

Minutes of the meeting of the BUCKINGHAMSHIRE AND MILTON KEYNES FIRE AUTHORITY held on TUESDAY 24 JUNE 2014 at 11.00 am

Present Councillors Bendyshe-Brown, Busby, Chilver, Dransfield, Exon, Glover, Gomm, Lambert, Mallen, Morris, Watson, Webb and Wilson

Officers: M Jones (Chief Fire Officer), J Thelwell (Chief Operating Officer), G Britten (Director of Law and Governance), D Skinner (Director of Finance and Assets), L Swift (Director of People and Organisational Development) D O'Driscoll (Head of Service Development), M Osborne (Head of Service Transformation), S Gowanlock (Corporate Planning Manager), N Boustred (Group Manager Prevention and Protection Policy), K Nellist (Democratic Services Officer), F Pearson (Group Manager Communications), and E Andrews (Executive Assistant).

Apologies: Councillors Huxley, Reed, Schofield and Vigor-Hedderly

FA01 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

(Councillor Dransfield presiding)

It was proposed and seconded that Councillor Busby be re-elected Chairman of the Fire Authority for 2014/15.

RESOLVED –

That Councillor Busby be re-elected Chairman of the Authority for 2014/15

(Councillor Busby in the Chair)

FA02 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

It was moved and seconded that Councillor Dransfield be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Fire Authority for 2014/15.

RESOLVED –

That Councillor Dransfield be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Authority for 2014/15.

FA04 MINUTES

RESOLVED –

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Fire Authority held on 19 February 2014, be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

FA06 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed the new Member Councillor Wilson to the Authority.

The Chairman announced that:

- (a) Chief Fire Officer Mark Jones was awarded the Queen's Fire Service Medal in the Queen's Birthday Honours; this individual award and its citation reinforces how this service had developed over the last 4 years, leadership from the Chief Fire Officer combined with a commitment by the Fire Authority to challenge and adhere to its principles of great service and low cost had ensured that this Authority is one of the best in the country; and that a copy of the citation had been placed in the Members' Library;
- (b) Denis O'Driscoll had announced his retirement after a Fire Service career spanning more than 30 years. Having started his career in London Fire Brigade in 1983 before transferring to Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes in 2006. Denis would leave the Service on the 17 August. The Chairman thanked Denis for all his hard work and dedication to this Authority and wished him and his family well for the future;
- (c) he and the Vice-Chairman, along with officers, attended the LGA Annual Fire Conference in Cardiff on the 11 and 12 March. The conference provided a range of stimulating workshops and plenaries on subjects including blue light integration, the future of fire service finance, national resilience, budgets and privatisation;
- (d) the Peer review team visited the Service on the 10-12 June 2014. During the visit the team interviewed staff from across the Service. The initial feedback received on the final day was very positive; however, the Service could always learn and get better. The peer team would now submit a report and this would be published alongside an action plan for all to see. The Chairman thanked Group Manager Neil Boustred for his excellent work in pulling this together;
- (e) members need to inform the Director of Legal and Governance of any disclosable pecuniary interests that are not already recorded in the Authority's register of interests within 28 days of their re-appointment.
- (f) that Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service won a prestigious award the previous night at the annual awards ceremony organised by the public risk management association Alarm. The award was in recognition of the ambulance co-responder scheme being run in partnership with South Central Ambulance Service.
- (g) before moving on to the substantive agenda items:

- he would be calling upon the Chief Fire Officer (CFO) to provide an update on the meeting which he attended, convened by the Fire Minister last Friday 20 June and an update on the response which he had submitted to the "*Government review into the law governing industrial disputes*" and to share with the Authority the content of his recent correspondence with the Prime Minister.
- he would also call upon the Chief Operating Officer to update the Authority on the last two periods of industrial action on 12 and 13 June and last Saturday 21 June.
- he had two items of correspondence to bring to the Authority's attention, a letter to him from the Fire Minister Brandon Lewis which will be placed in the Members' library and a letter from the FBU Brigade Chairman Buckinghamshire (Keith Williams); and that
- in light of the representations made in Mr Williams' letter, he would be proposing a short adjournment to permit Mr Williams to make a statement and then inviting the CFO to respond.

That concluded the Chairman's announcements.

The Chief Fire Officer informed Members that all Chief Fire Officers (CFO's) had been invited to meet with the Fire Minister and Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) officials to discuss the on-going pension dispute. The CFO's were given the chance to express their views and ask questions.

The Chief Fire Officer also spoke of the abuse and threatening tones particularly on social media that had been made against him and other officers of this Service and the submission to the first stage of the Carr Review (the Government review into the law governing industrial disputes) on the behaviours of Trade Unions.

The 'Knight Review' had been discussed and the Chief Fire Officer had expressed his views to officials that a response from the Government was needed on the National Joint Council arrangements.

The Chief Fire Officer felt that the Government would proceed to legislative implementation with the changes to the pension scheme as the Minister was clear that the FBU leadership hadn't shown the Government any will to resolve the dispute by agreement, but walked away to take each set of strikes during meaningful discussions which had seemed close to agreement.

The Chief Fire Officer having noted the Prime Minister's announcement last February that if he led the next government he would seek to review the abilities of certain key workers to take industrial action felt compelled to write to him because of the current on going dispute. The Chief Fire Officer believed the right to take legitimate strike action should remain for all workers. However, alongside these rights there should also be regulations which ensure that the vital roles undertaken by certain workers, cannot be overlooked.

For key emergency workers there should be a minimum notice period for strike action in the region of four weeks from announcement to taking action to allow employers enough time to make adequate, and potentially less costly provisions.

A short response on behalf of the Prime Minister had welcomed the proposals and would be placed in the Members Library.

The Chief Fire Officer had also placed the submission to the Carr Review in the Members Library. The evidence was being taken in two stages, the first deadline on the use of extreme tactics was 13 June the second one was a more general reform for the conduct of trade unions and takes its evidence over a longer period.

The Chief Operating Officer updated Members on the recent industrial action. There was a 24 hour strike over the 12 and 13 June. There had been 11 calls, all dealt with professionally by our crews. The calls ranged from car fires, false alarms to an 18 month old child locked in a car. There was also a period of strike action on the 21 June. There had been 6 calls during that period and again all dealt with professionally by our crews.

The Chairman proposed to adjourn the meeting to allow Mr Keith Williams, FBU Brigade Chairman Buckinghamshire to make a statement, it was seconded and put to the vote with all in favour.

Mr Williams was then invited to speak.

The Chairman then invited the Chief Fire Officer to respond.

The Chairman, Chief Fire Officer and FBU Brigade Chairman Buckinghamshire responded to Members' questions.

The Meeting resumed.

FA09

MEMBERSHIP OF THE AUTHORITY

The Authority noted that the following Members had been appointed by the Constituent Authorities to serve on the Fire Authority for 2014/15:

Buckinghamshire County Council (12)

Councillors Bendyshe-Brown, Busby, Chilver, Glover, Gomm, Huxley, Lambert, Mallen, Reed, Schofield, Vigor-Hedderly and Watson

Milton Keynes Council (5)

Councillors Dransfield, Exon, Morris, Webb and Wilson

FA10

COMMITTEE MATTERS

- (a) Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990

The Authority noted that the allocation of seats on the Authority was:

- (i) Conservative Group: 11 seats (64.7059%)
 - (ii) United Kingdom Independence Group 2 seats (11.7647%)
 - (iii) Liberal Democrat Group: 2 seats (11.7647%)
 - (iv) Labour Group: 2 seats (11.7647%)
- (b) Committee Matters – Committee Appointments

RESOLVED -

1. That the following Committees be appointed and seats allocated, as follows:

- (a) Executive Committee (8 members):

- (i) Conservatives – 5 seats
- (ii) Liberal Democrats – 1 seat
- (iii) Labour – 1 seat
- (iv) United Kingdom Independence – 1 seat

- (b) Overview and Audit Committee (9 members):

- (i) Conservatives – 6 seats
- (ii) Liberal Democrats – 1 seat
- (iii) Labour – 1 seat
- (iii) United Kingdom Independence – 1 seat

2. That the following Members be appointed to the Executive Committee:

Councillors Busby, Dransfield, Gomm, Lambert, Morris, Reed, Schofield and Webb

3. That the following Members be appointed to the Overview and Audit Committee:

Councillors Bendyshe-Brown, Chilver, Exon, Glover, Huxley, Mallen, Vigor-Hedderly, Watson and Wilson

FA11 CALENDAR OF MEETINGS

The Authority considered possible dates for its meetings and meetings of its committees during 2014/15.

RESOLVED -

1. That meetings of the Authority be held on Wednesday 22 October 2014, 17 December 2014, Wednesday 25 February 2015 (with a proviso to change to Wednesday 18 February 2015 to be decided at the meeting on Wednesday 17 December 2014) and Wednesday 10 June 2015, all at 11 a.m.
2. That meetings of the Executive Committee be held on Wednesday 30 July 2014, Wednesday 17 September 2014, Wednesday 19 November 2014, Wednesday 4 February 2015, Wednesday 18 March 2015 and Wednesday 13 May 2015, all at 10 a.m.
3. That meetings of the Overview and Audit Committee be held on Wednesday 16 July 2014, Wednesday 24 September 2014, Wednesday 3 December 2014 and Wednesday 11 March 2015, all at 10 a.m.

FA12 APPOINTMENT OF REPRESENTATIVES TO OUTSIDE BODIES

The Authority considered the appointment of representatives to outside bodies:

RESOLVED -

1. That Councillor Busby be appointed as the Authority's representative to the Local Government Association Annual Conference.
2. That Councillors Busby and Dransfield be appointed as the Authority's representatives to the Local Government Association Fire Commission.
3. That Councillor Busby be appointed as the Authority's representative to the Regional Management Board (South East Fire Improvement Partnership), with Councillor Dransfield as deputy.
4. That Councillors Dransfield and Reed be appointed as the Authority's representatives on the Thames Valley Fire Control Service – Programme Sponsoring Group.

It being moved and seconded it was:

RESOLVED

5. That discretion be delegated to the Chief Fire Officer to approve, in consultation with the Chairman, an appointee

as a second Authority representative to the Local Government Association Annual Conference

FA13 LEAD MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES

The Authority considered the allocation of Lead Member responsibilities.

RESOLVED –

That Members be appointed as Lead Members for 2014/15 as follows:

Responsibility	Lead Member
Community Protection	Councillor Morris
Human Resources, Equality and Diversity	Councillor Reed
Finance, IT, Property, Procurement and Control	Councillor Dransfield
Health and Safety, Corporate Risk	Councillor Schofield
Resource Management	Councillor Busby

FA14 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM COMMITTEES

Overview and Audit Committee – 12 March 2014

The Authority considered the recommendations of the Overview & Audit Committee held on 12 March 2014 relating to:

Review of Financial Regulations

The Authority noted that the Review of Financial Regulations had been scrutinised by the Overview and Audit Committee and the main changes were set out in the Executive Summary of the report.

RESOLVED –

That the Financial Regulations as amended be approved.

FA15 PREVENTION STRATEGY

The Head of Service Transformation introduced the report and explained to Members that the Prevention Strategy was a foundation not just for the Corporate Plan and local plans but for the new Public Safety Plan. The new strategy was based upon the excellent work of the previous one, but it had been felt that a new strategy, rather than refreshing the old one, was more appropriate.

The Authority was advised that the new strategy gives more flexibility for people at local level to make decisions and develop

their own plans to meet their community needs. Enhanced data and analysis of local areas allows campaigns to be targeted better.

The Head of Service Transformation explained the three core values of Prevention, Protection and Response. The new strategy is cognisant of the recent Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA) publications in respect of community safety. The four key areas are Homes, Communities and Community Facilities, Roads and Businesses and Commercial. The main focus of the strategy was around the first three key areas. Businesses and Commercial will form part of the new Protection Strategy.

The Lead Member for Community Protection thanked the Head of Service Transformation and Group Manager Prevention and Protection Policy for their hard work in coming up with a new Strategy rather than updating the previous one.

The Head of Service Transformation also advised Members that the dates on this Strategy would be changed to align with the new Public Safety Plan so that it could be reviewed at the same time.

RESOLVED –

1. That the Prevention Strategy 2014/15 - 2016/17 be adopted.
2. That the commissioning of the central prevention policy department review, with the emphasis on shaping the team to facilitate and support delivery of the new Strategy be approved.

FA16

LOCAL GOVERNMENT PENSION SCHEME 2014 – EMPLOYER DISCRETIONS

The Director of People and Organisational Development advised Members that all the Authority's support and control room staff were eligible to join the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) which was administered on behalf of the Authority by Buckinghamshire County Council (BCC).

On the 1 April 2014 the scheme changed from a final salary pension scheme to a career average re-valued earnings (CARE) scheme which was governed by a variety of regulations which defines the rights and obligations of the employing authority (BMKFA), the administering authority (BCC) and the employees (scheme Members). As an employer, the Authority was required to adopt, publish and keep under review its policy on some of the available discretions. Some existing discretions are no longer available, but have been replaced with new ones.

The Authority was required to publish a policy by 1 July 2014.

A discussion was held regarding Regulation 30(6) Flexible Retirement. Members were advised that each case would be treated on its own merit and a business case required.

It was agreed and seconded to amend the recommendation as follows:

RESOLVED:

That the Pensions Discretions Policy Statement be approved with the proviso that any discretion implemented under Regulation 30(6) LGPS Regulations 2013 be subject to the prior approval of the Executive Committee.

FA17

2015-20 PUBLIC SAFETY PLAN: FOR PUBLIC CONSULTATION

The Chief Fire Officer introduced the report by advising Members that unlike other Authorities the risk management consultation was not driven by cost reduction; but followed a reducing trend of risk in the communities of Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes. He also advised that this consultation document was populated with pre-consultation work which allowed the Authority to already know the public's view on what was in it. Previously, the public were only asked about risk, but this time they would be given costs so they were better informed.

The Risk map showed flooding as a significant consideration for this Authority; therefore proposals would be put forward to extend our readiness and response capabilities in the important area of citizen evacuation.

The plan looked at response and showed that in some areas the Authority needed to try and better match operational capacity to incident demand.

Installation of sprinklers could help reduce the extent of fire damage and therefore protect economic investment in commercial premises and residential premises in more remote locations. Subsequently, this could help reduce demand on the Authority's future response function.

The strategies summarised in the consultation document were good and well thought out and the Chief Fire Officer thanked his officers for their diligence and expertise. The Authority had also added a commitment to re-consult on anything which represented major change.

Member workshops and briefings would be conducted to ensure that an informed decision was taken at the Fire Authority meeting in December.

The Lead Member for Community Protection thanked the officers for their hard work and was pleased that the focus groups had brought out concerns that may have been different to what Members might have thought. The Lead Member for Community

Protection was also pleased that a full consultation plan was to take place over a 12 week period; and asked Members to take the report back to their Councils and Districts to get a response from residents. The Authority was informed that an electronic copy of the consultation plan would be circulated to Members after the meeting.

RESOLVED -

1. That the 2015-20 Public Safety Plan at Annex A for public consultation be approved.
2. That the consultation plan at Annex B be approved.
3. That the Chief Fire Officer be granted discretion to finalise the presentation of the 2015-20 Public Safety Plan in readiness for the consultation and to determine the consultation questions.

FA18

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Authority noted that the next meeting of the Fire Authority is to be held on Wednesday 22 October 2014 at 11.00am.

THE CHAIRMAN CLOSED THE MEETING AT 12.50PM