



Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BUCKINGHAMSHIRE AND MILTON KEYNES FIRE AUTHORITY
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 9 OCTOBER 2024 AT 11 AM.

Present: Councillors Adoh, Bagge, Bailey, Carroll, Chapple OBE, Hussain OBE (part), Lambert, McLean (Vice Chairman), Rouse (Chairman), Stuchbury, Sullivan and Walsh

Officers: L Harrison (Chief Fire Officer), S Tuffley (Assistant Chief Fire Officer), G Britten (Director of Legal and Governance), A Carter (Head of Technology, Transformation and PMO), R Davidson (Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development), A Stunell (Head of Human Resources), D Buchanan (Head of Protection, Assurance and Development), P Scanes (Head of Prevention and CRMP), C Newman (Data Intelligence Team Manager), and K Nellist (Democratic Services Officer)

Online: M Hemming (Director of Finance and Assets), A Hussain (Deputy Director of Finance and Assets),

Apologies: Councillors Banks, Exon, Hall, Khan and Lancaster

The Chairman advised that although members of the public were able to attend and observe in person, following the meeting, a video recording would be uploaded to the Authority's YouTube Channel.

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

FA31 (a) MINUTES

RESOLVED –

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Fire Authority held on 12 June 2024, be approved, and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

(b) MINUTES

RESOLVED –

That the Minutes of the Extraordinary meeting of the Fire Authority held on 11 September 2024, be approved, and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

FA32 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS

MINUTES – 12 JUNE 2024 - FA18 – SAFETY CENTRE IMPACT REPORT – The chairman asked for a visit to the Safety Centre be arranged for Members – This had been arranged for Thursday 21 November at 2pm and Members had been invited.

FA19 – PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT – Q4 2023/24 – The Assistant Chief Fire Officer advised that this work had not yet been addressed but tolerance levels would be looked at and brought back to a future meeting.

The Chairman confirmed that officers were working through the FBU’s Manifesto. The FBU representative would be invited to the December Fire Authority meeting and the progress the Service had made would be discussed.

MINUTES – 11 SEPTEMBER 2024 - FA27 - HIS MAJESTY’S INSPECTORATE OF CONSTABULARY AND FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES (HMICFRS) – VALUES AND CULTURE UPDATE - The Head of Human Resources advised Members that a positive action plan was carried out for the last cohort of apprentices, details of which were presented to the last Authority meeting but would be shared again with the Member – this has been shared with the Member.

FA28 - HIS MAJESTY’S INSPECTORATE OF CONSTABULARY AND FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES (HMICFRS) – STANDARDS OF BEHAVIOUR - The Vice Chairman asked about number 13b (by 1 February 2025, fire and rescue authorities and chief fire officers should make sure all service managers and members of fire and rescue authorities who hear appeals receive appropriate training) and what type of training would be available to Members - The Head of Human Resources advised that if procedures are introduced that require Members involvement in appeals, training would be provided.

FA33 DISCLOSURES OF INTERESTS

None.

FA34 CHAIRMAN’S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman announced that the Authority welcomes Councillor James Lancaster onto the Authority who has been appointed by Milton Keynes City Council to replace Councillor Hannah O’Neill who has stepped down from her position on the Authority.

On 23 September 2024 Ronnie Davidson joined the Strategic Management Board as the Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development. Ronnie comes with a wealth of public sector experience and is looking forward to working closely with staff across the Service,

along with meeting Members and stakeholders.

The Service has achieved the Gold Standard in the Employers Network for Equality and Inclusion, Talent Inclusion and Diversity Evaluation ENEI TIDE awards. Every year stakeholders from across the Service complete an EDI benchmarking survey and submit evidence to support it. Year on year we have improved; last year we achieved Silver and the three years before that Bronze.

The Service has been ranked 56th in the Top 100 Apprenticeship Employers, the highest position among Fire and Rescue Services in the country. The rankings highlight England's top apprenticeship employers, recognising their dedication to creating opportunities, promoting diversity, and ensuring apprentice success. Our apprenticeships are crucial to our Service as they enable us to build a skilled, diverse workforce that is integral to maintaining the high standards of safety and response our communities rely on. Appearing in the Top 100 Apprenticeship Employers is a significant accolade for us, as it helps future apprentices identify opportunities with leading organisations.

On 3 September the Chief Fire Officer and I were written to by the Rt Hon Dame Diane Johnson DBE MP following the publication of His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services report on their Thematic Inspection into the handling of misconduct. The letter reinforces the need for Chiefs and Chairs of all Fire and Rescue Authorities to use their respective leadership roles to drive change to ensure that all staff can operate in a safe and secure environment. A copy of the letter is attached.

The Chief Fire Officer advised Members that the Service supported what the Prime Minister was looking to achieve, and senior leaders of the organisation would be driving standards of professional behaviour. The organisation took a zero-tolerance approach to bullying and misogyny, and that tolerance would definitely impact the culture that was being driven in Buckinghamshire.

The Long Service Awards Ceremony was held on Thursday 3 October at The Gateway in Aylesbury. The event was well attended with family, friends, the Chairman, Vice Chairman, Chief Fire Officer and members of the senior leadership team along with senior officers, all celebrating the achievements of those receiving their Long Service and Good Conduct medals and Long Service Certificates. The Awards were presented by Countess Howe, His Majesty's Lord Lieutenant of Buckinghamshire, who gave a moving speech highlighting some of the achievements of the

Service.

(Councillor Hussain OBE joined the meeting)

FA35 LATE URGENT ITEM – NEW MEMBER OF THE AUTHORITY

By reason of being notified on the 30 September 2024 of the appointment by Milton Keynes City Council of Councillor James Lancaster to the Authority, the Authority confirms the appointment of Councillor Lancaster onto the Executive Committee in accordance with his Group Leader's wishes.

FA36 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM COMMITTEES

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE – 11 SEPTEMBER 2024

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT – Q1 2024/25

The Data Intelligence Team Manager advised Members that this report was for quarter one 2024/25 (April – June). The report had changed, there was now more commentary to support some of the information in the report, and also provided, were three additional highlighted measures.

The first highlighted measure was the availability of On-Call, this was for newer Members and gave a bit more information as to why the figures looked the way they did, and a look forward as to how they would be addressed.

The second highlighted measure was regarding appraisal completion, highlighting how important they were to the Service, it was a way of thanking staff, but also developing them.

The third highlighted measure was bank shift costs. The establishment numbers were in a good position now, and this had a positive impact on reducing the bank shift costs. In the first quarter alone, the Service was £100k below the same period last year.

A Member asked how the Service would address On-call in 2025/26.

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer advised Members that On-Call would be a big focus in the coming months. In the draft Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) On-Call was something that would be looked at over the next five years. Officers wanted to bring the focus back into the Service after focusing over the last eighteen months on wholetime recruitment and workforce planning which was now in a good place.

The Authority had supported the transformation funding to improve the access to training courses, which would be used to boost recruitment for On-Call firefighters. A lot of

work had been done on social media in targeting and 'have a go' days.

A Member asked if the appraisal completion improved in the next quarter.

The Data Intelligence Team Manager advised that the Service achieved 95% on both objectives and end of year appraisals by the end of Quarter two which was incredible. This had been a main focus which had worked well.

A Member asked about 'non-domestic property fire accidental' in June the figure was red. As the Service no longer responded to automatic fire alarms (AFAs) without charge, was there a correlation between those two things.

The Data Intelligence Team Manager advised that it was hard to get the target tolerances correct as they were very small numbers. The AFA pilot did not start until 8 July, so would not have affected the figures in the first quarter. The AFA pilot was going well, and of all the calls challenged, only one turned out to be a real incident.

A Member asked about fire safety audits as it was still red through the first quarter.

The Head of Protection, Assurance and Development advised that he had introduced the target in light of feedback from HMICFRS, and there not being a reliable risk-based inspection programme in place. A year on, the risk-based inspection target had been met for the very high risk and managing the demand led activity in terms of post fire inspection and complaints, and the number of audits undertaken in the last twelve months had doubled compared to the previous twelve months.

The Chairman asked about the high-risk site information, which was an area the Service had been criticised for in the HMICFRS report, as it was showing a deterioration on level 4 and also was the level 3 target sufficiently stretching.

The Data Intelligence Team Manager advised that for a level 4 high risk site, the Service would visit on an annual basis to familiarise itself with the risk. This relied on crews being available, and not being called out and the buildings staff being able to accommodate the crew as well. Sometimes the delays were not due to the Service, but not being able to get access to the site. It was a high priority, and dashboards were provided to each station so they knew what sites would be coming up. The Service was also moving to a new system, which was a lot more informed.

The Chairman asked about the internal audits measure which had only been green or blue twice in the last twelve

months, was this in hand.

The Director of Finance and Assets advised that to give Members reassurance, it was measuring overdue actions as a percentage of total outstanding actions. In terms of total audit actions, it had come down, but as a percentage it was still relatively high for the ones that were overdue. There might be a new audit report come in with a number of actions on it which would make the figure go back up. These were scrutinised and closed off at every Overview and Audit Committee meeting.

The Chairman asked when Members would be able to see the 2023/24 Carbon Emission figures to measure the current ones against.

The Director of Finance and Assets advised that there had been some issues in getting figures out of the energy company and officers continued to chase them. On a positive note, smart meters had been installed at all sites.

The Chairman asked if it would be possible, where there were measures that were of concern or a highlighted measure, was there a way of bringing a rolling month update, so that Members could understand whether the trend was continuing?

The Data Intelligence Manager advised that he would look into it.

RESOLVED -

That the Performance Management – Q1 2024/25 be noted.

FA37

GRENFELL TOWER INQUIRY – PHASE ONE AND PHASE TWO RECOMMENDATIONS

The Head of Protection, Assurance and Development advised that the Service had invested a significant amount of time and resource to ensure the necessary improvements across 34 recommendations that were reportable to the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) from the Phase one inquiry had been managed. From a protection perspective, the Service had responded to its legislative requirements and officers continued to monitor and regulate high rise buildings as appropriate.

In terms of Phase two, the current understanding of the recommendations was that most of them were directed towards fire and rescue services and were almost confirmation of Phase one actions. They were, for example, asking HMICFRS to look at London Fire Brigade's (LFB) response to Phase one and if LFB had implemented the

things that were required of them at that stage.

There were some other recommendations that were new for consideration. Officers were starting to put some internal governance around the Phase two recommendations and were also awaiting further understanding from the NFCC in terms of reporting requirements nationally.

The Head of Protection, Assurance and Development assured Members that across its service delivery of prevention, protection and response, the Service was doing everything in its gift and responsibility to make buildings safe, and if they do have fires, staff were operationally prepared, and operational competent as best they could be to deal with them.

A Member asked that his thanks be put on record to everyone from Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service in getting the Authority to the position it was in now.

A Member felt that one of the extraordinary things was the provision of water and how London Fire Brigade understood where and what hydrants it had. Where was this Service in determining whether it knew where all its hydrants were for the provision of water.

The Head of Protection, Assurance and Development advised that the Service had already looked at water provision, and the understanding was that there were some training gaps at that time in London Fire Brigade that do not exist in this Service. Adequate training was provided for new starters around water provision and there were also online training packages available for staff that should be renewed when appropriate. The SSRI information that the Service holds on its high-rise premises, maps out exactly where the hydrants were, and indeed also the dry risers should they be needed.

A Member asked about airwave, fire ground radios and communication in high-rise buildings.

The Head of Protection, Assurance and Development advised that communications was one of the complexities around high-rise buildings as found with Grenfell. Airwave and fire ground radios, both had slightly different challenges in high rise buildings. Airwave was the multi agency interaction with Fire Control. Fire ground radios were for commanders and teams on scene. Fire ground radios had been procured in collaboration with Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service, Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service may join in that procurement exercise at a later date. They had functionality to be either analogue or

digital which certainly the science and the evidence at the moment suggests that digital had a greater chance of being successful in those environments.

The Head of Technology, Transformation and PMO advised Members that whilst the emergency services network programme was in a state of hiatus at present, the Service still had close links with the programme team and coverage was one of the most important pieces being looked at. The National programme team were testing various scenarios.

A Member asked about learning and how to implement that learning at the Fire Service College.

The Head of Protection, Assurance and Development advised there was a clear link between operational preparedness, competence and operational learning. Gap analysis had been undertaken against all fire standards that oversee those three response areas and were comfortable where we were as a Service. A lot of work had been undertaken around the Operational Assurance Improvement Plan, and also just launched internally was a consultation on a revised operational learning framework aligned to the fire standard.

A Member asked about risk assessment and who would be informing the residents who live in these buildings, was it something readily done, planned for, how was it done.

The Head of Protection, Assurance and Development advised that hopefully the report gave an indication of some of the prevention work that was being done and continued to be done around this. There was a lot of work done initially after the incident to visit high rise residential properties and offer support to residents and home fire safety checks to residents. Members could also help by signposting people to information on the Service's website about lots of prevention areas and of course, some dedicated to living in high rise properties.

The Chairman noted the Service was supporting a colleague in getting a fire engineering degree but was it a one-person capability at present. Was there a plan of how this would be made an embedded capability with the Service, i.e. more people doing it.

The Head of Protection, Assurance and Development advised that for the size of this Service, it was important to balance demand versus capability. It was a four year commitment for the officer that was currently undertaking it. It was something to look at from a Thames Valley perspective, as there was not the capability in the other

two services.

The Chairman advised was there a growing risk with all these Inquiries and recommendations (Grenfell, Manchester Arena), that lead to check lists and requirements of things the Service had to do, could the Service end up in a form of institutional complacency, that if the checklist had been done, the Service had done what was expected of it. What do officers think that the Authority and the Service should be doing to make sure that as well as working through these inquiries and actions, it also creates the space to step back and challenge itself around what else does the Service need to be worrying about, what was on the risk horizon that had not been seen yet, rather than check list complacency.

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer advised that there had been a lot of action plans that had come through over recent years, and there was a tendency to work through these action plans and there was a vulnerability there. The day after the Grenfell fire, officers were already thinking, what does this mean for the Service, getting to know those risks really forensically and upping the risk in terms of anything over six storeys, looking at equipment, policies and procedures and how staff were trained, how it was assured and how to exercise it. There was a year of thematic exercising, working in high rises. It's about the organisation and the Authority giving staff the confidence to make those decisions.

The Chief Fire Officer advised Members that exercising was a key part of making sure the Service was operationally confident and competent and going forward the ethos was the Service could never be complacent about it, there has got to be a continual learning cycle.

RESOLVED -

That the report be noted.

FA38 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

That the public and press representatives 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 and minutes contain information relating to any individual; and Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as the report and minutes 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.

FA39 EXEMPT MINUTES

RESOLVED –

That the Exempt Minutes of the meeting of the Fire Authority held on 12 June 2024, be approved, and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

FA40 INDUSTRIAL ACTION PLANNING UPDATE

The Authority considered the briefing, details of which were noted in the exempt minutes.

FA41 DEPUTY CHIEF OFFICER APPOINTMENT

The Authority considered the report, and approved the recommendations, details of which were noted in the exempt minutes.

RESOLVED –

That the Authority approve the appointment of Simon Tuffley, to the role of Deputy Chief Fire Officer commencing on 1 November 2024 on the salary package detailed.

FA42 INTERIM SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM (SMT) ARRANGEMENTS

The Authority considered the report, and approved the recommendations, details of which were noted in the exempt minutes.

FA43 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

To note that the next meeting of the Fire Authority will be held on Wednesday 11 December 2024 at 11 am at Milton Keynes City Council, 1 Saxon Gate East, Central Milton Keynes. MK9 3EJ

THE CHAIRMAN CLOSED THE MEETING AT 12.20 PM