

Item 3

Minutes of the meeting of
the TYNE AND WEAR FIRE AND
RESCUE AUTHORITY held in the
Fire and Rescue Service
Headquarters, Barmston Mere on
MONDAY, 22 NOVEMBER 2010
at 10.30 am

Present:

Councillor T. Wright in the Chair

Councillors Bell, Boyes, Charlton, Clark, Essl, M. Forbes, N. Forbes, Mole, Renton and D. Trueman.

Part I

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillors Clare, Haley, Huscroft, Jordan and Woodwark.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Minutes

38. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the minutes of the meeting of the Authority held on 20 September 2010, be confirmed and signed as a correct record,

- (ii) the minutes of the meeting of the Governance Committee held on 27 September 2010, be received and noted,
- (iii) the minutes of the meeting of the Human Resources Committee held on 18 October 2010, be received and noted, and
- (iv) the minutes of the meeting of the Civil Contingencies Committee held on 25 October 2010, be received and noted.

Review of Emergency Planning and Resilience Arrangements in Tyne and Wear

Dave Smith, Paul Dowling, Linda Scott and Helen Hinds were in attendance for this item of business.

The Chief Executive, Sunderland City Council submitted a report outlining the review of the Emergency Planning Unit and individual resilience functions across Tyne and Wear, which commenced in 2009. This further report was requested by members of the Authority at their last meeting.

The report detailed the team of officers set up to carry out the review and explained that the terms of reference for the review was agreed by the Tyne and Wear Chief Executives. On 16 July 2010 the Chief Executives considered a range of options set out in paragraphs 4.2 and 4.3 of the report, and expressed a preference for a local authority based approach with some co-ordination at LRF level. This approach was then subject to consultation with category 1 responders.

A final report would be taken via the Tyne and Wear Local Authority Chief Executive's to the Tyne and Wear Leadership Group for final decision in December 2010.

Initially the working group identified seven options but also recognised that others may emerge. Detailed and substantial work was undertaken resulting in a focus on three possible options. A comparison of these was attached at Appendix 2 of the report.

Category 1 responders were now being consulted upon the three options identified by the working group. A summary of responses was attached at Appendix 1 and the Chief Executive also referred members to paragraph 8 the report which laid out the limitations of the current arrangements.

Dave Smith then welcomed any comments/questions from members and explained that any views would be submitted as part of the consultation process.

Councillor N Forbes commented that he felt a strong statement was being made that the current arrangements were not fit for purpose and questioned whether this was due to providers or commissioners. Dave Smith responded by advising that both parties played a part in this and a lack of consensus in operations were evident.

Councillor N Forbes then referred to sections 9.2 and 9.3 of the report and commented that while the report highlighted the benefits from the perspective of the Local Authorities, a potential flip side could be seen from a Tyne and Wear perspective. As a result, he commented that this may also need to be discussed from a Tyne and Wear Perspective.

When querying the purpose of the new LRF post (if created) members were advised that this would be a co-ordinating role providing a single point of contact.

When the discussing the issue of the Annual Report and it being produced 'after the event' members queried whether this was sensible and sufficient. The Chief Executive acknowledged these concerns and agreed to feed them back.

Councillor N Forbes then referred to section 9.3 of the report and commented that these were indicative figures only with little evidence to substantiate them without a full analysis being undertaken.

Dave Smith responded to the issues raised and explained that financial costs and estimated savings could only be estimates at this stage, until a decision had been reached by the Leaders. The costs implications were also secondary to the reasons for the review. He then went on to advise that delivery had in the past, and would continue to be a statutory responsibility of the Local Authority and not a third party. Therefore if this was to be a responsibility of a third party, it must fulfil the responsibilities of the Local Authority. The new post had been suggested, throughout the consultation process, to re-enforce a co-ordination function at the LRF Level.

Councillor Bell expressed her concerns in relation to the consultation process and felt that options submitted clearly focused on option 2 which she did not feel was an open consultation exercise. In addition to this, the timescales were also extremely tight.

As members clearly still had issues and concerns with the process and felt unable to make an informed decision, Councillor Mole suggested that the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Chair of the Civil Contingencies Committee meet with the leaders prior to a decision being made in December to talk through issues in greater detail.

Members agreed that this was an excellent idea and Dave Smith also welcomed the approach.

Councillor M Forbes finally added that a future report on the LRF be submitted to the authority which detailed savings made together with the support required for the Secretariat.

39. RESOLVED that the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Chair of the Civil Contingencies Committee meet with the leaders prior to a decision being made in December to talk through issues in greater detail.

Draft Integrated Risk Management Action Plan for the Period April 2011 to March 2015

The Chief Fire Officer, the Clerk to the Authority and the Finance Officer submitted a report seeking Members' approval of the proposed content of the Authority's Draft Integrated Risk Management Action Plan (IRMP). Approval was also sought for this to be subject to public consultation for a period of twelve weeks.

It was considered that the IRMP would be important in managing the impact of the Spending Review along with continued good financial management and ongoing work to improve efficiency, procurement and effective use of assets and resources.

Five actions were proposed for 2011-15. These being:-

- **Action 1 - Review of Management Structure** – it was proposed to conduct a review of all management structures from Principal Officer down to and including Station Manager level and equivalent.
- **Action 2 - Review of Protection and Technical Activities** – review the risk based inspection programme within its statutory framework.
- **Action 3 - Review of Staffing Profiles** – to ascertain whether arrangements could be made more efficient through greater flexibility.
- **Action 4 - Review of Aerial Ladder Platform Provision and Crewing** – review the level of provision and staffing of the aerial ladder platforms to ascertain the future requirements for these balanced against community risk and utilisation patterns.
- **Action 5 - Review Mobilising** – it was proposed to undertake a fundamental review of the staffing and systems required to deliver an effective mobilising function should the RCC project fail.

In addition to these actions, two further areas of potential activity had been identified which, if implemented, were likely to detrimentally impact on the quality of service experienced by the public, or the ability to deliver shared objectives through collaboration. These areas were – (1) cessation of specific diversionary and education activities and (2) Review of the type, number and location of Category 1 and 2 appliances. It was not proposed to include them as proposed actions in the IRMP at this time, but to include them as potential actions should the need arise as a consequence of further funding pressures.

In accordance with national IRMP guidance it was proposed that draft actions for 2011-15 be subject to public consultation prior to approving the IRMP in March 2011. The consultation exercise would commence on 23 November 2010 and conclude on 22 February 2011.

Councillor N. Forbes commented that the Spending Review implications detailed within the report were extremely useful as this set the vision for the future and how it would be implemented.

40. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the principle of a four year IRMP covering the period 2011 to 2015 be agreed,
- (ii) the draft actions for the 2011/15 plan be noted,
- (iii) Additional Areas for Consideration and the approach of including these as potential actions in the draft plan be noted,
- (iv) the proposed 2011/15 actions be subject to staff, public and partner consultation, as detailed in the report, and
- (v) the Chief Fire Officer report the results of the consultation exercise to the Authority for consideration prior to final approval and implementation of the /15 SCSP/IRMP and associated action plan.

Medium Term Financial Strategy 2011/2012 to 2014/2015

The Chief Fire Officer, the Clerk to the Authority, the Finance Officer and the Chief Emergency Planning Officer submitted a joint report which outlined the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2011/2012 to 2014/2015 and sought approval for the updated Budget Planning Framework for the preparation of the 2011/2012 Revenue Budget.

Members were advised that the MTFs had been updated using the best information available and would continue to be updated as further announcements were made.

In light of the spending review, Fire Authorities would receive 25% less formula grant funding over the period. This reduction being 'back loaded' with the greatest reductions falling in 2013/2014 and 2014/2015. Grant figures for 2011/2012 would not be made available until the finance settlement was announced in December.

In addition to the 25% reduction in formula grant there two specific grants where future funding remained uncertain. These being the New Dimensions Grant and the Regional Control Room Grant.

Due to these uncertainties, the MTFs had been prepared on the basis of a 3% reduction in 2011/2012, a 5% reduction in 2012/2013 and 8.5% reductions for both 2013/2014 and 2014/2015.

Confirmation had been received that Authorities that chose to freeze their Council Tax in 2011/2012 would be reimbursed through the new grant mechanism. The grant had not however been confirmed for 2015/2016 which could imply that the grant could cease. The Authority was therefore seeking clarity on this point.

Members were then referred to Appendix A of the report which detailed General Fund balances and also Appendix B which showed earmarked reserves and also provisions.

Numerous spending commitments had been taken into account. These included: staff costs, pensions, financial arrangements for firefighter pensions, public sector pension review, general price rises, energy prices, other prices (capital financing – debt charges, capital grant and revenue contribution to capital outlay) and interest on balances.

The Finance Officer then took Members of the Authority through the various spending pressures and efficiency savings. The efficiency savings arising from IRMP had been built into the MTFs and were reflected in Appendix E together with the indicated savings for 2011/2012 to 2014/2015.

Members of the Authority thanked the Finance Officer for his detailed report and it was:-

41. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the Budget Planning Framework for the preparation of the 2011/2012 Revenue Budget be approved, and
- (ii) the Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2011/2012 to 2014/2015 be noted at this stage and that it will be updated to reflect the reviews outlined the report.

Revenue Budget 2010/2011 – Second Review

The Chief Fire Officer and the Finance Officer submitted a joint report advising Members of issues relating to the 2010/2011 Revenue Budget position and providing an updated Statement of Balances.

This joint report of the Chief Fire Officer and the Finance Officer advised members of issues relating to the 2010/11 Revenue Budget position, and provided an updated Statement of Balances.

Through regular monitoring of the revenue Budget the following areas were drawn to the Authority's attention:-

- Employee Costs;
- Premises;
- Supplies and Services;
- Leasing Charges;
- Revenue Contribution to Capital Outlay;
- Income;
- Service Pressures;
- Revenue Contribution to Capital Outlay; and
- Vehicle Replacement Programme.

Appendix A showed the movement of balances within 2010/11 and included an update on the estimated level of balances as at 31 March 2011.

42. RESOLVED that the position in regard to the Revenue Budget for 2010/11 as detailed and the updated statement of balances be noted.

Capital Programme 2010/2011 – Second Review

The Chief Fire Officer and the Finance Officer submitted a joint report outlining the second review of the Capital Programme and the changes made as a consequence of the First Capital Programme Review on 14 June 2010.

This joint report of the Chief Fire Officer and the Finance Officer reviewed the current years Capital Programme and reflected the changes from that presented to the Authority as a consequence of the First Capital Programme Review.

Members were directed to the appendix to the report which set out the 2010/11 position. The following issues were brought to Member's attention:-

- IT Equipment;
- BTC – Security Improvements and Incident Management Training facilities;
- BTC – Repairs to Fire Ground and Offices;
- Operational Equipment;
- Storage facilities at Gosforth for ALP;
- Estates – other schemes (less than £100k); and
- Capital Programme 2010/11.

Members were assured that the prudential indicators were regularly reviewed through internal monitoring procedures that tracked performance.

Councillor N Forbes commented on the Vehicle Replacement Programme and asked what was being done to support environmental technology. ACFO Joy Brindle advised that to date, fuel adaptations had been made and that the Fleet Manager was also looking at other options. A briefing note would be provided explain these issues in greater detail.

43. RESOLVED that the Capital programme as set out in the appendix to the report be approved.

Review of the Retained Function at Gateshead South Fire Station (Station 13)

The Chief Fire Officer, the Clerk to the Authority, the Finance Officer and the Personnel Advisor to the Authority submitted a joint report informing Members of the findings of the review into the operational effectiveness of the retained appliance T13P2 based at Gateshead South Community Fire Station.

Examination of data has highlighted that, over the last three years, appliance T13P2 had only attended 91 incidents. Furthermore, the average attendance time was 7.26 minutes. In addition to this, the Station also had a full-time fire appliance which was the first response to incidents in the area and where the retained fire appliance was unavailable due to staffing shortfalls or mechanical defects, a second fire engine was required to provide operational assistance to the area.

As a consequence, the Chief Fire Officer proposed that fire appliance T13P2 be removed from the operational fleet on the grounds of effectiveness and efficiency of the service.

It was:-

44. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) approval in principle be given to the removal of the retained fire appliance T13P2 from the operational fleet, subject to the outcome of a further public consultation exercise,
- (ii) that further reports be received, as appropriate.

Dissolution of the North East Fire and Rescue Regional Management Board

The Chief Fire Officer submitted a report informing Members of the Regional Management Board's decision in principle, to dissolve the Board and to replace it with a more informal meeting structure of Chairmen and Chief Fire Officers.

Members of the Authority were advised that with the arrival of the Coalition Government, the Fire Minister, Bob Neill MP, announced that he was giving Fire and Rescue Authorities the freedom to work on a collaborative basis without the need to have in place Regional Management Boards in a way that best suited local circumstances.

Currently, the Regional Management Board met four times per year and required funding in the region of £20,000 per annum contributed by each Constituent Authority.

Dissolving the RMB with no alternative mechanism for sharing issues and discussing future and current collaborative ventures could pose a risk to the four Authorities given the financially difficult period the public sector was about to enter however, an informal forum would have no direct costs yet it would provide the necessary vehicle to allow discussions on collaboration to take place.

At the RMB meeting held on 6 October, a paper containing options was debated by those present. It was unanimously agreed that the RMB be dissolved and that the existing budget be returned to the four Fire and Rescue Authorities.

It was:-

45. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the contents of the report be noted and the decision to dissolve the RMB be endorsed, and
- (ii) the proposal to establish an internal forum consisting of the Chair/Portfolio Holder and the Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive of the four Authorities be approved.

National Resilience Audit

The Chief Fire Officer submitted a report outlining the outcome of a recent audit undertaken by the National Resilience Advisory Team (NRAT) which had examined the effectiveness of the service's strategies, policies and procedures underpinning the New Dimension Programme, with specific reference to the Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) assets in meeting the National Resilience Programme expectations for responding to national level incidents.

Members were advised that the overall results of the audit confirmed that the service was well advanced and that the evidence provided the Audit Team with a high level of confidence that the service satisfactorily discharged its statutory duties in relation to the USAR capability.

The Audit Team identified one area of development which related specialist training forces for a small number of staff, this was linked to the change in the crewing model and plans were in place to address this shortfall.

Members of the Authority congratulated the staff on the outcome of the audit.

It was:-

46. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the contents of the report be noted, and
- (ii) further reports be received, as appropriate.

Correspondence List for Information

The Chief Fire Officer submitted a list of items of correspondence that had been received since the last meeting of the Authority, and were not subject to a separate report.

47. RESOLVED that the correspondence list be received for information.

Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006

48. RESOLVED that in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006 the public be excluded during consideration of the remaining business as it contains information relating to any individual or information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual or information relating to consultations/negotiations in connection with any labour matter arising between the Authority and employees of the Authority (Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A, Part I, Paragraphs 1, 2 and 4).

(Signed) T. WRIGHT,
Chairman.

Note:

The above minutes comprise only those relating to items during which the meeting was open to the public.

Additional minutes in respect of other items are included in Part II.