

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, 19 JULY 2010 at
10.30 a.m.

Present:

Councillor T. Wright in the Chair

Councillors Bell, Boyes, Charlton, Essl, M. Forbes, N. Forbes, Haley, Huscroft,
Jordan, Renton, Trueman and Woodwark.

Part I

Apologies for Absence

An apology for absence was submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillor Clark.

Declarations of Interest

Councillors Bell, Charlton and Haley declared a personal interest in relation to
Item 10 – Fire Control Update, as Directors of the North East Fire Control Company
Limited.

Minutes

13. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the minutes of the meeting of the Authority held on 14 June 2010, be confirmed and signed as a correct record,

- (ii) the minutes of the meeting of the Governance Committee held on 28 June 2010, be received and noted, and
- (iii) the minutes of the meeting of the Civil Contingencies Committee held on 5 July 2010, be received and noted.

Councillor M. Forbes referred to the minutes of the Annual Meeting of 14 June 2010 and requested an amendment.

It was:-

14. RESOLVED that Councillor Jordan replace Councillor M. Forbes on the Policy and Performance Committee for the ensuing year.

Matters Arising from Minutes

Date, Time and Venue of Future Meetings – the Dates of Meetings of the Civil Contingencies Committee to be held in October 2010 and January 2011 were confirmed to be 25 October 2010 and 31 January 2011.

Regional Firefighter Recruitment Campaign

The Chief Fire Officer, the Clerk to the Authority, the Finance Officer and the Personnel Advisor to the Authority submitted a joint report considering the outcomes from the recent Regional Firefighter Recruitment Campaign which commenced on 4 November 2009. All four Fire and Rescue Services in the North East participated in the Campaign and the report included the effectiveness of the Positive Action Programme, Brand Campaign and outcomes of the process relating to the diversification of the workforce.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer advised Members that 10,648 application packs were requested over a six day period. 4,379 of these went on to submit a completed application form which equated to a 41% application return rate. Of these applicants 86.5% were male, 7.9% female and 5.2% described themselves as from a 'black or minority ethnic background' (BME).

The data indicated that the marketing activities had made a significant impact in attracting a higher percentage of under-represented groups to the process. The majority of the under-represented groups however, were not successful at the Second Sift Stage of the process. The Chief Fire Officer was therefore undertaking a full review of the process.

As it was unlikely that there would be enough available candidates to meet the Authority's requirements for at least the next two years, the interim period provided an excellent opportunity to finalise the review and implement and embed any changes prior to the next recruitment drive.

A discussion then ensued between Members of the Authority with regards to the self declaration from potential applicants as to equality and diversity issues and their personal information

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer assured Members that provisions were put in place to help people in the process to ensure that the Fire Service was an employer of choice.

Consideration having been given to the matter, it was:-

15. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the contents of the report be noted,
- (ii) the ongoing development of a positive Action Programme be supported, and
- (iii) further reports be received, as appropriate.

Review of Establishment Levels

The Chief Fire Officer and the Finance Officer submitted a joint report reviewing the establishment levels of the organisation.

The review considered the number of Firefighters and Officers required to crew the operational fleet of fire appliances 24 hours per day, 365 days per year. The latest review clearly suggested that by December 2010, the Authority would be substantially below authorised establishment levels, primarily due to an increase in the number of operational staff exercising their right to retire at the age of 50 with 30 years service. Accordingly, a trainee firefighter course of 30 personnel was required.

The cost of providing a trainee course for 30 staff would be in the region of £264,000.

It was:-

16. RESOLVED that the Authority endorse the commencement of a trainee firefighter course in September 2010.

Member Links with Community Fire Stations

The Chief Fire Officer submitted a report, setting out for the consideration of Members, a revised list of affiliative links between Members and the Community Fire Stations and departments in Tyne and Wear.

ACFO Tom Capeling reminded Members of the aim to enhance liaison and communication between Members and staff on Community Fire Stations.

Members referred to Appendix A of the report which set out proposed links between fire stations and service departments and Members. Officers responsible for each specific location would establish contact and arrange a programme of visits to the link stations/departments. A typical agenda would include discussion between the Officers concerned and the Link Member on current issues affecting the locality, scrutinising of the Station/Departmental Plans and their associated targets and issues of concern to staff.

Referring to the Appendix, Councillor M. Forbes who had been assigned to both the Fulwell Community Fire Station and also the Sunderland Central Fire Station asked if this could be amended to one. In addition Councillor Huscroft suggested that he be the Link Member for Wallsend Community Fire Station due to this being his constituent ward and Councillor Charlton therefore be nominated Link Member for Tynemouth Community Fire Station.

ACFO Tom Capeling agreed to action this request.

17. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the report and the proposed link arrangements be noted, and
- (ii) subject to the amendments detailed above, the links between Members and Stations/Departments be approved.

Integrated Risk Management 2010/11 Action Plan – Quarter 1 Update

The Chief Fire Officer, the Clerk to the Authority and the Finance Officer submitted a joint report providing an update for Members in respect of the implementation of the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) actions for 2010/11.

Assistant Chief Fire Officer Joy Brindle advised Members that a significant amount of work had been undertaken in respect of the four IRMP actions, namely:-

- Evaluation of the Retained Category 2 Appliance (Gateshead South CFS) – information was currently being collated and a report would be prepared for Members in the Autumn.
- Examine Low Activity Staffing Model – different staffing models were being reviewed and visits to the FRS' to gain an insight into the introduction and impact of different models were planned for July 2010.
- Review of Community Safety – work had been completed identifying essential and non-essential core activities. The management structure had also been reviewed. Proposals for a staffing model which would provide a refined community safety function were currently being developed.

- Back Office Function Review – a review of three back office functions was currently being undertaken. These were Human Resources, Data and Information and Administration and Support Services. The findings would be reported in late Autumn.

Consideration having been given to the matter, it was:-

18. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the progress made in relation to the implementation of the 2010/11 IRMP Action Plans that were included in the SCSP be noted, and
- (ii) further reports be received upon the completion of the outstanding actions.

Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) Occupational Health and Safety Gold Award

The Chief Fire Officer submitted a report relating to the RoSPA Occupational Health and Safety Gold Award.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer was pleased to announce that the Authority had been awarded the prestigious RoSPA Gold Award for the fifth consecutive year (six times in total). This was an excellent reflection of the commitment and team approach to the positive health and safety culture that existed within all levels throughout the service.

As the winner of the RoSPA Gold Award for a fifth consecutive year, the RoSPA Awards Adjudication Panel had also recommended that the Authority be awarded a RoSPA Gold Medal Award for Occupational Health and Safety. This would be presented at a ceremony on Thursday, 23 September 2010.

The Chief Fire Officer emphasised that this was an excellent accolade for the Authority and its employees and recorded his appreciation to all members of staff for their direct responsibility for health, safety and welfare, and seeking to maintain a safe working environment.

Members, having expressed their congratulations:-

19. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the accolade given to the Authority in achieving the RoSPA Gold Medal Award be acknowledged, and
- (ii) the Chief Fire Officer convey his congratulations and thanks to all staff and their representative bodies for their contribution to a safe working environment.

Annual Efficiency Statement

The Chief Fire Officer, the Finance Officer and the Clerk to the Authority submitted a joint report informing Members of the contents of the Annual Efficiency Statements (AES) which were due to be submitted to the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) on 20 July 2010. Appendix A showed the efficiencies that had been achieved in 2009/10, together with a forecast on what was expected to be achieved in 2010/11, attached at Appendix B of the report.

Members noted that the Backward Looking AES showed cumulative cashable efficiency gains to the value of £2.75m, or 4.82%, by the end of March 2010. Therefore the Authority had exceeded the cumulative target for 2008/2009 and 2009/2010 of 3.2% set by CLG.

With regard to the Forward Looking AES 2010/2011, a cumulative cashable efficiency gain of £3.9m or 6.9% by the end of 2010/2011 was estimated. This figure being above the cumulative 4.8% target required by CLG for 2008/2009 to 2010/2011.

It was:-

20. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the efficiency statements attached as Appendices A and B of the report be approved, and
- (ii) further reports be received, as required.

Regional Fire Control – Update

The Chief Fire Officer, the Finance Officer and the Clerk to the Authority submitted a report providing Members with an update in respect of developments in the FiReControl project and the Regional Control Centre (RCC) in the North East, for consideration by Members.

The report highlighted elements of the Select Committee report which recommended that, given the levels of public funding invested so far and the benefits it would accrue plus the additional cost of cancelling it, that the project continued and was not cancelled.

Deputy Chief Fire Officer John Hindmarch informed Members that the Fire Minister Bob Neill MP gave a speech at the Fire and Rescue 2010 Conference in Harrogate on 29 June 2010 on Fire and Resilience Policy. The Minister's speech focused on three key principles for contract delivery, placing the responsibility firmly on EAD's to deliver the main system but in doing so this must be on time, to cost and to the quality standard expected by the Fire and Rescue Service.

Until the full impact of the Minister's speech was considered it was not possible to determine whether there was to be any change to the go live dates for the Authority. The Chief Fire Officer however confirmed that the Authority would not go live before July 2011.

The Chief Fire Officer expressed his continued concerns regarding the assurance and testing of MRMS. This lack of assurance presented significant risks to the project. Members would therefore receive further reports as the situation developed.

It was:-

21. 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.

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

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

23. RESOLVED that in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006 the public be excluded during their consideration of the reports as they contain exempt information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Authority holding that information) (Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A, Part I, Paragraph 3).

(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.

