

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 18 JULY 2011 at 10.30
am.

Present:

Councillor B Heron in the Chair

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

Part I

Apologies for Absence

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

The Chairman was pleased to report on the excellent attendance at the recent open days held at five community fire stations within Tyne and Wear.

Declarations of Interest

Councillors M Forbes and Renton declared a personal and prejudicial interest in relation to Item 5 – Payment of members Allowances – Special Responsibility Allowance as Leaders of the Conservative Party and Liberal Democrat Party, respectively.

Minutes

13. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the minutes of the Annual meeting of the Authority, Part I held on 13 June 2011, be confirmed and signed as a correct record; and
- (ii) the minutes of the meeting of the Governance Committee, Part I, held on 27 June 2011, be noted for information; and
- (iii) the minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Performance Committee held on 4 July 2011, be noted for information.

Bravery and Meritorious Conduct Award

The Chief Fire Officer submitted a report for the Authority to recognise the meritorious and brave actions taken by Blue Watch Crews from North Tyneside East and North Tyneside South Fire Stations during operations at a serious dwelling fire.

The Chief Fire Officer advised Members that on 3 February 2011 Blue Watch crews from North Tyneside East and North Tyneside South Fire Stations attended a serious dwelling fire in which an elderly person was trapped.

With small heed to their own circumstances, a breathing apparatus crew entered the flat, and in face of a fierce fire searched for, found and rescued the resident of the flat. These actions were in the best traditions of the Service and stood as testament to the public service ethos of which Tyne and Wear Fire & Rescue Service were so proud.

Sadly, the Chief Fire Officer advised that the individual died of the injuries the following day.

Watch Manager Rowley and Watch Manager Miller were presented with a Gold Award for brave and meritorious conduct by the Chairman who thanked them for the enormous courage they had shown. Condolences were expressed to the friends and family of the elderly lady.

14. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the Gold Award for Meritorious Action be noted and endorsed; and
- (ii) the Crews of 32 and 33 be thanked and congratulated for their actions.

Watch Manager Rowley and Watch Manager Miller left the meeting at this juncture.

Payment of Members Allowances – Special Responsibility Allowance

Councillors M Forbes and Renton left the meeting at this juncture.

The Clerk to the Authority and the Finance Officer submitted a report to request the Authority to determine the special responsibility allowance (SRA) to be paid for the Leaders of the Minority parties.

The Chairman reminded members under the current Members' Allowances Scheme a SRA was paid to the Leader of the Majority Party in Opposition. Currently both minority parties had equal representation on the Authority but the scheme did not recognise this possibility.

A similar situation arose in 2003 at which time the Authority decided to share the allowance between the respective Leaders.

15. RESOLVED that the payment of the special responsibility allowance be divided equally between the Leaders of the minority parties.

Councillors M Forbes and Renton re-joined the meeting.

Authority Arrangements for Handling Matters Relating to Civil Contingencies and Emergency Planning

The Chief Fire Officer and the Clerk to the Authority submitted a report to propose amendments to Standing Orders and Committee arrangements for the handling of civil contingencies and emergency planning matters by Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Authority (TWFR), in light of the recent review of Council emergency planning functions.

Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO) Brindle outlined the report and in doing so she reminded members of the Emergency Planning Unit's (EPU) previous role to deliver a number of Council functions in relation to emergency planning. In light of recent decisions, it was now felt to be timely to review the nature of TWFR's arrangements for political leadership of matters relating to emergency planning and civil contingencies. In particular, it was suggested that the Civil Contingencies Committee be dissolved, with duties delegated to the Committee being retained by the Full Authority.

There would still be a continued role in ensuring effective liaison with Councils and other partners which provided opportunity for scrutiny of involvement in collaborative arrangements in place through the Local Resilience Forum.

In response to a question from Councillor M Forbes, ACFO Brindle explained that collaborative activity was carried out through the LRF which was established in 2004 and that involvement from TWFRS was at the highest level.

Members were advised that, in light of the cessation of the EPU, all references to it and to the role of the CEPO would need to be removed from the Standing Orders.

Councillor N Forbes reminded that the Authority did put forward a case which was not in support of the disbanding the EPU but unfortunately an alternative approach had been adopted. He commented upon the extraordinary work undertaken by the unit and paid a tribute to the professionalism shown by staff especially through the

recent difficult times. He felt this was a strong reflection of the high standards they maintained and was pleased that most staff had gained employment in a similar function.

Thanks were also extended to Councillor Bell, Chairman of the Civil Contingencies Committee for the excellent work she had carried out.

The Chairman then, on behalf of the Authority, thanked Val Bowman and her team (both past and present) for their hard work and dedication over the years and commended them for the range of issues they had dealt with and to the highest of standards. He went on to say that Val had worked in emergency planning for 19 years and had been at the Helm of the unit since 2002. During this time Val had helped protect Tyne and Wear from threats, put emergency plans in place and represented Tyne and Wear on both a local and national front. He commented that Val had also been an inspirational leader supporting the unit through what had been an incredibly difficult time and she would be a huge miss. The chairman advised that Val would be working for the LRF in future and wished her every success in her new role.

Val was presented with a gift from the Authority and all members extended their gratitude to all EPU staff members for their work and wished them well for the future.

Val thanked members of the Authority and its relevant officers for all their support and felt privileged to have served for Tyne and Wear over the years. She gratefully received the gift.

16. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the dissolution of the Civil Contingencies Committee as set out in section 3.8 of the report and the retention of those functions delegated to the Committee by the Full Authority be approved;
- (ii) authorisation be given to the Chief Fire Officer and the Clerk to the Authority to implement the changes and revise the Terms of Reference accordingly; and
- (iii) authorisation be given to the Chief Fire Officer and the Clerk to the Authority to amend the Standing Orders to take account the removal of the role of Chief Emergency Planning Officer, as set out in section 5.1 of the report.

Treasury Management – Review of Performance 2010/11

The Finance Officer submitted a report informing members of the Treasury Management borrowing and investment performance for 2010/2011.

Dennis Napier (representing the Finance Officer) referred members to section 4.1 of the report to highlight that restructuring exercises had led to an ongoing debt interest saving of £0.298 million per annum.

The Authorised Borrowing Limit for External Debt was set for 2010/11 at £52.846m with an Operational Boundary of £47.846m. The Authority's maximum external debt was £38.436 which was well within both of the limits.

At 31 March 2011 the Authority had outstanding investments of £27.514m which illustrated the prudent and careful approach which had been taken.

In response to a question from Councillor Mulvenna asking whether International Financial Regulations were adhered to, the Finance Officer explained that it was the CIPFA Code of Practice which applied to Treasury Management but the International Financial Standards did apply and were used for, the Statement and Accounts.

17. RESOLVED that the Treasury Management performance for 2010/2011 be noted.

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

The Chief Fire Officer introduced a report advising that the Authority had been awarded the prestigious RoSPA Gold Award for the seventh time.

Deputy Chief Fire Officer Hindmarch subsequently outlined the report and explained that the Adjudication Panel had recommended that the Authority be awarded their seventh Gold Award for Occupational Health and Safety. This sustained achievement award placed TWFRAs on course for the next category of the President's Award. The award was to be presented at a ceremony on Thursday 22 September 2011.

Councillor Mole commented upon this excellent achievement and asked that the message of how 'proud' members were, be conveyed.

18. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the accolade given to the Authority in maintaining the RoSPA Gold Award be noted and endorsed; and
- (ii) the Chief Fire Officer convey congratulations and thanks to all staff and their representative bodies for their contribution to a safe working environment.

Partnership Bulletin Awards 2011

The Chief Fire Officer submitted a report informing Members that the NEFRA project had won two awards presented by the Partnership Bulletin at a ceremony recently held in London.

The first of the awards presented to NEFRA was in the 'Best Accommodation' category, where the project had been short-listed along with a further five nominated projects. However, it was the success in the second, and main, award of the night, the 'Project Grand Prix' that was particularly notable.

It was:-

19. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the contents of the report be noted; and
- (ii) all those involved in the NEFRA project be congratulated.

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

20. 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.