

Item No. 3

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 DECEMBER 2019 at
10.30 a.m.

Present:

Councillor Taylor in the Chair

Councillors Butler, Dodds, Duggan, Forbes, Flynn, Haley, Hunter, Kilgour, Pickard,
Purvis, Samuels, Stephenson and Woodwark

Part I

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillor Burdis,
the Chief Fire Officer and the Police and Crime Commissioner.

Declarations of Interest

ACO Baines declared an interest in Item 7 – Minutes Part II of the Fire Authority
meeting held on 18 November 2019 as a Director of the former Impeller Assurance &
Resilience Ltd and advised that he would withdraw from the meeting prior to
consideration of the report.

Minutes

Arising from the Minutes of the last meeting, the Strategic Finance Officer reported
that notification had been received from Government that the Fire Pension Grant
would be honoured for 2020/2021 at a similar level to 2019/2020. He advised that
although the exact level was yet to be confirmed, this was good news for the
Authority and the financial position would be better than anticipated.

Councillor Pickard requested that Members be provided with a brief note once the level of grant had been announced. The Strategic Finance Officer advised that the detail would be included in a report to be presented at the January 2020 Authority meeting. He advised that the grant for 2019/2020 had been £2.7 million and hoped that it would be a similar level for 2020/2021.

52. RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Authority held on 18 November 2019, Part I, be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

Bonfire Campaign 2019

The Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive (Clerk to the Authority) submitted a report to update Members on the 2019 bonfire campaign.

ACO Robson highlighted that a more detailed report would be presented to the Authority in due course once the validated and evaluated data had been received from partner organisations. He advised that this information would inform planning for the following year's campaign.

The Authority was advised that a proactive bonfire campaign had been undertaken during the weeks prior to 5 November and included educational activities, publicity and media messages, bonfire uplift schemes and operational command and control arrangements.

ACO Robson reported that Fire Safety (FS) granted 35 explosives licences, with a total of 130 licences in force for the Halloween and bonfire selling period from 15 October ending on 10 November 2019. He advised that 86 explosives inspections had been completed by the explosives' officers on the lead up to and within this selling period. In addition, as part of these inspections, the department had conducted 15 joint inspections with Northumbria Police and local Trading Standards teams across Tyne and Wear.

Members were advised that a leaflet had been developed on the safe storage and selling of fireworks which was issued to local retailers on the lead up to bonfire night. The downward trend in issuing licences had continued which had been due, in part, to extended licences covering a five-year period being available.

ACO Robson reported that this year, working with North Tyneside Trading Standards, had seen a seizure of over 500 kg of fireworks from an unlicensed car wash. The person responsible was given an 8-month suspended prison sentence, 150 hours community service and Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service was awarded £850 costs.

Turning to the incident statistics, ACO Robson highlighted that there had been significant reductions in all categories compared to the previous year. He explained that due to experience of previous years, additional measures for management of calls and incidents during the bonfire period changed for 2019. The 'busy' bonfire period fell midweek in 2019 and significant rainfall occurred in the weeks prior to early November, therefore no additional officers were used to support control. One additional flexible duty officer (FDO) was on standby as a 'Brexitee' point of contact, but was not used during the period.

ACO Robson reported that there had been six reported attacks on operational fire crews in 2019 which represented a 25% decrease from 2018. Fortunately, no injuries had been sustained by firefighters. He advised that the Service would continue to work in collaboration with local partners and the Northumbria Police as part of the zero tolerance to tackle incidents of anti-social behaviour and attacks on emergency crews. He explained that the issue of body worn cameras were acting as a deterrent and also the footage was being used to support police investigations, aid evidence gathering for fire investigators and supporting accident investigations.

Councillor Samuels commended the work of the Service and its partners for the campaign. She advised that she had seen first-hand the targeted work undertaken and the difference it had made.

Councillor Woodward was pleased that there had been reductions in incidents however he felt that it was still utterly repugnant that attacks on emergency crews were occurring. He commented that the body worn cameras were an excellent tool to be used for the good of the Service. ACO Robson expressed his gratitude to the Fire Brigade Union and the firefighters in recognising that the cameras were to be used to protect their members and colleagues.

Councillor Haley referred to the joint working with trading standards and enquired whether links with evidence gathering for any other illegal activities that might be being undertaken at the inspected premises, for example, illegal tobacco trading. He also commended the use of the body worn cameras and commented that these shameful attacks on firefighters had led to the Fire Service having to make a significant financial contribution to protect their workforce. ACO Robson advised that he could not comment whether links with other illegal activities and assured that there was other partnership working being undertaken to examine that kind of activity. In relation to the illegal storage of fireworks, he assured Members that the seized fireworks were disposed of in the appropriate environmentally safe manner.

Councillor Flynn also recognised the importance of the body worn cameras as a deterrent and also as a training aid. He added that attacks on emergency crews were unacceptable and hoped that the offenders were prosecuted accordingly.

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

53. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the content of the report be noted; and
- (ii) further reports be submitted to the Authority as necessary.

Ability not Disability Conference

The Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive (Clerk to the Authority), the Strategic Finance Officer and the Personnel Adviser to the Authority submitted a joint report on the National Emergency Services Disability Conference, organised and hosted at the Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters on 3 December 2019.

ACO Baines highlighted that the Disability Network Groups were central to the Service as equality, diversity and inclusion were fundamental to the Service's culture and values. He reported that there were four network groups, BME, Disability, LGBT+, and Gender, which supported employees with advice and guidance, development of policies, and continuous improvement.

Authority Members were advised that the Disability network group worked tirelessly across a range of areas, including; improving accessibility to premises, encouraging disclosure, and raising disability awareness across the Organisation. The Department for Work and Pensions recently awarded the Service the 'Disability Confident Leader' award in recognition of its ongoing good practice.

ACO Baines reported that the Disability conference followed on from successfully hosted National Conferences with TWFRS for Gender, and LGBT+, hosted by the respective networks. He explained that the Disability Conference entitled 'Ability Not Disability' had been aligned with 'International Day of Persons with Disabilities' on 3 December 2019, with over 90 delegates spanning over 30 organisations, including Fire, Police, Office of Police and Crime of the Commissioner, Ambulance, Local Authority, Airport, together with third sector organisations. He advised that the event promoted good practice and shared learning, including inspiring employee reflections from personal experiences, and organisational approaches to disability support and awareness. Disability Organisations also provided conference stands.

Authority Members were advised that the sessions at the conference included:

- Disability Network Group Overview (TWFRS)
- Conference Welcome (Lee Ridley 'Lost Voice Guy')
- Neurodiversity & Me (Greater Manchester FRS)
- Video TED Talk: 'I'm Not Your Inspiration' (Stella Young)
- Working in Partnership with TWFRS to raise awareness around Mental Health Issues (MIND)
- Sign and Sing Performance (Percy Hedley Foundation Northern Counties School Deaf Signing Choir, and Blue Light Choir)
- Who Cares (South Tyneside Carers)
- Great Minds Don't Always Think Alike (Cambridgeshire FRS)
- Disability Hate Crime (Northumbria Police)
- Supporting Colleagues with Disabilities (TWFRS)

ACO Baines emphasised that the event supported the Authority's drive for continuous improvement in equality, diversity and inclusion, specifically in approaches to disability awareness within the workplace. He commented that individual requirements were captured during enrolment with reasonable adjustments made as required.

Councillor Butler reported that he had attended the Conference on behalf of the Authority and congratulated the TWFRS, particularly ACO Baines, for its organisation. He commented that the talks on ADHD and neuro diversity as a superpower if harnessed correctly had been excellent and would not be out of place as TED talks. He also commended the Sign and Sing performance of the choirs.

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

54. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the content of the report be noted; and
- (ii) continued support be given to the Service's commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

Local Government Association Fire Conference and Exhibition 10 & 11 March 2020

The Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive (Clerk to the Authority), the Strategic Finance Officer and the Personnel Adviser to the Authority submitted a joint report to consider the Authority's representation at the Annual Fire Conference of the Local Government Association (LGA) is scheduled to be held in Blackpool on 10 and 11 March 2020.

ACO Baines reported that the LGA Annual Fire Conference was the key conference for Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs) as it dealt with issues of direct concern to the Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) as a whole. He advised that the full programme for the conference had not yet been released however, it was expected that the results of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) first two tranches of inspection, the Grenfell Inquiry's first report (November 2019) and the Spending Review would be topics for consideration.

Authority Members were advised that the cost to attend the conference for LGA member authorities, which covered the main conference and workshop sessions was £395 + VAT per person plus the additional travel and accommodation. These modest costs were deemed to be good value for money.

ACO Baines reported that under normal practice the Chairman and one other Authority Member would be nominated to attend when the conference was not local and invited Members to consider attendance at the conference and advise the Chief Fire Officer accordingly.

Councillor Forbes highlighted that the Conference was well represented in other ways as a number of Members would already be attending in their Local Authority roles. He therefore recommended that the Chair, Councillor Taylor, be nominated to attend on behalf of the Authority.

55. RESOLVED that the Chair, Councillor Taylor, be authorised to attend the Annual Fire Conference of the Local Government Association (LGA) scheduled to be held in Blackpool on 10 and 11 March 2020.

Retirement of ACO Robson

The Chair highlighted that this would be the last meeting for ACO Robson before his retirement from the Service. He reported that Alan joined the Northumberland FRS on 10 October 1989 after serving as an apprentice at Alcan in Blyth. After six years at Northumberland, Alan transferred to Tyne and Wear to serve at the Pilgrim Street White Watch. He was quickly promoted and became qualified in fire and community safety protection.

The Chair paid tribute to Alan's involvement in developing a new incident command vehicle equipped with mobile electronic incident updates. This technology was rolled out and is now fitted to all appliances.

Authority Members and Officers congratulated Alan and wished him a long and happy retirement.

ACO Robson thanked the Members and Officers for their kind words and added that it had been an honour to work for the TWFRS. He wished the Authority well for the future.

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

56. 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 or to 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). The public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

At this juncture, ACO Baines also withdrew from the meeting in view of his declaration of interest.

(Signed) T. TAYLOR,
Chair

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.