

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BUCKINGHAMSHIRE AND MILTON KEYNES  
FIRE AUTHORITY HELD ON WEDNESDAY 17 OCTOBER 2018 AT 11.00 AM

**Present:** Councillors Carroll, Exon, Hopkins, Irwin, Lambert, McDonald (Vice-Chairman), Roberts, Teesdale and Watson

**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 (Director of Finance and Assets), N Boustred (Head of Service Delivery), J Parsons (Head of Service Development), D Norris (Area Commander), S Gowanlock (Corporate Planning Manager), P Mould (Group Commander Community and Business Safety), S Tuffley (Group Commander Policy and Resilience), A Stunell (Head of Human Resources) A McCallum (Executive Assistant to Chief Fire Officer), J Humphrey (Watch Commander) and K Nellist (Democratic Services Officer)

**Apologies:** Councillors Clare, Cranmer, Farrow, Geary, Glover, Marland, Reed and Wilson

(Councillor McDonald presiding)

**FA16 MINUTES**

RESOLVED –

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Fire Authority held on 13 June 2018, be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

**FA17 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Chairman's Announcements had been circulated in advance.

The Chief Fire Officer presented two certificates, one to Area Commander Neil Boustred, who was retiring after thirty years' service with Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service. The certificate was from the National Fire Chiefs Council for outstanding work over the years and Neil's contribution to fire alarms. The second was a Letter of Commendation from the Chief Fire Officer to the Deputy Chief Fire Officer awarded for exemplary service in relation to a serious incident on the M1 Motorway in which the actions of a drink driver resulted in the deaths of eight people on 26 August 2017.

**FA18 COMMITTEE MATERS**

**Revision of the Authority's Standing Orders**

The Director of Legal and Governance advised Members that the Authority's Standing Orders currently allow written questions and motions to be submitted to the Monitoring Officer by fax. With the move to multi-functional devices, there was no way of monitoring receipt of such communications, so it was therefore

recommended that it be made clear that service by this means was no longer accepted.

A Member asked if written communication by email was allowed and was advised that it was.

RESOLVED -

That the Authority's Standing Orders be amended so that the following text shown struck through at SOA7 (4) and SOA 8(1) be deleted:

"Members of the Authority, or its constituent councils, District, or Parish Councils may submit written questions prior to the Meeting to allow their full and proper consideration. Such questions shall be received by the Monitoring Officer to the Authority, *in writing or by fax*, at least two clear working days before the day of the Meeting of the Authority or the Committee".

"Except for Motions under Standing Order SOA 9 which may be moved without notice, every notice of motion shall be given *in writing or by fax*, signed by the Member or Members of the Fire Authority giving the notice, and delivered at least twelve clear days, excluding Sundays and Bank Holidays before the next meeting of the Authority, at the office of the Monitoring Officer to the Authority, by whom it shall be dated and entered in a book which shall be open to the inspection of every Member of the Authority during normal office hours".

**FA19**

### **THE AUTHORITY'S PREVENTION STRATEGY 2018-2023**

The Lead Member for Community Protection introduced the report.

Group Commander, Community and Business Safety advised Members that the purpose of the refreshed and updated Prevention Strategy was to provide a clear focus for the Service Delivery Directorate's priorities for the next five years. This had involved refreshing and updating the current Protection and Prevention Strategies and the development of a completely new Response Strategy. This Strategy had been aligned with the Protection Strategy 2018-2023 and Response Strategy 2018-2023, developing a suite of three Strategies that underpin Service Delivery.

The Prevention Strategy focuses on four key pillars, which encompass all of the prevention activities:

- Safer Homes;
- Fires;
- Road Safety;
- Fire as a Health and Wellbeing Asset.

The Group Commander, Community and Business Safety advised Members that the success of the Strategy would be measured through:

- how effective the service was at preventing fires and other emergencies;
- how well we use data and information to understand our current and future risks, taking account of national risks and trends;
- how well we use our resources, optimising the contribution to well-being of our people;
- how well we understand our community;
- how well we secure an affordable way of delivering the management of risk of fire, emergencies and other risks now and in the future.

The Group Commander, Community and Business Safety advised Members that there had been a consistent reduction in accidental dwelling fires, road traffic collisions and those seriously injured or killed. The Central Prevention Team, Community Safety Coordinators and operational crews continued to work hard to identify and support those members of the community who were seen as most vulnerable. The Prevention Strategy would build on this good work and continue to promote and build the Authority's brand amongst its partners and communities and wherever possible move forward through a collaborative pathway.

The delivery and measurement of the success of the Prevention Strategy would be further enabled as the Premises Risk Management System developed, allowing greater use of quality data, targeting service delivery where it was identified as being needed the most.

A Member asked for further information regarding one of the achievements in the strategy 'financially supporting both Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Safeguarding Board for adults and children'. The Member asked that if the Authority financially supported this, should it not be more vociferous about it and perhaps explain further in the report. It was agreed that this would be looked into.

A Member felt that with regard to the Integrated Impact Assessments (IIAs) for each Strategy, they all had 'positive' indicators, but only the Response Strategy had stated this and was advised that further IIAs would be carried out as each Strategy was developed.

A Member asked if a meeting could be arranged with Wycombe District Council as there were a couple of initiatives being developed around children that might be beneficial for the fire service to be involved in as well. Officers stated they were happy to be involved.

A Member asked for clarification regarding the purchasing of shared data as part of the aim to target the most vulnerable groups within the community and was advised that the Authority was trying to find the best way collaboratively to share data. This

was done in two ways, working with local authorities and the NHS, and by buying commercially available data through operational alignment with its Thames Valley partners, who had all bought into an agreement which gives the Authority analytical data to predict where the most vulnerable were, not just from fire, but from other society risks.

A Member asked what support the fire service gave to Hazzard Alley in Milton Keynes and was advised that the Prevention Manager was working with them on various projects, a senior manager sat on the Board of Trustees and that the Authority had previously approved that financial support of £25k per year be given up until the end of financial year 2018/19.

A Member asked if it could be arranged for Members to visit Hazzard Alley and it was agreed this would be organised.

RESOLVED –

That the Prevention Strategy 2018-2023 be approved.

**FA20**

### **THE AUTHORITY'S PROTECTION STRATEGY 2018-2023**

The Group Commander Community and Business Safety advised Members that as previously stated, this Strategy had been aligned with the Prevention Strategy and Response Strategy developing a suite of three strategies that underpin Service Delivery.

The Protection Strategy focused on four key area, which encompass all of the Protection activities:

- Audits;
- Non-domestic property fires;
- Quality of service;
- Automatic fire alarms.

Success of the Strategy would be measured through:

- how effective we are at protecting non-domestic premises from fired and other emergencies
- how effective we are at enforcing non-compliance within non-domestic premises of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order;
- how well we use data and information to understand our current and future risks, taking account of national risks and trends;
- how well we use our resources, optimising the contribution to business continuity of our people;
- how well we secure an affordable way of delivering the management of risk of fire, emergencies and other risks now and in the future;

The Group Commander Community and Business Safety advised Members that as an Enforcing Authority under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order, the Authority had consistently met

its duties, delivered advice and taken enforcement action where and when appropriate. Currently it had three prohibition notices active and four prosecutions being investigated with case files being prepared. The Authority would continue to review how it delivered the most cost effective service to the public, taking into account possible changes in Fires Safety legislation and guidance following the Grenfell tragedy. Work continued collaboratively to develop a common way of working with its Thames Valley partners.

The Group Commander Community and Business Safety advised Members that supporting both of these Strategies was the new Premises Risk Management System (PRMS), which would integrate the Authority's various risk information systems to improve its ability to target those most vulnerable to the risk of fire and other emergencies. The system was currently being piloted and would be rolled out wider to go live in the near future. As this system developed, it would encapsulate non-domestic premises, allowing protection activities to be recorded in real time and take account of additional information through the system, improving our ability to report and analyse statistical information and trends.

A Member asked with regard to Automatic Fire Alarms and the service attending on 76 occasions, what period it covered? Officers to clarify in the Strategy.

A Member asked if the penultimate paragraph regarding Sprinklers on Page 12 could be reworded and this was agreed.

RESOLVED –

That the Protection Strategy 2018-2023 be approved, subject to the two amendments above being completed.

## **FA21**

### **THE AUTHORITY'S RESPONSE STRATEGY 2018-2023**

Group Commander Policy and Resilience advised Members that the Response Strategy completed the suite of strategies for Service Delivery for approval today. This Strategy focused on four key pillars:

- maintain a continual state of operational readiness;
- deliver a highly effective emergency response;
- demonstrate openness, transparency and be a learning organisation;
- deliver best value to the public

The Group Commander Policy and Resilience advised Members that the Strategy allowed the Authority to deal with the challenges identified in the Public Safety Plan now and into the future, and translate those strategic enablers into day-to-day activities, which would be measured and benchmarked. The aim was to rise to the identified challenges and make the best use of resources, deliver a first class emergency response, deliver a highly efficient, effective and resilient fire and rescue service and to be an outstanding fire and rescue service.

RESOLVED –

That the Response Strategy 2018-2023 be approved.

**FA22**

**EFFICIENCY PLAN PROGRESS REPORT**

The Director of Finance and Assets advised that this report had been brought before Members today to high-light the excellent work the Authority had done to achieve savings over the past four years. When the HMICFRS Inspection takes place next year the Inspectors would be looking at the efficiency of the Authority and this was really good evidence to support the work that had been done to achieve that efficiency.

The Director of Finance and Assets advised Members that despite achieving these savings, there had been a number of cost pressures the Authority had been facing, one of which was pay awards. The Authority had originally budgeted 1% but this year the pay award had been agreed at 2% which would put increased pressure on finances. The other issue which had become known over the last few weeks was around pensions. The original discounted rate was going to decrease from 3% to 2.8% above inflation but recently the Treasury reduced the rate even further to 2.4%. The initial report from the government's Actuary Department suggests that the employers' contribution for the firefighter's scheme would increase from 17.6% to 30.2%. The impact on the Authority would be an increase of annual contributions of £1.6M. The Treasury had said that for 2019/20 it would fund 90% of this amount; however, that would leave the Authority in a position of uncertainty the year after. Officers would continue to lobby government for increased precept flexibility to deal with this pressure, and for additional funding.

RESOLVED -

That the progress against the Efficiency Plan be noted.

**FA23**

**THE 2019-20 LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE SETTLEMENT: TECHNICAL CONSULTATION PAPER**

The Director of Finance and Assets advised Members that this was the Authority's response to the 2019/20 Government Consultation. The response was very similar to last year's response and was written before the pensions issue had become known.

RESOLVED –

That the response to the consultation be noted.

**FA24**

**LOCAL AUTHORITY PLANNING CONSULTATIONS**

The Lead Member for Community Protection advised that Members had expressed an interest in what interactions officers of the Authority had with local authority planning services. This report provided an overview of the interaction this year, as all

local authorities had published strategies. Officers had also been engaging planning officials face to face to both explain the Authority's concerns and to understand the longer-term development plans to inform the drafting of the next Public Safety Plan. In particular, Members had expressed an interest in officers making representations around the need for key worker housing.

The Corporate Planning Manager introduced the report, drawing Members attention to the appended letters setting out the Authority's responses to the statutory six-week public consultations held by Milton Keynes Council and the Buckinghamshire District Councils in relation to the latest versions of their local plans. In addition to addressing specific local matters, the responses also contained representations relating to the general effect of planning decisions on community safety and the Authority's operations including:

- ensuring provision of adequate infrastructure and access to new housing developments for firefighting and rescue purposes;
- Measures to improve the safety of housing and facilities for vulnerable groups such as the elderly and disabled;
- Measures to improve the safety of key parts of the public estate such as schools;
- Management of flooding risks;
- Provision of affordable housing for emergency services workers.

The Corporate Planning Manager also advised Members that officers were engaged in an ongoing dialogue with the relevant local authorities regarding the potential implications for fire and rescue of major infrastructure projects such as HS2, Heathrow expansion, Cross Rail and the East-West rail and proposed Expressway linking Cambridge, Milton Keynes and Oxford. The outcome of these discussions would inform the development of the next Public Safety Plan covering the period 2020-2025.

Some potential requirements in relation to future fire and rescue service provision had also been provided to Buckinghamshire County Council to inform their dialogue with central government regarding the potential for a 'growth deal' covering the period to 2033.

In response to a Member question, the Head of Service Development confirmed that these included outline requirements for provision of new fire and rescue facilities, and indicative costs associated with these, to deal with potential risks arising from the impact of specific projects including HS2, the planned growth of Princes Risborough and the new East-West economic and transport corridor linking Cambridge, Milton Keynes and Oxford.

A Member asked what the Authority's position on sprinklers was and was advised that it very much depended on the type of building and the risks associated with it as to whether it was beneficial to have a sprinkler system. Nationally, the fire and rescue service had been campaigning very strongly for sprinklers. There had been tremendous success in Wales, where residential accommodation cannot be built unless there were sprinklers. Scotland was moving that way; unfortunately, England was a long way behind. The National Fire Chiefs Council was pushing as hard as it could, but government was a lot more resistant to introducing sprinklers.

A Member wanted clarification on fire crews moving cars if there was no access for a fire appliance and was advised that primarily the fire service does have access if residents take into consideration the needs of the fire and rescue service. If necessary and if there was a life risk, crews would take a particular risk to get their appliances nearer to the incident or they would use the hose from where they were. The service also operates reactively. Where residents contact the service to talk about parking issues in their area, crews would go out and actually have a look. If they see any issues, they can put up signs on lampposts and leaflets on some of the vehicles themselves, just to highlight that they do need to be getting access in case of emergency. As far as moving vehicles was concerned, it would be the very last resort.

A Member asked if the Authority had received responses to its letters and was advised that it had received acknowledgments to all only.

A Member asked if officers could approach Buckinghamshire County Council and Milton Keynes council concerning the Highways England Seminars regarding the East-West Expressway and was advised that they would.

RESOLVED –

That the report be noted.

## **FA25**

### **EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION OBJECTIVES 2016-20: REVIEW OF YEAR TWO PROGRESS**

The Lead Member for People and Equality and Diversity introduced the report and advised Members that this was year two of the Authority's four-year programme on the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Objectives.

The Head of Human Resources advised Members that this was an update on the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Objectives, which were agreed in June 2016. As the Lead Member had stated, the Authority was two years into the four-year programme. When originally developed, years one and two were about putting the infrastructure in place, laying the foundations and making sure



the Authority could analyse and improve the data and ensuring it was aligning its equality and diversity focus with the people strategy priorities. Years three and four would be about embedding equality and diversity into the organisation, making sure to drive progress and also report trends. The report compared progress against the equality framework for fire and rescue services.

The Head of Human Resources advised Members that the report set out four of the Authority's equality and diversity objectives. Also, from the 30 March 2017, the Authority was required to publish equality data with regard to gender pay. The regulations that introduced this requirement were the Equality Act 2010 (Gender Pay Gap Information) Regulations 2017.

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 12 December 2018 at 11am.

THE CHAIRMAN CLOSED THE MEETING AT 12:10 PM