

Minutes of the meeting of the EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE of the BUCKINGHAMSHIRE AND MILTON KEYNES FIRE AUTHORITY held on WEDNESDAY 16 September 2015 at 10.00 am

Present: Councillors Busby (Chairman) Dransfield, Gomm, Lambert, Marland, Morris, Reed and Schofield

Officers: J Thelwell (Chief Fire Officer), M Osborne (Deputy Chief Fire Officer), G Britten (Director of Legal and Governance), L Swift (Director of People and Organisational Development), D Sutherland (Acting Director of Finance and Assets), M Hemming (Deputy Finance Director), G Smith (Head of Service Delivery), P Holland (Head of Projects and Transformation) S Wells (Service Delivery Manager Buckinghamshire) F Pearson (Communication and Consultation Manager) and K Nellist (Democratic Services Officer)

Apologies: None.

EX14 MINUTES

RESOLVED –

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on Wednesday 29 July 2015, be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

EX15 Quarter One Budget Monitoring Performance and Debt Management April – June 2015

The Committee considered the revenue and capital budget monitoring and debt management performance report for the three months to 30 June 2015. Managers had positively and proactively controlled spend and forecast an underspend of £1.922m against a revenue budget of £28.7m. Excluding the Statutory Accounting and Contingency items totalling £1.506m, the overall forecast underspend on operational budgets reduced down to £416k.

The Lead Member for Finance, IT, Property, Procurement and Control advised Members that this was yet again more good news, although a large part of the Authority's projected underspend in the budget was due to contingency. There was an overspend on fire control as it had not gone live when expected and this had added to the costs, but there was potential to make saving here in the future.

A question was asked as to whether the property and ICT underspend related to the fire control project. It was advised that it was part of the capital programme for property (quotes for remedial work had been lower than budgeted). The remedial costs for moving away from the Merlin Centre were still on going.

RESOLVED –

1. That the budget virements as detailed in Appendix B be authorised.
2. That the latest projected outturn forecast for the Authority as at 30 June 2015 be noted.

**EX16 TREASURY MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE 2015/16
QUARTER 1**

The Committee considered the Treasury Management Performance 2015/16 Quarter 1 report. The Lead Member for Finance, IT, Property, Procurement and Control advised Members that a decision had been made in 2013 to bring the management of the Authority's reserves in house. The Authority had saved a significant amount of money by doing so, accruing extra interest, with relatively little risk and making significant savings on its investment.

The Chairman and Chief Fire Officer had discussed whether the treasury management performance should now be passed over to the Overview and Audit Committee to monitor. The Acting Director of Finance and Assets supported this move.

The Acting Director of Finance and Assets also advised Members that overall performance remained very good and the Authority had been approached by Royal Berkshire Fire Authority to see if it could assist with their Treasury Management.

A question was asked as to whether it was possible to ensure that the investments made in the Authority's name were only made with companies who invested ethically as it was understood that Buckinghamshire County Council was considering such a policy.

The Acting Director of Finance and Assets advised Members that the Authority did not have a specific policy on ethical investment, but it did have a duty to ensure that it got the best possible value for the tax payers of Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes.

The Chief Fire Officer suggested that a paper regarding the legality parameters of ethical investment would be prepared so that Members could then consider the desirability of adopting a policy.

RESOLVED –

That the Treasury Management Performance 2015/16 – Quarter 1 report be noted.

**EX17 TRADE UNION BILL – RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION
UNDER DELEGATED POWERS**

The Chairman advised Members that the Chief Fire Officer had submitted a response under delegated powers as the timing was such that it was not possible to get a report to the full Authority.

The Chief Fire Officer advised Members that the Authority was getting a number of these consultations coming through from Government, with very short time frames, which would need to be submitted under delegated powers.

With regard to the Trade Union Bill the Authority had a lot of experience in terms of strike action and managing strike action. The Chief Fire Officer did not think the Government went far enough in terms of the Trade Union Bill and that was reflected in the Authority's response.

The Chief Fire Officer believed that giving seven days' notice to try and organise response to strike action for an emergency service was not sufficient, so the Authority's response tabled that it should be 28 days. The responsibility for providing major incident response should not fall on the employer but should fall on the Trade Union as they have instigated the withdrawal of labour.

To scale up an emergency response for protection of the community, in terms of timescales, was not taking away anybody's right to strike, but obviously gives the emergency service an opportunity to put in place arrangements which protect the community. An extended time line may also give both sides an opportunity to negotiate further and may even put off strike action in the longer term.

The Lead Member for Finance, IT, Property, Procurement and Control felt the Authority was well ahead of this legislation in the way in which it dealt with industrial action in the past year. The one area that the Authority suffered, in particular the previous Chief Fire Officer, was abuse on social media. It was hoped that the Bill would become an Act and would put the responsibility onto the Unions.

Councillor Marland asked that his objections to a number of points in the response be recorded.

RESOLVED –

That the response of the Chief Fire Officer be noted.

EX18

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED –

That the public and press be excluded from the meeting by virtue of Paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12a of the Local Government Act 1972, as Appendix 1 of the report contains information relating to an individual; and on this ground it is considered the need to keep information exempt outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information, so that the meeting may consider the following matter:

Chief Finance Officer Arrangements

The Chairman asked the Acting Director of Finance and Assets, the Head of Finance (Deputy Director) and the Communication and Consultation Manager to leave the room.

EX19

CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER ARRANGEMENTS

RESOLVED –

1. That the substantive appointment of a Director of Finance and Assets from autumn 2015 be agreed;
2. That the proposed recruitment process as outlined in Appendix 1 be approved.

[Press and Public re-admitted]

EX20

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Committee noted that the date of the next Executive Committee would be held on Wednesday 18 November 2015 at 10.00am.

THE CHAIRMAN CLOSED THE MEETING AT 10.50AM.