

Minutes of the meeting of the BUCKINGHAMSHIRE AND MILTON KEYNES FIRE AUTHORITY held on WEDNESDAY 14 October 2015 at 10.00 am

Present Councillors Bendyshe-Brown, Busby (Chairman), Dransfield, Exon, Glover, Gomm (part), Lambert, Marland (part), Morris, Reed, Schofield, Watson, and Wilson

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 Finance Director), G Smith (Head of Service Delivery), J Parsons (Head of Service Development), P Holland (Head of Service Transformation), R Priest (Group Commander, Prevention and Protection Policy), J Williams (On-Call Station Commander North), K Nellist (Democratic Services Officer), F Pearson (Communication and Consultation Manager), E Andrews (Executive Assistant to Chief Fire Officer), G Barry (Information, Governance and Compliance Manager) and Anne-Marie Carter (BASI Project Manager)

Three members of the public

Apologies: Councillors Clarke OBE, Huxley, Mallen and Vigor-Hedderly

FA18 MINUTES

RESOLVED -

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Fire Authority held on 10 June 2015, be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

FA19 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed Ann-Marie Scott, Director of People and Organisational Development at Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service to the meeting.

The Chairman's announcements are appended to these minutes.

Members congratulated the Director of People and Organisational Development on her recent 'Best in Fire' award from CFOA.

FA20 COMMITTEE MATTERS

RESOLVED -

That the amendment of Lead Member Responsibilities be approved.

FA21 COMMUNITY SAFETY UPDATE

The Lead Member for Community Protection introduced the report and advised Members that the service was working well both outside its boundaries and with other organisations to support the most vulnerable in the community.

Group Commander Richard Priest advised Members that the Authority was looking at different ways of working with partners and how this could create reciprocal arrangements that would be beneficial to all.

Fire deaths and fire injuries had been reduced to a level where underlying causes such as social isolation, smoking and alcohol were identified. Working with partners the service could offer a lot of data on vulnerabilities. The service had the capacity that whilst staff were carrying out home fire risk checks they could also be undertaking safe and well visits.

The Authority was also looking at its resources and how fire stations could be used as community hubs.

Buckingham Fire Station crews had already undertaken dementia training and the crews were also involved in creating activity classes for local school children to improve health and fitness.

High Wycombe Fire Station crews had been trained to improve their knowledge and understanding of those members of the public with Asperger's and Autistic Spectrum Disorder.

The appendix to the report had been given to all partners to ensure that a consistent message was given to all and the service was working with Buckinghamshire County Council and Milton Keynes Council.

Members requested that this information was passed down to community level, Local Area Forums in Buckinghamshire and Parish and Town Councils in Milton Keynes.

A Member also requested that the information was shared with the Local Government Association.

RESOLVED –

That the content of the report be noted.

FA22

EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT – THE INSTITUTION OF FIRE ENGINEERS

The Lead Member for Human Resources and Equality and Diversity introduced the report advising Members that it was a recent example of the Authority's commitment to the development of its people.

The Director of People and Organisational Development wanted to remind Members that they had approved the Authority's approach to a strategic integrated employee training and development programme back in March 2015 and this report showed that it had moved a significant way forward to making it happen.

There were three parts to the overall skills and development process for operational staff, the first one being skill enhancement and knowledge. A quality assured assessment takes place on station and was undertaken by supervisory managers who had been through development centres.

The second part was attendance of crews at the Fire Service College for external validation for practicable ability, assessment of incident command and breathing apparatus. Members would be visiting the Fire Service College on Wednesday 28 October 2015 to see this in progress.

This paper focuses on the third element. Operational staff go through a development centre process for promotion and qualification and the second stage of this was enhancing technical knowledge and the Authority was now undertaking this through the Institute of Fire Engineers (IFE).

This was piloted in November 2014 and from March 2015 the IFE qualification was introduced. There had been a significant level of interest from firefighters and crew managers and within the past six months the Authority had put 65 candidates through these exams.

In July 2015 it was rolled out to on-call supervisors and in the future may be rolled out to below supervisory level for on-call firefighters. The Authority had asked IFE to look at a certificate for on-call firefighters that would link to the firefighter role maps and national standards so as to be externally validated and benchmarked.

Thanks to the work of the Learning and Development Manager, the Authority had now been awarded by the IFE, Examination Centre status for the County and in spring 2016 the Authority was already collaborating with Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service to hold a joint examination centre.

Lastly, the Authority was also exploring possible ways to use the IFE qualification when the Apprenticeship programme begins next year.

RESOLVED –

That the report was noted.

(Cllr Gomm joined the meeting)

FA23

TREASURY MANAGEMENT GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENT

The Chairman advised Members that there was an amendment to the Officer's recommendation that was then circulated to Members. It was explained to members that if the recommendation were to be approved, there would be a change to the Authority's Terms of Reference to reflect that recommendations regarding the Treasury Management would in future come from the Overview and Audit Committee and not the Executive Committee.

The Chairman of the Overview and Audit Committee advised Members that if there was a particular area of the Authority's business they would like scrutinised to let him know.

RESOLVED –

- 1) That future Treasury Management monitoring reports be received by the Overview and Audit Committee.
- 2) That the Overview and Audit Committee's terms of reference be amended so that it shall 'consider and make recommendations to the Authority on the Annual Treasury Management Strategy'.

FA24

DRAFT AUTHORITY RESPONSE TO HM GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION ON CLOSER WORKING BETWEEN THE EMERGENCY SERVICES'

The Government was consulting on a series of measures designed to transform the delivery of local fire and police services and drive greater collaboration between the police, fire and rescue and NHS ambulance services.

Members were all in agreement that they did not think that proposals to enable Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) to take on the duties and responsibilities of fire and rescue authorities, was suitable for Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority. Members were not against the idea in areas where there was a local desire to do it.

The Chief Fire Officer reiterated that the Authority was broadly supportive of the process; however, the trigger should be the failure of the existing governance arrangements. The Fire Authority model worked well in Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes. Members asked the Chairman and Chief Fire Officer to strengthen the approach by including cross party consensus.

A Member asked if this consultation was only available for fire authorities to respond to. It was advised that the consultation was open to the public, so anyone could respond. Information and assistance would be given to Milton Keynes Council to respond independently.

RESOLVED –

That Members delegate authority to the Chief Fire Officer to finalise the response in consultation with the Chairman for submission to HM Government on behalf of the Authority.

FA25

MILTON KEYNES TRANSFORMATION UPDATE

The Chairman proposed a motion to adjourn the meeting to hear the views of the Fire Brigades Union representative who had expressed a wish to speak on the Milton Keynes Transformation project. Councillor Lambert seconded the motion.

RESOLVED – that the Authority does now adjourn.

The meeting adjourned at 11.51; and reconvened at 11.57.

The Lead Member for Community Protection advised Members that the Milton Keynes Transformation was the first of five area reviews that would be delivered as part of the Authority's Corporate Plan 2015-20.

The Head of Service Transformation advised Members that a full staff and public consultation into the proposal to centralise the resources at Great Holm and Bletchley fire stations into a new Blue Light Hub at West Ashland started on the 14 September 2015 and would run for eight weeks up to the 9 November 2015.

During the consultation period three focus groups had been facilitated by Opinion Research Services (ORS), one in the Bletchley area, one in the Great Holm area and one involving a wider audience across Milton Keynes.

On each of those evenings there was a three hour presentation provided by an independent facilitator giving the attendees information that's already in the public domain and within the Authority's public safety plan, to allow them to make an informed decision on the proposals that are being put forward. The feedback had been very positive. As the Authority was part way through the consultation, the report had not yet been received from Opinion Research Services.

There was also an online questionnaire and 151 submissions to the site (in four weeks) had already been received.

If the consultation period was extended it would have an impact on the plan. There was a realistic time frame for delivering the project; however, a four week delay created by the consultation process would have a knock on effect on a number of key milestones. One of which was discussions with Milton Keynes Development Partnership about being in a position to purchase the land.

(Councillor Marland left the meeting having declared an interest in the Milton Keynes Development Partnership).

The Milton Keynes Development Partnership was very keen that the land was purchased before the end of the current financial year; otherwise they had other interested parties wanting the land.

Every six months a progress report of the transformation bid was given to DCLG regarding receiving the funds. If there was a delay to the project it could put in jeopardy the funds the Authority would receive.

Also, if the consultation period was extended the start date for the actual build itself would be affected. Delays would affect all aspects of the project.

Councillor Wilson moved the following recommendation which was seconded by Councillor Exon:

"That the Authority extend the current consultation period for the Milton Keynes Transformation project to the 31 December 2015"

On being put to the vote the recommendation was declared lost.

RESOLVED –

That the contents of the report be noted.

FA26

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Authority noted that the next meeting of the Fire Authority was to be held on Wednesday 16 December 2015 at 11.00am.

THE CHAIRMAN CLOSED THE MEETING AT 12.20PM