Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the TYNE AND WEAR FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY held in the Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters, Barmston Mere on MONDAY, 5TH JUNE, 2006 at 10.30 a.m.

Present:

Councillor Gibson in the Chair

Councillors Bell, Bollands, Cooney, Forbes, Heron, James, Jordan, O'Neil, Renton and Woodwark.

Part I

Appointment of Chairman

1. RESOLVED that Councillor P. Gibson be appointed as Chairman of the Authority for the ensuing period to the next Annual Meeting.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Anglin, Boyes and Huscroft.

Appointment of Vice-Chairman

2. RESOLVED that Councillor Cooney be appointed as Vice-Chairman of the Authority for the ensuing period to the next Annual Meeting.

Membership of the Authority, Appointment of Committees and Appointment of Spokesmen for 2006/2007

The Clerk to the Authority submitted a report (circulated) concerning the position with regard to appointments made to the Authority by the Constituent Councils for the Municipal Year 2006/2007.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Members noted that North Tyneside's nominations were provisional and would not be confirmed until that Council held its Annual Committee Meeting to appoint to outside bodies during week commencing 5th June, 2006.

Sunderland City Council had given notice that Councillor Young would be replaced by Councillor J. Fletcher whose appointment was effective from 16th June, 2006. In addition to this, despite North Tyneside currently having two seats, an application had been made to the Secretary of State to increase the membership. If successful, North Tyneside would then occupy three seats.

3. RESOLVED that:-

(i) subject to North Tyneside confirming the nominations, the Membership of the Authority for 2006/07 be noted;

(ii) the undermentioned Members be appointed to serve on the Committees of the Authority indicated for the Municipal Year 2006/07:-

(a) Governance Committee

Independent Chairman - Mr. G.N. Cook
Second Independent Member - subject to a later report
Councillors Ms. Bell, Mrs. Forbes, R. Heron, Mrs. James, O'Neil and Woodwark

(b) Policy Advisory Committee

Councillors Bollands, Cooney, Gibson, Huscroft, Jordan and a vacancy

(c) Civil Contingencies Committee

Councillors Ms. Bell, Ms. Boyes, Cooney, Gibson, R. Heron, Mrs. James, Jordan and Renton

(d) Human Resources Committee

Councillors Anglin, Bollands, Ms. Boyes, Cooney, Mrs. Forbes, Gibson, O'Neil and Woodwark

(e) Performance Review Committee

Councillors Ms. Bell, Cooney, Gibson, R. Heron, Huscroft and Renton

(f) Appointments Committee

Councillors Bollands, Ms. Boyes, Cooney, Mrs. Forbes, Gibson and Huscroft

(g) Disciplinary Appeals Committee

Councillors Bollands, Ms. Boyes, Cooney, Mrs. Forbes, Gibson and Renton

(h) Personnel Appeals Sub-Committee

Ms. Bell, Mrs. James, Jordan, O'Neil, Renton and a vacancy

(i) Emergency Sub-Committee

Councillors Cooney, Gibson and Woodwark

(iii) North East Fire and Rescue Regional Management Board

Councillors Cooney, Gibson, Mrs. Forbes and Renton
Substitute Members – Councillors Bollands, Huscroft, Jordan and O'Neil

(iv) the undermentioned Members be appointed as spokesmen for the purpose of answering questions from Members of the undermentioned Constituent Councils on the discharge of the Authority's functions:-

Gateshead	Councillor Bollands
Newcastle	Councillor Cooney
North Tyneside	Councillor Jordan
South Tyneside	Councillor Ms. Bell
Sunderland	Councillor Gibson

(v) the undermentioned Members be appointed as Lead Members and Support Members:-

Community Engagement and Partnerships

Lead Member	-	Councillor Gibson
Support Member	-	Vacancy

Diversity and Equality

Lead Member	-	Councillor Cooney
Support Member	-	Councillor Anglin

Performance Management

Lead Member	-	Councillor Ms. Bell
Support Member	-	Councillor R. Heron

(vi) Councillors Cooney and Gibson be appointed as the Authority's representatives on the Local Government Association.

Date, Time and Venue of Future Meetings

The Clerk to the Authority submitted a report (circulated) setting out the proposed date, time and venue of meetings of the Authority and its Committees for the Municipal Year 2006/2007.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

4. RESOLVED that the cycle of meetings for 2006/2007 as set out in the report be approved subject to an additional date being scheduled for the Civil Contingencies Committee.

Minutes

5. RESOLVED that:-

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

(ii) the minutes of the meeting of the North East Fire and Rescue Regional Management Board held on 28th April, 2006 – Part I (circulated) be received and noted.

Department for Communities and Local Government

The Chief Fire Officer and the Clerk to the Authority submitted a joint report (circulated) providing an outline of the role of the new department and of the ministerial team that will be responsible for delivering the department's agenda, for the information of Members.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Members of the Authority were advised that the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) had succeeded the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister with immediate effect, following the Cabinet reshuffle.

The new department will build upon the important work that the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister had already undertaken. Its additional responsibilities for race, women, faith, community cohesion and equality place the department in an even stronger position to deliver sustainable communities. The Fire and Rescue Service already contributed to these agenda and would continue to have an important role to play.

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

6. RESOLVED that the report be received and noted.

Annual Member Liaison and Development Programme

The Chief Fire Officer, the Clerk to the Authority and the Finance Officer submitted a joint report (circulated) providing for the information of Members, the Liaison and Development Programme for 2006/07.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Members were reminded that within the Comprehensive Performance Assessment Report a number of weaknesses were identified, which included reference to Member development and training opportunities. Due to this, an Improvement Action in relation to governance, structure and Member development was included in the CPA Action Plan.

The aim of the Liaison and Development Programme was to ensure that all Members of the Authority had a clear understanding of the Authority's policies and action plans whilst also allowing Members to contribute to the future development of policies and plans (attached as Appendix A).

Members noted that the seminar for newly appointed Members scheduled to take place on Monday, 5th June, 2006, 1130 – 1400 hours, would be re-convened.

In addition to this, a Workshop One for all Authority Members was scheduled for Thursday, 15th June, 2006, 1030 – 1230 hours at Service Headquarters.

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

7. RESOLVED that:-

(i) the Annual Liaison and Development Plan be approved, as outlined in Appendix A, subject to the new Members Induction being cancelled and re-arranged; and

(ii) the events detailed in the report be noted.

Draft Fire and Rescue Services Performance Framework 2006/2007 – A Consultation Document

The Chief Fire Officer, the Clerk to the Authority and the Finance Officer submitted a joint report (circulated) outlining the Draft Fire and Rescue Framework 2006/2007 – A Consultation Document, for the information of and consideration by Members.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Mr. Bathgate explained to Members that the aim of the Draft Performance Framework was to provide a clear picture of progress since the 2005 CPA which involved greater emphasis on service delivery.

The Performance Framework would comprise three broad elements:-

- **Operational Assessment of Service Delivery**

  The operational assessment was a self-assessment based on a toolkit being developed by ODPM and CFOA. Self-assessments were scheduled for six weeks commencing in July, with site visits scheduled for August to November. The suggested date for Tyne and Wear's site visit was Monday, 20th November to Wednesday, 22nd November, 2006.

- **Use of Resources Assessment (including VFM element)**

  The Use of Resources would be assessed via a self-assessment, meetings with external auditors and the provision of supporting evidence.

- **Direction of Travel Assessment**

  Would seek evidence of improving outcomes (not actions) and the progress made to implement Improvement Plans to sustain future improvement.

The Authority had accepted an invitation to participate in the pilot of the new Performance Framework, which would involve the Direction of Travel element only, scheduled for early July, 2006.

At this juncture, Members were informed that in order to meet the submission date of the 30th May, 2006, the Chief Fire Officer in consultation with other Officers of the Authority had submitted a response on behalf of the Authority.

Upon detailed discussion, it was:-

8. RESOLVED that:-

(i) the contents of the report be noted; and

(ii) the response submitted by the Chief Fire Officer be endorsed.

Annual Efficiency Statement

The Chief Fire Officer, the Finance Officer and the Clerk to the Authority submitted a joint report (circulated) informing Members of the contents of the Annual Efficiency Statement submitted to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, in accordance with Fire Service Circular 14-2006.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

Members were advised of the requirement to achieve a total efficiency gain of £105 million gross cashable efficiency savings, or 5.67%, by 2007/08 when compared to the net current revenue expenditure in 2004/05. This sum being part of the global £6.45 billion efficiency gain target set for local government as a whole.

The overall aim of the initiative was an intention to raise productivity and enhance value for money in the public sector. Consequently, efficiency gains realised in one area of the service could be re-invested in other areas of the service which require further development.

Members were then referred to the efficiency gains forecast by this Authority (set out in the attached document). Two key areas of note were those relating to crewing levels and the Strategic Review of Fire and Rescue Cover. Taking all of the initiatives into account this Authority expected to be able to realise an efficiency gain of 5.43% by the end of 2006/07, therefore exceeding the target set for the current financial year.

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

9. RESOLVED that:-

(i) the contents of the report be noted; and

(ii) further reports be received, as required.

Regional Control Centre Governance – Consultation

The Chief Fire Officer, the Clerk to the Authority and the Finance Officer submitted a joint report (circulated) outlining the response to consultation undertaken by the ODPM in relation to the Regional Control Centre Governance.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The Chief Fire officer advised the Authority that the consultation related specifically to the Government's preferred model of a local authority company structure to manage RCCs. The current consultation document set out the ways in which the Government would expect the local authority companies to operate.

The Fire and Rescue Framework 2006 reinforced the Government's preferred direction giving the reasons for concluding "that a local authority company was the model it wished RMBs to adopt because this reduced the exposure to risk of individual authorities and minimised administrative and operational risks to national resilience. It also provided greater transparency and accountability in terms of the governance structures and required all authorities to take ownership and responsibility for the control centres in their region".

The consultation document set out the background on how local authority companies could deliver and run the network of RCCs and also outlined options and specific questions on which it invited views.

Members noted that ODPM had confirmed their commitment to fund the costs associated with setting up the company, including initial work on ensuring a company secretary is in place, training of directors and legal work on the Memorandum and Articles of Association.

The proposed articles and memorandum of association did not allow for diversification of services and proposed the local authority company to be a single purpose vehicle solely for operating the RCC.

Expectations that the local authority company would be established in the North East by 1st August, 2006 left timescales very short and Members of the Authority spent some time discussing its flexibility.

On the issue of risk and directors liabilities, it was noted that the consultation paper mixes liability, maladministration and code of conduct. Councillors and Officers ought to be aware of the circumstances in which they may find themselves personally held to account in respect of activities of the company.

The attention of Members was then drawn to the increase in the majority required on voting and to ensure that each relevant Authority must be present when a decision was being made.

At this juncture, Mr. Rayner recommended that the Directors on the Company be derived from the membership of the Authority, and not outside.

Upon detailed discussion, it was:-

10. RESOLVED that:-

(i) the comments outlined in Appendix A, which the RMB had approved in principle be noted; and

(ii) further reports be received, as appropriate.

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

11. 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 which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual and the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Authority holding that information) (Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A, Part I, Paragraphs 1, 2 and 3).

(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.