

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 14 DECEMBER 2015 at
10.30AM.

Present:

Councillor T Wright in the Chair

Councillors Bell, Burdis, M. Forbes, N. Forbes, Haley, Harrison, Lauchlan, Mole, Perry, Price, Renton and Stephenson.

Part I

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillors Maughan and Pickard.

The Chairman reminded members that a training session would take place at the conclusion of the meeting which would be based on an update on the Emergency Medical Response Trial, a Finance Update and also Future Leadership Development within Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service. A Carol Service would then take place at 2pm.

The Finance Officer circulated financial information for 2010/11 to 2015/16, for the information of members. This additional information had been requested at the previous meeting.

The Chairman then announced that the service had recently received 3 awards. These were 'Celebrating Excellence in Fire and Emergency', 'Primary Awards' (Highly Commended) and 'CIPR – North East Pride Award'. Thanks were extended to all those involved for these fantastic achievements and maintaining the high profile and standards set by the Authority.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Minutes

48. RESOLVED that:

- (i) The Minutes of the Meeting of the Authority, Part I, held on 16th November, 2015 be confirmed and signed as a correct record; and
- (ii) The Minutes of the Meeting of the Policy and Performance Committee held on 9th November, 2015, be noted for information.

Financial Sustainability of Fire and Rescue Services

The Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive submitted a report to brief the Authority on a recently published report of the National Audit Office. A full report was attached at Appendix A, and a supporting document was also available on request.

ACFO Bridle advised members that the report focused on:

- The impact of funding reductions on financial sustainability
- The extent to which CLG had taken an informed approach to implementing funding reductions, and how it had assisted FRAs to manage reductions
- The effectiveness of CLG's system for providing assurance on financial health and service standards.

ACFO Brindle explained that the report found that funding for fire and rescue services had fallen significantly between 2010-11 and 2015-16, with a 33% real terms reduction in funding and an average 22% reduction in spending power.

Savings had come primarily from staffing with the largest reductions being in Control, non-uniformed and managerial posts. For Tyne and Wear this had realised savings of 12% and nationally, 14%. Whilst response standards had not changed, the scope of the response had.

CLG was recommended to:

- Improve its understanding of the capacity of the sector to deliver further savings, and the likely impact of this
- Assess the potential for different authorities to make further savings by examining underlying costs and the efficiency measures taken
- Analyse factors behind long-term downward trend in fires, and in particular the impact of FRS prevention and response activity

The report outlined that CLG had limited understanding of the underlying costs of providing fire and rescue services and also of the impact of FRS activity on outcomes such as fires and casualties in fires.

CLG was felt to be supporting FRAs in implementing efficiency and transformation through the Fire Transformation Fund.

ACFO Brindle explained that questions were raised at the recent CFOA meeting as to whether this was an appropriate way forward and CFOA had agreed that funding should be distributed according to risk.

The Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive advised that a further document following discussions with AMFRA would be circulated which highlighted discussions held in relation to the unfairness of the distribution of funding which would be used for further lobbying to Central Government.

CLG was therefore recommended to assess the likely impacts of different types of service transformation on cost reduction and service improvement, in particular the value of activities which primarily add value to other sectors.

Members were then advised that CLG had devolved assurance about service quality to the local level, and relied on local scrutiny for this (including Fire Peer Challenge). This was in keeping with its policy of localism, however the report asked questions about the quality of independent technical support to local members, and the robustness of peer challenge.

CLG was recommended to strengthen its assurance on the sector's operational performance by:

- Widening the scope of national resilience assurance to include whether local operational capacity was sufficient to simultaneously contribute at major incidents and maintain local service levels
- Consulting on the ways in which the peer challenge system could be further strengthened, potentially by involving the Chief Fire and Rescue Advisor
- Encouraging authorities to standardise operational targets and performance reporting
- Gathering substantive evidence to support the Secretary of State's assurance to Parliament

Members were referred to the graph detailed at page 15 of the report, which highlighted the fact that Metropolitan Fire Authorities had received the greatest cuts when compared to Combined Fire Authorities and Single Tier and County Councils. These representations were made at the time of Sir Ken Knight's Review.

Members of the Authority acknowledged the funding cuts they were faced with however commented that issues in relation to sustainability of the current service provided, needed to be addressed and that the risks associated with this, needed to be communicated to the Minister, including European MP's, to outline the resultant implications of the financial cuts on the fire service.

49. RESOLVED that the contents of the NAO report be noted.

Fireworks and Bonfire Incidents 1st-6th November 2015

The Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive submitted a joint report to inform Members of the incident activity levels, diversionary and intervention programmes and instances of Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) within the Service area over the Bonfire period, 1st to 6th November 2015.

Members were advised that in addition to the operational planning, a proactive Darker Nights Campaign was undertaken during the weeks prior to the 5th November.

For the period 1st to 6th November, the following data had been validated:

- 4.7 % reduction in the total number of calls received by Service control (from 715 in 2014 to 682 in 2015).
- 3.7 % increase in the total number of incidents attended (from 433 in 2014 to 449 in 2015).
- 12.3 % increase in the number of deliberate ASB secondary fires (from 179 in 2014 to 201 in 2015).
- There were 3 attacks on fire-fighters in 2015, 2014 there were 0 attacks on firefighters.
- There were 3 firework related property fires in 2015, compared to 2 in 2014.

Members acknowledged that a partnership approach to the bonfire period had again proven to be extremely successful in managing risk. Whilst the total number of calls had decreased, the total number of incidents attended and the number of ASB secondary incidents attended had increased. The number of bonfire and refuse uplifts undoubtedly prevented many more incidents and further reduced the risk to members of the community and firefighters alike. The reports on firefighters were extremely disappointing however Members were assured that each attack was investigated and works were on-going with the Police.

Looking forward to 2016, the next focus was on the period April to June. The Service would therefore be working with multi-agency partners to deliver a Lighter Nights Campaign targeted at young people to reduce the amount of Anti-Social Behaviour incidents.

50. RESOLVED that:

- (i) The contents of the report be noted; and
- (ii) Further reports be received as necessary.

Domestic Sprinkler Partnership Project

The Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive, the Deputy Clerk to the Authority and the Finance Officer submitted a joint report to update Members on the partnership working to install sprinkler protection in dwellings within Tyne and Wear, which would improve the safety of vulnerable people in the community.

Members were reminded that as previously reported, the Chief Fire Officer maintained that the targeted use of domestic sprinklers would save lives and was committed to working with partners to promote the benefits of domestic sprinklers.

TWFRA identified vulnerable households through an intelligence led targeted methodology which enabled resources to be directed to those most in need.

Members were advised that since commencing this work in 2012, up to 1227 dwellings have had, or were planning to have, sprinklers fitted as a result of the work of the Authority. TWFRA had agreed to part-fund 254 of the installations, on a case by case basis.

To enhance Community Safety information, Members were reminded that £550,000 had been allocated to a Community Safety Reserve. To date, £320,000 had either been spent or committed to allocations.

Councillor Stephenson welcomed the report and commented upon the benefits of housing developers embracing the installation of domestic sprinklers. Councillor Haley agreed and suggested that a monitoring exercise should also be undertaken, given the recent change in legislation in Wales.

51. RESOLVED that:

- (i) The contents of the report be noted;
- (ii) The installation of Sprinklers in each LA area be championed; and
- (iii) Support be given to the continuation of the project supported by the Community Safety Reserve.

Emergency Medical Response Trial

The Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive submitted a report to inform Members of the Emergency Medical Response (EMR) trial which TWFRS was undertaking.

Members were advised that crews at Newcastle West (West Denton) Community Fire Station were to co-respond to defined emergency medical incidents under conditions agreed with NEAS. Firefighters would provide potentially life-saving medical interventions if they could reach a desperately ill patient before paramedics

under the pilot.

Crews would remain focussed on dealing with fire and rescue incidents for the period of the trial, but would be mobilised to certain life threatening medical emergencies, if not already at an incident, and if they could arrive in time to keep a patient alive until Ambulance Service staff could take over. The FRS would not attend alone, however would provide a service if possible, until the ambulance crew arrived.

Data would be consistently collected throughout the trial and a full evaluation would be undertaken to assess the effectiveness of Firefighters providing a level of Emergency Medical Response. Members were advised that this evaluation would be submitted to the NJC and would be combined with evidence from around the country to form a national picture. The Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive reminded members that other FRS's were already undertaking this approach, with Greater Manchester being one of the first to sign up. The monitoring exercise would therefore be used to brief members on impact and outcomes in due course.

52. RESOLVED that:

- (i) The contents of the report be noted;
- (ii) This area of work be supported; and
- (iii) Further reports be received as appropriate.

Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme (ESMCP) – Update

The Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive and the Finance Officer submitted a joint report to update Members on the current progress of the national Emergency Services Mobile Communication Programme (ESMCP).

Members were advised that the initial timescales for the programme anticipated that contracts would be awarded in April 2015, with the first Services going live with the ESN in early 2017. However, there had been some significant changes to the procurement process and the timescales for contract award.

Due to the scale and the complexity of the project the transition from the Airwave network to the ESN would take a number of years. Draft transition timelines had been produced; however, due to the delays in the project and the resultant extension of different Airwave contracts, the timeline had changed a number of times over the last 12-18 months.

Members were advised that the original Airwave contract was due to terminate for all FRSs at 23:59hrs on 31/12/16. Following negotiations with Airwave, DCLG had enacted the 3 year contractual extension to the Firelink contract. This would extend the GB wide service received from Airwave from 31st December 2016 to 31st December 2019 in line with the planned transition timetable for the ESMCP and thereby provide fire and rescue services with the continuity of service during the transition window to ESN.

ESN service commencement was expected mid 2017 with Tyne and Wear along with the other emergency services in the North East Region being in the 3rd rollout group, with an anticipated transition date of late 2017 / early 2018.

53. RESOLVED that:

- (i) The contents of the report be noted; and
- (ii) Further reports be received as necessary.

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

54. 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 was considered to involve a likely disclosure of information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Authority holding that information) or to consultations or negotiations in connection with labour relations matters arising between the Authority and employees of the Authority (Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A, Part I, Paragraphs 3 and 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.

