

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF BEDFORDSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY
HELD AT FIRE AND RESCUE HEADQUARTERS ON 15 NOVEMBER 2022 AT 10.00 AM**

Present: Councillors P Duckett (Chair), J Chatterley, K Choudhury, M Headley and Y Waheed
CFO A Hopkinson, ACO G Chambers, Mr G Britten and Mr S Frank
Councillor C Atkins joined as an observer at 10:05am

22-23/EC/25 Apologies

25.1 The Deputy Chief Fire Officer and Assistant Chief Fire Officer were unable to attend the meeting.

22-23/EC/26 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary and Other Interests

26.1 There were no declarations of interests.

22-23/EC/27 Communications

- 27.1 The Chief Fire Officer provided Members with an update regarding the ongoing national pay negotiations for Grey Book staff. The Fire Brigades Union had recently balloted its Members on whether or not to accept the improved pay award of a 5% increase and an overwhelming majority had voted not to accept the pay award. There had not yet been a ballot on strike action; however, the Service was preparing for all eventualities.
- 27.2 In relation to Green Book Staff, the pay offer of £1925 plus an additional day of annual leave had been agreed by two of the three trade unions and this was currently in the process of being applied to staff salaries.
- 27.3 The Chair reported on a very positive meeting with Mr Andrew Selous, MP, on the White Paper and the collaborative work undertaken by the Service with its blue light partners, culminating in an invitation for him to visit Dunstable Community Fire Station to witness some of these activities first-hand.

22-23/EC/28 Minutes

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 11 October 2022 be confirmed as a true record.

22-23/EC/29 Public Participation

29.1 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).

22-23/EC/30 Revised Governance Action Plan and Timetable

- 30.1 The Chief Fire Officer introduced his report which included a revised action plan to update the Fire and Rescue Authority's constitutional aspects of the Member's Handbook. Changes had been made as a result of Member feedback at the workshop held on 6 October 2022 and the Authority meeting on 31 October 2022.
- 30.2 The Chair highlighted three key areas: the remit of the Executive Committee, the scrutiny process and promoting the Service to external partners and the public, particularly in light of the various collaboration projects that the Service was involved in.
- 30.3 The Chief Fire Officer advised that consideration was already being given to public affairs and how the Service could better engage and communicate to the wider public and raise its profile locally.
- 30.4 In response to a question, Mr G Britten, the Authority's Monitoring Officer, referred to the timetable set out in the action plan proposing that any changes be submitted to the Authority meeting in February 2023 so that these were agreed prior to the appointment of Members to the Authority in May 2023. He confirmed that it was within the remit of the full Authority to agree changes to its Constitution.
- 30.5 In regards to the scrutiny function, it had previously been noted that scrutiny of decisions made by the Executive Committee must be undertaken by members of the Audit and Standards Committee, either as that Committee or as a separately appointed Task and Finish Group.
- 30.6 Quotes for suppliers for training to be included as part of the Member Development Programme would be sought to compare those to the costs already provided by the Local Government Association. Members agreed the list of items proposed for the Member Development Programme within the report.

30.7 As part of the review of the terms of reference of the Audit and Standards Committee, the Assistant Chief Officer and Treasurer would liaise with the Chair of the Committee and the Monitoring Officer regarding the appointment of an independent member, in accordance with recent Guidance.

RESOLVED:

1. That the contents of the report be received and the revised action plan and timetable be agreed.
2. That additional work be undertaken to define the roles of the Executive Committee and the scrutiny function within the Authority, with Councillors Duckett and Waheed leading on the Executive Committee and Councillor Atkins leading on the scrutiny function.
3. That Councillor Choudhry, in his role as Lead Member for Workforce & Organisational Development, work with Officers to further develop the Member Development Programme.

22-23/EC/31 CRMP update

- 31.1 The Committee received a report setting out proposals for formal consultation on the Budget for 2022-23 and Community Risk Management Plan 2023-27. Mr S Frank, the Head of Strategic Support and Assurance sought Member approval of the proposed survey questions set out in the report, as the survey was due to go live the following week in accordance with the budget preparation timetable.
- 31.2 It was acknowledged that at present, there was a large degree of uncertainty relating to both the Autumn Statement on 17 November 2022 and potential strike action.
- 31.3 The view was expressed that the first half of the questions seemed more like statements than actual questions. It was also suggested that Plain English terms should be used wherever possible, as some members of the public may not understand the meanings of phrases such as “strategic approach to collaboration” or “blue light partners”. It was important that the questions and their content were as accessible as possible. The wording of the question identifying support for ethical investment should also be revised.
- 31.4 In relation to the current financial uncertainty around the Autumn Statement and any capping or related announcements to Council Tax levels, it was also mooted that it may be prudent to wait until an announcement was made before including any questions gauging support for percentage or set increase in the Service’s Council Tax precept.
- 31.5 In order for the survey questions to be finalised by the following week, it was suggested that amendments be made in line with comments made at the meeting, with the Head of Strategic Support & Assurance being delegated authority to revise the questions in consultation with the Chair on behalf of the Executive Committee.

RESOLVED:

1. That the contents of the report be acknowledged.
2. That the Head of Strategic Support & Assurance be delegated to review and revise the survey questions in consultation with the Chair prior to the consultation commencing.

22-23/EC/32 Work Programme

32.1 Members received the updated work programme.

32.2 The Chair requested that an update on discussions to redefine the role of the Executive Committee, and of the scrutiny function, be provided to the next meeting of the Executive Committee.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Work Programme be received and the cyclical agenda items be noted.
2. That the Committee receive an update on the proposed roles of the Executive Committee and the scrutiny function at its next meeting.

The meeting ended at 10.44 am