

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, 28 FEBRUARY 2011 at
10.30 am.

Present:

Councillor T. Wright in the Chair

Councillors Bell, Charlton, Clark, Essl, M. Forbes, N. Forbes, Haley, Huscroft, Mole, Renton, Trueman and Woodwark.

Part I

Apologies for Absence

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

Declarations of Interest

Councillors Bell, Charlton and Haley declared a personal and prejudicial interest in relation to item 9 (Future use of the North East Fire Control Company for the Provision of Mobilising Control Services) as members of the Regional Control Company (RCC).

Lynne Bennett (Representing Clerk to the Authority) declared a personal and prejudicial interest in relation to Item 7 – Integrated Risk Management Plan 2011-15 as a relative was a firefighter within the service.

Minutes

77. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the minutes of the meeting of the Authority, Part I held on 24 January 2011, be confirmed and signed as a correct record;
- (ii) the minutes of the meeting of the Civil Contingencies Committee, Part I, held on 31 January 2011, be noted for information; and
- (iii) the notes of the Budget Consultation meeting held on 9 February 2011, be noted for information.

Extension of Term of Office – Mr. G. Cook

The Clerk to the Authority submitted a report to consider an extension to the existing term of office of Mr. G. Cook, Chairman of the Governance Committee, until such time as the arrangements in respect of the standards regime were reviewed.

The Deputy Clerk to the Authority advised members that guidance provided that independent members should serve no more than a total of eight years after which new members should be recruited. Mr. Geoff Cook will have served in excess of eight years by the next annual meeting in June. A number of authorities had expressed concern that, given the current uncertainty regarding the future of the standards regime, it may be preferable to retain those who had been trained and understood their role rather than try to recruit, appoint and train new members for what may be a very short term.

It was:-

78. RESOLVED that the Authority agree to extend the existing term of office of Mr. G. Cook until such time as the Authority reviewed its arrangements in respect of the standards regime, in light of the Coalition Government's proposals.

Revenue Budget 2011/2012

The Chief Fire Officer, the Chief Emergency Planning Officer, the Clerk to the Authority and the Finance Officer submitted a joint report presenting for consideration and approval, the Revenue Budget for 2011/2012 including the precept required to be levied on the District Councils in Tyne and Wear.

The Finance Officer reminded members that the Government had made changes to the formula grant system that had had a significant detrimental effect on the Authority's grant entitlement for 2011/12.

The Government had generally ignored most of the comments made by the Authority to its Provisional Grant Settlement for 2011/2012 in the final settlement announced and any national changes had been fairly minor in nature in comparative terms across the settlement.

Councillor N. Forbes commented that further lobbying through relevant channels should remain a focus of the Authority.

The grant of £32.191 million, remained unchanged from the figure announced previously and represented a decrease in formula grant of 9.5% for 2011/12.

Indicative Formula Grant of £31.096m had been released for 2012/2013 which showed a further grant reduction of 3.4%. The finance settlement for the two years beyond 2012/2013 remained uncertain as a new distribution mechanism was to be introduced in 2013/2014. However, as the cuts in the first two years represented 6.5% of the national 25% reduction announced in the emergency budget, it was anticipated that the reduction for these years could be at least 9.25% per year.

The Authority would access a Council Tax Freeze Grant £597,578 which equated to a 2.5% precept increase. This grant would be payable annually for the remainder of the SR10 period, however it was not clear if this funding would remain beyond 2014/2015.

The proposed revenue budget for 2011/2012 totalled £56,730 million. The Authority would precept the five district councils which would mean a Band D council tax of £73.16.

It was:-

79. RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the revised estimate for 2010/2011 be noted, as summarised at Appendix A;
- (b) the Revenue Budget for 2011/2012 be approved, as summarised at Appendix A;
- (c) the Projected Pensions Account 2011/2012 be noted, detailed at Appendix B;
- (d) the position on general and earmarked balances and reserves, the associated risks and their mitigation be noted, as outlined at Appendices C, D and E;
- (e) the Medium Term Financial Strategy detailed at Appendix F be noted;
- (f) the Council Tax base of 326,725 for the year 2011/2012 be noted, as notified by the billing authorities within Tyne and Wear;

(g) agree that the following amounts now be calculated by the Authority for the year 2011/2012 which represented a Council Tax freeze for 2011/2012, in accordance with Sections 43 and 44 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992:-

- (i) £63,591,361 - being the aggregate of the amounts which the Authority estimates for the items set out in Section 43(2)(a) to (d) of the Act;
- (ii) £7,459,373 - being the aggregate of the amounts which the Authority estimates for the items set out in Section 43(3)(a) to (b) of the Act;
- (iii) £56,131,988 - being the amount by which the aggregate at (i) above exceeds the aggregate at (ii) above, calculated by the Authority in accordance with Section 43(4) of the Act, as its budget requirement for the year.
- (iv) £32,228,786 - being the aggregate of the sums which the Authority estimates will be payable for the year into its Authority Fund in respect of redistributed Non-Domestic Rates, Revenue Support Grant and additional grant and as increased by the net surplus on the Billing Authorities' Collection Funds;
- (v) £73.1600 - being the amount at (iii) above, less the amount at (iv) above all divided by the amount in paragraph 7.4 above, calculated by the Authority in accordance with Section 44(1) of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year;
- (vi) Valuation Bands

A	48.7733	Being the amount given by multiplying the amount at (v) above by the number which, in the proportion set out in Section 5(1) of the Act, is applicable to dwellings listed in a particular valuation and divided by the number which that proportion is applicable to dwellings listed in valuation band D, calculated by the Authority in accordance with Section 36(1) of the Act, as the amounts to be taken into account for the year in respect of categories of dwellings listed in different valuation bands.
B	56.9022	
C	65.0311	
D	73.1600	
E	89.4178	
F	105.6756	
G	121.9333	
H	146.3200	

Capital Programme 2011/2012 Including Prudential Indicators

The Chief Fire Officer, the Clerk to the Authority, the Finance Officer and the Chief Fire Officer submitted a joint report to present for consideration and approval, the Capital Programme for 2011/2012, including the prudential indicators.

Members were referred to Appendix A of the report and were advised that the Capital Programme totalled £3,370,967.

The Capital Programme for 2011/2012 included provision of £852,182 to fund proposed new starts, in addition to £357,285 which was required to fund continuing projects. The proposed Capital Programme and Vehicle Replacement Programme for 2011/2012 was attached at Appendix A.

With regard to the Vehicle Replacement Programme, option appraisal would be undertaken, where leasing finance was available, to determine whether leasing or outright purchase represented the best option on a value for money basis. It was proposed that where possible, future vehicle replacement be funded via outright purchase using the Authority's existing resources. The Chief Fire Officer also stated that a full review of the programme was to be undertaken in the coming months with the focus on seeking further efficiencies.

The Authority would receive a Fire Capital Grant allocation of £1,512,753. A contribution of £200,000 was required to contribute towards funding the 2011/2012 Capital Programme. The remainder of this grant would be transferred to a Capital Grants Reserve in order to meet the cost of future prioritised capital schemes.

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

80. RESOLVED that:-

Members are requested to:-

- (i) approve the Capital Programme and Vehicle Replacement Programme for 2011/2012 as set out at Appendix A;
- (ii) approve the Prudential Indicators for the years 2011/2012, 2012/2013 and 2013/2014 as set out in Appendix B;
- (iii) approve the Annual Minimum Revenue Provision Statement set out in Section 6;
- (iv) approve the amendments to the Prudential Indicators for 2010/2011 in respect of the Authority's Authorised Limit for External Debt to £45,408 million and to its Operational Boundary for External Debt to £40.408 million;
- (v) approve the Prudential Indicators for the years 2011/2012, 2012/2012 and 2013/2014 as set out in Appendix B.

Integrated Risk Management Plan 2011-2015

Lynne Bennett withdrew from the meeting during consideration of this item of business.

The Chief Fire Officer, the Clerk to the Authority, the Finance Officer and the Personnel Advisor submitted a joint report to present the findings of public, partner and staff consultation on the proposed Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) for 2011-15 and seeking approval to begin implementation of the IRMP from April 2011.

The draft IRMP action plan contained the following proposed new actions:-

- Review of Management Structure;
- Review of Protection and Technical Activities;
- Review of Staffing Profiles;
- Review of Aerial Ladder Platform Provision and Crewing
- Mobilising

Following member approval in November 2010, a twelve week consultation period commenced with a range of stakeholders supported by a short summary document and presentation. The feedback was detailed within the report.

Generally, the feedback was broad and quantitative. Although the number of the public engaging in the consultation was quite small, there was overall support for the proposed approach of maintaining its frontline service to the public over the next four years. The 5 proposed actions had not received any adverse comments, with the majority of discussion being about the two further areas for consideration (diversionary activity and whole time appliances). Regarding these, there had been some debate about the relative value of Response and Prevention/Protection.

The Chief Fire Officer had carefully considered the issues raised and proposed that:-

- the five actions, and the implementation of the 2010/11 actions, should go forward to the implementation stage, subject to any changes members may wish to make;
- full reports should be brought to Members on the findings of each of the reviews prior to implementing them;
- the Authority should give further consideration to diversionary activities and whole time appliance in the light of the financial position for 2013 and beyond, as it emerges in the coming months. This would be subject to future reports.
- TWFRS should remain in dialogue with parties so that any collective opportunities to minimise the impact of acts on the public can be explored.

It was:-

81. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the actions in the draft IRMP 2011-15 be approved; and
- (ii) further reports be received as actions were implemented.

Consultation Report : Review of the Retained Function at Gateshead South Fire Station

The Chief Fire Officer submitted a report informing members of the outcome of the consultation exercise undertaken in the Birtley area, in respect of the Proposal to remove the retained fire engine from Gateshead South Fire Station, and seeking their approval to proceed with the proposal.

Assistant Chief Fire Officer Tom Capling explained that the Consultation Plan provided the community partners with an opportunity to discuss and challenge the outcome of the review.

Whilst some of the consultees were initially concerned about the proposal, the broad consensus after the meetings was that the proposal would result in a more efficient and effective delivery of service.

Consequently, the Chief Fire Officer proposed that the retained fire engine, T13P2, was removed from the operational fleet on the grounds of effectiveness and efficiency and requested member approval.

It was:-

82. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the contents of the report be noted;
- (ii) the removal of T13P2 from the operational fleet be approved, as recommended in the FA report of 22/11/2010; and
- (iii) further reports be received as necessary.

Future use of North East Fire Control Company for the Provision of Command and Control Services

Councillors Bell, Charlton and Hayley withdrew from the meeting during consideration of this item.

The Chief Fire Officer, the Clerk to the Authority, the Finance Officer and the Personnel Advisor to the Authority submitted a joint report setting out the current status of the North East Fire Control Company (NEFCC) and seeking the approval of Members to the proposal to write to the Company advising that the Authority will no longer require its services.

The LACC governance model was determined by DCLG in the early stages of the FiReControl Project as the preferred model for management of the North East Regional Control Centre (RCC) as part of the national network and the services that were intended to be delivered from therein.

With the termination of the RCC project the requirement for the LACC to provide mobility and resource management services to this Authority as part of the nation system had now been removed.

Accordingly, the Chief Fire Officer was of the opinion that the LACC had no further role to play with regard to the ongoing provision of a command and control function within this Authority and as such was seeking the permission of Members to write to the NEFCC to inform the Company of the position.

It was:-

83. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the Chief Fire Officer write to NEFCC Company indicating the Authority's position with regard to the NEFCC as outlined in Section 3.3; and
- (ii) further reports be received as appropriate.

Operational Assessment Peer Review 2010

The Chief Fire Officer submitted a report advising Members of the outcome of the Operational Assessment Peer Review undertaken between 12th and 15th October, 2010.

At the conclusion of the audit the peer review team provided informal verbal feedback and had now provided formal written feedback to the service and the Chief Fire Officer was pleased to advise that the team formed a very positive opinion of the service in general, as the following two examples demonstrated:

- TWFRS was a good service performing well. Staff were enthusiastic, they worked hard, and enjoyed working for the service and were committed to it.
- In the recent past the service had made significant progress in relation to change of culture to embrace community safety alongside response and the development of operational intelligence.

In addition to providing an overview of the organisation, the review also highlighted areas of good practice which in their view, should be shared with other services.

Councillor Woodwark commented that it was pleasing to see that the organisation worked to deliver.

It was:-

84. RESOLVED that:-

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

The Stonewall Workplace Equality Index

The Chief Fire Officer submitted a report to inform Members of the result of the Stonewall 2011 Workplace Equality Index Top 100 Employers and to provide details of the Authority's standing in the Index.

Members were reminded that Stonewall was founded in 1989 and had worked ceaselessly to place sexual equality on the mainstream political agenda and to achieve equality and justice for lesbians, gay and bisexual (LGB) people. One method which the organisation used to assist its work is the workplace equality index (WEI) which benchmarked and ultimately showcased Britain's top employers for LGB people.

The Chief Fire Officer was pleased to advise that the Authority had achieved a significant improvement in performance in the WEI for 2011. The Authority had been ranked in 60th position in the top 100 index and had also secured the prestigious title of Joint Number One Fire and Rescue Service in the country, which was shared with West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service.

A benchmarking meeting was scheduled for February 2011 and any development areas would be included in an Improvement Plan for the following year.

The Chairman on behalf of the Authority commented that he was proud of this achievement.

It was:-

85. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the contents of the report be noted;
- (ii) the Core Team be congratulated on this achievement; and
- (iii) 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.

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

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

87. 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 exempt information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Authority holding that information) 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 3 and 4).

(Signed) T. WRIGHT,
Chairman.

Note:

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

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