

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 JANUARY 2013 at
10.30 am.

Present:

Councillor T Wright in the Chair

Councillors M. Forbes , Haley, McAtominey, Mole, Mortimer, Mulvena, Ord,
Padgett and Price.

Part I

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillors
Ahad, Bell, N. Forbes, Gambling, and Stephenson.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Minutes

56. RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Authority held on 17
December, 2012, Part I be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Revenue Budget 2012/2013 – Third Review

The Chief Fire Officer and the Finance Office submitted a joint report advising
Members of issues relating to the 2012/2013 Revenue Budget position and
updated Statement of Balances.

Members were advised that the Revenue Budget Second Review, reported to the Authority in November 2012 outlined an estimated underspend of approximately £0.400 million, and that regular monitoring of the Revenue Budget continued to take place.

Appendix B, attached to the report demonstrated the variations at 31 December 2012 for Members' information.

The budget was anticipated to show a small overall underspend of approximately £90,000 at out-turn from the projected balanced position reported at the Second Review. Members were advised that the reason for this was because the Authority would accrue savings in 2012/2013 as a result of the back office review that had taken place, however the savings would not be realised until 2013/2014.

A number of other variations which were cost neutral were also being managed within the budget heading, including:- savings from staff turnover and the recruitment freeze; pension costs relating to a number of areas including deficiency; injured fire fighters and various other pension cost variations.

There continued to be no ill health retirements to date in 2012/2013, therefore Members were advised this could also result in a potential underspend.

The Finance Officer explained that a number of additional areas of spend that may give rise to a potential underspend also continued to be kept under review. These included:-

- Auditor Fees, since the annual fee for 2012/2013 was anticipated to be lower than estimated;
- Premises, an increase in Business Rates would result in an overspend on the budget which was not anticipated when the budget was initially agreed;
- Debt Charges, the Authority, with the assistance of the lead authority would be required to review its level of debt with a view to assessing the potential for reducing future revenue cost implications. It was confirmed that this exercise would have no impact on the out-turn position for the 2012/2013 budget.

Appendix A attached to the report demonstrated the movement of balances within 2012/2013 and included an update on the estimated level of balances as at 31 March 2013.

Upon consideration of the report, it was: -

57. RESOLVED to note the position with regard to the Revenue Budget for 2012/2013 as set out in the report, including the updated Statement of Balances set out in Appendix A.

Capital Programme 2012/2013 – Third Review

The Chief Fire Officer and the Finance Officer submitted a joint report to review the current year's Capital Programme and reflect changes from that presented to the Authority as a consequence of the Second Capital Programme Review on 19 November 2012.

Members were assured that the Capital Programme continued to take place, and a number of variations resulted in a net increase of £37,067 to the Capital Programme.

It was reported that there was a projected saving on the Temperature Control System to Fire Training Houses. This was estimated to be in the region of £100,000 and would be closely monitored.

The West Denton refurbishment of £50,035 had been postponed pending the mobilisation/control review. This would be slipped in to the Capital Programme for 2013/2014.

Members were advised that it was projected that the total cost of the Dignified Accommodation Review would be £6,500 over the original estimate. This would be met from underspends within other Estate projects.

In relation to ICT there had been progress made on replacement of the Fireground Radio equipment and there was now a possibility that procurement may be completed by the end of the financial year, when previously it had been uncertain whether the costs would be incurred in 2012/2013. Again, Members were assured the situation would be kept under close review.

At the present time it was unclear whether upgrade/replacement of the HR Software of £157,000 would be incurred in 2012/2013. It was confirmed that the Capital Programme would be reviewed and amended accordingly if costs slip into 2013/2014.

Moving on to the Control/Mobilising System, Members were advised that at second review it was reported that the mobilising and resource management system would be paid in four equal instalments at set stages of implementation during 2012/2013 and 2013/2014. The contract had been updated since with a slight change to the profiling of the payments, which resulted in bringing forward £36,602 of the system cost in to 2012/2013.

As in previous years capital grant funding for 2013/2014 and 2014/2015 would be allocated to fire authorities on a population basis. It was confirmed that the Authority would receive £1,094,917 in both 2013/2014 and 2014/2015 using the same methodology.

Authorities were also invited to submit bids for supplementary funding for specific projects that they deemed essential to the service and which would generate a return on the capital invested. In total, Government was allocating a supplementary £38 million to 15 fire and rescue authorities across the two financial years.

Members were advised that Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Authority had been successful in one of their two bids in respect of 'day crewing initiative' and would receive an additional grant of £524,000 in both years towards the costs of the scheme.

Prudential Indicators for the financial year 2012/2013 had been approved by the authority on 20 February 2012, and these continued to be closely monitored.

Having given consideration to the report, it was:-

58. RESOLVED to approve the revised Capital Programme for 2012/2013 as set out in Appendix A.

Schedule of Precept Instalments 2013/2014

The Chief Fire Officer submitted a report explaining that the Billing Authorities required that payments should be made by twelve equal monthly instalments, commencing in April 2013, payable on the last working day of each month, to continue with practice adopted in 1993/1994.

The proposed dates were as follows:-

Tuesday	30th April 2013
Friday	31st May 2013
Friday	28th June 2013
Wednesday	31st July 2013
Friday	30th August 2013
Monday	30th September 2013
Thursday	31st October 2013
Friday	29th November 2013
Tuesday	31st December 2013
Friday	31st January 2014
Friday	28th February 2014
Monday	31st March 2014

Upon consideration of the matter, it was: -

59. RESOLVED that under paragraph 4(4) of the Local Authorities (Funds) (England) Regulation 1992, the schedule of instalments proposed within the report, be agreed.

Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement 2013/2014 and Draft Revenue Budget 2013/2014 and MTFs Update

The Chief Fire Officer and the Finance Officer submitted a joint report updating Members on the draft Revenue Budget 2013/2014 which took into account the implications of the Provisional Grant settlement for 2013/2014 announced on 19

December 2012. The details of which were outlined in Appendix A which accompanied the report.

It was reported to Members that a further updated Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) would be presented in February 2013 when the finalised Revenue Budget 2013/2014 was to be approved. This was due to the lateness and complexity of the Settlement and the fact that an updated MTFS had been presented to the November 2012 meeting.

Members' attention was drawn to paragraphs 1.6 and 1.7 of the report. In particular, the fact that Government had set its capping criteria for Fire and Rescue Authorities at 2% (it was 4% last year). This meant any proposed increase in Council Tax for 2013/2014 in excess of 2% would be subject to a local referendum.

The impact on Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Authority was also described. Specifically, that Government's Revenue Spending Power for Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Authority would reduce by £3.135m or 5.02% in 2013/2014 to £59.340m compared to an adjusted 2012/2013 position of £62.476m. A breakdown of these figures was shown in Appendix 2 which accompanied the report.

Changes in Revenue Spending Power in 2013/2014 were referred to within the report, followed by a summary of the comments that had been made on the Settlement which would form the basis of the Authority's response to government.

An opportunity was provided for Members to ask any questions or comment on the report.

In response to an enquiry raised by the Chair regarding the history of the collection of Council Tax, the Finance Officer advised that the lead authority was currently in the process of liaising with local authorities in relation to the matter. Generally, the collection of council tax in Sunderland had always been consistent with few peaks and troughs. Nonetheless, the lead authority was monitoring this closely.

In response to a further enquiry from the Chair regarding whether a council tax freeze should continue, the Finance Officer advised that the situation was going to be challenging and a freeze would be a decision required to be made by Members in due course.

Councillor Haley commented that the proposals contained in Appendix 3 regarding the awarding of grants could be tweaked should grants be included into the base budget as a way of government clawing that money back. The Finance Officer agreed the comment was fair, stating that the new system had been set and would not be reviewed until 2020, and concurred that clearly, a formula could indeed be used by government to move money around should they choose to.

Upon consideration of report, it was:-

60. RESOLVED to note: -

- (i) the contents of the report which included the updated draft Revenue Budget position for 2013/2014 taking into account the implications of the provisional local government finance settlement for 2013/2014 and 2014/2015;
- (ii) the comments made on the Authority's behalf to the government's consultation on the Provisional Grant Settlement for 2013/2014, which was further detailed in Appendix 1 paragraph 1.21; and
- (iii) that the final Revenue Budget and Precept for 2013/2014 would be presented to the Authority at its meeting in February together with an updated MTFs.

Command and Control – Update

The Chief Fire Officer, the Finance Officer and the Clerk to the Authority submitted a joint report updating the Authority on the progress made with the replacement command and control system and associated building works.

Members were reminded that in September 2011 the Authority approved the procurement of a replacement Mobilising and Resource Management System, and the Authority would work collaboratively with Northumberland Fire and Rescue Authority with regard to this procurement.

The procurement process resulted in Telent achieving the highest score based on the evaluation criteria. As such, Telent was identified as the most economically advantageous tender and in accordance with the Authority Standing Orders, Telent was duly awarded the contract on 22 November 2012.

It was reported that much progress had been made in terms of providing suitable and sufficient premises to house the command and control function within Service Headquarters, and that building alterations had been completed by December 2012 thereby providing a suitable premise in which to install and test the new command and control system.

Members were invited to visit the new command and control accommodation at the close of the meeting.

Upon consideration of the report, it was:-

61. RESOLVED to: -

- (i) note the contents of the report; and
- (ii) receive further reports as appropriate.

Member Links with Community Fire Stations

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

Members were reminded that at an Authority meeting held on 17 September 2007, a fire station link scheme was approved. The aim of which was to enhance the liaison and communication between Members of the Fire Authority and staff on Community Fire Stations and in departments. The scheme was updated by Members on 16 July 2012.

Member Links with Community Fire Stations had proved to be successful since its implementation, the benefits of which were outlined within the report.

Councillor Price requested to be included on the Sunderland Central Fire Station because he lived in Fulwell in Sunderland and was a Ward Member for the Millfield Ward in Sunderland.

It was also reported that as part the Regional Control Centre (RCC) project, appliance call signs had been changed to new national signs. Whilst this took place, it was also deemed to be an appropriate opportunity to change the names of community fire stations to harmonise the revised national model. The changes to station names were contained in Appendix A.

Upon consideration of the report, it was:-

62. RESOLVED to:-

- (i) consider the report and the proposed link arrangements set out in Appendix A;
- (ii) endorse the links between Members and stations/departments, subject to any changes Members may wish to make.; and
- (iii) link Councillor Price with Sunderland Central Fire Station.

Correspondence List

The Chief Fire Officer submitted a list of correspondence that had been received since the last meeting of the Authority, and were not subject to a separate report.

63. RESOLVED that the correspondence list be received for information

(Signed) T. WRIGHT
Chairman

Note:

The above minutes compromise 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.