

Minutes of the Meeting of the EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE of the BUCKINGHAMSHIRE AND MILTON KEYNES FIRE AUTHORITY held on WEDNESDAY 10 JULY 2019 at 10.00 AM

**Present:** Councillors Clarke OBE, Hopkins, Marland, McCall, Roberts and Teesdale

**Officers:** J Thelwell (Chief Fire Officer), L Swift (Director of People and Organisational Development), G Britten (Director of Legal and Governance), M Hemming (Director of Finance and Assets), A Hussain (Principal Accountant) C Bell (Group Commander Service Delivery Manager North), M Crothers (Programme Manager) F Mansfield (HR Services and Development Manager), M Hussey (Trainee Accountant), F Pearson (Consultation and Communication Manager) and K Nellist (Democratic Services Officer)

One member of the public

**Apologies:** Councillors Lambert, McLean and Roberts

#### **EX01 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

(Director of Legal and Governance presiding)

It was moved and seconded that Councillor Clarke OBE be elected Chairman of the Committee for 2019/20.

RESOLVED -

That Councillor Clarke OBE be elected as Chairman of the Committee for 2019/20.

#### **EX02 APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIRMAN**

It was moved and seconded that Councillor Hopkins be appointed as Vice Chairman of the Committee for 2019/20.

RESOLVED -

That Councillor Hopkins be appointed as Vice Chairman of the Committee for 2019/20.

#### **EX03 MINUTES**

RESOLVED -

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on Wednesday 6 March 2019, be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

#### **EX04 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM COMMITTEES**

##### **OVERVIEW AND AUDIT COMMITTEE- 13 MARCH 2019**

##### **(a) Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy**

The Director of People and Organisational Development advised Members that the Authority reviewed its policies and procedures regularly and this was the reason for bringing this policy to the Committee as it was up for renewal. The key issue when policies were renewed was to ensure they remained fit for purpose and any revised legislation was taken into account. The Authority was very open and transparent about its policies and procedures and consulted widely with staff and the representative bodies.

The HR Services and Development Manager advised Members that this report presented the updated Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy, which had been reviewed in line with normal practice. The report had undergone formal consultation and all feedback has been considered and incorporated into the updated document. Apart from accepted minor amendments, changes were shown as either additional text underlined (underlined) or deleted text struck through (~~struck through~~).

The HR Services and Development Manager advised Members that Appendix 2 detailed the feedback received during the formal consultation process and the responses to each, as incorporated into the updated Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy. As noted, some changes had been made to the document, including reference to the structured groups that had been established throughout the Service who support and promote inclusion and engagement; the section on monitoring sensitive personal information had been amended to encourage the capture of this information, which assisted with the identification of inequality, initiating activity and evaluating progress and the nine protected characteristics had been added to aid understanding for the reader.

The Chairman reminded Members that at the Fire Authority meeting on 19 June 2019, the Authority resolved that references in the EDI policy to the Director of People and Organisational Development be deleted and replaced by the Deputy Chief Fire Officer.

RESOLVED –

That the content of the EDI policy, as detailed in Appendix 1, be adopted.

**(b) Updated Code of Conduct (V3.0)**

The HR Services and Development Manager advised Members that this report presented the updated Code of Conduct, which had been reviewed in line with normal practice. This document had undergone formal consultation and all feedback had been considered and incorporated into the updated document. Apart from accepted minor amendments,

changes were shown as either additional text underlined (underlined) or deleted text struck through (~~struck through~~).

The HR Services and Development Manager advised Members that some of the amendments that had been made included making reference to the Authority's values and more emphasis being added to sections throughout the document following consultation feedback.

It was noted that in section 15.2 the word 'minimum' had incorrectly been struck through; and that at its meeting on 19 June 2019 the Authority resolved that references in the EDI policy to the Director of People and Organisational Development be deleted and replaced by the Deputy Chief Fire Officer.

Subject to those additional amendments to Appendix 1 being made it was:

RESOLVED –

That the content of the updated Code of Conduct, as detailed in Appendix 1, be adopted.

**EX05**

**BUDGET MONITORING PERFORMANCE AND DEBT MANAGEMENT APRIL 2018-MARCH 2019 (PROVISIONAL OUTTURN)**

The Director of Finance and Assets advised Members that the Provisional Outturn was an annual report brought to the Committee for approval, the recommendations were similar to previous years, with only one change to recommendation 4, where usually any late changes due to audit would be agreed between the Lead Member and Chief Finance Officer, but because the Authority had not yet appointed Lead Members, it would just be at the discretion of the Director of Finance and Assets if changes needed to be made following the audit.

The Principal Accountant advised Members that the provisional outturn figure for the year was a net underspend of £520k. This represented a 1.83% variance against the budget. The amount had been transferred to the Revenue Contribution to Capital Reserve in accordance with the approved Reserves Strategy. There was also an increase in funding which was predominantly from business rates and the pooling arrangement the Authority had with local county and district councils.

A Member understood that there was a risk the audit wouldn't be completed on time, through no fault of the Authority's, but a lack of resource from the external auditor and was advised that yes although the Authority was ready with the draft accounts in advance of the deadline of 31 May, a lack of resource from the external auditor, meant it wasn't completed on time. The impact for the Authority was that it would not be able to sign off its

accounts and the plan was now to bring them to the Fire Authority meeting in September to get them signed off.

The Chairman asked if Ernst & Young, the external auditors, had reduced their costs to the Authority due to their lateness and was advised that fees were set nationally on a scale of how large and how high risk each authority was. The Authority's fees had reduced over recent years.

The Chairman asked if a letter could be sent to Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd, advising that the Authority was unhappy with the audit not being completed in a timely manner.

Councillor Marland asked if the letter could be forwarded to him as he sat on the Resources Board of the LGA and would be happy to raise it there as well.

RESOLVED –

1. That the provisional outturn forecast for the Authority as at 31 March 2019 be noted.
2. That the slippage of £6,378k on the capital programme is approved to be carried forward into 2019/20.
3. That the Authority approve £204k to be transferred into the future funding revenue reserve to fund projects which have slipped during 2018/19.
4. That delegated authority be given to the Chief Finance Officer to authorise any late changes to the movements in reserves and capital slippage amounts resulting from accounting adjustments needing to be made during the year-end closedown process.
5. That should any changes to the amounts referred to above be required, then the Chief Finance Officer will report these to Members at the next available meeting.

**EX06                    EMERGENCY SERVICES    MOBILE    COMMUNICATIONS  
PROGRAMME (ESMCP)**

The Programme Manager advised Members that this paper provided a further update regarding the current status of the project to deliver the Emergency Services Network or ESN. The intervening period since the last report in March had seen the release of the second report from the National Audit Office into the delivery programme. The report highlighted that the management of the programme had led to delays, increased costs and poor value for taxpayers. The predicted cost of the programme was now estimated at £9.3b, some £3.1b more than the original estimate.

The Programme Manager advised Members that the National Audit Office also stated that they believed that these revised predicted costs were uncertain and that it was unlikely that the

ESN would be ready for use by 2022, which was the revised date for delivery. The Public Accounts Committee met on 22 May 2019 to discuss the report with Senior Civil Servant Sir Philip Rutnam. It was stated during these proceedings that the Full Business Case would not be signed off until the end of this year.

The Programme Manager advised Members that the Authority continued to engage with representatives from the Home Office technical team to move forward with the Direct Network Service Provider issue. For Members who may not be aware, this link would provide the Authority with a direct link into the ESN rather than connecting via the Control Room network. This link would be used for managing the Authority's own devices. It now looked very likely that the Authority would be looking to install a separate network link in Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS) to allow it to manage its own ESN devices and a proposed network diagram to deliver this, was being drawn up and further dialogue with the Home Office team would be necessary.

The Programme Manager advised that in the last report Members were advised of the decision made by the Home Office to withhold the final payment of Local Transition Resource funding which was originally aimed to be paid over three financial years. This final payment amounted to £435k. However, in the intervening period, the decision had been reversed and the final payment had since been received by BFRS who were the Treasurers for the South Central region. Arrangements had now been made for the South Central services to draw down from this sum. The delivery of the project was in hiatus awaiting further information from the Central Home Office Team.

A Member asked how long the Authority could keep the existing system going if there were further delays and was advised that the existing Airwave system was fairly robust, the downside of the existing system was it tended to concentrate mainly on voice traffic and not data traffic, the new system will open up lots of possibilities to the Authority. Airwave recognised that there was going to be a delay and last year they embarked on a series of mini projects to update their existing equipment and update their existing network, which was still ongoing, so we can be fairly reassured for the next few years that the Airwave system would be robust enough to continue.

RESOLVED –

That the report be noted.

## **EX07**

### **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The Committee noted that the date of the next Executive Committee meeting would be held on Wednesday 16 October 2019 at 10.00am.

THE CHAIRMAN CLOSED THE MEETING AT 10.30 AM

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