

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, 21ST JULY, 2008 at
10.30 a.m.

Present:

Councillor T. Wright in the Chair

Councillors Armstrong, Bell, Bollands, Boyes, Charlton, Clark, Cooney, Forbes,
Heron, Jordan, McIntyre, Renton, Scaplehorn and Woodwark.

Part I

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Armstrong and McMillian

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Minutes

27. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the minutes of the meeting of the Authority held on 16th June, 2008 – Part 1 (circulated) be confirmed and signed as a correct record;
- (ii) the minutes of the meeting of the Performance Review Committee held on 23rd June, 2008 – Part 1 (circulated) be received and noted;

- (iii) the minutes of the meeting (circulated) of the Governance Committee held on 30th June, 2008 – Part 1 (Arc) be received and noted;
- (iv) the minutes of the meeting (circulated) of the Civil Contingencies Committee held on 7th July, 2008 Part 1 (Arc) be received and noted; and
- (v) the minutes of the meeting of the Human Resources Committee held on 7th July, 2008 – Part 1 (circulated) be received and noted.

Matters Arising

3(i) – Minutes of the Authority

The Conservative Group made the following changes to their membership on committees:-

Policy Advisory Committee – removed Councillor Forbes and added Councillor Jordan;

Civil Contingencies Committee – removed Councillor McIntyre and added Councillor Jordan;

Human Resources Committee – removed Councillor Jordan and added Councillor Forbes;

Performance Review Committee – removed Councillor McIntyre and added Councillor Forbes;

Personnel Appeals Sub-Committee – removed Councillor Forbes and added Councillor Jordan.

3(iii) – Minutes of the Governance Committee

The Deputy Clerk advised that a further training session in relation to Standards Board Regulations 2008, would be held at the conclusion of the Authority meeting in September.

Bravery and Meritorious Conduct Award and Long Service Award

The Chief Fire Officer submitted a report (circulated) to recognise the meritorious and brave actions taken by Crew Manager (CM) Lee Bell during operations at a serious dwelling fire.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

At this juncture, the Chairman of the Authority presented a Gold Award for brave and meritorious conduct to Crew Manger Lee Bell in recognition of his actions in rescuing a casualty from a serious house fire at 38 Glanton Wynd, Gosforth.

The Chairman presented Councillor Cooney with a Certificate for 20 years service on behalf of all Members and Officers of the Authority for his hard work and true dedication over the past 20 years.

It was:-

28. RESOLVED that:-

- a) the Gold Award for Meritorious Action be endorsed;
- b) Crew Manager Bell be congratulated and thanked for his actions; and
- c) the Authority place on record the appreciation of the long service received by Councillor Cooney.

Pay Award 2008 and Associated Issues

The Chief Fire Officer, the Clerk to the Authority, the Finance Officer and the Personnel Advisor submitted a joint report (circulated) outlining the contents of the Circulars, and identifying the implications on this Authority, for the information of Members.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The pay award under employees' conditions relating to the National Joint Council for Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services Scheme of Conditions of Service ('Grey Book'), determined on the basis of a national agreement, had produced an increase of 2.45% effective from 1st July 2008. Arrangements were in place to ensure that the relevant pay increases are paid to all eligible staff.

The effect of the 2.45% pay award in 2008/2009 was £717,249. Provision had been made within the 2008/2009 Revenue Budget at 2% amounting to £585,509. Taking into account current and expected staff turnover in 2008/2009, the Chief Fire Officer, having consulted with the Finance Officer, had identified that the balance of £131,740 could be met from within the existing salaries budget.

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

29. RESOLVED that:-

- a) the action taken by the Chief Fire Officer be endorsed; and
- b) further reports be received as appropriate.

Fire and Rescue Conference – 2008

The Chief Fire Officer, the Chief Emergency Planning Officer, the Clerk to the Authority, the Finance Officer and the Personnel Advisor submitted a joint report (circulated) informing the Authority that the Fire and Rescue 2008 Conference was scheduled to take place at the New Arena and Convention Centre, Liverpool, from 27th to 29th August, 2008.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

This conference was an annual event which would be highlighting a number of key issues, including operational doctrine, flooding and the environment, health and safety, comprehensive area assessments, fire insurance and equality and diversity.

In addition to the above, there would also be an opportunity to view the Emergency Action Zone, where the very best fire fighting and rescue equipment and techniques will be shown in a series of demonstrations and the conference will run alongside the tenth World Firefighter Games, also being held in Liverpool.

The cost of this conference was £450 per member not including VAT which could be met from current budget headings.

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

30. RESOLVED that the attendance of the Chairman and Vice Chairman at the conference be approved.

Update on the Fire and Rescue National Framework Document 2008/2011

The Chief Fire Officer, the Finance Officer and the Clerk to the Authority submitted a joint report (circulated) updating Members on the current status of the Fire and Rescue Framework 2008/2011, which was issued for consultation by the department of Communities and Local Government (CLG) in late November 2007.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The Chief Fire Officer advised Councillors that following a recent consultation there was widespread support with regard to the proposed change to a three year review timescale and the reduction in the number of requirements imposed upon Fire and Rescue Services, therefore CLG had determined to adopt this new format.

The detailed content of the document had remained largely unchanged following the consultation exercise. The Chief Fire Officer stated that this included the requirement to submit a business case to CLG should an Authority wish to extend any existing contracts that it has in place, a requirement which this Authority had objected to in its consultation response.

Consideration having been given to the report it was:-

31. RESOLVED that:-

- a) receipt of the Fire and Rescue National Framework 2008/2011 Publication be acknowledged; and
- b) further reports be received as appropriate.

Future of the Centre of Excellence and Firebuy

The Chief Fire Officer, the Finance Officer and the Clerk to the Authority submitted a joint report (circulated) providing Members with information relating to the outcome of the CGL consultation exercise on the proposal to establish a fire and rescue service Centre of Excellence (CoE) and the outcome of the CGL review into the National Procurement Strategy and the role of Firebuy.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Members were advised that following the consultation exercise CLG collated and considered the responses they received.

The outcome of this assessment highlighted the fact that, whilst there was still support for the principle of a CoE, there was widespread concern about the extent of its proposed remit and, in particular, disquiet over the proposal for Firebuy to migrate to the CoE when the future of this organisation itself was still being questioned.

Concerns were also expressed about the funding burden that would fall upon fire and rescue services to help cover the running costs of the CoE.

The consultation exercise undertaken into the governance and function of the Centre of Excellence has resulted in the CLG postponing the introduction of the new body and returning to the status quo. This position should be maintained for at least 2008/2009. However, CLG had stated that it does not rule out the possibility of returning to the issue, depending upon how circumstances evolve.

It was:-

32. RESOLVED that:-

- a) the contents of this report be noted and endorsed; and
- b) further reports be received as appropriate.

Publication of the Pitt Review – Lessons Learned from the 2007 Floods

The Chief Fire Officer, the Finance Officer and the Clerk to the Authority submitted a joint report (circulated) to inform Members of Sir Michael Pitt's review of the widespread flooding in England during 2007, entitled 'Lessons Learned From the 2007 Floods'.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The Chief Fire Officer advised that of the total of 92 recommendations, the majority do not directly impact on the fire and rescue service. Nevertheless, there were a number of sections of the report that did relate to the work of fire and rescue services, and these had dealt with mutual aid, the co-ordination of roles and the potential for an additional statutory flood rescue duty for the fire and rescue service.

It was:-

33. RESOLVED that:-

- a) the contents of this report be noted and endorsed; and
- b) further reports be received as appropriate.

Final Performance Outturn Report for the 2007/2008 Corporate Targets

The Chief Fire Officer, the Clerk to the Authority, the Finance Officer and the Personnel Advisor submitted a joint report (circulated) providing the final performance outturn for the 2007/2008 corporate targets.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The Chief Fire Officer advised that Appendix A contained the following items of performance information for each indicator:-

- Actual figure for 2004/05
- Actual figure for 2005/06
- Actual figure for 2006/07
- Year to Date for 2007/08
- End of Year for 2007/08
- Target for 2007/08 (reported in the BVPP)
- Variance with the target
- Percentage variance with the target

Appendix B provided a three year graphical comparison of performance for our Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPI's). Appendix C provided a snap shot of our BVPI performance against the relevant targets and the previous year's performance.

Upon detailed discussion, it was:-

34. RESOLVED that the contents of the performance report be noted and endorsed.

Integrated Risk Management Annual Action Plan 2008/09 First Quarterly Update Report

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 (IRMP) Annual Action Plan for 2008/2009.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The Chief Fire Officer was pleased to report that all the improvement actions within the plan were progressing well. The IRMP had also generated efficiency savings for the Authority that had allowed reinvestment into service provision and these efficiencies had been incorporated into the Annual Efficiency Statement that was provided for Communities and Local Government (CLG).

It was:-

35. RESOLVED that:-

- the progress made in relation to the implementation of the 2008/2009 IRMP action plan be noted and endorsed;
- further reported be received as appropriate.

Best Value Performance Plan 2008/2009

The Chief Fire Officer, the Clerk to the Authority and the Finance Officer submitted a joint report (circulated) informing Members of the publication of the Best Value Performance Plan (BVPP) 2008/2009. The BVPP highlights the Authority's previous BVPI performance and sets the targets for the 2008/2009 coming year.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillors were advised that the BVPP provided external partners and stakeholders with an overview of how the performance of the Authority relates to Vision and Mission it has set.

Furthermore, in order to highlight the Authority's performance against that of other Fire and Rescue Authorities the BVPP provides a clear comparison of its BVPI performance against that of the other six Metropolitan Fire and Rescue Authorities for 2007/08.

This would be the final year the Fire and Rescue Authority would be required to produce a Best Value Performance Plan. However, the Authority will continue to report performance within the Annual Report and the Strategic Community Plan.

Upon discussion, it was:-

36. RESOLVED that the Best Value Performance Plan 2008 be approved.

Annual Efficiency Statement

The Chief Fire Officer, the Finance Officer and the Clerk to the Authority submitted a joint report (circulated) informing Members of the contents of the Annual Efficiency Statements (AES) submitted to the department for Communities and Local Government (CGL) on the 19th July, 2008.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Both the Backward Looking and Forward Looking efficiency statements were required to be submitted to CLG by 19th July, 2008 and this requirement had been complied with.

The Backward Looking AES shows cumulative cashable efficiency gains to the value of £5.1m, or 9.94%, by the end of March 2008. The Chief Fire Officer was pleased to note, therefore, that the Authority had exceeded the target of 5.67% set for it by CLG.

The Forward Looking AES for 2008/2009 highlighted that the Authority was forecasting a cashable efficiency gain of £1.03m or 1.8% by the end of 2008/2009. It was worth noting that this figure was above the 1.6% required by CLG.

At this juncture, Members thanked the Authority's Officers for the excellent efficiency savings achieved.

Upon discussion, it was:-

37. RESOLVED that:-

- a) the efficiency statements be noted and endorsed; and
- b) further reports be received as required.

Publication of RCC Business Case P1: Regional Annexes

The Chief Fire Officer, the Finance Officer and the Clerk to the Authority submitted a joint report (circulated) informing Members of the publication of Part 1 of the latest iteration of the Fire Control Business Case and highlights some of the key issues within it.

The Chief Fire Officer advised that the CLG had set out what it believed to be the staffing numbers necessary to operate the Regional Control Centre. There were a total of 63 staff during the transitional phase falling to 55 staff when steady state operation was achieved.

Secondly, Members were asked to note that, using current regional control room costs as a baseline, the RCC would be more expensive to operate than the current North East control rooms.

Current regional costs, which had been independently audited, were £4.8m per annum whereas the costs for the RCC for the North East were estimated to be £5.4m per annum. An increase of £0.6m per annum.

CLG were proposing that the increased cost of the North East RCC will be met through central funding. However, this would be reviewed after three years. CLG have not yet published Part 2 of the Business Case. The contents of the document relate to the National Case for FiReControl and the way in which this has been costed.

Upon detailed discussion, it was:-

38. RESOLVED that:-

- a) the Chief Fire Officer, in association with the Finance Officer, write to CLG expressing concerns over the potential additional financial burden falling on the Authority;
- b) that staffing levels will remain a local issue for determination; and
- c) a letter be sent to local MP's to brief them on the situation and request their support.

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).

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

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

40. 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 involves a likely disclosure of exempt information relating to any consultation or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations in connection with any labour relations matters arising between the Authority and employees of, or office holders under, the Authority or in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings (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.