



Minutes of the Meeting
of the TYNE AND WEAR FIRE
AND RESCUE AUTHORITY
held remotely using **Microsoft
Teams** and **livestreamed on
YouTube** on MONDAY 15
MARCH 2021 at 10.30am.

Present:

Councillor Taylor in the Chair

Councillors Burdis, Butler, Dodds, Doyle, Duggan, Flynn, Forbes, Haley, Hunter, Kilgour, Pickard, Samuels, Stephenson and Woodward.

Part I

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillors Purvis and also Ms K. McGuinness, PCC.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Minutes

61. RESOLVED that the minutes of the Meeting of the Authority held on 15 February 2021, Part I be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Treasury Management Policy and Strategy 2021/2022, Including Prudential 'Treasury Management' Indicators For 2021/2022 To 2024/2025

The Finance Director submitted a report to approve the proposed Treasury Management Policy and Strategy (including both borrowing and investment strategies) for 2021/2022 and the Prudential 'Treasury Management' Indicators for

2021/2022 to 2024/2025 and to take into account any comments provided by the Governance Committee, who fully supported the proposals, the previous week. Members were reminded of the statutory requirements in relation to the Local Government Act 2003 (the Act) and also the CIPFA requirements for which the proposed policy and strategy satisfied all requirements.

Appendix 1 of the report set out the Prudential Treasury Management Indicators 2021/2022 to 2024/2025 and the Finance Director explained that these ensured that capital investment plans were funded, affordable, sustainable and prudent and also maintained the authority's cash flow.

Appendix 2 summarised the prudent and very careful approach of the Authority in relation to Treasury Management which reflected no change to that of previous years which had proven to serve the Authority well.

The Finance Director explained that the basis of the agreed Borrowing Strategy was to:

- continuously monitor prevailing interest rates and forecasts;
- secure long-term funds to meet the Authority's future borrowing requirement when market conditions were considered favourable;
- use a benchmark financing rate of 2.60% for any new long-term borrowing (i.e. all borrowing for a period of one year or more); and
- take advantage of debt rescheduling opportunities, as appropriate.

Members were then advised that the Authority's investment priorities in order of importance were:

- The security of its capital;
- The liquidity of its investments; and
- The Authority aimed to achieve the optimum yield on its investments, but this was commensurate with the proper levels of security and liquidity

The Finance Director referred to the Lending List Criteria detailed at Appendix 5 of the report and also the Approved Lending List (Appendix 6) which was fully laid out, for transparency purposes and was also regularly reviewed.

Members were assured that whilst no changes were necessary or proposed at the present time, given the prudent approach which had been undertaken, the market was constantly kept under review, given fluctuations in the financial market and any changes would be reported to Members.

Councillor Haley referred to the Approved Lending List and questioned what scrutiny was applied to the banks which were holding the Authority's monies, welcoming any assurances which could be given in relation to the Authority's capital deposits.

The Finance Director commented that this was often difficult to ascertain, as where the banks held their monies was unknown. In addition, the Authority could only invest through a narrow list of UK financial institutions, however information in relation to ethical policies from these financial institutions could be sought, which would be included within future reports.

Councillor Woodward commented that the Governance Committee had scrutinised the Policy and Strategy and welcomed the comprehensive report, which in comparison to the same time the previous year, did not have as many unknowns. Members however needed to remain mindful, that there were still some uncertainties in relation to Brexit, for example, however it was a much clearer picture than that of last year.

The Finance Director agreed and commented that the financial uncertainty remained given that the COVID-19 Pandemic was still ongoing and also that the Financial Settlement was still to be received, however things were more steady than this time last year and in addition to this, the policy was flexible, therefore if revisions were ever needed to be made, these would be reported to Members as soon as possible.

62. RESOLVED that:

- (i) The proposed Annual Treasury Management Policy and Strategy for 2021/2022 (including specifically the Annual Borrowing and Investment Strategies) be approved and,
- (ii) The proposed Prudential 'Treasury Management' Indicators 2021/2022 to 2024/2025 be approved.

Pay Policy Statement 2021/2022

The Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive (Clerk to the Authority), the Finance Director and the Personnel Advisor to the Authority submitted a joint report to inform members of the Pay Policy Statement for 2021/2022 of the Authority and to seek approval to publish this information in accordance with the statutory requirements.

Members were advised that Section 38 of the Act required English and Welsh local authorities and fire and rescue authorities to produce an annual pay policy statement, setting out authorities' policies for the financial year in relation to the remuneration of their senior staff/chief officers, the remuneration of their lowest-paid employees, and the relationship between the pay of chief officers and that of other employees. A copy of the Pay Policy Statement 2021/2022 was attached to the report.

Referring to 2.3 of the report, the Finance Director explained that the statutory pay policy statement needed to cover the Authority's policies relating to:

- The level and elements of remuneration for each chief officer (including salary, bonuses and benefits in kind);
- The remuneration of its lowest-paid employees (together with its definition of "lowest paid employees" and its reasons for adopting that definition);
- The relationship between the remuneration of its chief officers and other officers;

- Other specific aspects of chief officers' remuneration: remuneration on recruitment, increases and additions to remuneration, the use of performance-related pay and bonuses, termination payments, and transparency (i.e. publication of and access to information relating to their remuneration).

The Authority was advised that whilst pay was important as a whole, it was fairness which was of most importance, following the Hutton Review. The current pay multiples for the Chief Fire Officer and lowest paid employee (£17,842) was 8.54:1. This ratio was well within the Government's expectation that the pay multiple relationship should be below 20:1 in local government. In addition, this was below the national average of 15:1 in the wider public sector. Therefore, the Authority was considerably lower on both factors, which reflected a fair allocation.

Also detailed within the policy was a comparison to the Chief Fire Officer and the lowest paid operational firefighter and Members were asked to note that this multiple then reduced to 6.14:1.

In addition, the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), issued the Local Government Transparency Code 2015 which included the requirement to produce annual data regarding trade union facility time. Members were advised that this was £54,944 equating to 0.2% of the total pay bill.

63. RESOLVED that:

- (i) The Pay Policy Statement for 2021/2022 be approved; and
- (ii) Receive further reports be received as necessary.

Members' Allowances Scheme for the Financial Year 2021/2022

The Deputy Clerk to the Authority and the Finance Director submitted a joint report to consider and adopt a Members' Allowances Scheme for 2021/2022.

The Deputy Clerk advised that the practice of the Authority had been to use the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) appointed by Sunderland City Council, to make recommendations regarding its Scheme.

The Panel's report was attached, and Members were advised that in view of the circumstances with the Covid-19 Pandemic, the Panel had not undertaken a detailed review. It had therefore proposed that the detailed review be deferred and in the meantime, had recommended that the scheme for 2021/2022 remain the same.

Members were advised that none of the schemes of the constituent authorities contained a special responsibility allowance for Members who served on the Fire Authority. The current basic allowances paid by the authorities were Gateshead £11,279, Newcastle £9,200, North Tyneside £10,358, South Tyneside £7,667, Sunderland £8369. This was in accordance with the recommendations of the relevant IRPs, although in respect of Sunderland, the Panel recommended an indexation increase to the basic allowance for 2021/2022, which the Council declined to implement.

The Deputy Clerk explained that the total cost of Allowances paid by the Authority to members of all of its various Committees, based on the existing scheme, would be £80,637. Of this sum £72,397 was paid to elected members and £8,240 to the three independent persons co-opted onto the Governance Committee.

64. RESOLVED that the terms of the current Scheme be applied for the financial year 2021/2022.

Approval of Absence

The Deputy Clerk of the Authority submitted a report for Members to consider and approve, a further period of absence from Mr G. Cook, Chairman of the Governance Committee.

Members were reminded that a report was submitted to the meeting of the Authority on Monday 16th November, 2020, which approved the re-appointment of Mr G. Cook as Chair of the Governance Committee, and also for a period of absence, due to illness.

The Deputy Clerk advised Members that Mr Cook last attended a meeting of the Governance Committee on 13 March 2020, which had been unavoidable.

As a consequence of the application of section 85 Local Government Act 1972 and Mr Cook's non-attendance at a meeting of the Fire Authority for a consecutive period in excess of six months, his position as member and Chair of the Governance Committee would cease on 16 May 2021.

It was therefore proposed that the Authority approve a further period of absence for Mr Cook as a co-opted member and Chair of the Governance Committee with immediate effect.

65. RESOLVED that an extension for a further period of absence, due to illness, for Mr Cook be approved, with immediate effect.

Proposed Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) 2021 -2024

On introducing the item, the Chairman advised that an error had been identified in Item 8 (Proposed Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) 2021-2024 in sections 4 and 5 of the report.

Section 4 detailed two 4.2 paragraphs which should have been listed as 4.2 and 4.3 and also, the table at section 5.1 was inaccurate in relation to proposal one (which had been withdrawn). The proposal to add an additional fire appliance to the response fleet had therefore been included within the revised report, with an additional section of 5.2 and 5.3, and this had been circulated to Members on 9th March, 2021.

The Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive (Clerk to the Authority), the Finance Director and the Personnel Advisor to the Authority submitted a joint report to present the

the proposed IRMP 2021-2024 for Fire Authority consideration and approval prior to a full public consultation on the proposals. If approved, the IRMP 2021-2024 would result in 40 new Firefighter jobs being created within Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service.

The Chief Fire Officer explained that the IRMP covered the Authority's view of community risk and also, how the service managed its resources to mitigate risk. Members were advised that any decisions made related to improving the operational response of the Service and to improving the service to the community, as a result of long term planning.

The Chief Fire Officer advised that proposals were not being sourced from new finances, they were as a result of good financial management and efficiencies made over the last 4 years and beyond. Members were reminded that the financial position of the Authority had worsened since 2010, particularly in relation to Core Sending Power, when compared to that of other Authorities. Members were thanked for their work in relation to a risk-based approach both in relation to finances and also protecting the Community.

DCFO Heath reminded Members that an IRMP workshop was held following the February 2021 meeting of the Fire Authority to engage members on working proposals and seek feedback and comment, and also to help frame any future proposals.

Alongside the key IRMP proposals being presented, would be a requirement for the Service to review the day crewing close call (DCCC) working pattern at both Rainton Bridge and Birtley fire stations as a result of a legal ruling from a case raised in South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service. The ruling that the DCCC did not meet the Working Time Regulations resulted in a direction from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) that unless a local collective agreement could be secured with relevant trade unions, it must be changed. To date, no local collective agreement had been reached. Members were advised that a more detailed discussion would take place within Part II of the agenda.

DCFO Heath explained that with the impending local elections and period of purdah, it was proposed that public consultation would be open for a period of eight weeks, following the elections, which would also align with the next (June) meeting of the Fire Authority.

Members were advised that a review of the workload modelling data for the 3 fiscal years 2017-18, 2018-19 and 2019-20 had been undertaken. As the data used was up to the end of March 2020, the data set had not been affected by the potential significant change to society during lockdown and the restrictions on the public at large.

Workload modelling used the resources provided in the various scenarios to simulate an emergency appliance turnout response to incidents that had occurred historically over three years (2017/18, 2018/19 and 2019/20).

Members were reminded that the quicker that firefighters could attend an emergency with the number of firefighters required to safely undertake immediate interventions, the greater the opportunity to save life and reduce harm and damage.

DCFO Heath referred Members to Section 4 of the report and commented that the two proposals took into account the request from Members several years ago, when difficult decisions were being made, for these to be referred back for consideration when the CFO felt it was an appropriate time to do so.

Members were reminded that TWFRS consistently performed as one or in many cases the fastest FRS in England to respond to primary fires, with the average for England being 8mins 43 seconds and TWFRS attending within 4-5 minutes. Members and the Community of Tyne and Wear were assured that this was due to careful planning and the use of modelling and that the current proposals would not jeopardise the public safety or the favourable position of TWFRS in any way.

DCFO outlined Proposal 1 by explaining that the introduction of an additional fire appliance (A02) at West Denton had been operating as a pilot since 1 November 2020. Key benefits had included improving the speed and weight of response to emergencies with an additional fire crew available to deploy. In addition, given that the command unit was located at West Denton, and was currently dual crewed with the single appliance (A01), if A01 was deployed, this took a fire appliance out of use and could result in delays in the availability of the command unit or if already deployed, a fire appliance. Additionally, when the command unit was required, the appliance from Gosforth (E01) was often required to support the command unit crew as they had been trained in its use and also crewed height appliances.

Members were advised that during the pilot that was currently running, where appliance A02 had been available on a permanent basis, it had been deployed on 270 occasions as of 1 March 2021. This had shown the value in that if A02 was to be reinstated, this would improve overall response time by 2 seconds.

Referring to Proposal 2, DCFO Heath advised that had been supported by a pilot of primary crewing of one of the ALPs since the November 2020. The Service had been operating with three ALPs although the FA approved during the 2017-2020 IRMP that the service would require two ALPs and this was now being implemented as one of the ALPs reached the end of its working life. Additionally, by primary crewing of ALPs would support the availability of fire appliances as there would not be a need to reduce the number of fire appliances to crew the ALPs.

DCFO Heath explained the two proposals would improve the speed and weight of response to fire and other emergencies and was evidenced based. If agreed, the proposals would also result in the need to create 40 new Firefighter posts, which was both affordable and sustainable.

Councillor Woodward commented that whilst the proposed IRMP was set for a 3 year period, the financial settlement only lasted for one year, therefore whilst proposals were welcomed, the Authority remained in a difficult position.

Councillor Haley welcomed the current position of the Authority in relation to expanding the number of Firefighter posts and questioned how the second appliance

at the west of Gateshead would be used, particularly in relation to risk and speed and weight of response.

DCFO Heath advised that West Denton was being proposed as opposed to Swalwell as the way the mobilising system worked was resilient in terms of the Command Unit and also overall improved attendance times by approximately 2 seconds.

Councillor Butler welcomed the proposals commenting that primary crewing of Aerial Ladder Platforms was only currently located at Marley Park, which would take a considerable amount of time to travel to other areas around the region.

DCFO Heath reassured Members of the Authority that the current model was safe, however proposals would improve the speed and weight of response.

Councillor Stephenson referred to the decisions the Authority made previously and commented that the positive decisions being made today, were due to very careful planning and the prudent approach, undertaken by the Authority and welcomed the proposals. Councillor Stephenson commended and thanked all staff involved, in bringing this back to Members, for consideration.

66. RESOLVED that:

- (i) The formal draft IRMP 2021 -2024 proposals be noted;
- (ii) It be noted that the proposals would result in the creation of 40 new Firefighter jobs within the Service;
- (iii) The two proposals within the IRMP 2021-2024 be approved;
- (iv) An additional fire appliance at West Denton fire station (station Alpha) be introduced into the response fleet on a permanent basis;
- (v) A Primary crew both of the Aerial Ladder Platforms (ALP) within the service be approved;
- (vi) An eight week public consultation period as set out in the report, be approved; and
- (vii) Further reports be received, as appropriate, following public consultation.

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

67. 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 any individual or which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual, (Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A, Part 1, Paragraphs 1 and 2). The public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

It was confirmed that the livestream of the meeting had ended.

(Signed) T. TAYLOR
Chair

