

Item 3 (i)

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 16 SEPTEMBER 2019
at 10.30am.

Present:

Councillor Taylor in the Chair

Councillors Burdis, Butler, Dodds, Duggan, Forbes, Flynn, Haley, Hunter, Kilgour, Oliver, Purvis, Samuels, Stephenson and Woodwark and Ms McGuinness (PCC).

Part I

Apologies for Absence

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

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Minutes

23. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) The minutes of the Authority, Part I held on 15 July 2019 be confirmed and signed as a correct record;
- (ii) The minutes of the Meeting of the Policy and Performance Committee held on 8 July 2019 be noted for information; and
- (iii) The minutes of the Meeting of the Governance Committee held on 29 July 2019 be noted for information.

Revised Political Balance and Appointment to Committees 2019/2020

The Deputy Clerk to the Authority advised Members that as a result of the Police and Crime Commissioner Election on 18th July, Cara Kim McGuinness had now been appointed as the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) Representative.

Members were advised that the Police and Crime Commissioner, being a Member of the Authority, had given notice that she wished to be treated as a Member of the Labour Group, for the purposes of the Local Government Act, 1989.

Given this request, the political balance had been recalculated and the re-distribution seats were highlighted in Appendix 1b of the report.

24. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) The membership of Cara Kim McGuinness, Police and Crime Commissioner be noted; and
- (ii) The following appointments be made to the Governance, Human Resources, Appointments and Personnel Appeals Committees:

Governance Committee – Councillor Hunter

Human Resources Committee – Councillor Butler

Appointments Committee – Councillor Purvis

Personnel Appeals Committee – remove Councillor Butler and add Councillor Purvis

Review of Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Authority Standing Orders: Delegation Scheme

The Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive (the Clerk to the Authority), the Strategic Finance Manager and the Personnel Advisor to the Authority submitted a joint report requesting Members to consider the following amendments to the Standing Orders of the Authority:

To delegate to the Chief Fire Officer the power to make temporary additions to the 'Grey Book' (uniformed) establishment up to and including the role of Area Manager B.

To update the Delegation Scheme and the Terms of Reference of the Human Resources Committee to reflect changes to the structure of the spinal column points (SCP) for non-uniformed grades following National Joint Council (NJC) for Local Authorities' Circular NJC5/12/17 referring to the Green Book pay award for the period 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2020.

The Chief Fire Officer advised Members that in order to ensure the effective and efficient running of the Service, there may be occasions whereby an additional Grey Book (uniformed) posts were required to be created on a temporary basis, prior to permanent structural changes being proposed to the Authority.

Currently determination and approval of the establishment of all Grey Book employees was a matter for the Authority and the Authority's Standing Orders made no provision for the delegation to the Chief Fire Officer, of any powers to make amendments to the Grey Book establishment, be that temporary or otherwise.

The Authority had, however, previously delegated power to the Chief Fire Officer with regard to the non-uniformed establishment.

It was therefore proposed that approval be given to an additional delegation for the Chief Fire Officer whereby in consultation with the personnel advisor they could approve temporary additions to the Grey Book Establishment for a period of up to 24 months in respect of posts up to and including the role of Area manager B.

25. RESOLVED that the amendment of the Delegation Scheme and Terms of Reference in the Authority's Standing Orders, as set out in Section 3 of the report, be approved.

Statement of Assurance and Annual Report (SOAAR) 2018/2019

The Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive (the Clerk to the Authority) and the Strategic Finance Manager submitted a joint report to present the draft Statement of Assurance and Annual Report (SOAAR) 2018/2019 to Members for approval.

ACFO Baines advised Members that although the Authority still faced financial pressures, its workforce was committed to working with partners and supporting investment to deliver positive outcomes for all of its Tyne and Wear communities.

The SOAAR highlighted that during 2018/19:

- The Control room had received over 29,700 calls
- The Prevention and Education team had delivered over 24,600 Home Safety Checks
- The Fire Safety team had carried out 1,700 fire safety audits on commercial premises
- Based on the latest Home Office figures, the service had the second fastest response rate of any metropolitan fire services to dwelling fires.

Councillor Flynn congratulated the service on the liaison with South Tyneside Homes following the Grenfell Tower incident and commented that it was incredibly disappointing to learn that Firefighter's were being questioned under caution.

26. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) The contents of the report had been reviewed; and
- (ii) The draft SOAAR 2018/2019 be approved

IRMP Review of Response Update

The Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive (the Clerk to the Authority), the Strategic Finance Manager and the Personnel Advisor to the Authority submitted a joint report providing an update for Members on the implementation to date of the 2017-2020 IRMP Response Review action to crew all pumping appliances (pumps) with four staff.

ACFO Robson advised Members that implementation at the first four stations (Wallsend, Marley Park, Hebburn and Birtley) demonstrated that there were no performance or health and safety issues reported that were directly attributable to the implementation of this action.

During the ten-month period from 1 June 2018 to 31 March 2019, appliances at West Denton, Newcastle Central, Wallsend, Rainton Bridge, Marley Park, Sunderland Central, Hebburn, Birtley and Swalwell had attended 7814 incidents.

Members were asked to note that based upon the evidence gathered during the implementation period the action taken in reducing the crewing on appliances had no direct impact on the speed and weight of response to the above incidents. In addition to this, there were no performance or health and safety issues.

Councillor Haley asked for assurances that measures were in place for operational staff to report any such issues and was advised that the service was ROSPA accredited which verified the health and safety processes and provided the necessary assurances.

Members commented that additional detail in relation to the actual incidents, including any issues which had been raised, would be useful in future reports. ACFO Robson welcomed the suggestion and agreed to expand upon the current level of detail and also provide some examples.

Councillor Oliver questioned whether Firefighters felt that they were required to work harder and was advised that whilst operational staff may at times need to wait slightly longer for additional resources, feedback did not suggest that Firefighters felt less safe or were required to work harder.

Councillor Flynn referred to appliance attendance and queried whether a record log was kept if, for example, appliances were diverted. ACFO Robson explained that yes, the Command and Control Room retained a detailed log of the movements and whereabouts of each appliance.

27. RESOLVED:

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

Annual Audit Letter

The Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive (the Clerk to the Authority) and the Strategic Finance Manager submitted a joint report detailing the Annual Audit Letter for 2018/2019 issued by the External Auditor, Mazars LLP. A copy of the Annual Audit Letter was attached at Appendix A of the report.

Members were advised that the External Auditor issued an unqualified opinion on the Authority's Financial Statements and an unqualified Value for Money Conclusion.

The Annual Audit Letter confirmed that the Authority:

- Produced unqualified Financial Statements for 2018/19 that gave a true and fair view of the Authority's financial position and its financial performance as at 31st March 2019 and that no objections to the published Financial Statements had been received;

- Published its Narrative Report with the Financial Statements, as statutorily required, and that the details were found to be consistent with those Financial Statements;
- Had provided an Annual Governance Statement that was found to accurately reflect the Authority's governance arrangements and that these followed the requirements of the 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework 2016';
- Had no matters identified that required a report in the public interest or from other powers available to the auditor under the 2014 Act; and
- Had proper arrangements in place to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of Resources and received an unqualified Value for Money Conclusion.

Councillor Oliver referred to the Value for Money Conclusion, in particular the Auditors comment that the Authority's usable reserves (excluding its general fund balance) were £25.038million as at 31 March 2019 and whilst earmarked for specific purposes, they do provide flexibility to manage the medium-term financial position and asked what the reserves could be used for.

Members were advised that the Authority did have a reserves policy in place and whilst various specific reserves were held, for example, the PFI reserve, capital reserve and the resilience reserve, the reserves statement did specify exactly what these could be used for.

In addition to this, the Chief Fire Officer advised Members that the current reserves position would be reduced to zero by 2024 and that capital funding had not been received for several years now.

Councillor Haley referred to the Auditors statement that the Authority had continued to make good progress in addressing the financial challenges from public sector austerity and had a proven track record of delivering planned budget reductions and commented upon the cost to the organisation and the detrimental impact that this had had over several years and suggested that this message be conveyed to Government.

Members of the Authority thanked the finance team for their outstanding work and the excellent judgement which had been achieved, commenting that Mazars clearly held a high opinion of the Authority which was welcomed.

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

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

29. 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) (Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A, Part I, Paragraph 3).

(Signed) T. Taylor
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.