

Minutes of the meeting of the EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE of the BUCKINGHAMSHIRE AND MILTON KEYNES FIRE AUTHORITY held on WEDNESDAY 21 SEPTEMBER 2016 at 10.00 am

Present: Councillors Busby (Chairman), Gomm, Marland, 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), M Hemming (Deputy Director of Finance and Assets), K McCafferty (Head of Human Resources), N Boustred (Head of Service Delivery), P Holland (Head of Service Transformation), M Stevens (Management Accountant), S Wells (Group Commander Training Learning and Development), S Grosse (Station Commander Training Quality Assurance), F Mansfield (Human Resources Development Manager), F Pearson (Communication and Consultation Manager), K Williams (Prevention Policy Manager) and K Nellist (Democratic Services Officer)

Apologies: Councillors Carroll and Lambert

EX11 MINUTES

RESOLVED –

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on Wednesday 13 July 2016, be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

EX12 BUDGET MONITORING PERFORMANCE AND DEBT MANAGEMENT APRIL-JUNE 2016

The Committee considered an update of the provisional revenue and capital outturn position and debt management performance to 30 June 2016.

The Management Accountant advised Members that managers had positively and proactively controlled spending and forecast an under-spend of £668k, against a revenue budget of £28.3m. The main area of underspend was in Service Delivery. Staffing levels were lower than budgeted in this area due to retirements and leavers in previous years and on-call firefighter employment was significantly below budgeted establishment levels. The underspend which resulted from this was then being utilised for the 'bank' system, non-grey book staffing initiative and apprenticeships.

The Management Accountant advised Members that there was a pressure on funding as the Government had only guaranteed six months of USAR funding so far this financial year.

RESOLVED –

1. That the latest projected outturn forecast for the Authority as at 30 June 2016 be noted.

2. That £500k of the projected underspend for 2016/17 be transferred to a reserve to help fund the apprenticeship initiative in future years.
3. That the budget virement as detailed in Appendix B be authorised.

EX13

FOUR YEAR SETTLEMENT AND EFFICIENCY PLAN

The Chairman advised Members that the Minister of State for Policing and the Fire Service had recently visited the Service. He also advised that the Home Office were looking to get some clarity in terms of future funding issues and this report addresses the issue around the Authority having a four year settlement and efficiency plan.

The Deputy Director of Finance and Assets advised Members that as announced at last year's spending review, the Government would offer a four year settlement to authorities in exchange for a robust efficiency plan which also set out the savings planned over that period. The efficiencies and initiatives contained within the Authority's plan were based heavily on the Public Safety Plan which was subject to public consultation and had been approved by Members.

The Deputy Director of Finance and Assets advised Members that the Authority was in a strong financial position. The efficiency requirements were almost exactly offset by the planned savings, with a difference of only about £30k over the four year period, which would only require minor additional savings. There were a number of risks that were noted in the report, one of which was the USAR funding which was not guaranteed going forward. One of the key assumptions contained within the report was the need to raise Council Tax by 1.99% each and every year over the period and this was to help offset the 57% reduction the Authority was seeing in the Revenue Support Grant over the same period.

The Deputy Director of Finance and Assets advised Members that last week the Government released a consultation which included referendum principles for Council Tax for 2017/18 and whilst shire districts and lower quartile Police and Crime Commissioners were able to raise Council Tax by up to £5.00, it appeared that at present this didn't extend to fire authorities. A Consultation response would be brought to the Fire Authority at its October meeting, seeking the freedom for fire authorities to raise Council Tax by up to £5.00, rather than being capped at 1.99%. This might help negate the risk should USAR funding cease and help fund any other initiatives as required within the community.

RESOLVED –

1. That the Government's offer of a guaranteed four year settlement be accepted; and
2. the Efficiency Plan be approved.

EX14**OPTIONS FOR DECOMMISSIONING OF THE INCIDENT RESPONSE UNIT**

The Lead Member for Property and Resource Management advised Members that on the 9 December 2015 the Service was informed by CFA National Resilience of the decision to reduce the national provision of Incident Response Units (IRU) from 65 to 43. The IRU based at Broughton was one of 22 that would be decommissioned effective from 31 December 2015.

The Head of Service Delivery advised Members that the Authority had operational support units at Milton Keynes and Great Missenden, as well as an environmental protection unit and this was the reason why there was a need to keep some of the items of equipment. The Authority also had mutual regional and national support if required, as Royal Berkshire, Northants, Bedfordshire and London fire and rescue services were still keeping their Incident Response Units.

RESOLVED –

1. That the rigid frame MAN chassis vehicle complete with forklift truck be decommissioned and sold;
2. that the identified specific equipment be retained within the Service and placed on appliances;
3. that other equipment and stocks be stored within Brigade stores to replace consumables; and
4. that any remaining equipment be sold off or donated to another service which has been allowed to retain an IRU.

EX15**FIRE REFORM – DELIVERING THE AUTHORITY'S WORKFORCE REFORM PROGRAMME**

The Lead Member for Human Resources and Equality and Diversity advised Members that the report summarises the workforce reform that the Authority had delivered to date since embarking on a Service wide integrated continuous improvement and transformation programme in 2010.

The Director of People and Organisational Development advised Members that the report also set out the Authority's current and future programme for innovative, cultural reform to support delivery of the 2015-2020 Corporate and Public Safety plans. This programme had been developed and continually reviewed in order to deliver the Authority's strategic aim to 'optimise the contribution and well-being of its people' and to ensure that the workforce reform prioritises were aligned with those set out in the Home Secretary's speech on Fire Reform delivered on 24 May 2016.

The Director of People and Organisation Development also advised Members that the programme included anticipated outcomes of the Adrian Thomas 'Conditions of Service' review,

which would be reviewed again once the Thomas report was published.

The Chairman advised Members that the Authority was well ahead of any other fire and rescue service in England, in terms of the way the staff had embraced workforce reform. If some of the innovative ideas and different ways of working had not been embraced, the Authority would have been faced with even tougher decisions than those already taken.

RESOLVED-

1. That the significant progress on workforce reform from 2010 to date as outlined in Annex A be noted; and
2. that the current and future workforce reform programme 2016 to 2020 which incorporates the Fire Reform Agenda, as outlined in Annex B be noted.

EX16

PENSIONS UPDATE

The Lead Member for Human Resources and Equality and Diversity advised Members that this report provided an update on the various pension related activities currently being managed by the Authority and the impact for the Service.

The Human Resources Development Manager advised Members that this report followed the last pension update presented to the Executive Committee on 18 November 2015. The Authority continued to be subject to five different pension schemes, which were split between two Pension Administrators, the West Yorkshire Pension Fund and Buckinghamshire County Council.

The Human Resources Development Manager advised Members of a few other points of note:

- The Government Actuary's Department (GAD) Ombudsman Case was concluded in December 2015 with Buckinghamshire County Council, who were the administrators for the Authority at the time, making payments to the affected individuals, well ahead of the scheduled date of April 2016. The funding was made available by DCLG to the Authority to enable it to make the necessary payments to affected individuals;
- in collaboration with Royal Berkshire Fire Authority and following a joint tender process, West Yorkshire Pension Fund was awarded the pension administration contract in December 2015. Following the award, work started to seamlessly transfer the pension administration from Buckinghamshire County Council for a 'go live' date of 1 April 2016. The project completed on time with no major issues or additional expenditure;
- the Authority had used internal audit as a 'critical friend' to support the transition to the new pension administrator,

providing an evaluation of the adequacy and effectiveness of the transfer arrangements and governance. The audit review found the governance arrangements to be robust, with the transfer run as a project with all expected documentation in place;

- all LGPS members received their Annual Benefit statements in July 2016. Due to issues with West Yorkshire Pension Fund's software provider there was a slight delay with the issuing of statements to firefighters. West Yorkshire Pension Fund had notified the pension regulator and the Authority had advised staff of this delay;
- West Yorkshire Pension Fund would complete the guaranteed minimum pension reconciliation exercise on behalf of the Authority. This was a lengthy project with a number of key steps, with all data required to be reconciled by December 2018;
- the Local Pension Board had been established since July 2015 and quarterly meetings continued to be held. The Authority had recently recruited a third scheme member representative after one board member had resigned from their post. The Scheme Advisory Board had now been established and would provide support and advice to the local pension boards;
- the training school and turntable ladder allowances were now pensionable and the Authority continued to progress the historical impact on this amendment;
- the Authority had a position on the pension discretions that were required to be in place and was working with Royal Berkshire Fire Authority for a position on the remaining 49 discretions for the 2015 firefighter pension scheme;
- the Authority's re-enrolment date was later this year and the Authority was working with Buckinghamshire Country Council and West Yorkshire Pension Fund on completing this piece of work.

The Chairman thanked the Human Resources Development Manager for the clarity of the report.

RESOLVED –

That the update on pension matters within the Authority be noted.

EX17

WATER RESCUE TRAINING AND CAPABILITY

The Lead Member for Human Resources and Equality and Diversity introduced the report and advised Members that the

report provided an update on the notable developments that had come about following the external review conducted by subject matter experts into the Authority's water rescue training and capability, during early 2015.

The Group Commander, Training Learning and Development advised Members that:

- this was a very exciting piece of work that captured some of the many strengths within the organisation and perhaps most notably the decision to continually invest financially in our water rescue capability during a period of austerity;
- it showed a willingness to invite external bodies to challenge and scrutinise and this had allowed the Authority to continue a cycle of improvement;
- the report recognised the skills currently in the workforce and provided opportunities from a promotional perspective, that would allow firefighters with a passion for water rescue to deliver training to other operational employees.

The Station Commander Training Quality Assurance gave Members a presentation on the Authority's water rescue capabilities which include the Authority's water rescue instructors and joining the national flood rescue asset register.

RESOLVED –

1. That the investment toward enhancing and up skilling the competencies of selected staff, in becoming water rescue instructors, whose responsibility it is will then be, to deliver in-house an externally verified and accredited Level 2 First Responder course be noted; and
2. that the successful outcome of the recent submission to DEFRA that has resulted in one of the BFRS water rescue teams being accepted onto the National Flood Rescue Asset Register be noted.

EX18

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED -

By virtue of Paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as the minutes contains information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual; and Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as the minutes contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of a person (including the Authority); and on these grounds it is considered the need to keep information exempt outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Director of Legal and Governance, Director of People and Organisational Development, Deputy Director of Finance and Assets, Head of Human Resources, Head of Service Delivery, Head of Service Transformation,

Management Accountant, Group Commander Training Learning and Development, Station Commander Training Quality Assurance, Human Resources Development Manager, Communication and Consultation Manager, Prevention Policy Manager and the Head of Service Transformation left the meeting.

EX19

EXEMPT MINUTES

RESOLVED -

That the Exempt Minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on Wednesday 13 July 2016, be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

EX20

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Committee noted that the date of the next Executive Committee meeting would be held on Wednesday 23 November 2016 at 10.00am.

THE CHAIRMAN CLOSED THE MEETING AT 11.05AM.