

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 11 OCTOBER 2021 at
10.30am.

Present:

Item 3

Councillor Taylor in the Chair

Councillors Bell, Dodds, Doyle, Flynn, Forbes, Haley, Hunter, Johnson, Ord, Samuels, and Woodwark.

Part I

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted to the meeting on behalf of Councillors Burdis, Dick, Kilgour and Warne and also and also Ms. K. McGuinness (PCC).

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Announcement

The Chief Fire Officer referred to the Festival of Rescue 2021 which was hosted by Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service on the 17th and 18th September and was attended by over 25 Fire and Rescue Services with over 60 teams taking part. The Chief Fire Officer commented that this had been a resounding success.

The Chairman agreed and on behalf of the Authority, thanked all Fire and Rescue Services for attending, and also the sponsors, all five local authorities and also the public for their engagement and attendance.

Councillor Bell explained that the team had done an excellent job and had showcased the North East in a fantastic way. As a result of this, Councillor Bell

commented that he would like to think that the Service could attract the World Games 2025 which would hopefully be supported from colleagues across the Country.

Councillors agreed commenting that the posts on social media had been extremely positive and that this had been a spectacular event for the Service and the region and asked that staff be congratulated. Members commented that it had been a resounding success and that family engagement and involvement with children had been excellent as with the focus on rescue as well as fire, which really highlighted the scope of the work of Firefighters.

Members of the Authority agreed with Councillor Bell, that it would be excellent for the Service to attract the World Games in 2025.

DCFO Heath took the opportunity to advise Members that West Midlands Fire and Rescue Service on their way travelling to the event, had witnessed a road traffic collision and provided assistance to both the casualty and also managing the scene until the fire crews had arrived. Thanks were extended to West Midlands FRS for their help and dedication.

Minutes

27. RESOLVED that: -

- (i) the minutes of the Authority, Part I held on 13 September 2021 be confirmed and signed as a correct record;
- (ii) the minutes of the meeting of the Human Resources Committee, Part I held on 19 July 2021 be noted for information; and
- (iii) the minutes of the meeting of the Governance Committee, Part I held on 30 July 2021 be noted for information.

Appointment of Independent Person

The Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive (Clerk to the Authority) and the Deputy Clerk to the Authority submitted a joint report to consider a re-appointment of the Independent Person for the Authority.

Members were reminded that Under the Localism Act 2011, the Authority was required to appoint an Independent Person (IP), whose views were sought and taken into account in connection with complaints about members' conduct. The IP received an annual allowance of £200 and reasonable travel and subsistence expenses were reimbursed.

At its meeting on 18 November 2019, the Authority extended the period of appointment of Mr Hall for an additional period of two years from 1 December 2019. This appointment would therefore expire on 1 December 2021.

Mr Hall had provided valuable input and support to the complaints process in Sunderland, which had recently extended his appointment for a further two year term and it was therefore recommended that his period of office also be extended by the Authority.

28. RESOLVED that approval be given to extend the period of appointment of Mr Dennis Hall as Independent Person, as set out in the report, for an additional period of two years from 1 December 2021.

Draft IRMP 2021-2024 Proposal 3; Birtley Fire Station

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 return IRMP 2021-2024 Proposal 3 back to the Authority for reconsideration.

Members were reminded that at the Fire Authority meeting of 13 September 2021, the outcomes of the draft Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) 2021-2024 were considered and three of the four proposals were approved by the Fire Authority and were now being implemented.

IRMP Proposal 3; *to introduce a day crewing working pattern at Birtley fire station*, was not approved and the Chief Fire Officer was requested to revisit the proposal of introducing a day crewing provision where the fire cover proposals including during the hours of 2000 hrs through to 0800 hrs was reconsidered.

DCFO Heath advised the Authority that consideration had been given to alternative options that the Fire Authority may wish to consider which included:

- A. Remain with the original proposal for day crewing at Birtley station (0800 hrs- 2000 hrs);
- B. Consider day crewing with an on call/ recall to duty element from 2000 hrs – 0800 hrs;

Members were then advised that Option A was as set out in within the paper and proposal to Fire Authority at the September 2021 meeting and was presented again as a viable option.

Option B included the original day crewing proposal between 0800 hrs and 2000 hrs each day with an on call provision between 2000 hrs and 0800 hrs each day.

An on call provision could be based on one of a number of models, some examples of which were set out below:

- i) To seek volunteers from the staff working at Birtley fire station and engage them on a secondary contract to provide an on call provision. This would require additional payment of a retainer and possibly a training fee. Alternatively, an on call additional payment of between 5%

– 10% of their substantive whole time salary may be considered and put to employee representatives for negotiation.

- ii) To seek volunteers from the existing TWFRS firefighter workforce across the whole service and engage them on a secondary contract of employment as on call Firefighters. This may also include a requirement to pay a retainer and training costs as per option i above.

Members were asked to note that if the current staff working at Birtley were asked to undertake an on call roll at the station, many did not live in the immediate vicinity and travel time to the station if alerted, could be beyond what was normally considered for immediate on call Firefighters. Therefore, if chosen it may need to be an extended on call arrangement with neighbouring stations responding until the on call team arrived.

The implementation cost associated with Option A was provided for within the current revenue budget and, as indicated in the table at Appendix A of the report, would at the end of the pay protection period generate an ongoing revenue budget saving.

In relation to Option B, there would be an increase in salary costs over option A in relation to the on call element of the fire cover proposal. As with option A, the implementation costs could be met from the current revenue budget, and at the end of the pay protection period, the options would generate an ongoing revenue cost which could be accommodated within the base revenue budget.

Councillor Haley thanked the Principal Officer team for their hard work in bringing back this proposal due to concerns raised throughout the consultation and commented that whilst both options provided the same cover, as Option B was clearly affordable, he felt that this was the option which should be implemented.

Councillor Forbes seconded this, commenting that whilst either option would provide full and comprehensive cover, the views of the community had been listened to and Option B would provide more reassurance to the public. In addition, Councillor Forbes thanked Councillor Haley, Liz Twist MP and other Gateshead Councillors for their approach in dealing with the situation and commented that it would be useful to include the baseline costs within the budget as soon as possible.

Councillor Woodward commented that he also supported Option B however reiterated that both options provided the same level of cover and therefore not much was changing given the assurances given from Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service, to provide assistance where necessary.

Councillor Haley commented that whilst he was supportive of collaboration with other authorities, he did not feel comfortable requiring support from a neighbouring service.

29. RESOLVED that approval be given to the implementation of Option B, as detailed within section 4.2 of the report.

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 1, Paragraphs 3 and 4). The public interest in maintaining this exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

(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.

