

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE BUCKINGHAMSHIRE AND MILTON KEYNES  
FIRE AUTHORITY HELD REMOTELY ON WEDNESDAY 10 JUNE 2020 AT 11.00 AM

**Present:** Councillors Carroll, Christensen (part), Clarke OBE, Cole, Exon (part), Hopkins, Hussain, Lambert, Mallen (part) Marland, McCall, McLean (part), Mills, Minns, Stuchbury and Walsh

**Officers:** J Thelwell (Chief Fire Officer), M Osborne (Deputy Chief Fire Officer), G Britten (Director of Legal and Governance), M Hemming (Director of Finance and Assets), D Norris (Head of Service Delivery), C Bell (Head of Service Development), S Gowanlock (Corporate Planning Manager), A Stunell (Head of Human Resources) J Humphrey (Station Commander HR Projects) and K Nellist (Democratic Services Officer)

**Apologies:** Councillor Hall

Live webcast broadcast: [https://buckinghamshire-public-i.tv/core/portal/webcast\\_interactive/488697](https://buckinghamshire-public-i.tv/core/portal/webcast_interactive/488697)

The Director of Legal and Governance confirmed the webcast was live.

**FA01 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

(Councillor Hopkins in the Chair)

Councillor Hopkins gave a roll call of Members, who provided their names when asked.

It was proposed and seconded that Councillor Clarke OBE be elected Chairman of the Fire Authority for 2020/21.

RESOLVED –

That Councillor Clarke OBE be elected Chairman of the Authority for 2020/21.

(Councillor Clarke OBE in the Chair)

**FA02 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN**

It was moved and seconded that Councillor Hopkins be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Fire Authority for 2020/21.

RESOLVED –

That Councillor Hopkins be appointed Vice-Chairman of the Authority for 2020/21.

**FA03 MINUTES**

RESOLVED –

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Fire Authority held on 12 February 2020, be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

**FA04 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman announced that:

She wished to thank the Buckinghamshire Council Members that had not been reselected to serve on the Fire Authority for the coming year, Noel Brown, Charlie Clare, Anita Cranmer (Vice Chairman – Overview and Audit Committee), Netta Glover, Brian Roberts, Jean Teesdale (Lead Member Health Safety and Corporate Risk), and with special thanks for David Watson (Chairman Overview and Audit Committee). She welcomed the six

new Conservative Members from Buckinghamshire Council, Andrew Cole, Gary Hall, Mahboob Hussain, Wendy Mallen, Tim Mills, Liz Walsh and one new Labour Member Robin Stuchbury.

On 7 May 2020, the Blue Light Hub in Milton Keynes was handed over to the Authority following practical completion of the building. There was still some outstanding work to be done on a section of the car park, but work was now well underway to prepare and test the main building in advance of it becoming operational. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the decision had been made not to proceed with the decked car park and the fit-out of the top floor at the current time. However, the car park would be constructed with the appropriate elevation and footings to allow an upper deck to be installed with the minimum amount of disruption in future. A full evaluation of the cost and benefits, both to the Authority and the wider community, would be presented to a future meeting of the Authority. It was anticipated that our service would start operating from the new facility from 30 June 2020. The police and ambulance service would begin operating from the site once the remaining section of the car park had been fully completed, which was forecast for Autumn 2020.

The Chairman also wished to put on record her thanks and the thanks of the Members to all the staff at Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service for the splendid work they had undertaken during the Covid-19 pandemic.

(Councillors Exon and McLean joined the meeting)  
(Councillor Mallen left the meeting)

## **FA05**

### **MEMBERSHIP OF THE AUTHORITY**

The Authority noted that the following Members had been appointed by the Constituent Authorities to serve on the Fire Authority for 2020/21:

#### Buckinghamshire Council (11)

Councillors Carroll, Christensen, Clarke OBE, Cole, Hall, Hussain, Lambert, Mallen, Mills, Stuchbury and Walsh

#### Milton Keynes Council (6)

Councillors Exon, Hopkins, Marland, McCall, McLean and Minns

## **FA06**

### **COMMITTEE MATTERS**

- (a) Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990

The Authority noted that the allocation of seats on the Authority was:

(i) Conservative Group:	10 seats	(58.82%)
(ii) Liberal Democrat Group:	4 seats	(23.53%)
(iii) Labour Group:	3 seats	(17.65%)

- (b) Committee Matters – Committee Appointments

RESOLVED-

That the following Committees be appointed and seats be allocated, as follows:

(a) Executive Committee (8 members):

- (i) Conservatives – 5 seats
- (ii) Liberal Democrats – 2 seats
- (iii) Labour – 1 seat

(b) Overview and Audit Committee (9 members):

- (i) Conservatives – 5 seats
- (ii) Liberal Democrats – 2 seat
- (iii) Labour – 2 seat

RESOLVED

1. That the following Members be appointed to the Executive Committee:

Councillors Clarke OBE, Hall, Hopkins, Lambert, McCall, McLean, Marland and Walsh in accordance with the Group Leader's wishes.

2. That the following Members be appointed to the Overview and Audit Committee:

Councillors Carroll, Christensen, Cole, Exon, Hussain, Mallen, Mills, Minns and Stuchbury in accordance with the Group Leader's wishes.

## **FA07**

### **CALENDAR OF MEETINGS**

The Authority considered proposed dates for its meetings and meetings of its committees during 2020/21.

RESOLVED –

1. That meetings of the Authority be held on Wednesday 14 October 2020, 9 December 2020, Wednesday 17 February 2021 and Wednesday 16 June 2021, all at 11 a.m.
2. That meetings of the Executive Committee be held on Wednesday 15 July 2020, Wednesday 16 September 2020, Wednesday 18 November 2020, Wednesday 10 February 2021 and Wednesday 24 March 2021, all at 10 a.m.
3. That meetings of the Overview and Audit Committee be held on Wednesday 22 July 2020, Wednesday 11 November 2020, and Wednesday 17 March 2021, all at 10 a.m.

## **FA08**

### **APPOINTMENT OF REPRESENTATIVES TO OUTSIDE BODIES**

The Authority considered the appointment of representatives to outside bodies having received nominations which were seconded:

RESOLVED –

1. That Councillor Clarke OBE be appointed to attend the Local Government Association Annual Conference.

2. That Councillor Clarke OBE be appointed as the Authority's representative (and Councillor Hopkins as the Standing Deputy) to the Local Government Association Fire Commission.
3. That Councillor Clarke OBE be appointed as the Authority's representative (and Councillor Hopkins as the Standing Deputy) to the Local Government Association Annual Fire Conference.
4. That Councillor Clarke OBE be appointed as the Authority's representative (and Councillor Hopkins as the Standing Deputy) to the Combined Fire Authorities Conference.
5. That Councillors Clarke OBE and Lambert be appointed as the Authority's representatives on the Thames Valley Fire Control Service – Joint Committee.
6. That Councillors Carroll and Hopkins be nominated as substitute members on the Thames Valley Fire Control Service – Joint Committee.

**FA09**

**LEAD MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES**

RESOLVED –

That Members be appointed as Lead Members for 2020/21 as follows having received nominations which were seconded:

Responsibility	Lead Member
Service Delivery, Protection and Collaboration	Councillor Clarke OBE
People, Equality and Diversity and Assurance	Councillor Lambert
Finance and Assets, Information Security and IT	Councillor Hopkins
Health and Safety and Corporate Risk	Councillor McLean

**FA10**

**2020-2025 CORPORATE PLAN**

The Corporate Planning Manager advised Members, that as they would have seen from the cover paper and Appendix 1, the main purpose of the Corporate Plan was to shape and schedule the programme of work needed to develop and implement the proposals contained within the Authority's Public Safety Plan (PSP). The most recent of these, covering the five-year period through to March 2025, was approved by the Authority at its meeting on 12 February 2020. This was following, and with regard to, the outcomes of an eight-week public consultation carried out in the last quarter of 2019. The draft plan at Appendix 1 also reflects the exercise of the discretion granted to the Chief Fire Officer by the Authority at the February meeting to determine the sequencing and timing of the work required to deliver on the strategic priorities set out in the PSP.

The Corporate Planning Manager advised Members that consolidated into the draft Corporate Plan were the 'Areas for Improvement' identified by the HMICFRS following their first inspection of the Service last year. The findings of which were reported to the Authority at the exceptional meeting held on 23 January 2020 and were also the subject of an action plan presented to the Authority on 12 February 2020. Furthermore, there had been a review of the draft Corporate Plan in light of the current Covid-19 pandemic and modifications made to try to anticipate the potential impact of it.

The Corporate Planning Manager advised Members that as they would have seen, it was structured around a framework of Strategic Objectives and Enablers. The first three objectives related to prevention, protection and response in managing risks in the community as required by the National Framework. The fourth was about ensuring that it was done in a way that ensured value for money and compliance with regulatory and good practice standards. There were also a range of Outcome Measures shown that were used to determine overall progress in relation to the objectives. These were reported annually to the Overview and Audit Committee, usually in November via the Annual Performance Monitor Report. There were also three strategic enablers that related to people, information systems, and assets and equipment in supporting delivery of the strategic objectives.

The Corporate Planning Manager also advised Members that the potential risks to the ability to deliver the plan were set out at page 45, together with how the Service proposed to control these. The Service was entering a period of great uncertainty as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, not least in relation to the economic outlook, which would have potential implications for, amongst other things, the nature and level of risk in the community and also the Authority's revenue funding base which was currently being considered, with a view to capturing it as part of the financial strategy that was proposed to be presented to the Authority in October. Given the degree of uncertainty that was likely to persist for some time to come, the plan would be under regular review and, in addition to reporting on progress via the Overview and Audit Committee, would be brought back to Members should any significant revisions be required. As Members would have also seen, a scheduled mid-term review of the 2020-25 PSP, was due to take place in 2022/23 although this could be brought forward if conditions required it.

A Member stated that some other fire and rescue authorities included a period of public consultation for their Corporate Plan, the Member presumed it was a discretionary process, but asked why the Authority had not done so, although with the current situation, finding a period of 8 or 12 weeks to consult would have been very challenging.

The Corporate Planning Manager responded that the Authority had been fortunate that it had managed to get its PSP finalised before the current situation. Some fire and rescue authorities were in a period of abeyance and discretion had been given by government to defer those plans because of the challenges around conducting a proper consultation. With regard to the issue of consulting on the Corporate Plan, the National Framework required that fire and rescue authorities consult on their Integrated Risk Management Plans (Public Safety Plan) but does not set out any requirements for documents such as the Corporate Plan. Although the draft Corporate Plan document itself had not been the subject of an external public consultation, many of the issues and proposals that it builds on, were included in the Public Safety Plan public consultation that was carried out towards the end of last year.

A Member asked if the Authority was satisfied that all the projected forecasts, against the risks, were accommodated for, and was the Authority satisfied that the responsibilities to meet all its financial obligations were accounted for, and the closing of Bletchley and Great Holm Fire Stations and moving to the Blue Light Hub would not increase

risk; and, with the background of the pandemic, would anything have to be changed, modified, improved or altered.

The Chief Fire Officer advised that more work had been commissioned looking forward at the economic issues facing the Authority. That work would be undertaken in conjunction with the Local Resilience Forum and community impact assessments would be completed, to assess the broader position across the Thames Valley. The work would look at how changes in the economic circumstances would affect the community in terms of business, how that would affect the changes in risk within the community and how that would link into increased vulnerability within communities. Also being looked at, would be the increase in community tensions following the terrible death of George Floyd. An assessment would be undertaken in the coming weeks and months, which would then be compared to the current Corporate Plan, to see if they align. It may be that the priorities within the Corporate Plan would change in view of the current circumstances.

Members thanked the Corporate Planning Manager for the Corporate Plan and the update regarding Covid-19.

RESOLVED –

That the 2020-2025 Corporate Plan be approved by the Authority.

**FA11**

#### **THE AUTHORITY'S PEOPLE STRATEGY 2016-2020 ANNUAL UPDATE**

The Station Commander HR Projects advised Members that this report was a final update on the achievements to date of the Authority's People Strategy 2016-2020, which was approved by Members in 2016. The People Strategy was currently being revised to ensure it aligned to the new Public Safety Plan and Corporate Plan. The revised strategy would be presented to the Authority in October 2020. The People Strategy demonstrated how the Authority captures the commitment and professionalism of all its people to achieve the vision, aim, priorities and objectives of the Public Safety Plan and Corporate Plan.

The Strategy had recently been incorporated into the new Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service website which facilitated a single point of entry for those interested in its work, which enabled an easy link to published news and updates from across the organisation. The People Strategy continued to be maintained and updated through stakeholder engagement. There were five key areas supporting the overarching People Strategy, each had its own strategy these were: Equality, Diversity and Inclusion; Employee Engagement; Resourcing; Talent Management and Employee Well-being. The main page on the website detailed the strategy's Key Challenges, Assumptions, Employee proposition, Our Vision, Aim and priorities, and culminates at the bottom with links to the five key areas.

The Station Commander HR Projects advised Members that in January 2020, as part of the employee engagement project, the Authority carried out a follow up employee culture survey to the 2017 survey. The results were promising and provided an insight into the strengths and areas for opportunity. The results were currently being used to set actions at both service and team level. The results would also be utilised to inform the revised People Strategy and provide evidence for future HMI Inspections.

The Station Commander HR Projects advised Members that with regard to resourcing, there had been a number of targeted recruitment campaigns

via social media and the DAX platform, attendance at many career fairs, all to encourage and attract more diverse applicants. The Authority had recruited some 84 apprentices across operational and support services to date, and recently revised its apprenticeship model to ensure it remained attractive and in line with other services. There were 17 new operational apprenticeship recruits, who were currently in training at the Fire Service College, to ensure the Authority was fully prepared for the impacts of the court of appeal pensions ruling.

Succession planning was undertaken as part of the performance management process and included a rolling organisational training needs analysis. The Authority's talent management programme continued to ensure replenished development pools at each level, resulting in staff with the required skills to fulfil the roles when needed. A pilot scheme to identify and develop future leaders in the service was successfully employed and would be utilised later this year to validate the process.

A network of Mental Health Champions and First Aiders, who all received the appropriate training, was established. All Champions and First Aiders had been issued with a green mental health awareness ribbon pin so that employees could identify them and approach them for support where necessary. The Well-being Group successfully obtained funding for the Critical Incident Stress Debriefing team to be refreshed and retrained in trauma support which took place in November 2019. There were now 20 members of the trauma support team that could be called upon to deliver debriefs for employees who have been exposed to traumatic events.

A Member asked what was being done to attract more women into the service/apprenticeships.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer advised Members that Her Majesty's Inspectorate had commended the Authority on the work it had done, especially around social media and reaching out to underrepresented groups within its community, but it was work in progress. There were separate 'have a go' days, engagement with colleges, and many other areas, to help recruit people from underrepresented backgrounds. The Authority was doing well compared to many other fire and rescue services, but it would continue to work on this.

RESOLVED –

That the content of the report be noted.

## **FA12**

### **EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION OBJECTIVES 2020-2025**

The Lead Member for People and Equality and Diversity and Assurance thanked the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (ED&I) Group for their expertise, knowledge and willingness in bringing the report and objectives together.

The Head of Human Resources advised Members that this report was an update on the progress to set the objectives for the future, which aligned to the Public Safety Plan and Corporate Plan 2020-2025. In late 2019, employees from across the service met as the ED&I Group and looked at tangible 6, 12 and 18 month objectives and the action plan at Annex B was formed. There were regular monthly reviews to see what had been completed, what was in progress and what was still needed to be done to ensure the priorities were identified. For example, over the weekend a

communication was sent out to the organisation regarding 'Black Lives Matter'.

The Head of Human Resources advised Members that the Authority undertook a Culture Survey in early 2020 and that showed that the Service values and promotes employee diversity, 78% of the respondents were in favour: this was a marked increase of 17% from the last survey. Also, 79% of the 377 respondents were happy that they were treated with respect as individuals.

The Head of Human Resources also wanted to highlight the HMICFRS Inspection report People Pillar. The Service was commended on ED&I and was given a good rating. An improvement plan had been written and the Service strives to continue with the areas it did well on, to make sure there was continued improvement and also the areas where it may need some development.

The Head of Human Resources advised Members that the Authority was encouraging staff to disclose their protected characteristics. Members would see in the data that there were areas where employees hadn't disclosed their protected characteristics. Employees tended to when they joined the Service, but if there were any changes, they were not so willing to update them. The ED&I Group would be carrying out a piece of work, to find out why people didn't want to disclose this information, and to encourage them to do so, so they were supported and represented.

A Member asked why the Authority had to report on pay equality and was advised that it was a statutory requirement to publish the gender pay information in March every year. The Authority previously hadn't recruited for over 7 years and over the last few years when recruiting Apprentices, it was working hard to reach all the different communities through different mediums.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer advised Members that the gender pay gap and equal pay were different. Gender pay was around average pay, and the potential earning of different sexes, and equal pay was across all roles. Just because there was a gender pay gap, didn't mean that males and females were not paid the same for the same role. Firefighters earn exactly the same salary irrespective of their background.

A Member asked that given recent events, was there equality impact assessment training available for employees and also Members of the Fire Authority, and was advised that this was one of the objectives, and the equality impact assessment guidance which had been refreshed, would be published.

A Member asked that given Milton Keynes Council's focus on fostering and encouraging people to foster, was there an allowance available and were incentives available for employees who wanted to foster and was advised that the Maternity, Adoption and Parental Leave entitlements procedure had recently been refreshed and the Authority went over and above the statutory requirements.

A Member asked under the 'Black Lives Matter' campaign whether the Authority needed to change its strategy or take any special measures to improve its services and was advised that as this had happened very quickly, there had been communication with the whole organisation asking employees if they wanted to get involved with the ED&I group as this was the best way to help make a difference. It hadn't changed the Authority's strategy, as it was already within its strategy.

RESOLVED -



1. That the contents of the report and workforce diversity data in Appendix 1 be noted.
2. That the EDI objectives for 2020-2025 in Annex A and the six, twelve and eighteen month objectives in Annex B be approved.

**FA13**

**CONSULTATION BY MINISTER OF STATE FOR BUILDING SAFETY, FIRE AND COMMUNITIES**

The Director of Legal and Governance advised Members that as set out in the short cover report, the purpose of this report was to apprise the Authority, in its role as the governance body for Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service, of a letter received by the Chairman and Chief Fire Officer from the recently appointed Minister with responsibility for Fire. The Minister's letter, seeks views from the consultees listed in his letter on the recommendations made by Sir Tom Winsor, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector for Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services, in his 'State of Fire and Rescue' report which was published on 15 January 2020. The letter seeks collective contributions from the bodies listed in his letter but also invites views from individual fire and rescue services before the end of June 2020. Sir Tom Winsor's four recommendations were set out in the report. The recommendations pose fundamental and existential questions for the fire and rescue sector to wrestle with. Such as what was the role of a fire and rescue service and what was the role of its employees; whether the national pay negotiation machinery for firefighters needed to be overhauled; whether legislation was needed to enshrine the demarcation of roles between a fire and rescue authority and its Chief Fire Officer; and finally, whether a code of ethics should be produced for all fire and rescue authority employees.

A Member asked for clarification on the second recommendation in Sir Tom Winsor's report and was advised that it was asking for a general view on pay and that the consultees included the Fire Brigades Union and other representative bodies.

RESOLVED –

1. That the content of the letter from Lord Greenhalgh dated 14 May 2020 (Annex A) be noted; and
2. that the Chief Fire Officer be authorised to submit a response after consultation with the Group Leaders and Vice Chairman.

**FA14**

**EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

RESOLVED –

It was moved and resolved that the Press and Public be excluded from the meeting by virtue of Paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12a of the Local Government Act 1972, as the report contains information relating to an individual; and Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12a of the Local Government Act 1972 as the report contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of a person; and on these grounds it is considered, at this moment in time, that the need to keep information exempt outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

The Chairman advised viewers of the live webcast that the meeting would now go into private session to hear the report and discuss the recommendations. The vote on the recommendations would be taken in public session and it was estimated that the deliberations may take 30 minutes. Anyone watching the webcast should check back on the webcast at 12.45 pm.

M Osborne (Deputy Chief Fire Officer), D Norris (Head of Service Delivery), C Bell (Head of Service Development), S Gowanlock (Corporate Planning Manager), A Stunell (Head of Human Resources) and J Humphrey (Station Commander HR Projects) left the meeting.

The live webcast was suspended for 30 minutes.

**FA15**

**SUCCESSION PLANNING**

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

At 12.45 pm the Director of Legal and Governance confirmed the webcast had restarted.

An amendment having been proposed and seconded, Members voted on the resolutions below as follows:

	For	Against	Abstained
Carroll	✓		
Clarke OBE	✓		
Cole	✓		
Exon	✓		
Hopkins	✓		
Hussain	✓		
Lambert	✓		
Marland	✓		
McCall	✓		
McLean	✓		
Mills	✓		
Minns	✓		
Stuchbury	✓		
Walsh	✓		

**RESOLVED –**

1. an interim departure from the DCFO Succession Plan (Annex A) until no later than 31 December 2022 be approved; and a paper to be submitted to the Authority before this date to consider all options open to the Authority.
2. the re-engagement of the incumbent DCFO/COO be approved because of operational need for business continuity with regard to part of the COVID-19 recovery programme (while not setting a precedent) in order that an offer of employment be made:
  - a. subject to the following:

- i. a fixed term contract for 2 years to terminate no later than 31/12/2022 (unless terminated by either side on the giving of 3 months' notice); and
  - ii. £125,784 per annum starting salary.
- b. with terms and conditions in accordance with the DCFO's current entitlements and obligations.

THE CHAIRMAN CLOSED THE MEETING AT 12.51 PM