

Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority



Minutes of the Special Meeting of the EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE of the
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE AND MILTON KEYNES FIRE AUTHORITY held on FRIDAY 7
OCTOBER 2022 at 10.00 AM.

Present: Councillors Christensen, Hall, Hopkins, McLean and Rouse (Chairman)

Officers: G Britten (Director of Legal and Governance), A Hussain (Deputy Director of Finance and Assets) A Carter (Head of Technology, Transformation and PMO), S Tuffley (Head of Prevention, Response and Resilience), P Mould (Area Commander - Industrial Action), K Nellist (Democratic Services Officer) and C Newman (Data Intelligence Team Manager)

Remotely: M Osborne (Acting Chief Fire Officer), C Bell (Acting Deputy Chief Fire Officer), and A Stunell (Head of Human Resources)

Apologies: Councillors Lambert, Marland (joined meeting remotely) and Walsh

The Chairman advised the Committee that the meeting was being recorded and would be uploaded on to the Authority's YouTube channel after the meeting.

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCWmIXPWAscxpL3vIiv7bh1Q>

(At the request of the Chairman the meeting observed a minute's silence in memory of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II)

EX12 MINUTES

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Executive Committee held on Wednesday 13 July 2022, be approved, and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

EX13 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MINUTES

EX09 - The Director of Legal and Governance advised that with regard to the Home Office White Paper Consultation, a response had been submitted on behalf of the Authority and circulated to the Group Leaders.

EX10 - The Director of Legal and Governance advised Members that Operational KPI's were on the agenda for today's meeting.

EX14 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

None.

EX15 (A) SUPPORTING OPERATION LONDON BRIDGE

The Head of Prevention, Response and Resilience advised Members that following the announcement on 8 September 2022, that Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II had passed away, a statement was released on the same evening, from the Chairman, on the Authority's intranet and internet pages. The website was altered to reflect the period of national mourning and the Union flags were flown at half-mast.

A small team was established internally to coordinate the activity associated with operation London Bridge (the Queen's funeral) and Parallel Bridge, which focused on supporting wider associated ceremonies, business as usual activity and additional support to colleagues in and around Windsor. Station Commander Resilience and Business Continuity, the Communications Officer, and Station Commander Operational Preparedness and BA, were the initial core members of that team.

Following a request from the multi-agency Gold team overseeing operation London Bridge, Station Commander Resilience and Business Continuity was nominated to provide Multi Agency Information Cell support to the strategic meetings for London Bridge over the next two weeks.

As a mark of respect, all public meetings scheduled during the period of national mourning were postponed, as was the open day at Broughton fire station and attendance at the MK Pride event. The Chief Fire Officer represented the Service at the County Proclamation Ceremony in Aylesbury and the proclamation event held in Milton Keynes on Sunday 11 September.

On the weekend before the state funeral, the Head of Technology, Transformation and PMO and Station Commander Protection Central represented the Service at church services of thanksgiving in Aylesbury and Milton Keynes. The Aylesbury service was also supported by members of the Ceremonial Team. Staff from across the Service participated in the national moment of reflection, when the nation held a minute's silence on September 18 at 8pm, the night before the Queen's funeral. In the days leading up to the funeral, staff also supported colleagues across the Thames Valley on the ground in Windsor.

The Head of Prevention, Response and Resilience advised Members that the Service received a request from Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) for Fire Safety Protection Officers to be

deployed to complete additional fire safety audits. There was also a request for Prevention teams to provide additional support in and around Windsor. Members of the Prevention team Community Safety Coordinators, volunteered to assist in providing Prevention advice to the community of Windsor on the weekend. The Community Safety Coordinators worked in Windsor on the Saturday prior to the funeral, delivering community safety messages and advice to the public, as well as assisting in two medical emergencies.

The Service also received a request from Thames Valley Police (TVP) Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, and Explosive (CBRNe) Commander to provide a Multi Agency Scene Assessment Team (MASAT) and a Detection, Identification and Monitoring (DIM) provision. This support commenced from the Thursday through to the end of the funeral, with Group Commander Prevention and Resilience being deployed to Windsor for the duration, alongside colleagues from Oxfordshire, Berkshire, TVP, SCAS HART, and other teams coordinated through national resilience.

A Business Fire Safety Inspector, was also utilised for his technical skills as an Airwave tactical advisor, where he formed part of a multi-agency communications cell at Milton Keynes Police station, supporting Operation London Bridge.

Furthermore, the Acting Deputy Chief Fire Officer was called up to participate in the state funeral marching procession, as a representative of the Civilian Services. The Acting Deputy Chief Fire Officer was deployed into London for rehearsal from the Tuesday before the funeral and marched in the procession behind the sovereign alongside colleagues from the Merchant Navy, Royal Fleet Auxiliary, the Maritime Coastguard Agency, Police Services, His Majesty's Prison Services, Ambulance Service, British Red Cross, St John Ambulance, Royal Voluntary Service and Cadet forces.

The Chairman thanked all those who were involved for their fantastic work over this period, and said it was a tremendous honour for the Acting Deputy Chief Fire Officer to represent the Service at the funeral itself.

The Vice Chairman wished to place on record his appreciation to Buckinghamshire Council for its organisation of the Proclamation of His Majesty King Charles III in Aylesbury Market Square.

(B) SUMMER PRESSURES

The Acting Deputy Chief Fire Officer advised Members that this was an interim update as there was a report going to the Fire Authority meeting on 12 October 2022 and also as the Service was still half way through the debriefing process. July and August were some of the most

demanding times the Service had ever faced in terms of the pressures placed on it for operational response across the whole of Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes and extending across the Thames Valley and wider areas. Fifteen fire and rescue services declared major incidents (including Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service). A learning review of command would be carried out and any learnings or changes necessary to improve the Service, applied. Debriefing exercises would be held for all staff involved. The Local Resilience Forums were also gathering information for their own learnings. Once all the information was gathered, a full and thorough report would be brought back to the Authority. Some of the areas being looked at were preparedness and resilience, response, equipment, fleet, welfare of staff, communications both internally and externally, health and safety and prevention activity.

The Chairman asked if the learnings from the National Fire Chief Council would be integrated into the Service.

The Acting Deputy Chief Fire Officer, advised that the Service was feeding into learnings locally, regionally and nationally.

A Members asked if there was a welfare vehicle for these types of incidents, or was the Service planning anything.

The Acting Deputy Chief Fire Officer advised that the Service had a provision, but it needed to broaden the awareness of this and enhance the current provision and educate all staff about it.

The Chairman and Vice Chairman both gave their thanks on behalf of all the Authority Members to all staff for their fantastic efforts during this time.

EX16

WORKFORCE PLANNING UPDATE

The Lead Member for People, Equality and Diversity and Assurance introduced the report and advised Members that recruitment was going very well. There were 20 new joiners to Wholetime, and the Service was concentrating on the four key On Call Stations for retained staff.

The Head of Technology, Transformation and PMO advised Members that following a reset of the workforce planning brief, a range of planning measures and detailed plans were now being reviewed monthly, with action taken where appropriate. The measures focused on ranged from joining and leaving the service and promotion. The plan also showed how the Service would achieve its operational establishment by the end of the year.

The Chairman advised Members that one of his top three priorities was to increase the headcount up to full capacity.

The Chairman asked that on the plan, where it showed the on station staff would be above establishment by March 2023, it showed some assumptions around attrition, was this at the right level.

The Head of Technology, Transformation and PMO advised that both the retirement profile, and leavers profile was taken into account. This does change when other Services go out for recruitment, but it had been factored in where possible.

A Member was very impressed with the 'have a go day' at Olney Fire Station, and with the 20 potential new on call firefighters who attended.

RESOLVED –

That the Workforce Planning Update be noted.

EX17

BUDGET MONITORING REPORT APRIL 2022-JULY 2022

The Deputy Director of Finance and Assets advised Members that the report in Appendix A set out the Authority's revenue and capital spending position as at 31 July 2022, together with the projected outturn position for the financial year. The budget of £33,480m compared to the forecast outturn of £33,763m gave a forecast year end overspend of £0.283m. Furthermore, the level of funding was showing a favourable variance of £0.418m which had resulted in an overall net underspend of £0.134m against the expenditure budget. Since the production of this report, there had been subsequent events that had resulted in the most recent forecast underspend increase to £847k, an increase of £713k.

The Deputy Director of Finance and Assets advised Members that the key events that had resulted in the increase in underspend were the announcement of the energy price cap for non-domestic customers had reduced the forecast spend for the year on gas and electricity by £400k. Previously forecasting utilities to cost in the region of £1.2m prior to the energy price cap being announced. The price cap was only for six months and was likely to stay in place for vulnerable industries beyond this point. There had also been a sharp increase in investment returns from the treasury activities. At the start of the financial year, projected returns were £30k with the base rate being under 1%. The recent increase in the Bank of England base rate had increased the forecast income from treasury management investments to £250k. The remainder of the increase was predominantly due to higher operational leavers than originally forecast, as well as some new support staff vacancies.

The Chairman updated Members where the Service was in terms of the pay award. The budget forecast a 2% pay award, but 2% had been rejected by the Fire Brigades Union (FBU). A revised pay award offer

was made this week by the NJC Employers of 5%. The Chairman advised that this Authority could afford 5% this year, but it would create some real challenges for the future if there was no additional funding or precept flexibility. The Home Office had indicated that it couldn't provide additional funding. The revised offer of 5% had been rejected by the FBU who were seeking further consultation with their members.

The Acting Chief Fire Officer advised Members that the FBU were looking to have a ten-day consultation period with their members, followed by a two week ballot process (online ballot) to see if it would be acceptable to the membership or not. Looking at the original timeline for industrial action (five weeks), this would increase it by another four weeks.

A Member asked what the Service had paid for its energy provision in the previous financial year.

The Deputy Director of Finance and Assets advised that last year it was in the region of £300-£350k. The Authority had budgeted for just over £500k, and actual costs were going to be over £700k this year. Moving forward as part of the MTFP process, the budget would be set at around £1.3m for next year, as costs were not expected to come down anytime soon.

A Member asked if there was an issue getting red fleet as deadlines kept slipping. Was the Authority contracted at the original price or could prices increase.

The Deputy Director of Finance and Assets advised that currently the Authority was contracted at the original price, but it had already been warned by some suppliers that there was a risk of significant price increases.

RESOLVED –

1. That the provisional outturn forecast for the Authority as of 31 July 2022 be noted.

It being proposed and seconded:

2. That the updates to the provisional outturn forecast be noted.

EX18

THAMES VALLEY FIRE CONTROL SERVICE SYSTEM CONTRACTS AND HARDWARE REFRESH

The Head of Prevention, Response and Resilience advised Members that the Thames Valley Fire Control utilised the Vision mobilising system from when it was established in 2015 and that contract had a review point at year seven, with an opportunity to break or extend. The mobilising system worked in conjunction with the DS3000 Integrated Command and Control (ICCs) System, which had a maintenance and support contract which expires in April 2023.

The Head of Prevention, Response and Resilience advised Members that both were critical to the safe and effective running of the system, and it was desirable that both the Vision system and ICCs System were aligned. It was complicated by the sale of SSS from Capita to NEC Software Solutions UK, which commenced in 2021. This acquisition was now subject to an investigation by the Competitions and Markets Authority (CMA). The CMA investigation does not include the Vision Mobilising System but does include ICCs system. The recommendation was to extend the Vision contract and tender for the ICCs contract.

A Member asked that if BT emergency call handlers took industrial action, whether provisions were in place.

The Head of Prevention, Response and Resilience advised that he had been informed by TVFCS that BT had provided assurance that they had contingency measures in place and they would continue to provide a 999 service.

RESOLVED –

1. That Oxfordshire County Council and Royal Berkshire Fire Authority be authorised to extend the Vision mobilising system maintenance and support contract for five years, from 10 April 2023 to 10 April 2028.
2. That in respect of the above, the Chief Fire Officer be instructed to request that the contracting authorities negotiate pricing options including those dependent on variations to the break clause exercisable by them in the current contract.
3. That Royal Berkshire Fire Authority be authorised to tender for a five-year maintenance and support contract, for the ICCS DS3000 from 10 April 2023 to 10 April 2028 (with options to extend for two years).
4. That the decision by officers to place the order for the hardware refresh of the Vision mobilising system be formally endorsed on behalf of the Authority.

EX19

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT – Q1 2022/23

The Chairman advised it was important that Members had visibility of key performance indicators that would support them in their role of scrutinising and reviewing the Service. Work was undertaken between the Senior Management Team and Lead Members to look at what those measures would be. This was still a work in progress.

The Head of Technology, Transformation and PMO advised Members this was the first report covering the Service's Performance Measures and showed a range of measures that had been built with input from both staff and Members. Three measures had been highlighted, as good performance and areas that needed focus. Deliberate fires to non-domestic premises, fire and wellness visits were ones to focus on

and serious accidental dwelling fires was a positive result. The measures continued to be developed and refined with updates being provided quarterly to Members.

The Chairman asked for further information regarding the fire and wellness visits as this linked back to the HMICFRS report.

The Head of Prevention, Response and Resilience advised that it was an area for improvement from the HMICFRS report and there was now an Improvement Plan in place, which had come through the Overview and Audit Committee. The Prevention Team had been working hard to restructure and regroup. There had been some recruitment challenges, but all positions had now been filled and they would be at full establishment. The improvement plan was progressing nicely, and the Prevention Strategy would be presented to Members at the Fire Authority meeting on 12 October. The volume of visits was not where it needed to be yet, but the numbers were starting to go up. The targeting of high risk and vulnerable people was going extremely well.

The Chairman advised that whilst the volume of visits was important, the balance of getting to the people who were vulnerable was very critical to get right.

A Member asked how groups of people i.e., living in sheltered housing, were targeted.

The Head of Prevention, Response and Resilience advised that people over 80 were a prime target and also people living in high rise buildings.

The Data Intelligence Team Manager explained to Members how people were targeted. The whole of Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes was broken down into 100/200m squares, and the number of people over 80 living in those squares was counted. The highest density areas were focussed on.

A Member asked that in terms of local knowledge, whether the Service engaged with Buckinghamshire Council and Milton Keynes Council's housing departments.

The Data Intelligence Team Manager advised that the Service did, and it also used a gazetteer which was a national address book that informed the Service of every property type. There was also work being undertaken with the Councils to make data sharing easier.

The Head of Prevention, Response and Resilience advised that the Prevention Team had a very strong relationship with Milton Keynes Housing Department and met with them weekly to discuss any issues. The Service was also sent a monthly list of all oxygen users, so they were also targeted.

RESOLVED –

That the Performance measures for 2022/23 are noted.

EX20

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Committee noted that the date of the next Executive Committee meeting would be held on Wednesday 16 November 2022 at 10.00am in Meeting Room 1.

THE CHAIRMAN CLOSED THE MEETING AT 10.44 AM.