

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, 20TH JULY, 2009 at
10.30 a.m.

Present:

Councillor T. Wright in the Chair

Councillors Bell, Boyes, Charlton, Clark, M. Forbes, N. Forbes, Mortimer and Renton.

In Attendance:-

Lynn Hunt - Audit Commission

The Chairman opened the meeting by proposing a one minute silence in remembrance of the Fire-Fighter Ewan Williamson who died on Sunday, 12th July whilst on duty for West Lothian and Borders Fire and Rescue Service.

Part I

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ball, Bollands, Clare, Scaplehorn and Woodwark.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

The Chairman did at this juncture, advise the Authority that although he did not have a direct interest (in relation to Item 5) as he had no connection with Lumsden Carroll, he did receive income from clients who all worked as sub-contractors for the Company.

Minutes

21. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the minutes of the meeting of the Authority held on 15th June, 2009 – Part I (circulated) be confirmed and signed as a correct record.
- (ii) the minutes of the meeting of the Governance Committee held on 29th June, 2009 – Part I (circulated) be received and noted subject to the inclusion of Councillor Bell within the attendance, and
- (iii) the minutes of the meeting of the Civil Contingencies Committee held on 6th July, 2009 – Part I (circulated) be received and noted subject to the inclusion of Councillor Renton within the apologies for absence.

Matters Arising – Minutes of Authority Meeting held on 15th June, 2009

Appointment of Committees 2009/2010

Councillor M. Forbes proposed the following change to membership:-

Councillor M. Forbes being appointed to the Human Resources Committee instead of Councillor Jordan.

Councillor Jordan being appointed to the Personnel Appeals Committee in place of Councillor M. Forbes.

Membership of the Authority and Appointment of Committees for 2009/2010

The Deputy Clerk to the Authority submitted a report (circulated) detailing the appointments made by North Tyneside following notification on 3rd July and asking Members to consider the vacancies on various Committees.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

22. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the appointment of Councillor D. Charlton (Lab), Councillor K. Jordan (Cons) and Councillor S. Mortimer (Cons) from North Tyneside Council be noted,
- (ii) Councillor S. Mortimer be appointed to the Policy and Performance Committee, the Appointments Committee and the Personnel Appeals Committee in place of Councillor P. McIntyre, and
- (iii) Councillor Ball be appointed to the North East Fire and Rescue Regional Management Board as a Substitute Member for both Councillors Wright and N. Forbes.
- (iv) Councillor M Forbes be appointed to the Human Resources Committee in place of Councillor Jordan and Councillor Jordan be appointed to the Personnel Appeals Committee in place of Councillor M Forbes.

ICT Technology Refresh- EADS Ltd Quotation

The Chief Fire Officer informed Members that, in line with the recommendation contained in the report to the 15 June 2009 meeting, an independent audit of the quotation supplied by EADS to undertake a technology refresh of the Service's equipment, had recently been completed and in light of the outcome of this it was likely that the quotation would not be accepted and work would commence on a full tender exercise instead.

Procurement of USAR Incident Training Facility

The Chief Fire Officer, the Finance Officer and the Clerk to the Authority submitted a joint report (circulated) setting out for the information of Members, the tendering arrangements in respect of the Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) Incident Training Facility and seeking approval to proceed with the procurement.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Members were advised that the USAR facility would allow for a high level of training in an environment which replicated the conditions fire-fighters were likely to face in their operational role.

Sunderland City Council, as the lead Authority for TWFRS and facilitator of the approved standing list of contractors, invited seven contractors to tender for provision of the capital works.

Upon discussion, it was:-

23. RESOLVED that the procurement of USAR Training Facilities from Lumsden & Carroll Construction at a total cost inclusive of statutory approval and professional design fees of £568,621.91 excluding VAT be approved.

Future Uniform Provision

The Chief Fire Officer, the Finance Officer and the Clerk to the Authority submitted a joint report (circulated) setting out, for the consideration of Members, proposals with regard to the future provision of uniform for staff and seeking Authority approval to proceed with these proposals.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Assistant Chief Officer Brindle reminded Members that the current uniform contracts were due to expire in 2009 and it was necessary therefore, to put in place new contractual arrangements for future uniform provision. Members were also reminded that since the region's collaborative uniform procurement contract was established, a national arrangement for uniform procurement – the Integrated Clothing Project (ICP) – had been introduced through a contract administered by Firebuy.

Whilst the ICP clothing was undoubtedly of a high quality, the North East FRAs, had some concerns about the ICP project particularly in relation to the flexibility of the contract and the potential costs associated with adopting the proposed uniform.

Consequently, colleagues from across the region agreed to adopt a common approach to examining proposals that would provide a value for money solution for future uniform provision.

The two key features of this work to were a cost comparison exercise in respect of ICP and a non-ICP alternative and a staff opinion survey concerning the clothing options across all four FRA's.

The results of this work indicated that the initial cost of the non ICP option was substantially less than the ICP option and could be contained within current budget levels and that a large preference for retaining the current style of uniform, with some small enhancements, was evident amongst staff.

Indicative costs for the non-ICP option were set at approximately £89,500 for the first year, based on historical data relating to known replacement rates within the service. The ICP option would result in further expenditure of £571,606.

Councillor M. Forbes commented that she was pleased that similar some other FRA's had also determined to pursue an alternative to the ICP option.

It was:-

24. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the non-ICP approach to the provision of a uniform contract be endorsed, and
- (ii) the production and submission of a business case to CLG, in conjunction with Fire and Rescue Service partners in the North East,

seeking consent to the procurement of uniform outside of the ICP national arrangements be agreed.

Ministerial Statement on Firebuy Ltd

The Chief Fire Officer submitted a report (circulated) informing Members of a recent statement made by the new Fire Minister Shahid Malik MP with regard to Firebuy Ltd.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Members were advised that on 25th June, 2009 the Fire Minister announced to Parliament that there was a continuing need to drive procurement efficiency at the national level with fire and rescue services and that a national procurement body was the most appropriate way to achieve this.

The Minister also stated that Firebuy's functions should not be undertaken in isolation but should be absorbed into a larger organisation which would integrate procurement with the management of the service contracts for the Firelink, FiReControl and New Dimension Programmes.

Whilst Firebuy Ltd already undertook this function for the New Dimensions Programme there was no similar body currently in existence to undertake the work with regard to Firebuy or FiReControl.

How this new body would be financed was not referred to by the Minister. However, the Minister did inform the House that a new Board would be required to control the new organisation and recruitment would commence in September 2009. In addition a consultation paper on future arrangements for the nationally managed aspects of Firelink, FiReControl and New Dimension would be forthcoming in July 2009. It was possible that funding options would be covered within this document.

Members of the Authority commented upon the Ministerial Statement and, in particular, their concerns over the potential risks associated with any further delay in the delivery of the RCC contract by May 2011. Due to this, it was proposed that the Policy and Performance Committee should consider the possible risks to the operation of the current control room that could manifest themselves as a result of further delays.

It was:-

25. RESOLVED that:-

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

- (iii) the item of business be referred to the Policy and Performance Committee for detailed consideration.

External Audit: Equality and Diversity

The Chief Fire Officer submitted a report (circulated) providing Members with an overview of the results of the Audit Commission's recent audit covering the subject of equality and diversity.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Lynn Hunt presented the findings of the report to the meeting, which encompassed both regional and individual Authority findings.

In summary, the audit did not identify any matters that were considered to be of notable risk and, overall, considered that the Authority was progressing well in the majority of areas.

Some areas were highlighted that would complement the commitment and work of the service. The recommendations included:-

- More effective use of regional resources to share good practice and develop a more consistent approach to self assessment and to improve learning from further external assessment against the Equality Standard.
- Develop corporate websites to ensure that best practice was adopted, and consistent messages given on recruitment.
- Continue to monitor the quality of applicants attracted by positive action activity to assist in evaluating whether the initiative was targeting suitable applicants.
- Ensure that the potential role of all front line staff as ambassadors for the service was considered as part of the recruitment process and in engaging minority and vulnerable communities in wider community safety initiatives.

A discussion then ensued between the Chief Fire Officer and Members of the Authority on what analysis was undertaken of job applicants and the Chief Fire Officer advised that a detailed analysis was undertaken and that results of this were used to inform future campaigns.

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

26. RESOLVED that the contents of the report be received and noted.

Member Links with Community Fire Stations

The Chief Fire Officer submitted a report (circulated) setting out, for the consideration of the Authority, a revised list of affiliative links between Members and the Community Fire Stations and departments in Tyne and Wear.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The Chief Fire Officer advised Members that a revised list had been compiled which set out for consideration the proposed links between fire stations and service departments and Members. Officers responsible for each specific location would establish contact and arrange a programme of visits to the link stations/departments.

Referring to Appendix A, the Chairman requested that M. Forbes be replaced with T. Wright for Fulwell Community Fire Station.

It was:-

27. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the report and the proposed link arrangements set out in Appendix A be approved, and
- (ii) the links between Members and stations/departments be approved subject to the amendment as detailed above.

NEFRA Collaborative PFI Project

The Chief Fire Officer, the Finance Officer and the Clerk to the Authority submitted a joint report (circulated) informing Members that the NEFRA (1) Project had progressed to Financial Close and setting out the dates for service delivery for the new Tynemouth Community Fire Station.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Members were advised that on Friday, 26th June 2009, Mr. R.C. Rayner, Deputy Clerk to the Authority, executed the Project Agreement and all other Project documentation under seal on behalf of the Authority. Following the execution of the Project documentation, financial close took place. The project was closed with an interest rate of 4.47% resulting in an additional annualised contribution for TWFA of £163,534, which was marginally lower than that estimated annualised contribution (£164,319) reported to Members on 15th June, 2009.

Following financial close, the construction partner of CSS (Collaborative Services Support) namely Shepherd Construction would mobilise the workforce and intended to start work on site on 6th July, 2009.

With the successful completion of financial close Authority Members were justifiably proud of the achievement. The Chief Fire Officer placed on record his appreciation to all those involved for their efforts in this respect.

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

28. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the report be approved,
- (ii) the change in affordability be noted,
- (iii) the change in the Lead Authority be noted, and
- (iv) progress reports continue to be received throughout the construction phase.

Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) Gold Award

The Chief Fire Officer submitted a report (circulated) informing Members of the achievement, for the fifth time, of the prestigious RoSPA Gold Award for the Authority's successful work in health, safety and welfare.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The Chief Fire Officer announced that the Authority had been awarded the prestigious RoSPA Gold Award for the fifth time. This achievement was an excellent reflection of the commitment and the comprehensive approach to ensuring a positive health and safety culture throughout the Service.

The RoSPA Gold Award would be presented at a formal ceremony on Thursday, 24th September, 2009. The Authority would receive a framed certificate and was entitled to use the Gold Award emblem on letter headings and fly the prestigious Gold Award flag.

It was:-

29. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the achievement of the RoSPA Gold Award be noted, and
- (ii) the Chief Fire Officer convey congratulations and thanks to all staff and the representative bodies for their contribution in securing a safe working environment.

Integrated Risk Management 2009/10 Action Plan – Quarter 1 Update

The Chief Fire Officer, the Clerk to the Authority and the Finance Officer submitted a joint report (circulated) providing 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).

J. Brindle (ACFO) updated the Members on progress against the 10 identified actions. All the improvement actions within the Plan were progressing well. Work that had been undertaken thus far was detailed within the report.

Close monitoring of the financial and operational implications of the IRMP would continue in order to ensure that the benefits set out in the Plan continue to be fully realised.

It was:-

30. RESOLVED that:-

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

(For copy report – see original minutes).

31. RESOLVED that the Correspondence List be received for information.

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

32. 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 any individual or information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual or information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Authority holding that information) (Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A, Part I, Paragraphs 1, 2 and 3).

(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.