

**MINUTES OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
MEETING HELD ON 23 NOVEMBER 2023**

Present: Councillors J Burnett (Chair), R Goodchild, M Headley (Vice-Chair), S Hussain
CFO A Hopkinson, ACO G Chambers, T/ACFO J Tai, Mr G Britten, Ms N Upton and Ms L Ehren
Cllr A Sultan was present via MS Teams
Cllr Owen was in attendance as an observer

23-24/EC/20 Apologies

Councillor Sultan attended the meeting remotely via Teams.

23-24/EC/21 Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary and Other Interests

There were no disclosures of interest.

23-24/EC/22 Communications

Support at Council Meetings

The Chief Fire Officer reported that Jason Tai, the Temporary Assistant Chief Fire Officer, had attended the recent meeting of Luton Borough Council to assist Councillor S Hussain in the event that technical questions regarding the incident at London Luton Airport arose.

Assistance would also be available at Central Bedfordshire and Bedford Borough Full Council meetings if necessary.

Councillor S Hussain confirmed that no questions had arisen.

Christingle Service

The Chair reminded Members that the Christingle Service would be taking place on 19 December 2023 at 6pm at Woburn Parish Church and invited everyone to attend.

HMICFRS Chairs and Chiefs Meeting

The Chief Fire Officer reported on the recent meeting with the HMICFRS attended by Chairs and Chief Fire Officers.

The Inspectorate had provided an update on how the current tranche of inspections was progressing and on the thematic review of handling of misconduct cases. Ten fire and rescue services had been selected to take part in this review; this Service was not one of those ten.

The Chair and Chief Fire Officer both agreed that this had been a productive networking opportunity.

The Fire Minister had expressed interest in the Service's collaborative work with the Ambulance Service and the invitation to the Minister to visit the Service was re-extended.

Passing Out Parade

It was noted that the Passing Out Parade would take place on Wednesday, 20 December 2023 at 5pm at Fire and Rescue Headquarters.

Response Standards

The Chief Fire Officer reminded Members that they would receive an informal update on response standards from Area Commander S Auger following the meeting.

23-24/EC/23 Minutes

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 21 September 2023 be confirmed as a true record.

23-24/EC/24 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).

23-24/EC/25 HMICFRS Action Plan Update

The Chief Fire Officer introduced an update on the progress made against the Service HMICFRS Action Plan that addressed the Areas for Improvement identified by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) in their 2023 service inspection report.

The report provided the background context of the inspection, including the cause of concern identified. The Chief Fire Officer expressed confidence that, when the Inspectorate returned the following week, there would be a positive outcome as a result of the work undertaken by the Service to address the issue.

Appendix 1 of the report set out progress made against the Areas for Improvement and a full update was provided to Members.

Councillor Headley thanked Officers for improvements that had been made to some of the targets to provide additional clarity, particularly in relation to timescales and identifying responsible Officers.

The Temporary Assistant Chief Fire Officer provided a further update on areas within his remit as follows:

Promoting the right values and culture

- As mentioned by the Chief Fire Officer the Service was in a much stronger position in relation to fitness testing, with approximately 94% of tests completed. The 24 outstanding related largely to staff who were on long-term sick, on modified duties or secondment, or who had recently returned to work. A new Service Fitness Adviser had commenced in post at the end of September.

Getting the right people with the right skills

- The Temporary Assistant Chief Fire Officer was chairing the Workforce Planning Group. This Group met on a quarterly basis to consider staff development and succession planning. New professional support staff development pathways had been created for Grey Book staff to prepare them for assessment and a similar system was being introduced for Green Book staff to identify talent and support development.
- Staff with specialist expertise were being employed on zero hours contracts to undertake specific pieces of work.
- Work was ongoing on the on-call improvement programme. The e-learning package had been revised to help streamline training and facilitate the completion of relevant modules within the required period. Take up of the training was being monitored by a Development Support Co-ordinator and trigger points introduced so staff could be supported to complete the training.
- On call Liaison Officers had also been employed to support this process.

Ensuring fairness and promoting diversity

- Management training on the grievance procedure, bullying and harassment had been provided in September 2023.

- A Professional Standards Investigator had been employed and consideration was being given to creating a joint standards unit with other Fire and Rescue Services so that investigations could be undertaken by staff external to the service. This was in the very early stages of development and would be subject to the agreement of the Authority at an appropriate point in the process.
- A revised grievance policy and procedure was currently out to consultation with representative bodies.
- Reviews of previous grievances cases had been undertaken to identify whether there were any learning points arising from these.
- A change had been made so that the Assistant Chief Fire Officer fulfilled the role of Investigating Commissioning Manager for all investigations. This role used to be carried out by functional heads of service. Centralising the role would provide a consistency of approach and increased awareness of any emerging themes.
- The Service had joined FRS Speak Up, a confidential reporting system, from 1 September 2023.
- Data from the recent whole-time recruitment campaign was being analysed to determine whether the positive action plan had been successful in increasing the diversity of the workforce. The Service sought to determine if those individuals from under-represented groups who had pre-registered an interest had applied for the whole-time posts, and if any of them had been successful. This was being overseen by the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Steering Group.

The Chair requested a report on the work being done regarding the culture of the organisation be prepared for submission to the full Authority. This was particularly topical given the HMICFRS's thematic review.

Members suggested events, such as the Luton Employability Day and school career fairs, where the Service could seek to engage with young people and encourage them to consider a career in the Service, recognising there were both operational and non-operational opportunities available.

Responding to Fires and other emergencies

- The operational assurance procedures had been reviewed. The Service was working with its supplier to develop software to better record debriefs following incidents. The Service was also seeking to complete station and control audits, with the software identifying themes and facilitating comparison and allowing the Service to grade stations, to introduce healthy competition to improve standards. This was being developed in accordance with National Operational Guidance. As a result of this work, the Service would become a Centre of Excellence for the software supplier.
- A National Operational Guidance (NOG) Training Integration Officer had commenced in post and the implementation of NOG was being overseen by a NOG Board and led by the NOG Implementation Group.
- Four NOG packs were due to be implemented by December 2023, with two further packs by March 2024.

Managing performance and developing leaders

- A talent grid had been developed to identify individuals suitable for development.

- A Green Book Trainer had been employed to support fire fighters through the assessment process.
- 360 degree feedback sessions had been undertaken with staff from Group Manager and above, with additional sessions being held for staff below this level in future.

The Assistant Chief Officer provided the following updates in relation to making best use of resources:

- The 2024/25 budget papers would highlight the “golden thread” running through from the Community Risk Management Plan priorities to how resources were allocated.
- An internal depository of productivity and efficiency examples was being established and was started to be populated with past examples and suggestions for the future.

The Chief Fire Officer added the following updates:

- The Service was now targeting its prevention work more effectively, with an increase in Home Fire Safety Visits being provided to the most vulnerable from 45% when the Inspectorate visited to 62%.
- Work was progressing to improve quality assurance processes and reduce unwanted fire signals. Engagement with local businesses was essential in preventing the latter.
- The Service was exploring opportunities with two other fire and rescue services to improve resilience arrangements within Fire Control.

RESOLVED:

That the updated action plan be noted.

23-24/EC/26 Work Programme

Members received the updated work programme for 2023/24 and noted the cyclical items.

The Chief Fire Officer reported that, following a recent meeting of the Service’s Corporate Management Team, minor changes had been made to the work programme for the full Authority.

RESOLVED:

That the Work Programme 2023/24 be received and the cyclical agenda items be noted.

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):

The CFO, ACO, T/ACFO and HCPA along with Cllr Owen also left the meeting room at 11.02 am.

Item:

23-24/EC/27 Brigade Managers Pay Review

23-24/EC/28 Re-engagement

The meeting ended at 1.02pm