

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 21 NOVEMBER 2011 at
10.30 am.

Present:

Councillor B Heron in the Chair

Councillors Ahad, Bell, M Forbes, N Forbes, Gambling, Mole, Mortimer, Mulvenna, Ord, Padgett, Renton, Stephenson and Trueman.

Part I

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillors Haley and Watters.

Declarations of Interest

The following Councillor declared a personal interest in the report below as a Member of the body indicated:-

Item 13 – Command and
Control – The Future

Councillor Bell

Director of the North East
Fire Control Company

Minutes

37. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the minutes of the meeting of the Authority, Part I held on 19 September 2011, be confirmed and signed as a correct record;
- (ii) the minutes of the meeting of the Governance Committee, Part I held on 26 September 2011, be noted for information;
- (iii) the minutes of the meeting of the Human Resources Committee, Part I held on 17 October 2011, be noted for information; and
- (iv) the minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Performance Committee, Part I held on 24 October, 2011 be noted for information.

Retirement of the Chief Fire Officer and Selection of a Successor

The Chief Fire Officer, the Clerk to the Authority, the Finance Officer and the Personnel Advisor submitted a report to set out, for the consideration and approval of Members, the proposed retirement date of the Chief Fire Officer and the subsequent selection process and timetable necessary to ensure a suitable successor was appointed.

The Chief Fire Officer advised members that after nearly 34 years service, he believed that following the formal setting of the 2012/2013 budget on Monday 20 February 2012, the time would be right to retire and the exact date identified for this to occur was Friday 24 February at 23.59 hours.

Members were then referred to the process and proposed timetable for implementation.

The Chief Fire Officer highlighted the proposal within the report that the eligibility criteria for the forthcoming vacancy should be such that individuals who have experience of managing at a strategic level within a fire and rescue service but do not necessarily possess operational experience would be able to apply for the post, in addition to those who do possess such operational experience.

A timetable for the process was appended to the report.

The Chairman then stated that an opportunity would be given at a future meeting to convey thanks and congratulations to the Chief Fire Officer however did comment that the Chief was extremely well respected across the service and had served the organisation incredibly well over the many years of service.

Members added that the Chief Fire Officer would be greatly missed by all.

38. RESOLVED that

- (i) the contents of the report be noted;
- (ii) the proposed retirement date of the Chief Fire Officer be approved;
- (iii) the proposals to invite applications from suitable qualified brigade managers (Assistant Chief Fire Officer and above) be approved;
- (iv) the selection process and associated timetable be approved; and
- (v) further reports be received as appropriate.

Appointment to Committees

The Clerk to the Authority submitted a report to recommend some changes in membership to the Human Resources, Personnel Appeals and Governance Committee.

Consideration having been given to the matter it was:-

39. RESOLVED that

- (i) the appointment of Councillor Mortimer and the deletion of Councillor M Forbes on the Human Resources Committee be approved;
- (ii) the appointment of Councillor M Forbes and the deletion of Councillor Mortimer on the Personnel Appeals Committee be approved; and
- (iii) the appointment of Councillor Gambling and the deletion of Councillor Bell on the Governance Committee be approved.

LGA Annual Fire Conference – 20 and 21 March 2012

The Chief Fire Officer submitted a report proposing an Authority representation at the LGA Annual Fire Conference.

Members were advised that the conference was to be held at the Highcliffe Marriott Hotel, Bournemouth on the 20 and 21 March 2012 and the theme of the conference would centre on resilience.

The cost of the conference was £360 per person, held at 2008 prices and the Chief Fire Officer proposed that the Chairman, Vice Chairman and one other member of the Authority be nominated to attend.

It was:-

40. RESOLVED that the attendance of the Chairman, Vice Chairman and one other Member at the LGA Fire Conference be approved.

Medium term Financial Strategy 2011/2012 to 2014/2015

The Chief Fire Officer, Clerk to the Authority and Finance Officer submitted a joint report to consider the draft Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2011/2012 to 2014/2015 and the approach to meeting the funding gap as currently forecast and also the Budget Planning Framework for preparation of the 2012/2013 Revenue Budget.

The Finance Officer spoke to the report and referred members to the draft MTFS 2011/2012 to 2014/2015 set out in Appendix 1 of the report.

Members were advised that a number of assumptions had been made. These included:

- There would be no collection fund surplus or deficit after 2011/2012;
- The council tax base would increase progressively each year based on historic data;
- The efficiencies proposed would be achieved or an alternative action taken;
- Grant reduction would be evenly spread across 2013/2014 and 2014/2015

Formula Grant allocations for 2013/2014 and 2014/2015 had been prepared for best and worst case scenarios. Best case being a total reduction of 18% and worst case almost 36%.

These scenarios had been modelled against council tax increase options with the best case including an increase of 2% and the worst case assumed no council tax increases.

Referring to the Budget Planning Framework, Members were reminded that consideration of the budget was at an early stage and that there were a number of uncertainties that would have a major impact on future years. The Budget Planning Framework had been designed to give some flexibility in addressing the final financial position as it emerged.

Councillor N Forbes commented upon the unfairness of the formula grant allocations which had been put on this authority and the North East and reminded that pressure needed to be continued to be placed on central government to address these issues.

Members of the Authority supported this lobbying for Tyne and Wear and commented that points raised throughout recent meetings needed to be put saliently to the government.

Members acknowledged the seriousness of the budget cuts and commented upon the potential detrimental loss of some services through these incredibly challenging times.

It was:-

41. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2011/2012 to 2014/2015 be noted at this stage and it would be updated to reflect the reviews outlined on the report;
- (ii) the Budget Planning Framework for the preparation of the 2012/2013 Revenue Budget be noted.

Revenue Budget 2011/2012 – Second Review

The Chief Fire Officer and the Finance Officer submitted a joint report advising Members of issues relating to the 2011/2012 Revenue Budget position, and providing an updated Statement of Balances.

Members were reminded that regular monitoring of the revenue Budget continued to take place and the following areas were drawn to their attention:-

At this stage in the financial year, a net estimated underspend of approximately £1.17 million had arisen in relation to Employee costs

The price increase for electricity charges had been less than anticipated and energy efficiency measures had been introduced across the service. These factors had resulted in an underspend of £19,000.

Vehicles had originally been intended to be leased therefore an underspend of £165,000 had arisen.

The Authority had received a share of a Reward Grant awarded to North Tyneside Council. This amounted to £172,000.

A number of initiatives and priorities for investment had been identified. These included the purchase of Multi-functional devices, Microsoft License Renewal and Regional Control for mobilising. These were at costs of £85,000, £300,000 and £100,000 respectively.

Members were assured that any potential savings would be utilised in the best possible way.

It was:-

42. RESOLVED that the position with regard to the Revenue Budget for 2011/2012 be noted, including the updated Statement of Balances set out in Appendix A of the report.

Capital Programme 2011/2012 – Second Review

The Chief Fire Officer and the Finance Officer submitted a joint report 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 13 June 2011.

The Finance Officer advised the Authority that the Capital Programme had been increased by £73,410 from the first capital review which totalled £4,135,020 to £4,208,430 and was to be fully funded from additional grant funding.

Members were assured that regular monitoring continued to take place and the following issues were brought to their attention:-

- It was projected that there would be a underspend of £55,000 on the refurbishment of non-PFI fire stations
- It was likely that the replacement of some of the Fireground Radio Equipment may be delayed into 2012/2013
- The Vehicle Replacement Programme was under review and the level of investment in new vehicles had not yet been confirmed,

It was:-

43. RESOLVED that the revised Capital Programme for 2011/2012, as set out in Appendix A of the report be approved.

Treasury Management – Half yearly Review of Performance 2011/2012

The Finance Officer submitted a report on the borrowing and investment strategy and performance for 2011/2012 to date, which incorporated the first and second quarterly Treasury Management reviews.

Members were referred to the report and were advised that with regards to Quarter 1 no debt rescheduling had been undertaken as rates had not been considered to be sufficiently favourable but interest on borrowing continued to be low.

The Operational Boundary Limit was recommended to be revised and increased to £2.0m but no change was required to the Authorised Borrowing Limit.

An increased rate of return achieved on investments held by the Authority was expected to generate additional interest of £30,000.

In relation to Quarter 2, the Authorised Borrowing Limit had been reviewed and amended.

It was:-

44. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the Treasury Management Performance for 2011/2012 to date be noted;
- (ii) an increase to the Operational Boundary from £41.363 m to £43.363 m to reflect an IFRS (2010/11) accounting adjustment be approved.

Progress in Delivering the Environment Strategy

The Chief Fire Officer submitted a report to update Members on the delivery of the Environment Strategy, and the impact this has had so far on the Service's energy consumption, fuel expenditure and carbon emissions.

Assistant Chief Fire Officer Brindle advised the Authority that the service had reduced its Carbon Emissions from buildings from 3,545 tonnes to 3,023 tonnes in 2010/11, a reduction of 14.7% in the first year of the environment strategy. This being a good start on the target of a 22% reduction by March 2015.

Members welcomed the findings within the report.

It was:-

45. RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted.

Olympics 2012 – Update

The Chief Fire Officer submitted a report updating Member regarding the actions taking place within Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service in preparation for the Olympics 2012.

Members were advised that as part of the 2012 Olympics, St James Park, Newcastle had been selected as the venue for Football.

The Olympic Torch would also pass through the region and TWFRS were working to support the safety alongside the designated routes.

The Olympic Torch Relay begins on 18 May 2012 and would run for 70 days. The North East would host 3 days of the event in June 2012. On the 15th day the Torch would leave Alwick Castle arriving in Tyne and Wear mid afternoon.

It was:-

46. RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted.

Correspondence List

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 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) B HERON
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.