

Minutes of the meeting of the EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE of the BUCKINGHAMSHIRE AND MILTON KEYNES FIRE AUTHORITY held on WEDNESDAY 20 SEPTEMBER 2017 at 10.00 am.

Present: Councillors Carroll, McCall, Reed, Sullivan and Wilson (Substitute)

Officers: J Thelwell (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), N Boustred (Head of Service Delivery), S Elmes (Employee Services and Payroll Manager), T Sanwo (Principal Accountant), K Nellist (Democratic Services Officer)

Apologies: Councillors Lambert, Marland and McDonald

A minute's silence was held as a mark of respect for the recent passing of Councillor Alan Walters MBE.

EX12 MINUTES

RESOLVED –

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on Wednesday 12 July 2017, be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

EX13 OPTIONS FOR PROCURING FIREFIGHTER PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE) FOLLOWING THE NATIONAL PPE PROCUREMENT PROJECT

The Head of Service Delivery advised Members that the Authority's purchase only contract for firefighter personal protective equipment (PPE) had been in place for eight years. The contract had expired but had been extended until 31 March 2018 but could not be extended any further.

In preparation for this, throughout 2016/17 the Authority had been actively engaged in a national collaborative PPE procurement project, led by Kent Fire and Rescue Service and the Chief Fire Officers Association (including 29 other fire and rescue services) but with direct involvement from Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service.

The national project outcomes revealed three options for consideration. Option 1 was to move to a 'fully managed service', option 2 was to continue with a 'purchase only' arrangement and option 3 was to disregard the national project outcomes and seek a local procurement alternative.

The Head of Service Delivery advised Members that there were significant costs associated with option 3 with a likelihood that the Authority would end up with the same outcome at a higher unit price and it would also delay the implementation phase,

creating significant risk to the Authority, so this was not recommended. Option 2 would require a lump sum, plus a secondary contract providing care, maintenance and audit service and there would also be ongoing costs associated with managing this 'in house' and was therefore not recommended.

Option 1 for a fully managed service was the preferred option as it transferred a significant amount of risk as the PPE was effectively leased from Bristol Uniforms with a total care agreement.

Due to the high volume of take up on the collaborative framework with 29 Services across the UK already expressing an interest in accessing it, an early decision was required to ensure the Authority secured an early start date for the 12 month implementation plan to meet its required deadline.

A Member asked why the deadline was September 2018 when the contract ran out in March 2018 and was advised that the Authority's deadline for procuring new equipment with the old contract was March 2018 but the servicing of equipment could continue to September 2018.

A Member asked whether the statement 'this included CPI indexation of a maximum of 2% annually for the life of the contract' was a contractual term or an assumption. He was advised that it was written into the contract and that the procurement team liaised regularly with firms of suppliers to ensure they remained viable.

A Member asked why option 2 was cheaper than option 1 and was advised that this was mainly due to recruitment and turnover.

RESOLVED –

That Option 1 to procure a fully management PPE service and the associated revenue budget growth bid in the sum of £114k p.a. be approved.

EX14

BUDGET MONITORING PERFORMANCE AND DEBT MANAGEMENT APRIL – JUNE 2017

The Deputy Director of Finance and Assets advised Members that the projected underspend for the year was £269k as at the end of the first quarter. This was a less than 1% variation compared to budget. There were risks as the underspend did not factor in any potential pay award above 1%.

The Deputy Director of Finance and Assets advised Members that the Authority, through the Chief Fire Officer and the Chairman, was lobbying Government for additional flexibilities regarding council tax and was pushing for a rise of up to £10. Last week

the Government released a consultation which included the referendum principles but disappointingly they currently remain unchanged, capped at 2%, but there was an additional question asking if there should be additional flexibilities for any class of Authority. The Authority was collating evidence to respond.

The Chairman advised Members that he and the Chief Fire Officer had met with six of the Authority's seven local MPs to lobby them on having the referendum level increased or lifted for fire precept, in the same way that it was for the Police and Crime Commissioner last year. The response from the MPs had been overwhelmingly supportive.

The Chief Fire Officer advised Members that the London Fire Brigade had a major issue with recruitment and was looking to recruit 400 new fire-fighters. It had recently relaxed its rules regarding firefighters living in London which could affect Buckinghamshire as London firefighters were also paid a London weighting allowance which was pensionable. This may entice some Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes firefighters to join them which would cause recruitment and retention issues within this Service. There were also issues with the recruitment and retention of on call staff. Moving forward there would be issues and the Authority would be recruiting all the way through to 2020.

A Member asked if the pay rise was not funded by Government how would the gap be filled, was the Authority looking at other options and was advised that the Authority was always looking at other options and different ways of working. It was explained that the Authority's staff had done amazing things with regard to flexibility but any pay rise above the 1%, or any further burdens following the Grenfell tragedy, would mean some really difficult decisions on head count, fire appliances and fire stations would have to be made.

RESOLVED –

That the latest projected outturn forecast for the Authority as at 3 June 2017 be noted.

EX15

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

The Director of People and Organisational Development advised Members that the 'Independent review of conditions of service for fire and rescue staff' report was published in November 2016. The report was presented to the Executive Committee at its meeting on 23 November 2016 and the purpose of this report was to update Members on actions taken to date against the recommendations that could be progressed locally, following careful consideration against the Authority's workforce reform agenda, which was set out in the People's Strategy 2015 to 2020.

The Director of People and Organisational Development also advised Members that the report made 45 recommendations across 5 main themes, with some directed at local fire and rescue services and other requiring consideration nationally. The conclusions, recommendations and findings impacted on the following: working environment; documented conditions of service; industrial relations; duty systems and management of the fire and rescue service. Appendix 1 to the report set out the relevant actions the Authority had progressed which supported the recommendations in the review.

The Director of People and Organisational Development advised Members that this gave the Authority good evidence if the Home Office was to ask for an update and also the topics in the report were likely to form part of the new inspectorate.

RESOLVED –

That the content of the update be noted.

EX16

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Committee noted that the date of the next Executive Committee meeting would be held on Wednesday 22 November 2017 at 10.00am.

Before the Chairman closed the meeting a Member asked that the work of crews who attended a recent tragic incident on the M1 be recognised; and if they had received counselling. He was advised that counselling had been offered to all involved; and that the Chairman had written to the Crew Commanders involved thanking them and their staff on behalf of the Authority for their exemplary work in such difficult and challenging circumstances.

THE CHAIRMAN CLOSED THE MEETING AT 10.55 AM.