

Minutes of the meeting of the BUCKINGHAMSHIRE AND MILTON KEYNES FIRE AUTHORITY held on WEDNESDAY 14 DECEMBER 2016 at 11.00 am

Present: Councillors Brunning, Busby (Chairman), Carroll, Clarke OBE (part), Exon, Glover, Gomm, Huxley, Lambert, Marland, McDonald, 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) 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), J Parsons (Head of Service Development), A Chart (Health and Safety Manager), J Pickford (Programme Manager), M Crothers (Programme Manager), A Collett (Organisational Development Manager), Sean Brannon (Training Design Technician), K Nellist (Democratic Services Officer), A McCallum (Executive Assistant to Chief Fire Officer) and A Baines (Health and Safety Apprentice)

Apologies: Councillors Mallen and Teesdale

FA24**MINUTES**

RESOLVED –

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Fire Authority held on 19 October 2016, be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

The Head of Projects and Transformation updated Members on the planning application for the Milton Keynes Blue Light Hub as, contrary to officers' expectations reported to the Authority at its October meeting, it had not been included on the agenda for the December Milton Keynes Development Control Committee meeting. The Head of Projects and Transformation reported that the Planning Officer had informed him that it would be taken to the 5 January 2017 meeting with a recommendation that planning permission be approved.

FA25**CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman's Announcements had been circulated in advance. In addition the Chairman announced that he, along with the Deputy Chief Fire Officer had recently met the Chief Executive of the Fire Service College and the Divisional Board Director from Capita and had been assured that they were pressing on with their improvements at the College and had spent £15m to date. Sadly, the college had not had the support from other fire and rescue services, but they were pleased with the joint working with Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service which should give Members reassurance that the Service's training was externally accredited.

FA26**VACANCY FOR THE OFFICE OF VICE-CHAIRMAN**

It being proposed by the Chairman and seconded by Councillor Wilson it was:

RESOLVED –

That a Vice-Chairman not be elected to the vacancy.

FA27 COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS: EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

RESOLVED –

That Councillor Peter McDonald be appointed to the Executive Committee.

FA28 LEAD MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES

It being proposed by the Chairman and seconded by Councillor Reed, it was:

RESOLVED –

That Councillor Peter McDonald be appointed as Lead Member for Finance, IT, Procurement and Control.

FA29 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM COMMITTEES:

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE – 23 NOVEMBER 2016

Members' Allowances

RESOLVED –

That the Scheme for Members' Allowances for 2017/18 be adopted.

FA30 ANNUAL AUDIT LETTER

The Chairman of the Overview and Audit Committee advised Members that the appointed auditor was required to issue an annual audit letter to the Authority following completion of their audit procedures for the year. An unqualified opinion was issued on the Authority's financial statements and the auditors concluded that the Authority had put in place proper arrangements to secure value for money in the use of its resources. Members should also note that there was a reduction of £10k in the audit fee paid for 2015/16 compared to 2014/15 and this was down to less risk and less hours being applied to the audit.

The Deputy Director of Finance and Assets advised Members that this detailed report summarised the key audit findings. There was an 'unqualified' audit opinion and in this context unqualified was very good and meant the auditors hadn't found any significant problems. The auditors found there were good arrangements for secure value for money for the Authority and they also acknowledged the Governance Statement was

consistent with their knowledge of the issues facing the Authority at present.

The Deputy Director of Finance and Assets advised Members that from the 2017/18 financial year, the deadline for preparing the Authority's financial statements would move to 31 May from 30 June. In addition, the deadline for completing the statutory audit would move to 31 July from 30 September. In 2015/16 the Authority met the timelines for having audited statements by the end of July 2016 which was a great achievement and reflects very well on the work of the finance team and wider support services. Also, in July 2016 an internal audit report 'Core Financial Controls' went to the Overview and Audit Committee and for the third consecutive year was given 'substantial assurance', which shows the Authority manages its day to day financial data extremely well.

The Deputy Director of Finance advised Members that the Chairman had mentioned earlier about the importance of external verification in relation to training, it was also important in relation to finances and taking this audit report and the other audit reports mentioned together, it demonstrated and gave Members reassurance that finances are planned, controlled and reported to the highest standard possible.

RESOLVED –

That the Annual Audit Letter for the year ended 31 March 2016 be approved for publication.

FA31

ANNUAL HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELLBEING REPORT

The Lead Member for Health and Safety and Corporate Risk advised Members that it had been a really excellent year for the Authority in terms of its health and safety performance.

The Health and Safety Manager updated Members on the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) Audit outcomes. The audit process looked at the Authority's policies and procedures and more importantly the practical implementation of them across the Service. The Service as a whole was complimented on the continued development of the health and safety management system which was reflected in the excellent score achieved. In the report there were eighteen recommendations to follow up. Eight were identified as high priority and ten as medium priority. These recommendations had been given a RAG status for completion. Of the eighteen recommendations, six were now complete with the remainder progressing well. The lead auditor revisited the Service in November and was pleased to see that good progress was being made on all of the action points from the audit.

The Health and Safety Manager advised Members that with regard to national statistics, Members would see in the report this service was the best performing in its family group. There was an increase in the injury rate of 0.39% despite a reduction in

actual injuries. In 2014/15 the Service had thirty-one injuries to firefighters and 2015/16 it had twenty-seven injuries to firefighters. The reason for the increase was that the Service now had fewer employees. In 2014/15 there were 609 and in 2015/16 there were 528. There was an increase in acts of violence against fire fighters from zero in 2014/15 to one in 2015/16. There was also an increase in RIDDOR reportable incidents to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) from two to three.

The Health and Safety Manager advised Members that near miss incidents were shown as red and there was a decrease in the number of near miss reports for that year. There were two ways of looking at this. It may mean there were less near misses occurring, which was a positive as it shows the Service was getting safer. Or, was it that there should be more near miss reports than accidents which was currently not the case. Following a programme of training in reporting of near misses, the Authority would be able to report next year an increase in near miss reporting and a reduction in accidents which was what it strived for.

The Health and Safety Manager also advised Members about the well-being of its employees. As 'People' was one of its strategic aims, the focus had been on improving the well-being of staff. Considerable progress had been made in identifying and implementing ways to achieve this, including participation in the Global Corporate Challenge, signing up the Authority to the MIND Blue light pledge and subsequent instruction of Blue Light Champions within the Service. The Service had actually improved the way it responded when staff were suffering from stress, with stress audits, counselling through the occupational health provider, return to work risk assessments, and creation of wellness action plans. Working with Human Resources (HR) on ways to prevent and protect staff from stress, The Health and Safety Manager would be able to report on progress in next year's report.

The Health and Safety Manager thanked the Lead Member for Health and Safety and Corporate Risk for his continued support throughout the year.

A Member asked if all Services were nationally audited and was advised that no they were not, but this would change when the new inspection regime was brought in by the Home Office.

RESOLVED –

That the performance of the Service in terms of Health, Safety and Wellbeing be noted.

FA32

FIRE REFORM – COLLABORATIVE WORKING UPDATE

The Lead Member for Human Resources and Equality and Diversity advised Members that this report provided an update

on collaborative working, primarily within the Thames Valley. Also included was the Authority's contribution on a range of national and regional collaborative programmes which support the Authority's reform agenda and in time will enhance the Thames Valley collaborative outcomes.

The Lead Member for Human Resources and Equality and Diversity advised Members that the best example of the Authority's collaboration was the Thames Valley Fire Control Service, where there was a joint Control Room with Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service and Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service. This was working increasingly well and the Lead Member encouraged Members to go and visit the Control Room.

The Lead Member for Human Resources and Equality and Diversity advised Members that a Memorandum of Understanding was signed by the three Thames Valley Fire Services in June 2015. Significant progress had been made since then and it was good to welcome to the meeting Julie Pickford who was the new Programme Manager for the Thames Valley. This appointment showed how serious all three Services were in moving forward with collaborating to provide a better and higher level of service for residents, whilst still ensuring this Service got best value for money.

The Lead Member for Human Resources and Equality and Diversity also advised Members that an increasing number of fire and rescue services had expressed an interest in the Authority's approach to building on the workforce reform agenda to move to local terms and conditions of employment.

The Director of People and Organisational Development advised Members that the success of the joint Fire Control had also identified a whole range of further opportunities in terms of operational policy and ways of working for the three services and the significant focus of the Thames Valley Collaboration was in that area.

The Director of People and Organisational Development advised Members of a significant event that took place on 28 November 2016 when the three Service's senior management teams, together with a lead member from each Service and Councillor Reed attended on the Authority's behalf, met and reviewed progress and identified future collaboration priorities. The three Services also agreed the next steps and priorities for the ensuing two years and how to turn them into tangible outcomes and benefits.

The Director of People and Organisational Development reassured Members that any plans the Authority signed up to, to enhance collaboration, would also enhance delivery of the Corporate and Public Safety Plans and not detract from it.

A Member asked if collaboration in Northamptonshire and Bedfordshire could be looked at as well as the Thames Valley as they shared close borders with Milton Keynes and was advised

that the Chief Fire Officer had regular meeting with his counterpart at Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service.

A Member asked if the Authority was looking at further collaboration with the Police and was advised that the Authority had regular meetings with the Police to look at opportunities for co-location. The Chief Fire Officer also said that collaboration with the Police in terms of property and estates had worked very well and there were further opportunities in the short to medium term to focus on fire-fire collaboration which would increase resilience, quality and possibly realise efficiencies.

(Councillor Clarke OBE left the meeting)

RESOLVED –

1. That the Thames Valley Fire and Rescue Services collaborative achievements to date, set out in Annex A be noted;
2. that the range of national and regional examples of collaborative working, set out in Annex B, be noted.

FA33

LEADING THE WAY WITH INNOVATIVE E-LEARNING

Members received a presentation from the Organisational Development Manager and the Training Design Technician on two awards that the Authority had recently won in October 2016 at Learning Pool Live. Paul Whidborne, Training Design Technician had won Learning Pool Superstar for his work driving collaboration between services, setting up a joint development area and sharing best practice. The Organisational Development Team had won a second award for Most Innovative eLearning.

The main points of the presentation were as follows:

- Buckinghamshire was the first fire and rescue service to combine both its training records and learning management system into a single system, giving 2:1 efficiencies and the first true blended training record (Core Training Record (CTR));
- all the products within Heat (eLearning package) had been developed for user needs. One major win was to solve group eLearning for staff, especially on-call crews who don't necessarily have time to complete modules individually. This, and the CTR, had sparked a lot of interest nationally and had led to twenty other fire and rescue services coming to Buckinghamshire to look at this product;
- Buckinghamshire was the only fire and rescue service to be nominated for a national eLearning Award. Not only nominated, but to win two years in a row, against some major competition;
- through collaboration, BMKFA had been leading the way nationally on how eLearning should be produced and also had been leading the way with Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service on making collaboration solutions available

for other fire and rescue services through the development of shared development systems;

- the nomination was presented as an E-Learning package;
- the submission was sent to the Judging Panel with their own login and password in order for them to complete the eLearning.
- the result of excelling in eLearning had earned the team a seat at the table for a national eLearning model. The team would sit on the Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA) working group to secure the future of eLearning and collaborative working across all fire services in the country.

A Member asked if it would be possible for Members to see the eLearning package and this was agreed and a login and password would be provided to Members.

FA34

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Authority noted that the next meeting of the Fire Authority was to be held on Wednesday 15 February 2016 at 11.00am

THE CHAIRMAN CLOSED THE MEETING AT 12.20PM