

MINUTES OF FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY MEETING HELD ON 18 JULY 2019

Present: Councillors C Atkins, R Berry, J Chatterley (Chair), K Choudhry, P Duckett, D Franks, M Headley, D McVicar, I Shingler and Y Waheed

CFO P Fuller and ACO G Chambers and Mr J Atkinson

19-20/FRA/15 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Gambold and Malik.

19-20/FRA/16 Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary and Other Interests

There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary and other interests.

19-20/FRA/17 Communications

Fundraising for Firefighter's Charity

The Chief Fire Officer reported that the FRA had received a certificate of appreciation from the Firefighter's Charity in recognition of the £72,000 raised on behalf of the charity during the year.

Asian Fire Services Association

The Chief Fire Officer advised that the Service had been awarded second place in the national awards recognising excellence in board leadership in equality, diversity and inclusion. The Service was referred to extensively in the Association's report. This was made available for Members at the meeting.

Visit by Director of Fire and Civil Resilience

The Director and Deputy Director of Fire and Civil Resilience are visiting the Service on 18 July 2019.

Chiefs and Chairs Meeting

The Chief Fire Officer reported that the Deputy Chief Fire Officer and the Chair had attended a meeting of Fire Chiefs and Chairs on 15 July 2019. The main topic of discussion was whether they wished to review the position in relation to the ongoing pay negotiations.

19-20/FRA/18 Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 6 June 2019 be confirmed as a true record.

19-20/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).

19-20/FRA/20 Governance Review

The Secretary and Monitoring Officer introduced the report setting out proposals for the future governance of the Fire and Rescue Authority and highlighted the recommendations as laid out in the report.

It was suggested that Executive Members should not serve on the Audit and Standards Committee, as that Committee undertook a scrutiny role. As five members were on the Executive, the remaining seven members should be members of the Audit and Standards Committee.

It was noted that meetings of the full Authority would be held at Dunstable Community Fire Station, whenever possible.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Policy and Challenge Groups be suspended;
2. That two additional FRA meetings be added to the 2019/20 calendar – 4 September 2019 and 6 November 2019 and the updated calendar of meetings be approved;
3. That the interim Executive Committee elected at the Annual Meeting remain in place with the remaining seven members being members of the Audit and Standards Committee;

4. That FRA Meetings continue to be held at Dunstable Community Fire Station, when possible, with the Annual Meeting held at Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters.
5. That the terms of reference of the Executive Committee be amended to include the management of the employment Relationship between the FRA and the Chief Fire Officer
6. That the decision to suspend the Policy and Challenge Groups for a trial period be reviewed at the next Member Development Day in October 2019.

19-20/FRA/21 Members' Allowances Scheme 2019/20

The Secretary and Monitoring Officer introduced his report which reviewed the Members' Allowances Scheme for 2019/20. He suggested that the Authority should consider making an adjustment to the Special Responsibility Allowance ("SRA") paid to FRA Executive Members to reflect the fact that the Policy and Challenge Groups were to be suspended for a period. The current SRA assumed that Executive Members would spend 9 days a year undertaking their additional responsibilities (not 11 days as set out in the report). It was proposed that these SRAs should be reduced to 6 days during the period of the trial in line with the SRA paid to the Chair of the Audit and Standards Committee. Also, the Chair and Vice-Chair's Special Responsibility Allowances would be reduced by 20 days each, to reflect the current workload.

The Secretary and Monitoring Officer asked the Authority to consider if the Member appointed to the Collaboration Group should receive a Special Responsibility Allowance to reflect the additional work involved in undertaking that role and a figure of 3 days was suggested.

The view was expressed that, according to the Local Government Act, no Member could receive two Special Responsibility Allowances. The Secretary and Monitoring Officer indicated that he would check the legality of Special Responsibility Allowances and report back.

RESOLVED:

That the Members' Allowances Scheme be updated from 1 June 2019 in accordance with the proposals set out in the report and the amendments proposed, and that the Scheme be adopted for the financial year 2019/20.

19-20/FRA/22 2018/19 Year End Performance Report

The Chief Fire Officer introduced the overarching performance report for year end 2018/19 that was aligned to the Service's strategic objectives. He highlighted that targets were measured using RAG ratings and would discuss those rated as red but take any other questions arising. HR was performing less well than planned despite a great deal of work to attract a more diverse application pool. The new recruits start in September which may have some effect on this performance. Target Pi 02b, which was to have less than four fire fatalities was missed, as the actual number of fire fatalities was five. Target Pi 03b, which was to have less than 23 fire injuries was also missed, as there were actually 29. As a result of this the Fire and Rescue service would increase the number of (Safe and Well) visits carried out. Target Pi

11, which referred to call handling time, was rated 'red' for a variety of reasons including the call handlers struggling to locate incidents from calls from mobiles that had moved away from the scene.

A Member pointed out that target SNP8 was incorrectly shown as Green as the target had been missed.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Service's performance against the delivery of the Authority's strategic objectives for 2018/19 be acknowledged.
2. That the Overarching Performance Report be published on the Service website.

19-20/FRA/23 Revenue Budget and Capital Programme Monitoring Report

The Assistant Chief Officer introduced his report on the forecast year end budget monitoring position as at 30 June 2019.

Regarding costs that ran across several years, Members suggested that in future it would be useful to see the full cost on the report, not just the yearly cost.

In response to a question the Assistant Chief Officer stated he would bring further information on the £75,000 spend on the Wi-Fi refresh to a future meeting and would indicate whether this would come from reserves or future underspend.

RESOLVED:

1. That the forecast outturns for revenue and capital be received.
2. That the comments in paragraph 2.3.9 of the report regarding the reconciliation work being undertaken regarding the firefighter pension schemes be noted.
3. That the Wi-Fi refresh is brought forward from the 2020/21 capital budget into 2019/20.

19-20/FRA/24 Annual Investment Report

The Assistant Chief Officer introduced the Authority's Annual Report for Treasury Management for 2018/19. He outlined that information on expenditure, borrowing, reserves and investments could be found in the report.

In response to a question, the Assistant Chief Officer explained that advice has been sought with regards to Brexit and it was now listed on the risk register. Advice was to keep a diverse portfolio that included short-term investments ensuring these adhered to the investment rules, for example high credit scores.

RESOLVED:

That the report be received.

19-20/FRA/25 Information Bulletin - (Apr-Jun)

Members received the information bulletin for 1 April to 30 June 2019.

RESOLVED:

That the information bulletin be received.

The meeting ended at 11.05 am