

Minutes of a meeting of the Combined Fire Authority held at City Hall, Leicester on Thursday, 27 September 2018.

PRESENT

Mr. N. J. Rushton CC (in the Chair)

Cllr. S. Barton	Mr. J. Kaufman CC
Mr. P. Bedford CC	Mr. W. Liquorish JP CC
Mr. I. E. G. Bentley CC	Cllr. K. Master
Cllr. K. Bool	Mr. M. T. Mullaney CC
Mr. B. Crooks CC	Mr T. Parton CC
Mr. D. Harrison CC	Cllr. A. Thalukdar
Cllr. K. Singh Johal	Mrs. M. Wright CC

In attendance

Andrew Brodie	Assistant Chief Fire and Rescue Officer
Lauren Haslam	Monitoring Officer
Alison Greenhill	Treasurer
Anna Poole	Democratic Services Officer
Adam Stretton	Area Manager Finance and ICT
Rick Taylor	Chief Fire and Rescue Officer

16. Apologies for absence.

Apologies were received from Mrs. B. Newton CC and Councillor E. Halford.

17. To receive declarations by members of interests in respect of items on this Agenda.

The Chairman invited members who wished to do so to declare any interest in respect of items on the agenda for the meeting.

No declarations were made.

18. To advise of any other items which the Chair has decided to take as urgent.

There were no urgent items for consideration.

19. Chairman's Announcements.

The Chairman informed the Combined Fire Authority (CFA) of the following:

- i. Sir Peter Soulsby had stepped down as a member of the CFA. The Chairman thanked him for his service to the Authority and welcomed Councillor Master as the new Vice Chairman;
- ii. The Chief Fire and Rescue Officer and Mr. D. Harrison CC had attended, on behalf of the Chairman, the Local Government Association briefing on current pay negotiations and the potential for broadening the role of Fire-Fighters. The current pay offer to the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) was being considered but had not

currently been accepted as FBU members were not happy with the level of offer. Mr D. Harrison CC added that there was a fair amount of despondency evident amongst Chief Officers attending the event; the financial constraints presented them with a dilemma as to how to progress through this situation and the effects on long term funding. The Chairman added that other members were welcome to attend such events on behalf of the CFA;

- iii. A letter had been sent to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) regarding the Local Government finance settlement 2019/20, requesting precept flexibility and the same level of increases as recently afforded to the Police and Crime Commissioner;
- iv. The Chief Fire and Rescue Officer had established 'VIP events', to promote the work of Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service (LFRS); these two/three hour events would be held on a six monthly basis. The first event, held on 14 September 2018, was attended by the Lord-Lieutenant of Leicestershire, the Lord-Lieutenant of Rutland, and Chairman of the County Council, as well as many other guests from local organisations. CFA members were asked to suggest potential invitees for future events;
- v. Following the Home Office visit to the Service in May to discuss Business Continuity Plans in the event of strike action, a draft report had been received. Comments on this had been made to the Home Office and a final report was awaited. Further detail was contained in the Operational update paper to this meeting and a further update would be provided to the CFA at its meeting on 12 December 2018;
- vi. A series of Member Briefing sessions would be held following CFA meetings to improve members' knowledge of the issues facing LFRS; the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer welcomed suggestions from members for topics that could be covered;
- vii. At a briefing held prior to this meeting, the Chairman had agreed with the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer that reports concerning the following would be presented to the CFA at its meeting on 12 December 2018:
  - a. Recruitment;
  - b. Policy on Sickness Management;
  - c. Fire Control Report – Financial Implications;
  - d. Estates and Property – Development Proposal;
  - e. Close Proximity Crewing – legal considerations.

**RESOLVED:**

- a) That Members would notify the
  - i. Chief Fire and Rescue Officer if they wished to attend events on behalf of the CFA so that they could be approached when invitations were received;
  - ii. Chief Fire and Rescue Officer of potential invitees for the VIP Events;
  - iii. Chief Fire and Rescue Officer of topics that they would like to be addressed at the member briefing sessions held following CFA meetings.

- b) That the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer would present reports on the following to the CFA at its meeting on 12 December 2018:
- i. Recruitment;
  - ii. Policy on Sickness Management;
  - iii. Fire Control Report – Financial Implications;
  - iv. Estates and Property – Development Proposal;
  - v. Close Proximity Crewing – legal considerations.

20. Public Participation/ CFA Rules of Procedure Rule 9 - Member Questions.

It was reported that no questions had been received under Procedure Rule 9.

21. To confirm the minutes of the meeting of the Combined Fire Authority held on 20 June 2018 as a correct record.

**RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the meeting of the Combined Fire Authority held on 20 June 2018 be taken as read, confirmed and signed.

22. To consider the minutes of the Corporate Governance Committee meetings held on 25 July 2018 and 12 September 2018.

**RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the Corporate Governance Committee meetings held on 25 July 2018 and 12 September 2018 be noted.

23. Business Rates Retention Pilot.

The CFA received a verbal update from the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer concerning the Business Rates Retention Pilot.

Members were informed that, on 25 July 2018, the Government had requested bids from Authorities wishing to pilot 75% business rates retention; the deadline for submissions was 25 September 2018. Due to the tight timescale involved, the decision had been taken under the urgent action procedure as the CFA did not meet during this time. The Chairman and Vice Chairman had agreed that the Authority would sign up for the pilot and a joint bid would be submitted. The City and County Councils and District Authorities had endorsed the earlier action.

**RESOLVED:**

That the update regarding the Business Rates Retention Pilot be noted.

24. External Audit - Annual Audit Letter 2017/18.

The CFA considered a report of the Treasurer concerning the External Auditor's audit letter for 2017/18. A copy of the report, marked "Agenda Item 9" is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion, the following points were raised:-

- i. The audit letter for 2017/18 was positive, following a straight forward audit. In future, it was expected that the focus on external audit would strengthen, particularly in relation to value for money and sustainability issues;
- ii. Fire Authority assets, appliances and vehicles, were now bought rather than leased as it was a more cost effective option; existing lease agreements would be allowed to run their course as this was cheaper than buying them out early. The decision would be kept under review, as part of the annual budget process, to ensure that value for money was continually achieved. Vehicles that were leased were maintained by LFRS workshops; Members welcomed further information on the financial aspects of ownership compared to the leasing of vehicles. The Treasurer agreed to provide a briefing note and asset list to members to set the context around the issue and give a more comprehensive picture of how the CFA finances work.

**RESOLVED:**

That the

- i. External Audit Annual Audit Letter 2017/18 be noted;
- ii. Treasurer would provide a briefing note, including an asset list, to members on the leasing or purchase of vehicles to set the context around the issue and give a more comprehensive picture of how the CFA finances work.

25. Annual Report and Statement of Assurance 2017/18.

The CFA received a report of the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer concerning the Annual Report and Statement of Assurance 2017/18. A copy of the report, marked "Agenda Item 10" is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion, the following points were made:-

- i. The Annual Report and Statement of Assurance documented LFRS achievements in 2017/18; production of the document was a statutory requirement set out in the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England;
- ii. The Efficiency Plan 2016/17-2019/20 had been compiled following the Government's request in order to secure longer term funding, which was now allocated for a three year period rather than the previous one year. However, it was recognised that the new inspection process may drive a new focus;
- iii. Braunstone Blues had been a very successful project, and had delivered good results. A collaboration project, it involved a range of delivery partners, including LFRS, and was focused on those areas in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland where there was a high demand for "blue light services". Funded by the Police and Crime Commissioner, the project would end in the autumn of 2018. However, the learning from the project would continue, as 'People Zones' would be established in three areas – Loughborough, New Parks and Coalville.

- iv. The number of Road Traffic Collisions (RTCs) attended by LFRS had reduced. Although this was positive, it remained a concern that the number of people killed or seriously injured in RTCs in the area still outweighed other areas;
- v. Although, the number of crew required to operate a fire engine had been reduced from five to four, Members were informed that this could not be reduced further as there was a need to ensure that crews operated as safely as possible. The new Tactical Response Vehicles could operate with no less than two staff and are located in Oakham, Lutterworth, Loughborough, Coalville and Hinckley;
- vi. The number of First Responder Incidents handled by LFRS had reduced; this performance followed the decision by the East Midlands Ambulance Service (EMAS) to end the trial of emergency first responding and also changes to their performance standards. However, other requests for support had been received from EMAS – for example, gaining access to property in the case of suicide.

**RESOLVED:**

That the Annual Report and Statement of Assurance 2017/18 be approved for publication, and the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer be authorised to make any necessary minor amendments prior to publication.

26. Equalities Annual Report 2017/18.

The CFA considered a report of the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer presenting the Equalities Annual Progress Report 2017/18. A copy of the report, marked “Agenda Item 11”, is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion, the following points were made:

- i. It was recognised that there was a low representation of females and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) fire fighters within LFRS. Recent natural attrition had also reduced levels for both categories. LFRS had adopted a range of measures to raise awareness and recruit, including “Have a Go” days, which last year 20% of participants were BAME and 18% female;
- ii. Recruitment generally was a challenge, and was especially so when attracting candidates who were BAME or female. Recruitment of on-call fire fighters presented restrictions, as potential recruits needed to live in the community they would serve to enable them to access the fire station quickly. A detailed report on recruitment had been presented to the CFA’s Corporate Governance Committee at its meeting on 12 September which highlighted that levels of remuneration impacted on recruitment and a further report would be presented at its next meeting on 21 November 2018, detailing options to improve recruitment, including more appropriate levels of remuneration. The Chief Fire and Rescue Officer assured members that, whilst every effort would be made to recruit fire fighters that reflected the ethnic balance of Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland, the priority was to recruit the people that best met the criteria for the role of fire fighter;
- iii. Ethnicity and diversity data, whilst maintained, did not drill down to specific levels; for example, the number of Polish fire fighters could not be identified. It was

pleasing that there had been an increase in the number of people who had felt able to declare their sexuality, and this was reflected in the report;

- iv. Regarding the availability of separate facilities for female fire fighters at all fire stations, members were informed that, where possible, this was the case. However, some LFRS buildings were old garages or sheds with one room and a toilet, so the provision of separate facilities was not always possible and the option to extend or change the property would potentially be very costly. The issues and potential options would be explored further in the report on Estates and Property Plan to the CFA at its meeting on 12 December 2018;
- v. Members congratulated the Fire Authority on its involvement in and contribution to PRIDE.

In response to questions about the three bullying and harassment cases detailed in the report, members were assured that there was a detailed policy in place, with an appeals procedure. All cases had been investigated thoroughly and the outcome recorded. However, as these were individual cases, the outcome could not be made public. Members were concerned to know that the result had been satisfactory to all involved, particularly the victim, and requested more detailed information about whether the reference to “males from a BAME background” referred to the perpetrator or the victim. Again, the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer assured members that the full process had been followed but that further details could not be given as the data had been depersonalised.

**RESOLVED:**

That the Equalities Annual Progress Report for 2017/18 be approved.

27. Operational Update.

The CFA received a report of the Chief Fire and Rescue Officer which highlighted the key operational matters since the CFA meeting held on 20 June 2018. A copy of the report, marked “Agenda Item 12”, is filed with these minutes.

Arising from discussion, the following points were raised:

- i. The Tactical Response Vehicles (TRVs) had been in service since January 2018, and so, a detailed picture of their usage, the type of incident attended, and their effectiveness could not be given at this stage. However, as it was felt that a more accurate reflection could be given after they had been in use for one year, it was agreed to bring a report to the CFA at its meeting in March 2019. Members were concerned that the report should also include data and analysis showing the number of incidents attended by a TRV, and where additional crew were called to support the TRV in dealing with the incident. Members were assured that the TRV crew were trained to use the equipment effectively to address the incident concerned and that there were internal processes to enable crew members to report concerns regarding response capability;
- ii. It was recognised that exposure to trauma and mental health issues were related and could have a significant impact on attendance at work. Members were assured that there were measures in place to manage the crew’s exposure to

trauma to reduce and mitigate any long-term detrimental impact on their mental health;

- iii. That District Councils were approached regarding the impact of incidents involving the deliberate and accidental ignition of grass, vegetation and rubbish; this was an issue that would be identified at a local level through the Joint Action Groups (JAGs). The member suggestion that it could also be addressed through the new 'People Zones' was acknowledged.

**RESOLVED:**

That

- a) the operational update for the period 21 June to 27 September 2018 be noted;
- b) a report would be presented to the CFA meeting in February 2019, concerning the Tactical Response Vehicles (TRVs), their usage, the type of incident attended, their effectiveness following one year of usage and would include data and analysis showing the number of incidents attended by a TRV, where additional crew had been called to deal with the incident.

28. Date of Next Meeting.

The next meeting of the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Combined Fire Authority would be held on Wednesday 12 December 2018 at 10.00am at Leicestershire County Council, County Hall, Glenfield.

10.00 - 11.20 am  
27 September 2018

CHAIRMAN