

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, 18TH SEPTEMBER,
2006 at 10.30 a.m.

Present:

Councillor Gibson in the Chair

Councillors Anglin, Bell, Boyes, Cooney, Fletcher, Heron, Huscroft, James, Jordan,
O'Neil, Renton and Woodward.

Part I

Apologies for Absence

An apology for absence was received from Councillors Bollands and Mrs. Forbes.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor Woodward declared a Personal Interest in Item 4 as an employee of Northern Rock.

Minutes

30. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the minutes of the meeting of the Authority held on 24th July, 2006 – Part I (circulated) be confirmed and signed as a correct record;

- (ii) the minutes of the meeting of the Performance Review Committee held on 31st July, 2006 – Part I (circulated) be received and noted; and
- (iii) the minutes of the meeting of the Grading Sub-Committee held on 15th September, 2006 – Part I (circulated) be received and noted.

Matters Arising – Minutes of 24th July, 2006

Amendments to Constitution

Members of the Authority were advised that Sections E7 and E8 of the Standing Orders had been amended to include an electronic reference.

In addition to this, contracts had been advertised for tender.

Regional Control Centre (RCC)/Firelink

Members noted that Councillors O'Neill and Fletcher would be appointed to serve as Directors on the RCC Local Authority Company, which results in changes to substitutes at the RMB therefore Councillor Bolland will substitute for both Councillors Gibson and Cooney.

Regional Control Centre (RCC)/Firelink

31. RESOLVED that the item be withdrawn from the agenda.

Integrated Risk Management Plan: Draft 2007/08 Action Plan

The Chief Fire Officer, the Clerk to the Authority and the Finance Officer submitted a joint report (circulated) proposing the draft IRMP Action Plan 2007/08 for consideration and, subject to any amendments, approval by Members.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The Chief Fire Officer reminded Members that the Integrated Risk Management Plan represents a key element in the modernisation and reform programme for the fire and rescue service.

The 2007/08 draft action plan detailed both the barriers to more effective service delivery as well as the means by which these could be overcome, in order to reduce risk to the community through the delivery of annual improvement actions.

In support of the five-year IRMP strategy, a draft action plan was formulated in October of each year based upon current and emerging risk trends as well as other pertinent information. Following this a public consultation exercise would be undertaken which would run for a period of 12 weeks. Individual project plans would underpin each of the identified actions required to mitigate the risks.

Councillor Renton commented upon the number of False Alarms mentioned in the report and the Chief Fire Officer assured that meetings had taken place to tackle this issue.

In addition to this, Councillor Woodward commented upon the importance of feedback via the consultation process.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer agreed, and commented that work had also been done to target the 'Hard to Reach' Groups for example the elderly which often tend to be isolated.

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

32. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the contents of the 2007/08 draft IRMP action plan had been considered;
- (ii) the draft 2007/08 IRMP action plan be subject to public consultation; and
- (iii) the Chief Fire Officer reports the results of the consultation exercise to the Authority for consideration prior to final approval of the 2007/08 action plan.

Value for Money Framework

The Chief Fire Officer, the Clerk to the Authority and the Finance Officer submitted a joint report (circulated) setting out for the attention of Members how the continual drive to secure and improve Value for Money had been incorporated in the Authority's key strategy documents and also sets out, in broad terms, the roles and responsibilities of elected Members and Officers in respect of achieving VfM.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Members were reminded that under the Audit Commission's revised code of practice there was a requirement for the Authority to demonstrate that it had in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources and that the Auditor would report, on an annual basis, on whether such arrangements to secure Value for Money (VfM) were in place.

In addition, as part of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment process there was also a requirement on the part of the Authority to demonstrate that the service was providing Value for Money.

Upon discussion, it was:-

33. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the VfM principles outlined in the report be endorsed; and
- (ii) further reports be received as appropriate.

Capital Strategy

The Chief Fire Officer, the Clerk to the Authority, the Finance Officer and the Personnel Advisor submitted a joint report (circulated) setting out for consideration and approval by Members, the Authority's Capital Strategy document, which was designed to underpin the Strategic Plan 2006/11.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The Capital Strategy is a framework to guide and demonstrate how decisions on capital investment and use of assets were built into and contribute towards the achievement of the Authority's Strategic Plan.

In order to ensure that the appropriate assets were available it was necessary to have a Capital Strategy which can serve as a key focal point for identifying capital developments and appropriate funding to allow these developments to take place.

The Capital Strategy document sets out the way in which capital assets would be utilised to support the four strategic goals of the Strategic Plan, namely:-

- Preventing loss of life and injury from fire and other emergencies;
- Responding appropriately to the risk;
- Planning and preparing for the exceptional events;
- Delivering a modern, effective service.

Upon discussion, it was:-

34. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the report and accompanying document had been considered; and
- (ii) the Capital Strategy be approved.

Medium Term Financial Strategy 2007/2008 to 2011/2012

The Chief Fire Officer, the Clerk to the Authority, the Finance Officer and the Chief Emergency Planning Officer submitted a joint report (circulated) outlining the Medium Term Financial Strategy from 2007/2008 to 2011/2012 and seeking approval to the Budget Planning Framework for the preparation of the 2007/2008 Revenue Budget.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The Finance Officer informed Members of the two main purposes of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) together with the subsidiary objectives.

In addition to this, Mr. Beardmore advised that the Authority was facing a period of considerable change. Due to this, a robust approach is being taken in establishing, and regularly updating, the medium term financial position facing the Authority.

Members, having been advised of the spending commitments that have been included in the Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2007/2008 to 2011/2012 were advised that the following areas had been considered in compiling the Medium Term Financial Strategy:-

- CPA Improvement Plan;
- Integrated Risk Management Action Plan;
- Strategic Review of Fire Cover;
- National and Regional Initiatives;
- Human Resources;
- Revenue Implications Arising from the Capital Programme.

A discussion then ensued in relation to specific grants from Central Government, which were included in the Revenue Budget for 2006/2007.

At this juncture Members were offered the opportunity to ask any questions or make any comments.

Councillor Huscroft commented upon Pensions, the impact of increasing energy prices and the floor mechanism.

Due to its complexity, the Finance Officer to the Authority proposed writing to Councillor Huscroft explaining the issues in greater detail.

Upon detailed discussion, it was:-

35. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the Budget Planning Framework for the preparation of the 2006/2007 Revenue Budget be approved; and

- (ii) the Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2007/2008 to 2011/2012 be approved and updated to reflect the reviews outlined in this report.

Business Continuity Policy

The Chief Fire Officer, the Clerk to the Authority and the Finance Officer submitted a joint report (circulated) setting out, for consideration and approval of Members, the Authority's policy in respect of Business Continuity Planning. This policy provided the framework within which the Authority's Business Continuity Plans were prepared and invoked to ensure there were procedures detailing how key service functions would be maintained in the event of significant disruption.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Councillors were referred to the Business Continuity Policy which identified what were considered to be the critical functions within the service, which would be the main focus of attention in respect of continuity planning.

Members commented that a major issue in Business Continuity Planning related to Industrial Action. This was to be considered at the Policy Advisory Committee in October.

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

36. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the Business Continuity Policy be approved; and
- (ii) further reports be received as appropriate.

Integrated Management 2006/07 Action Plan – Update

The Chief Fire Officer, the Clerk to the Authority and the Finance Officer submitted a joint report (circulated) providing an annual update for Members in respect of progress in the implementation of the 2006/07 IRMP Action Plan, approved by the Authority in March 2006.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer advised the Authority that a significant amount had been achieved in respect of delivering the actions set out in the 2006/07 Annual Action Plan.

Details of the progress that had been made in all of the areas identified in the 2006/07 IRMP action plan were contained in the attached appendix to the report.

Detailed monitoring of the financial implications of the IRMP continued to be undertaken in order to ensure that the efficiency savings and spending on the proposed areas of reinvestment accord with the overall strategy set out in the Authority's Integrated Risk Management Plan and Strategic Plan.

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

37. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the contents of the report be noted; and
- (ii) the inclusion of ongoing actions contained in the annual IRMP into specific departmental operating plans, monitored through the performance management framework be approved.

Best Value Performance Plan (BVPP) 2006/07

The Chief Fire Officer, the Clerk to the Authority, the Finance Officer and the Personnel Advisor submitted a joint report (circulated) requesting endorsement of the BVPP 2006/07 by the Authority.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The BVPP outlined the performance of the Authority over the past three years together with its targets for the current year and the following two years.

The BVPP reflected the performance of the Authority through its Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPs) and local indicators (LIs). In order to demonstrate the relationship between performance and the delivery of the Authority's Vision and Mission, the Plan had been formulated in line with the 4 Strategic Goals.

Councillors noted that the BVPP was made public on 30th June, 2006 via the Authority's website and would be available through the Intranet.

Upon discussion, it was:-

38. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the BVPP 2006/07 be endorsed; and
- (ii) the Chief Fire Officer continued to closely monitor those performance measures which were not achieving targets, and to provide further detailed interim reports to the Performance Review Committee as appropriate.

Community Safety Framework

The Chief Fire Officer, the Clerk to the Authority, the Finance Officer and the Personnel Advisor submitted a joint report (circulated) presenting the draft Community Safety Framework for consideration and approval by the Authority.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The Chief Fire Officer informed the meeting that the introduction of a Community Safety Framework would enable the Authority to set clear objectives and to monitor and review progress in achieving the new fire Public Service Agreement (PSA) targets for the reduction in the number of accidental fire-related deaths in the home and the number of deliberate fires by 2010, as detailed in the ODPM Fire and Rescue National Framework.

Subsequent to this, it was:-

39. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the draft Community Safety Framework be noted; and
- (ii) further reports be received as appropriate.

After the Incident Survey

The Chief Fire Officer submitted a report (circulated) informing Members of the contents of the recent After the Incident Survey which was carried out independently of the Service.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Members of the Authority were advised that After Incident Surveys enables TWFRS to evaluate customer satisfaction and the quality of service it had provided. By doing so, the Service could therefore identify areas where they were performing strongly and areas for improvement.

This independent survey demonstrated the high levels of service provided in terms of operational response. The vast majority of those questioned, 96% were very satisfied with the service they received and the remaining 4% said that they were fairly satisfied with the service they had received.

The Chief Fire Officer proudly advised that from the 33 Fire Services that took part in this survey, Tyne and Wear was rated number one for 'Satisfaction with Service Overall'.

It was:-

40. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the high standards of response arrangements and community satisfaction highlighted in this survey be recognised and noted; and
- (ii) further reports be received as appropriate.

IRMP – Operational Response Monitoring 2005/06

The Chief Fire Officer submitted a report (circulated) providing Members with the information regarding the annual performance of the Authority's operational resources in respect of average attendance times and attendance levels at incidents for 2005/2006.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Members were advised that the Authority's average attendance times to building fires for 2005/2006 are almost identical to the previous year. These figures were undoubtedly impressive and serve to illustrate the professional commitment of both mobilising and operational staff in dealing with emergency incidents.

Upon discussion, it was:-

41. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the performance in terms of operational response be endorsed; and
- (ii) further reports be received as appropriate.

Consultation of the Revocation of the Devon Fire and Rescue Authority Combination Scheme and Voluntary Combination of Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Authorities

The Chief Fire Officer, the Clerk to the Authority and the Finance Officer submitted a joint report (circulated) seeking Members views in relation to the voluntary combination proposals and to agree a response on behalf of the Authority.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Members attention was drawn to the comments of the Chief Fire Officer in relation to the proposals. In particular that the combination of the two Authorities would provide long term ability to release capacity whilst reducing costs to review service delivery in line with IRMP and the capability to deliver the Authority's strategic objectives.

In addition to this, a positive impact upon emergency response management and the capacity to deliver successful community safety initiatives. This would enable the FRAs to address the risk needs of the community's key service.

Upon detailed discussion, it was:-

42. RESOLVED that the comments provided by the Chief Fire Officer including views of Members given at the meeting be used as a basis of the response by the Authority to the consultation.

Vehicle Replacement Programme 2006/2007

The Chief Fire Officer and the Finance Officer submitted a joint report (circulated) requesting that the Authority approves changes to the Vehicle Replacement Programme and the Capital Programme for 2006/07.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The Chief Fire Officer advised that during the period of the contract, the vehicle body contractor ceased business and therefore this part of the contract had to be re-tendered.

As a result of this and price increases since the original estimate was prepared, the re-tendering exercise had resulted in costs of £771,000 associated with the provision of five water tenders, an increase of £146,000 on the original estimate in the Capital Programme.

The Capital Programme for 2006/07 included the replacement of one of the existing Emergency Tenders. Due to the Special Appliance review included in the IRMP Action Plan for 2006/07 not yet being finalised, it was proposed to defer the replacement of this vehicle. This realised a saving of £150,000 in the Capital Programme for 2006/07 which could be off-set against the additional costs outlined above.

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

43. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) an increase in the estimate for the five Water Tenders to £771,000 be approved; and
- (ii) the Emergency Tender from the Capital Programme 2006/2007 at a saving of £150,000 be deferred.

Fire '06 – Conference and Exhibition

The Chief Fire Officer submitted a report (circulated) advising the Authority of the Fire '06 Conference and Exhibition which was scheduled to take place at the International Centre, Telford, from 8th to 9th November, 2006 inclusive.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

FIRE 2006 would this year be tackling the nationwide issue of the resilience and would, in particular, focus on planning and responding to major incidents.

Upon discussion, it was:-

44. RESOLVED that the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and one other Member from the rota attend the conference.

LGA Annual Conference – 13th to 14th March, 2007

The Chief Fire Officer and the Clerk to the Authority submitted a joint report (circulated) informing the Authority that the Local Government Association (LGA) Annual Fire Conference was scheduled to be take place on 13th to 14th March, 2007 (inc.) at the Holiday Inn Hotel in Peterborough West.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The programme would take a fresh look at key issues for the future including, inter alia; the future of partnership working; harnessing the power of technology; getting the best from staff; and taking forward the preventative agenda.

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

45. RESOLVED that the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and one Member from the rota attend this conference.

Correspondence List

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).

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

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

47. 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 is considered to involve a likely disclosure of information relating to any individual or likely to reveal the identity of an individual and to the financial or business affairs of a particular person (including the Authority holding that information) or 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 (Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A, Part I, Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5).

(Signed) P. GIBSON,
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.