

Minutes of the meeting of the BUCKINGHAMSHIRE AND MILTON KEYNES FIRE AUTHORITY held on WEDNESDAY 14 FEBRUARY 2018 at 11.00 am

Present Councillors Carroll, Cranmer, Exon, Glover, Lambert, Marland, McDonald, McLean, Reed (Chairman), Roberts, Teesdale, Watson and Wilson

Officers: J Thelwell (Chief Fire Officer), M Osborne (Deputy Chief Fire Officer), G Britten (Director of Legal and Governance), D Sutherland (Director of Finance and Assets), N Boustred (Head of Service Delivery), J Parsons (Head of Service Development), M Hemming (Deputy Director of Finance and Assets), L Swift (Director of People and Organisational Development), K Nellist (Democratic Services Officer), F Pearson (Communication and Consultation Manager), A Hussain (Principal Accountant) and Stuart Gowanlock (Corporate Planning Manager)

One member of the public

Apologies: Councillors Irwin, McCall and Sullivan

FA41 WELCOME ANY NEW MEMBERS ONTO THE AUTHORITY

The Chairman welcomed the new Member to the Fire Authority Councillor Keith McLean from Milton Keynes Council and advised that it was the Group Leader's wish that he be appointed to the Executive Committee and Councillor Luisa Sullivan be appointed to the Overview and Audit Committee.

RESOLVED –

That Councillor McLean be appointed to the Executive Committee and Councillor Sullivan be appointed to the Overview and Audit Committee

FA42 MINUTES

RESOLVED –

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Fire Authority held on 13 December 2017, be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

FA43 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman's Announcements had been circulated in advance, but the Chairman also advised Members that he, along the Chief Fire Officer, Deputy Chief Fire Officer and the Deputy Director of Finance and Assets had met with the Minister for Policing and the Fire Service, the Rt Hon Nick Hurd MP. This meeting had been facilitated by the Rt Hon John Bercow MP.

FA44 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM COMMITTEES

Executive Committee – 7 February 2018

(a) Members' Allowances

RESOLVED –

That a Scheme for Members' Allowances for 2018/19 (Appendix C which includes figures indicative of a 1% increase) with an uplift from the 17/18 Scheme to reflect any final Grey Book pay award for 17/18 be adopted.

(b) The Prudential Code, Prudential Indicators and Minimum Revenue Provision

RESOLVED –

That the Prudential Indicators and the Minimum Revenue Provision policy statement be approved.

(c) Medium Term Financial Plan 2018/19 to 2020/21

A Member asked if the visit to the Minister had been worthwhile and was advised that it had given the Authority the opportunity to make the Minister aware of some matters he was not aware of, especially around the Authority's reserves position, what was allocated and why the Authority held a reserves balance.

A Member asked how the savings of £311k were accounted for and was advised that these came from various savings. There was some previous underspend on electricity, gas and utilities; additional aerial site income of £75k per year; revenue funding for sprinklers had been reduced, which would save £100k and there was increased treasury management income due to the excellent performance of investments.

The Director of Finance and Assets advised Members that he was aware of the risks regarding a pay rise above 1% and continued USAR funding. These risks had been flagged for some time on the Authority's risk registers. In terms of pay rises, Members would be aware that a settlement had been agreed with the government up until 2020, which was in line with the governments expectations that pay rises would not be above 1%. If pay rises start to take off significantly above that, the government was well aware that it would need to be funding such pay rises.

RESOLVED –

That the Authority:

1. note and have due regard to the report and Statement of the Chief Finance Officer (Section 8 of Annex A).
2. approve a Council Tax precept of £62.70 for a band D equivalent property (a 2.99% increase from 2017/18 – equal to 3.5p per week) and the revenue budget as set out in Appendix 1.
3. approve the capital programme as set out in Appendix 2.

Details of the recorded vote were set out below:

	For	Against	Abstained
Carroll	✓		
Cranmer	✓		
Exon	✓		
Glover	✓		

Lambert	✓		
Marland			✓
McDonald	✓		
McLean	✓		
Reed	✓		
Roberts	✓		
Teesdale	✓		
Watson	✓		
Wilson			✓

FA45

TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2018/19

The Deputy Director of Finance and Assets advised that Members were briefed at the Overview and Audit Committee in November 2017 and following this meeting, changes had been proposed to the strategy for 2018/19. The significant changes were:

1. That the duration limit to be used for UK based counterparties for 2018/19 should be the Capita recommended limit plus six months (e.g. the limit for counterparties rated 'Red' would be 1 year).
2. That the limit of 100 days was removed from non-UK based counterparties and that the duration limit was as per the Capita rating (but not including the plus six months discretion).
3. Any counterparty rated at least 'Green' by Capita should be added to the counterparty list regardless of location.
4. The top-ten building societies (by group assets) should be added to the counterparty list. The duration of investment would be limited to 1 year and the total amount invested with any one non-rated building society at any point in time would not exceed £2 million.
5. That up to £3 million could be invested in a property fund (or funds).

It being proposed and seconded that an amendment be made to the officer's recommendation 2, so that the following text be added, "subject to a paper going to the Authority for approval" it was:

RESOLVED –

1. that the changes numbered 1-4 in the Executive Summary to the Treasury Management Policy Statement, Treasury Management Strategy and the Annual Investment Strategy for 2018/19 be approved.
2. up to £3 million can be invested in a property fund (or funds) be approved subject to a paper going to the Authority for approval.
3. work is undertaken to investigate the possibility of restructuring the existing debt portfolio, including potential renegotiation of early repayment charges be approved.

FA46 FIRE AND RESCUE NATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR ENGLAND (GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION)

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer advised Members that the Consultation seeks views on the revised Fire and Rescue National Framework for England, which was published on 27 December 2017. Section 21 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 required the Secretary of State to prepare a Fire and Rescue National Framework which sets priorities and objectives for fire and rescue authorities (FRAs) in England in connection with the discharge of their functions. FRAs had a statutory duty to have regard to the Framework.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer advised Members that the National Framework was last updated in 2012 and this revised version incorporates such changes as the creation of a new inspectorate, the National Fire Chiefs Council, along with the provisions contained within the Policing and Crime Act 2017 on emergency services collaboration and changes to fire and rescue governance. In preparation for the draft consultation response, a gap analysis between the 2012 version of the National Framework and the proposed revision has been undertaken. This analysis with the main changes could be found at Appendix B.

RESOLVED –

That the proposed draft response (Appendix C) to be consultation be approved.

FA47 HER MAJESTY'S INSPECTORATE OF CONSTABULARY AND FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES (HMICFRS)

The Head of Service Development advised Members that currently HMICFRS were preparing to undertake three pilot inspections, one from each of the three main governance models. This Authority had been assisting HMICFRS in their preparations and the Chief Fire Officer was a member of the External Reference Group. Each Tranche would be a mixture of service governance types and would consist of 15 services. This Authority was in tranche three and proposed to be inspected in spring 2019. Running parallel to the pilot inspections was the consultation process. In general the Authority's position was supportive of the framework and methodology as proposed.

RESOLVED –

1. That the content of the report be noted.
2. That the response to the formal consultation on the framework (Appendix F) be agreed.

FA48 PAY POLICY PRINCIPLES AND STATEMENT 2018/19

The Lead Member for People and Equality and Diversity introduced the report and advised Members that the pay policy was required to be updated each financial year and was therefore being presented today as the 2018/19 Pay Policy for the Authority.

The Director of People and Organisational Development advised Members that it was pleasing to report that the Pay Multiples ratio of highest paid to lowest paid employee (as at December 2017) continued to fall for the sixth year running. This six year period saw the ratio improved by 22 per cent since 2012.

The Director of People and Organisational Development advised Members that the Government introduced a UK wide apprenticeship levy from April 2017. This levy was to help fund the increase in the quantity and quality of apprenticeship training and to give employers greater control of apprenticeships. The levy rate was set at 0.5 per cent of an employer's pay bill and was collected via PAYE. At the Executive Committee meeting on 29 July 2015, Members opted to use the apprenticeship training agency (ATA) model for the recruitment of apprentices. The Authority would utilise apprenticeship opportunities wherever practicable as part of a blended approach to improving diversity and refreshing the workforce. The Authority would reward apprentices appropriately, recognising competence and performance during the various development stages of their apprenticeship.

RESOLVED –

That the Pay Policy Principles and Statement as set out in Annex A be approved as the statutory Pay Policy Statement for 2018/19.

FA49

APPRENTICESHIP DIVERSITY CHAMPTIONS NETWORK

The Lead Member for People and Equality and Diversity advised Members that the Apprenticeship Diversity Champions Network (ADCN) was an initiative promoted by the National Apprenticeship Service. This report detailed the Apprenticeship Diversity Champions Network, its relevance to the Authority, the benefits of being a member and the requirements of becoming signatories to the Pledge.

The Lead Member for People and Equality and Diversity also advised Members that this Authority had lead the way in recruitment of apprentices and its diversity of the workforce had changed as a result of this in a positive way. This was about core principles and how the Authority challenges diversity of its workforce and to have a workforce that more closely reflects the communities across Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes.

The Director of People and Organisational Development advised Members that the National Fire Chiefs Council had recommended that up to four fire and rescue services joined this network as it fits with what fire and rescue services in the broader sector were trying to achieve around diversity and Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service was one of those four. The reason for bringing this proposal now was because it fits with the Authority's priorities for next year and it also gives the Authority free tools and techniques to use. It is supported by the National Apprenticeships Service, part of the Department for Education, who want to promote careers in fire and police. The National Apprenticeships Service were promoting a joint fire and police apprenticeship event on the first day of National Apprenticeship week 5-9 March 2018.

The Employee Relations and Engagement Manager asked Members to note the benefits of signing this pledge and the core principles of the Apprenticeship Diversity Champions Network (ADCN). Membership included; employing apprentices; driving an inclusive culture; championing diversity, gathering data, reporting back; and making a pledge. If adopted, a number of activities would need to be developed to achieve the goal of increasing the diversity of our workforce through apprenticeships. A Member asked who wrote the pledge, whether it was a standard format, what were the consequences of not signing and who was the dedicated

diversity champion going to be and was advised that there was a template to use, but the pledge in this report had been written with guidance from the network. It was proposed that the Director of People and Organisational Development would be the diversity champion. The consequences of not joining the network would be that the Authority would need to invest more money in front end recruitment, by using the national apprenticeship network, the Authority can use their systems to advertise vacancies; receive help with free campaigns and use their expertise to help us reach the diverse groups within Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes.

A Member asked a further question regarding what was the time line for the pledge and was advised that most of the work the Authority was already undertaking in its four year equality and diversity inclusion which Members approved in 2016. What had been put in the pledge was measurable, so progress could be shown.

Members agreed that the Chairman should write to the Apprenticeship Minister to invite him to come and visit this service.

RESOLVED –

That the Pledge for the Apprenticeship Diversity Champions Network is endorsed for signature by the Chairman of the Authority, the Lead Member for People and Equality and Diversity and the Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive.

FA50

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Authority noted that the next meeting of the Fire Authority was to be held on Wednesday 13 June 2018 at 11.00am.

THE CHAIRMAN CLOSED THE MEETING AT 12.20PM