

Minutes of the meeting of the EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE of the BUCKINGHAMSHIRE AND MILTON KEYNES FIRE AUTHORITY held on WEDNESDAY 23 NOVEMBER 2016 at 10.00 am

Present: Councillors Busby (Chairman), Carroll, Gomm, Lambert, 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 (Director of Finance and Assets), 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), J Parsons (Head of Service Development), D Thexton (ICT Manager) and K Nellist (Democratic Services Officer)

Apologies: Councillor Marland

EX21 MINUTES

RESOLVED –

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on Wednesday 21 September 2016, be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

EX22 BUDGET MONITORING PERFORMANCE AND DEBT MANAGEMENT APRIL-SEPTEMBER 2016

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

The Management Accountant advised the Committee that managers had positively and proactively controlled spending and forecast an under-spend of £655k, against a revenue budget of £28.3m.

The Committee were advised that the underspend was mainly due to staffing levels being lower than budgeted for, whole-time retirements and on-call firefighter employment being significantly below budgeted establishment levels. The underspend which resulted from this would be redirected into schemes looking to the future, including apprenticeships and new and flexible ways of working, for example the 'bank' system.

The Management Accountant advised the Committee that out of the £655k under-spend, £200k would be transferred to a reserve to help fund a sprinkler initiative for future years.

The Chairman advised Members that they should not focus on the issue of underspend in isolation, as if the Authority was successful with its new model for on call firefighters, some of that underspend would be used up quickly.

The Chairman requested that future reports should include a line which reflected the costs to the Authority of the 'bank system'.

RESOLVED –

1. That the latest projected outturn forecast for the Authority as at 30 September 2016 be noted.
2. That £200k of the projected underspend for 2016/17 be transferred to a reserve to help fund the sprinklers initiative in future years.

EX23

ANNUAL REPORT ON PARTNERSHIPS

The Director of Finance and Assets advised the Committee that this was an annual update of Member and Officer participation in external partnership arrangements and also suggested recommended additions to the Partnership Register.

Members had also been provided with a list of joint working groups and ongoing collaborative work.

RESOLVED –

1. That the revised Partnership Register, including suggested additions, set out in Appendix 2, be approved;
2. That the separate list of joint working groups where the Authority had an interest, including suggested additions, set out in Appendix 3, be noted.
3. That the content of Appendix 4 be noted.

EX24

MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES

The Director of Legal and Governance advised Members that the Authority was required to adopt a Scheme of Members' Allowances before 1 April each year and, in so doing, have due regard to the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panels of the constituent authorities when considering its own Scheme of Members' Allowances and confirm that it had done so when it gives public notice of the Scheme of Allowances.

This report recommended that the Scheme for 2017/18 increase the Members' allowances to the pay award for the National Joint Council (NJC) for Local Authorities' Fire and Rescue Services, Scheme of Conditions of Service (Grey Book), which was 1% for 2016/17.

A Member asked if it would be possible to look at a combined public notice with one of the local authorities to reduce the cost to the Authority. It was agreed that the Director of Legal and Governance would look into this.

RESOLVED –

That the Authority be recommended to adopt the Scheme for Members' Allowances for 2017/18.

EX25

ICT DISASTER RECOVERY PLAN

The Head of Service Development advised Members that in December 2015, following a review of the ICT Strategy, the Authority agreed to a revision promoting that, wherever prudent, solutions should be remotely hosted or cloud based. This very much reflected a clear policy steer from Government to the public sector in relation to cloud based solutions.

This report was presented to the Strategic Management Board on 25 October 2016 where it was agreed to move the disaster recovery system to a remotely hosted solution. As a result of decommissioning the control facility following the move to the Thames Valley Fire Control Service, the Authority's DR Servers were currently installed in the same room as the Business as Usual Servers. This was clearly not ideal and was always designed to be a temporary arrangement until the MK Blue Light Hub was constructed and provided a remote site for the DR servers. As this project was still some time from being constructed and enabled by the new ICT strategy, the ICT team investigated the possibility of an alternative cloud based solution.

A strong business case had been put together offering initial savings of £32K and further savings of £72K every six years by not needing to replace the servers (typically they have a life of 5/6 years). The project also had significant other business continuity benefits as it reduced other practical potential points of failure, such as the loss of the HQ site or connections provided by third party suppliers.

The report also updated Members on other areas of concern in relation to the exponential increase in virus attacks globally. After experiencing a couple of minor attacks and a significant ransomware attack, the ICT team was looking to bolster its defences through investment in its systems.

RESOLVED-

1. That the decision to move to cloud based technology to provide the bases of the Service's ICT disaster recovery plan be noted;
2. that the progress in delivering this project be reported to the Overview and Audit Committee.

EX26

INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF CONDITIONS OF SERVICE FOR FIRE AND RESCUE STAFF IN ENGLAND

The Lead Member for Human Resources and Equality and Diversity advised the Committee that there were a total of forty-five recommendations in the independent review of conditions of service by Adrian Thomas, the vast majority of which this

Authority would totally support. These recommendations were broken down into five main themes: the working environment; documented conditions of service; industrial relations; retained duty system and management of fire and rescue services.

The Lead Member for Human Resources and Equality and Diversity also advised the Committee that the Fire Brigades Unions' initial response had not welcomed the report, and had considered it 'irrelevant'.

The Director of People and Organisational Development advised the Committee that most of the recommendations in the report were already included in the Service's workforce reform agenda. Some of the recommendations were national issues and refer to things that are outside the Authority's remit, for example the National Joint Council (NJC) and the Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA). Regardless of whether the NJC reform happened, it would not impact on the Authority's agenda to move its conditions of service to local terms and conditions.

The Head of Human Resources advised Members that the Executive Summary mentions succession planning and resilience and resource modelling and Members would recall that the senior management succession plan was brought to a meeting of this Committee in July 2016. In addition, the report refers to the modernising of grey book and removal of gold book. This Authority had a very robust pay policy statement and the annual review of senior remuneration is presented to this Committee each year.

The Head of Human Resources also advised Members that there was a referral in the report under the working environment section, to early engagement and communication. The Authority had a very modern managing change procedure and really good positive relationships with representative bodies, including a Joint Consultation Forum with all representative bodies, including the local staff representative who sit and discuss, engage and consult. Finally, there was reference to rolling out unconscious bias training. Mr Thomas visited this Service in October 2016 as part of the leadership master class to deliver that training.

The Chief Fire Officer advised the Committee that at page 107 Section 30 it said "Fire authorities should keep the number and level of commitment of fire authority elected members under review. The right number may differ by authority but should be large enough to allow scrutiny without becoming burdensome on operational delivery. This was a matter which, at the June 2016 meeting of the Authority, the Chairman had requested be considered at the Authority meeting in February 2017 regarding the size of the Authority.

RESOLVED –

That the content of the report be noted.

EX27

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Committee noted that the date of the next Executive Committee meeting would be held on Wednesday 8 February 2017 at 10.00am.

THE CHAIRMAN CLOSED THE MEETING AT 10.50AM.