust that the refurbishment of Police Headquarters would be half the cost of purpose built new Headquarters site. If this was the case, she would be supporting this option going forward. She also stated that she would involve the Service in these discussions.

The Authority was advised that the Carbon Trust was currently undertaking an energy audit of the existing Police Headquarters site. It had subsequently been agreed that the Carbon Trust would undertake a similar audit of Fire and Rescue Headquarters.

The Chief Fire Officer confirmed that the Service was committed to the process as set out and agreed upon the award of funding from One Public Estate and would consider the full range of options.

RESOLVED:

That the submitted draft Minutes of the meeting of the Service Delivery Policy and Challenge Group held on 26 June 2018 be received.

18-19/FRA/21 Human Resources Policy and Challenge Group 28 June 2018

Councillor Waheed introduced the draft Minutes of the meeting of the Human Resources Policy and Challenge Group held on 28 June 2018.

She reported that the implementation of the new HR/Payroll System had been very successful and that all synchronisations had been completed. Strong performance had been achieved against the indicators measuring the recruitment of women and in parity of retention rates. It was acknowledged that further work needed to be undertaken to increase the recruitment of individuals from black and minority ethnic backgrounds and the Service continued to work with the Police and other partners in this respect.

The Assistant Chief Officer reported that a whole suite of positive action activities had been undertaken and confirmed that the learning points from the Police's successful recruitment campaign had been shared. For example, everyone from a black or minority ethnic background who voluntarily withdrew from the recruitment process was contacted to identify why they had done so. In anticipation of the next whole-time recruitment campaign, mentors would be provided at an earlier stage of the recruitment process.

The Police and Crime Commissioner commented that access to Bury Park Community Centre should improve the Service's engagement with the local community.

The Group had also received the Absence Year End Report, the Occupational Accidents Year End Report, which set out that there had been a decrease in the number of days lost due to workplace accidents from 388 in 2016/17 to 104 in 2017/18, an update on progress against the Single Equality Scheme Review and the Annual Report on the Provision of External Training.

RESOLVED:

That the submitted draft Minutes of the meeting of the Human Resources Policy and Challenge Group held on 28 June 2018 be received.

18-19/FRA/22 Audit and Standards Committee 6 July 2018

Councillor Headley submitted the draft Minutes of the meeting of the Audit and Standards Committee held on 6 July 2018.

The Committee had received the Audit Results Report and had approved the Statement of Accounts. The Committee had been advised by the external auditors that there had been an uncorrected misstatement relating to the share of the Pension Fund deficit position that had arisen following the agreement of the Statement of Accounts with Officers. As this was not material, it was agreed that the Statement of Accounts would not be adjusted.

Members were encouraged to access the Statement of Accounts and Audit Results Report on the Service's website.

Councillor Headley referred briefly to the legal action being taken as the result of price fixing in relation to trucks of 6 tonnes or over. This was ongoing and may result in a financial benefit to the Authority.

RESOLVED:

That the submitted draft Minutes of the meeting of the Audit and Standards Committee held on 6 July 2018 be received.

18-19/FRA/23 Collaboration Working Group

The Chief Fire Officer provided an update on collaboration initiatives between the Service, Bedfordshire Police and the East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust which were managed through the Blue Light Collaboration Board.

He reported on changes to the governance framework, including the creation of a Tactical Delivery Group to deal with operational issues, allowing the Blue Light Collaboration Strategic Board to focus on high-level, strategic issues.

A Blue Light Collaboration Workshop was being held on 1 August 2018 and would involve a vertical slice of staff from both the Police and Fire and Rescue Service. The workshop would begin with a presentation by a representative of the national Emergency Services Collaboration Working Group.

The decision had been made to procure a drone in collaboration with the Police and the delivery of this was expected in late July 2018.

The Chief Fire Officer advised that the Service had agreed that a trial of "red routes" would be undertaken in Luton. Service appliances would return to the station via known crime hot spots to provide a deterrent effect.

It was noted that currently appliances often took a different route back to the station, dependent on operational need, to demonstrate the Service's presence in the local community.

The Police and Crime Commissioner explained the processes that had to be followed to procure equipment such as drones in partnership, as the Force was involved with a number of collaborative arrangements with other Police Forces. This inevitably could delay procurement processes.

She advised that Police Officers, particularly Roads Officers, often engaged with the local community in an ad hoc way to demonstrate a Police presence.

She expressed the wish to attend the Collaboration Workshop, particularly the section on best practice.

In response to a question from the Chair, the Police and Crime Commissioner confirmed that she no current intention to assume responsibility for the Fire and Rescue Service.

RESOLVED:

That the content of the report be acknowledged.

18-19/FRA/24 Annual Overarching Performance Report Year End 2017/18

The Chief Fire Officer introduced the overarching performance report for the year-end 2017/18 that was aligned to the Service's strategic objectives.

Members noted that the relevant performance indicators were submitted to every meeting of the Policy and Challenge Groups.

The Assistant Chief Officer reported that a number of the indicators, such as those that related to property and ICT, could not be reported against at this stage and that performance highlighted in the report would improve when these were updated. She suggested that an updated report be circulated to Members for information at the next meeting of the Authority.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Service's performance against the delivery of the Authority's strategic objectives for 2017/18 be acknowledged.
2. That the Overarching Performance Report be published on the Service's internet site, once all the performance data was available and the report was updated accordingly.

18-19/FRA/25 Information Bulletin

Members received the information bulletin for the period 1 April 2018 to 30 June 2018 and were reminded that there were a number of Open Days at stations throughout the summer.

It was suggested that, in recognition of members of staff who had retired or left the Service after many years' service, this could be reported under the Communications item so that it would be recorded in the public domain.

In response to a question on a small number of firefighters leaving after very short periods of service, the Assistant Chief Officer confirmed that exit interviews were conducted and that there had been no issues arising in any of those cases that she had been aware of. She volunteered to investigate and would circulate the requested information to Members via email.

RESOLVED:

That the information bulletin be received.

18-19/FRA/26 CFO Contract of Employment

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 1 and 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act (as amended):

Item

CFO Contract of Employment

The meeting ended at 12.25 pm