

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 SEPTEMBER 2015
at 10.30am.

Present:

Councillor T Wright in the Chair

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

Part I

Apologies for Absence

An apology for absence was submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillor Renton.

The Chairman announced that Sunderland Civic Pride & Parade would return to Park Lane Village on Sunday 28th September and was the biggest celebration event of its kind in the City for the Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual and Transgendered community. Members of the Authority were encouraged to attend the event.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Minutes

24. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the minutes of the Authority, Part I, held on 20th July, 2015 be confirmed and signed as a correct record;

- (ii) the minutes of the meeting of the Governance Committee, Part I, held on 29 June, 2015 be noted for information;
- (iii) the minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Performance Committee, Part I, held on 6 July, 2015 be noted for information; and
- (iv) the minutes of the meeting of the Human Resources Committee, Part I, held on 13 July, 2015 be noted for information.

LGA Annual Fire Conference

The Chief Fire Officer submitted a report advising Members that the Annual Fire Conference of the Local Government Association (LGA) was scheduled to be held in Bristol on 8th and 9th March 2016. Authority representation was proposed at this event.

The cost of the conference was £395 per person for LGA member authorities which covered the main conference and workshop sessions.

Members were reminded that the conference earlier in the year had been held at Gateshead which enabled many members to attend. It was pleasing to note that the conference in 2017 and 2018 would held at Gateshead once again.

The Chief Fire Officer proposed that the Chairman and one other member of the Authority be nominated to attend. Councillor Stockdale was proposed.

25. RESOLVED that approval be given to the attendance of the Chairman and Councillor Stockdale at the LGA Fire Conference.

NJC Circular 13/15

The Chief Fire Officer, the Deputy Clerk to the Authority, the Finance Officer and the Personnel Advisor to the Authority submitted a joint report to inform Members of the contents of NJC Circular 7/15 (Appendix 2) and 13/15 (Appendix 1) which had potential implications on how Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service (TWFRS) support the community.

Members were advised that NJC Circular 7/15 discussed the work underway between the Employers and Employees representatives on the roles undertaken by firefighters, and the pay framework for Scheme of Conditions of Service (Grey Book) employees. One of the work stream reviews underway was looking at how Fire and Rescue Services could support the Health agenda.

NJC Circular 13/15 developed this theme in greater detail and invited expressions of interest from fire authorities wishing to take part in the trial.

TWFRS, as part of a larger piece of work with the other North East Fire and Rescue Services, was exploring the possibility of establishing a trial within the TWFRS area.

TWFRS were working with colleagues from neighbouring Fire and Rescue Services, the Fire Brigades Union (FBU), North East Ambulance Service (NEAS) and ambulance unions, at this early stage.

26. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the contents of the report be noted;
- (ii) this area of work be progressed; and
- (iii) further reports be received as appropriate.

Co-Location of Northumbria Police Staff at Tyne and Wear Fire Stations

The Chief Fire Officer submitted a report to update Members on the project for the basing of staff, and provision of neighbourhood policing services by Northumbria Police, at a number of Tyne and Wear fire stations.

Members were advised that the Service was on target for the co-locations to go live as follows:

- **Sunderland Central:** work was complete on building alterations and Police colleagues were scheduled to move into the station week commencing 21st September 2015
- **Hebburn:** building alterations were in progress for a planned “go live” date of week commencing 26th October 2015
- **Chopwell:** minor works were in progress for a planned “go live” date of week commencing 9th November
- **Farringdon and Birtley:** building alterations were in progress for a planned “go live” date of week commencing 16th November.

In response to a question from Councillor Price, ACFO Brindle confirmed that the tenancy agreement for Sunderland Central had been brought in line with others and increased from 2 years to 10 years. Costs were also on target, with no overspend anticipated.

Councillor Bell questioned whether there had been any communication within the Hebburn residential area and was advised that joint communications were planned for October.

27. RESOLVED that the progress made in terms of co-location of Northumbria Police neighbourhood policing staff on a number of stations be noted and endorsed.

The Chairman then announced that he had agreed that an urgent additional item of business could be considered by the Authority. This related to a consultation paper received by the Fire Authority on Friday 11th September, 2015, relating to Government proposals in respect of closer working between Emergency Services and Fire Authorities.

The Chairman explained that in view of the significance and importance of the matter, he proposed that it be considered as an urgent item of business to enable members to give some initial views and to consider any comments they may wish to make.

The Chief Fire Officer would then prepare a draft response which would be submitted to the October meeting of the Authority for Members' approval.

Councillor Wright therefore moved, seconded by Councillor Bell, the suspension of Standing Order B5 and accordingly it was:-

28. RESOLVED that Standing Order B5 be suspended for the following item of business only, to allow the consideration of an urgent item.

Government Consultation: Enabling Closer Working between the Emergency Services

The Chief Fire Officer submitted a report to brief the Authority on a recently published consultation document on Government proposals to enable closer working between the emergency services, including proposed changes to the governance of fire and rescue services and to initiate discussion on any response the Authority may wish to make.

Members were reminded that the 2015 Conservative manifesto contained an intention to "enable fire and rescue and police services to work more closely together and develop the role of elected and accountable Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs).

On 11th September 2015, Government issued a consultation document setting out proposals for legislative measures to enable the enactment of the manifesto commitment. It contained 16 questions and was open to the public, with a closing date of 23 October, 2015. The full consultation document was attached at Appendix A of the report.

Members were advised that the measures which were being consulted upon were as follows:-

- Introducing a new duty on all three emergency services to actively consider collaboration opportunities with one another to improve efficiency and effectiveness
- Enabling Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) to take on the duties and responsibilities of fire and rescue authorities where a local case was made
- Where a PCC takes on the responsibilities of a fire and rescue authority, enabling him or her to create a single employer for police and fire staff, facilitating the sharing of back office functions and streamlining management

- In areas where a PCC had not become responsible for fire and rescue services, enabling them to have representation on their fire and rescue authority
- Abolishing the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority and giving the Mayor of London direct responsibility for the fire and rescue service in London, as will be the case in Greater Manchester.

The conclusion of the document set out that there was no intention to integrate the two services but that “three governance models were being proposed for closer working between the police and fire”.

The consultation document set out a position that “directly accountable leadership” could secure better commissioning and delivery of emergency services at a local level and that where a local case was made, PCCs were uniquely placed to do this.

The majority of questions were concerned with the option of PCCs taking on the governance of fire and rescue services and in terms of identifying whether there was a local case for PCCs to take on the responsibility, views were being sought on a proposed process.

Members were advised that the document did not rule out mergers between fire and rescue authorities, however where fire authorities did wish to merge, they should consider whether this was best achieved through a merger or transferring their functions to PCCs. It was further proposed that where a PCC took on the governance, that the scrutiny function was carried out by existing Police and Crime Panels.

It was also proposed that where a PCC took on the governance and a single management structure was put in place, a single chief officer would be appointed across both services.

Councillor Stockdale commented that it appeared as though the consultation was aimed more at shrinking public services as opposed to new governance arrangements. In addition he went on to say that he did not feel as though the PCC was an accountable body, however the FRS was, and had a proven track record of local accountability, therefore efforts needed to be made to resist these proposals.

Councillor Haley added that the Authority currently had extremely strong governance arrangements in place and was concerned that proposals would weaken the current governance model.

The Vice-Chairman agreed and explained that a response must be submitted. Councillor N. Forbes therefore agreed to liaise with the Chairman to produce a draft response, following comments from this meeting. This would then be considered again at the October meeting of the Authority.

The Vice-Chairman went on to say that there was an inconsistency about the role of PCCs and also their functions particularly in relation to scrutiny. In addition, much of

the work undertaken by TWFRFA related to prevention which could only be achieved by good working relationships with partners. These proposals however took partnership working further away from local authorities.

As a result, the Vice-Chairman proposed that works be undertaken to engage with other authorities to consider a range of options which were in addition to the proposals detailed within the consultation, with a view of suggesting an alternative way forward.

Councillor M. Forbes agreed and commented that the consultation paper was vague in terms of explanations and what it intended to achieve. Councillor M. Forbes commented that combined authorities moved decision making outside the local area and that the specialist service currently provided could not be replicated by the PCC. As the PCC was elected, there was also no guarantee of continuity and experience.

Councillor Stephenson commented that the current initiatives in place were excellent and that positive results were still achieved despite the challenging times. Councillor Stephenson also welcomed the fact that the Authority as a whole, was united in believing that this was not the correct approach to take.

Councillor Price agreed and proposed that this be objected to on both a local and national level, with an alternative constructive proposal being made.

Upon detailed discussion the Authority agreed that urgent steps needed to be undertaken by the Chairman and Vice Chairman to collate a draft response, which would then be submitted to the October meeting of the Authority for consideration.

29. RESOLVED that the contents of the report and the appendix be noted and the steps taken to produce the Authority's response to the consultation, as detailed above, be approved.

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

30. 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.

