

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 23 JANUARY 2012 at
10.30 am.

Present:

Councillor B Heron in the Chair

Councillors Ahad, Bell, M Forbes, Haley, P Mole, Mortimer, Mulvenna, Padgett,
Renton, Stephenson, Trueman and Watters.

Part I

Apologies for Absence

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

Declarations of Interest

The following Councillors declared a personal interest in the report below as a
Member of the body indicated:-

Item 11 – IRMP Review of
Back Office Functions

Councillors M Forbes,
Heron, Padgett and
Trueman

Members of Sunderland City
Council.

Minutes

58. RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Authority, Part I held on 19 December 2011, be confirmed and signed as a correct record subject to rewording paragraph 5 on page 3, in conjunction with the Finance Officer.

Result of Prosecution

The Clerk to the Authority and the Chief Fire Officer submitted a joint report to inform members of the outcome of a recent safety prosecution relating to the unauthorised storage of fireworks.

Members were advised that on 22 September 2010, fire officers were alerted by the Northumbria Police to the presence of a large quantity of fireworks at Temple Recycle Company Limited at Pallion Industrial Estate, Sunderland.

The premises were registered for the storage of up to 250kg of type 4 or up to 100kg of type 3 and 4. However upon attendance at the premises, type 3 and 4 fireworks with a net explosive content of approximately 1,400kg were being stored inside the main body of the building and measures to prevent an explosion were highly inadequate.

Mr Alan Teasdale, the person who had placed the orders and arranged their storage was charged with both offences. Mrs Carol Finn who permitted storage of the fireworks and allowed staff to travel to Lincolnshire to collect and transport the consignments was charged with aiding and abetting the commission of the two offences.

Both defendants pleaded guilty to both offences. Community Service Orders were made against both defendants. Mr Teasdale was ordered to undertake 100 hours of unpaid work and Mrs Finn 60 hours. Each defendant was also ordered to pay £400 towards prosecution costs.

Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO) T. Capling assured members that inspections were routinely carried out at as many premises as possible.

In response to a question from Councillor Mulvenna asking whether any budget restrictions were likely to limit the number inspections the service was able to carry out in future, ACFO Capling explained that no this would not be the case as they were risk based inspections and fireworks were deemed to be high risk.

59. RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted.

Revenue Budget 2011/2012 – Third Review

The Chief Fire Officer submitted a report advising Members of issues relating to the 2011/2012 Revenue Budget position, and providing an updated Statement of Balances.

Members were referred to section 2.2 of the report to note the net decrease of £197,322 due to slippage of a number of projects.

A number of other areas of potential underspend were also kept under review. These being:- employee budget, Firefighter Ill Health retirements, utility charges, leasing charges and commercial training income.

60. RESOLVED that the position with regard to the Revenue Budget for 2011/2012 as set out in the report be noted, including the updated Statement of Balances set out at Appendix A.

Capital Programme 2011/2012 – Third Review

The Chief Fire Officer and the Finance Officer submitted a joint report to review the current year's Capital Programme and reflecting changes from that presented to the Authority as a consequence of the Second Capital Programme Review, on 21 November 2011.

Members were assured that regular monitoring of the Capital Programme continued to take place and a number of variations resulted in a net reduction of £197,322 to the Programme.

The Vehicle Replacement Programme was also under review and this would realise significant savings in terms of capital outlay and the resulting impact on future revenue budgets.

61. RESOLVED that the revised Capital Programme for 2011/2012, as set out at Appendix A be approved.

Schedule of Precept Instalments 2012/2013

The Finance Officer submitted a report explaining that the Billing Authorities required that payments should be made by twelve equal monthly instalments, commencing in April, payable on the last working day of each month, to continue with practice adopted in 1993-94.

The proposed dates were as follows:-

Monday	30 th April 2012
Thursday	31 st May 2012
Friday	29 th June 2012
Tuesday	31 st July 2012
Friday	31 st August 2012
Friday	28 th September 2012
Wednesday	31 st October 2012
Friday	30 th November 2012
Monday	31 st December 2012
Thursday	31 st January 2013
Thursday	28 th February 2013
Thursday	28 th March 2013

It was:-

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

Draft Revenue Budget 2012/2013

The Chief Fire Officer, the Clerk to the Authority and the Finance Officer submitted a joint report to present to Members the draft Revenue Budget for 2012/2013 along with the revised Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) following recent information on the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement.

Members were referred to Appendix 1, section 7.2 and were reminded of the following outstanding issues:- final preparation of the 2012-2013 budget was still ongoing, the position advised in relation to the Council Tax bases of Billing Authorities, any surplus/deficit on the collection fund of each of the Billing Authorities and the Authority's decision to accept or reject a Council Tax freeze for 2012-13.

Members acknowledged that a council tax freeze would have a significant impact.

Appendix 2 of the report was circulated at the meeting which set out the response to government.

In response to a question from the Chair asking the effect on the cost of living, the Finance Officer reminded that not only was the Authority facing huge cuts in grants but also rises in inflation and service pressures. Increases in fuel and utilities would also have a significant impact.

63. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the contents of the report and the draft Revenue Budget position for 2012/2013 be noted;
- (ii) the revised MTFS, attached at Appendix 1A of the report be noted;
- (iii) the final Revenue Budget and Precept will be presented to the Authority at its meeting in February.

Update on Local Resource Review

The Chief Fire Officer and the Finance Officer submitted a joint report providing Members with an overview of the key implications, for this authority, of the government's response to the recent consultation exercise on proposals for the retention of business rates by local authorities.

Members were advised that the response to the consultation from the authority was that single purpose fire authorities should be funded through fixed funding allocations for the years 2013/14 and 2014/2015.

This was on the basis that such authorities had little influence over the growth or reduction in business rates in their area and it would be wise, therefore, to fund them separately for the last two years of the spending review during which time sufficient

empirical evidence would have accumulated to allow a more informed decision to be made on the most appropriate method of funding for future years.

The Chief Fire Officer went on to say that despite the majority favouring the above, the government had chosen to fund through a percentage share of each relevant local authority's business rates.

The Finance Officer explained that this decision was totally unexpected and explained the unfairness in the event that the formula was not adjusted.

The new funding proposals would come into effect for the 2012/2014 financial year.

64. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the contents of the report be noted; and
- (ii) further reports be received as appropriate.

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.

65. RESOLVED that the correspondence list be received for information.

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

66. 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 the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Authority holding that information) or information relating to consultations/negotiations in connection with any labour matter arising between the Authority and employees of the Authority (Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A, Part I, Paragraphs 3 and 4).

(Signed) B HERON
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.