

Minutes of the Meeting of the EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE of the BUCKINGHAMSHIRE AND MILTON KEYNES FIRE AUTHORITY held on WEDNESDAY 13 NOVEMBER 2019 at 10.00 AM

Present: Councillors Clarke OBE (Chairman), Hopkins, Lambert, Marland, McCall, McLean and Teesdale (part)

Officers: J Thelwell (Chief Fire Officer), M Hemming (Director of Finance and Assets), G Britten (Director of Legal and Governance), C Bell (Head of Service Development), A Stunell (Head Of Human Resources), A Collett (Organisational Development Manager), F Pearson (Consultation and Communication Manager) and K Nellist (Democratic Services Officer)

Apologies: Councillor Roberts
One member of the public

EX12 MINUTES

RESOLVED –

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on Wednesday 16 October 2019, be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

EX13 EMERGENCY SERVICES MOBILE COMMUNICATIONS PROGRAMME (ESMCP)

The Vice Chairman introduced the report and advised Members that this report provided a further update regarding the national status of the programme and its impact on regional and local transition. The last briefing was provided to Members in July 2019.

The Vice Chairman read from the Summary of the Committee of Public Accounts Emergency Services Network: further progress review “ESN is now three years late and expected to cost the taxpayer at least £3.1 billion more than planned.” “The Committee has seen other examples where the lack of a market in certain technical or IT products and services put the Government in a weak contractual position. This is the eighth occasion that we have examined the programme. We will continue to be concerned about the progress of this programme until the department has a clear plan for delivery and can demonstrate that it has the skills and capacity to meet the substantial challenges ahead.”

The Head of Service Development advised that at the last briefing to Members in July, reference to the National Audit Office (NAO) report had been made which highlighted the poor management of the national programme which had, in turn, led to delays and an escalation in costs. Since the NAO report was produced, a further report had been released by the Public Accounts Committee (PAC). This publication was also less than

complimentary of the management of the national programme and had made six recommendations which were highlighted within this report. The recommendations focused on the production of a detailed, achievable delivery plan; assurances regarding the availability and costs of maintain the current Airwave network; an identification of the skills and tasks that were required to deliver and integrate the Emergency Services Network (ESN) and assurances that these would be addressed when appointing a new delivery partner; and that a revised and approved business case was delivered by the end of 2019. The National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) had issued a statement responding to the release of the PAC report which could be seen at Appendix A of this report. This highlights NFCC concerns regarding the programme and notes their agreement with the latest report.

Members would recall that officers were continuing to engage with representatives of the national programme regarding the provision of a Direct Network Service Provider or DNSP link. The Authority had submitted a further letter to the central programme seeking a resolution to this issue and the Senior User (the Head of Service Development) had been invited to take part in discussions with the Programme Director. Members could be assured that officers from this organisation continued to monitor the progress of the national programme and to engage with colleagues at regional and national levels to prepare for ESN.

The Chairman read from the Summary of the Committee of Public Accounts Emergency Services Network: further progress review – Confidence of emergency services in the new approach “The Department did not fully recognise the diversity of the industry users, and feedback from users had not been acted on.”

The Chairman advised Members that the members of the Thames Valley Fire Control Service Joint Committee had also written to the Permanent Secretary, Sir Phillip Rutnam setting out their concerns regarding the Programme.

RESOLVED –

That the report be noted.

EX14

RESPONSE TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE SETTLEMENT 2020-21: TECHNICAL CONSULTATION

The Vice Chairman introduced the report.

(Councillor Teesdale joined the meeting)

The Director of Finance and Assets advised Members that the consultation was published on 3 October 2019, with a deadline for responses of 31 October 2019. In accordance with the Scheme of Delegation to Officers, the response was discussed with the Chairman and Lead Member before submission. This

paper detailed the content of the submission for the attention of the Authority. The section of the Consultation most relevant to the Authority at the present time was Section 5: Council Tax. The current proposal within the Consultation was that the council tax referendum limit for fire and rescue authorities would be less than 2% (last year it was 3%). The response to this was that the Authority would recommend that fire and rescue authorities had flexibility to increase council tax by up to £5. This view was consistent with the consultation response provided by the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC).

The Chief Fire Officer advised Members that local MPs had been supportive in lobbying government on the Authority's behalf. The inspection report was still to come, probably in late December, although due to the election on 12 December the date might be put back further, and it wouldn't be surprising if the report mentioned how stretched the Service was and how difficult it would be to maintain it at the current level without further funding.

A Member asked if there was a legal way forward that would allow the Authority to the same precept flexibility as town and parish councils. This Authority received lower than the average parish council, band D equivalent.

A Member commented that the problem with percentage rises was that if you start on a low base, the percentage increase was very small and the gap between the highest and lowest just gets bigger.

RESOLVED –

That the response to the consultation be noted.

EX15

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED –

It was moved and resolved that the public and press representatives from the meeting by virtue of Paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as the reports and appendices contain information relating to an individual; and Paragraph 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as the reports and appendices contain information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual; and Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as the reports and appendices contain information relating to the financial or business affairs of a person (including the Authority); and on these grounds it is considered the need to keep information exempt outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information, so that the meeting could consider the following matters:

M Hemming (Director of Finance and Assets), G Britten (Director of Legal and Governance), C Bell (Head of Service Development),

F Pearson (Consultation and Communication Manager) and the member of the public left the meeting.

EX16 SUCCESSION PLANNING – BUSINESS CONTINUITY AND RESILIENCE

The Committee considered the report and appendices, details of which were noted in the confidential/exempt minutes.

EX17 INJURY PENSION OVERPAYMENTS

The Committee considered the report and appendices, details of which were noted in the confidential/exempt minutes.

EX18 SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM RESTRUCTURE: DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND ASSETS AND DEPUTY CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

The Committee considered the report and appendices, details of which were noted in the confidential/exempt minutes.

EX19 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Committee noted that the date of the next Executive Committee meeting would be held on Wednesday 5 February 2020 at 10.00am.

THE CHAIRMAN CLOSED THE MEETING AT 11.22 AM