

Item 3 (i)

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, 23RD NOVEMBER,
2009 at 10.30 a.m.

Present:

Councillor T. Wright in the Chair

Councillors Ball, Boyes, Charlton, Clark, M. Forbes, N. Forbes, Haley, Jordan
Mortimer, Renton, Scaplehorn and Woodwark.

Part I

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bell, Clare and Mole.

Declarations of Interest

The following Councillors declared personal interests in the undermentioned reports
as Members of the body indicated:-

Item 10 – Regional Fire
Control Update

Councillors Charlton and
Haley

Members of the North
East Fire Control
Company Limited

Minutes

46. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the minutes of the meeting of the Authority held on 21st September, 2009 – Part I (circulated) be confirmed and signed as a correct record;
- (ii) the minutes of the meeting of the North East Fire and Rescue Regional Management Board held on 24th July, 2009 (circulated) be received and noted;
- (iii) the minutes of the meeting of the Governance Committee held on 28th September, 2009 (circulated) be received and noted;
- (iv) the minutes of the Civil Contingencies Committee held on 12th October, 2009 (circulated) be received and noted;
- (v) the minutes of the Human Resources Committee held on 19th October, 2009 (circulated) be received and noted; and
- (vi) the minutes of the Policy and Performance Committee held on 26th October, 2009 (circulated) be received and noted.

Matters Arising – Minutes of the North East Fire and Rescue Regional Management Board

Members of the Authority were referred to the minutes, in particular item 7 – Review of the Number of Meetings Per Year, and noted the reduction in the number of RMB meetings to four per year, with the provision for additional extraordinary meetings as deemed appropriate. It was agreed that the Clerk to the Authority be authorised to execute the revised Agreement incorporating this amendment.

Brave and Meritorious Conduct Award

The Chief Fire Officer submitted a report (circulated) for Members to recognise the meritorious and brave actions taken by Firefighter (FF) Graham Dodd during the rescue of an elderly neighbour from a house fire whilst off duty.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

FF Graham Dodd was in attendance to receive this award from the Chairman, who both commended and thanked the Firefighter for his brave and meritorious actions.

It was:-

47. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the Fire Authority endorse the award for meritorious action; and

- (ii) Firefighter Dodd be congratulated and thanked for his actions.

Capital Programme 2009/2010 – Second Review

The Chief Fire Officer and the Finance Officer submitted a joint report (circulated) to review the current year's Programme and reflect changes from that presented to the Authority as a consequence of the First Capital Programme Review, on 15th June, 2009.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The Finance Officer advised Members that regular monitoring of the Capital Programme resulted in an increase of £80,100. Additional costs totalling £125,859 arising from the Barmston Training Centre (BTC), Incident Management Training Facility and the BTC Repairs to Fire Ground. Re-prioritisation had enabled these additional costs to be accommodated within existing resources.

The Authority had been awarded a capital grant of £34,482 by Communities and Local Government (CLG) to support a commitment to achieve higher efficiency and diversity ethnic recruitment targets. In addition to this, £35,000 funding had been received from Northumbria Police to purchase a minibus with disabled access lifts to transport elderly and disabled guests to and from SafetyWorks.

The Finance Officer went on to explain that large van/car in 2009/2010 was to be deleted and replaced with a Water Rescue Vehicle. The cost of the vehicle was £28,000 which was an increase of £18,000 from the original programme. This vehicle replacement programme also included provision for the purchase of an Aerial Ladder Platform at an estimated cost of £485,000. As the lead time for delivery could be up to 2 years, this would slip to 2010/2011.

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

48. RESOLVED that the revised Capital Programme for 2009/2010 be approved.

Revenue Budget 2009/2010 – Second Review

The Chief Fire Officer and the Finance Officer submitted a joint report (circulated) advising Members of issues relating to the 2009/2010 Revenue Budget position, and providing an updated Statement of Balances.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The Finance Officer advised that a net estimated underspend of £1.08 million was anticipated to arise in relation to employee costs.

This being partly due to higher levels of staff turnover than anticipated and the 2009 pay awards this being less than provided for within the budget. In addition to this, restructures had taken place.

An additional rise to an underspend in the 2009/10 budget of £77,000 had resulted from the slippage in the procurement of the Aerial Ladder. The ongoing economic position (resulting in an all time low level of interest rate) had also realised savings of approximately £200,000.

The Finance Officer assured Members that the financial position would be kept under close review.

It was:-

49. RESOLVED that the position with regard to the Revenue Budget for 2009/10 be noted as set out in the report, including the updated Statement of Balances as set out at Appendix A.

Fire and Rescue Service Circular 54/2009 – Firelink Managed Service Fees

The Chief Fire Officer and the Clerk to the Authority submitted a joint report (circulated) providing the Authority with a précis of the contents of Fire Service Circular (FSC) 54/2009 which dealt with the financial principles that the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) wished to apply in respect of charging Fire and Rescue Authorities for the use of the Firelink radio system and highlighting the potential for additional costs to fall on the Authority that might not be covered by the New Burdens principle.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer advised that the Circular confirmed CLG's position that "the New Burden would be calculated by comparing the difference between the Airwave service costs and the operational costs of existing wide area radio systems and associated costs which FRAs would expect anyway in relation to wide area communication systems".

The Circular also confirmed that the payments that Authorities must make to Airwave Solutions Ltd for the use of the network would commence from July 2010, which was the FiReControl cut-over date prior to the recent Ministerial rescheduling announcement. This announcement had moved the date back to May 2011 for the North East.

CLG had also set out the indicative amount that Authorities could expect to receive to meet the additional costs of using the radio system. This funding amounted to £143,000 for 2010/11, £191,000 for 2011/12 and £191,000 for 2012/13. There was a concern that it might not be sufficient, when added to budget provision for the existing radio system, to cover the Authority's share of the full operating costs of the Airwave system.

Furthermore, the charging procedure proposed by CLG would involve invoicing at a regional level, via the Local Authority Controlled Company (LACC). However, it may be more appropriate to allocate costs based on the fixed infrastructure of the system, the number of radios, the radio traffic levels or a combination of these factors.

Accordingly, it was proposed to Members that the Chief Fire Officer, in consultation with the Finance Officer, write to CLG to highlight this fact and to register the Authority's concern in respect of the possible additional costs and request that CLG review the baseline radio traffic levels set for Firelink with a view to meeting in full resultant New Burden costs.

It was:-

50. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the content of the report be noted;
- (ii) the Chief Fire Officer and the Finance Officer write to CLG to voice the Authority's concern regarding Firelink managed service fees; and
- (iii) further reports be received as appropriate.

Membership of Authority and Appointment to Committees and Outside Bodies 2009/2010

The Deputy Clerk to the Authority submitted a report (circulated) detailing a change in membership and requesting consideration be given to the appointment to Committees and Outside Bodies.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The representative of the Deputy Clerk advised Members that Gateshead Council had appointed Councillor Peter Mole (MBE) (Lab) to the Authority for the remainder of the municipal year.

The attention of Members was then drawn to the Association of Metropolitan Fire and Rescue Authorities (AMFRA). The six Metropolitan Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs) (Tyne and Wear, West Yorkshire, Greater Manchester, Merseyside, West Midlands and South Yorkshire) had agreed to establish a co-ordinating Group to better promote the views of Authorities and add vigour to the dialogue already established between Central Government and those responsible for the delivery of efficient and effective Fire and Rescue Services in these areas. Representation from each Authority would include two Elected Members (and two named substitutes), the Chief Fire Officer and respective Treasurers.

During consideration of co-option to the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel of Newcastle City Council, Members were advised that a request had been received from Newcastle City Council for the Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Authority to appoint a representative to attend future meetings of the Panel. The Panel had a broad remit covering community safety and was designated as the Crime and Disorder Committee for the purposes of the Police and Justice Act 2006 (as amended). As such it would consider all Councillor Calls for Action, including those relating to fires, fire safety, etc.

A detailed discussion ensued in relation to this request during which Members agreed that other Local Authorities within Tyne and Wear be contacted to discuss arrangements within their area to determine whether a consistent and integrated approach could be adopted across Tyne and Wear. An Officer from Sunderland City Council would therefore undertake a review and report back to the January meeting of the Authority.

It was:-

51. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the appointment of Councillor Mole from Gateshead Council for the remainder of the municipal year be noted;
- (ii) consideration of the appointment of a Labour Group Member to the Personnel Appeals Sub-Committee be deferred to a future meeting;
- (iii) Councillors T. Wright and N. Forbes be appointed to the AMFRA with Councillors Ball and Scaplehorn as Substitute Members; and
- (iv) the nomination of a representative to act as a co-opted member of the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel of Newcastle City Council be deferred.

Total Place Pilot

The Chief Fire Officer and the Finance Officer submitted a joint report (circulated) providing a briefing for Members on the Total Place pilot which was running across Sunderland, South Tyneside and Gateshead Council areas.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Assistant Chief Fire Officer Brindle outlined the report and explained that the Sunderland, Gateshead and South Tyneside pilot had identified alcohol and drug misuse as a pressing issue for all three Council areas, and was focusing its Deep Dive on this.

The work on alcohol and drug misuse began with a practitioner event on 17th September, bringing together representatives of all the partner organisations, to explore current practice and sought creative ideas about how outcomes could be improved by working in new ways.

Workstreams had been identified and it was anticipated that TWFRS would focus involvement primarily on the Early Intervention workstream.

Upon discussion, it was:-

52. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the approach being taken through the Total Place pilot and the implications for the Fire and Rescue Service be noted; and
- (ii) further reports be received as appropriate.

Regional Fire Control – Update

The Chief Fire Officer, the Finance Officer and the Clerk to the Authority submitted a joint report (circulated) updating Members in respect of progress with the FiReControl project and highlighted the recent position statement issued by the Local Government Association's Fire Services Management Committee regarding the project.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Deputy Chief Fire Officer Hindmarch advised Members of the Authority that sound progress continued to be made at the local level and joint consultation with representative bodies, Fire and Rescue Authorities and the Local Authority Controlled Company underpinned that progress. The areas detailed below were highlighted:-

Legacy Systems – CLG were not prepared to fund the replacement of legacy systems through the New Burdens framework where this work included the full replacement or extension of maintenance arrangements to cover the extended time period.

Staff Consultation – Whilst staff shift patterns at the RCC continued to be a subject of debate, both regionally and nationally, other areas such as diversity and equality policies, staff facilities and health, safety and welfare policies had been agreed.

Transfer Strategy – Consultations on options for transfer were currently taking place between the four North East Fire and Rescue Authorities and the LACC. It was envisaged that a decision on the Transfer Strategy would be required in the first half of 2010.

Finance Issues – The Circular stated project funding had been revised to provide £22,539,430 as the initial allocation for FiReControl implementation. The indicative baseline figure for 2010/11 had been revised and increased by 2.7%.

It was:-

53. RESOLVED that:-

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

National Resilience Audit

The Chief Fire Officer submitted a report (circulated) to inform Members of the outcome of a recent audit, undertaken by the National Resilience Advisory Team, which examined the effectiveness of this service's strategies, policies and procedures that underpin the New Dimension programme, with specific reference to the Mass Decontamination (MD) function and the Detection, Identification and Monitoring (DIM) function.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The Assurance Team visited several locations, including Service Headquarters, five Community Fire Stations and the Technical Services Centre in Gateshead. The overall result of the audit confirmed that the service was able to mobilise the MD and DIM capabilities with sufficient resources/attributes and within timescales to meet reasonable response requirements of the Tactical Guidance Document Fire and Rescue Service response to Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear events and the Home Office Model Response (HOMR).

It was:-

54. RESOLVED that:-

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

Integrated Risk Management 2009/10 Action Plan – Quarter 2 Update

The Chief Fire Officer, the Clerk to the Authority and the Finance Officer submitted a joint report (circulated) to provide an update for Members in respect of the implementation of the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) Annual Action Plan for 2009/10, approved by the Authority in March 2009.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The Chief Fire Officer advised Members that the delivery of the 2009/10 IRMP Annual Action Plan was progressing well with the planned actions thereby improving the service provided to the public. This was being achieved whilst also ensuring that efficiencies were realised that assisted the Authority to meet the targets set by Central Government.

It was:-

55. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the progress made in relation to the implementation of the 2009/10 IRMP Action Plan be noted; and

- (ii) further reports upon the completion of the outstanding actions be received.

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.

For copy report – see original minutes).

- 56. RESOLVED that the Correspondence List be received for information.

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

57. 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 consultation or negotiations in connection with any labour relations matters arising between the Authority and employees of the Authority (Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A, Part I, Paragraph 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.

