



Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority

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

- Present:** Councillors Adoh, Bagge, Bailey, Banks, Chapple OBE, Exon, Hall, Hussain OBE, Khan, Lambert, McLean (Vice Chairman), Stuchbury and Walsh
- Officers:** S Tuffley (Assistant Chief Fire Officer), G Britten (Director of Legal and Governance), M Hemming (Director of Finance and Assets), A Carter (Head of Technology, Transformation and PMO), A Stunell (Head of Human Resources), A Hussain (Deputy Director of Finance and Assets) D Buchanan (Head of Protection, Assurance and Development) and K Nellist (Democratic Services Officer)
- Apologies:** Councillors Carroll, O'Neill, Rouse (Chairman) and Sullivan (Cllr McLean presiding)

Councillor McLean opened the meeting by welcoming everyone to the Extraordinary Meeting of Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority.

Councillor McLean 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>

FA24 DISCLOSURES OF INTERESTS

None.

FA25 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Vice Chairman announced that he was honoured to attend the Firefighters Memorial Service at the National Arboretum earlier this month along with the Assistant Chief Fire Officer and the Ceremonial Team. He felt it was very emotive and in some way uplifting and virtually all other UK fire services were represented.

At the previous meeting on call firefighters were discussed, and he would encourage any Fire Authority Members to go along to one of the have a go days, or awareness evenings, not only would they see people that might potentially become firefighters either on call or wholetime, but could also support the current staff there.

FA26 HIS MAJESTY'S INSPECTORATE OF CONSTABULARY AND

**FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES (HMICFRS) –
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE (BFRS)
2023-2025 UPDATE**

The Head of Technology, Transformation and PMO advised Members that there were three papers being presented today relating to HMICFRS. The reports had been split to ensure they got the focus needed on the important topics covered. The first paper provided an update on the Service's progress against its Action Plan.

In October 2023, the Service received its 2023-2025 Round 3 HMICFRS Inspection report. The report detailed three causes of concern, focused on Prevention, Protection and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (ED&I). An HMICFRS Action Plan was developed and submitted to HMICFRS on 15 November 2023 and presented to the Authority on the 6 December 2023. This report showed progress against the Action Plan. All Prevention and Protection actions were now complete, and two more ED&I actions had been completed. To ensure changes were embedded, KPI's were put in place to monitor completed actions. The plan was reviewed regularly and updated monthly at a strategic management level and at the HMICFRS Tactical and Improvement Boards.

Progress was shared with HMICFRS through regular contact with the HMICFRS Service Liaison lead. HMICFRS also completed a revisit in May 2024 and the progress seen by HMICFRS could be seen in the appendices. A further revisit was planned for September 2024. The Chief Fire Officer and Chairman would also be presenting a further update to the HMICFRS Fire Performance Oversight Group in October 2024.

A Member asked if future updates would be presented to the Overview and Audit Committee.

The Head of Technology, Transformation and PMO advised that they would. The only reason the reports had come to the Authority today was timing, but all future reports would be presented to the Overview and Audit Committee to be reviewed.

A Member asked how frequent the meetings were, to reassure members that it was still in line with the plan and assurance that every aspect of the plan was reviewed.

The Head of Technology, Transformation and PMO advised that the Tactical and Improvement Board meetings were held monthly and were chaired by the Chief Fire Officer and the Improvement Board was chaired by the Deputy Chief Fire Officer. At present, the governance structure was

being reviewed, but if there were areas of concern, and definitely areas for improvement, these would feed into the governance structure so they were monitored and reviewed on a regular basis. Also, KPIs had been embedded and would feed into the performance reports that would be reviewed at the Performance Monitoring Board, and then presented to the Authority.

The Head of Protection, Assurance and Development advised that with regard to Protection, the Service continued to engage with the National Fire Chief Council (NFCC) and attend regular meetings with the NFCC Policy Reform Unit, who constantly look at legislative changes. The NFCC also host a lot of work around the building safety regulations, as that was an emerging regulator the Service needed to interact with. Officers also attend the Southeast Protection Regional meeting and furthermore, the Service had just engaged Avon Fire and Rescue Service to come and undertake a Peer Review in relation to the protection progress.

The Head of Human Resources advised that with regard to ED&I, the Service had received very good support from an ED&I specialist at Buckinghamshire Council and had also been working with the NFCC improvement team looking at Fire Standards and what else the Service needed to do. The Service was also part of the Asian Fire Service Association, attending their conference. The Service had also set up a Culture Board, chaired by the Deputy Chief Fire Officer.

RESOLVED -

That the HMICFRS 2023-2025 update be noted.

FA27 HIS MAJESTY'S INSPECTORATE OF CONSTABULARY AND FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES (HMICFRS) – VALUES AND CULTURE UPDATE

The Head of Technology, Transformation and PMO advised Members that the second paper provided an update on the recommendations made by the HMICFRS Values and Culture report. In March 2023 HMICFRS published a report on Values and Culture in English Fire Services. Following the report being presented in April 2023, the Authority and Service accepted all the recommendations. Since then, the Service had worked hard to ensure they were delivered. The appendices showed the final update on the recommendations. All were now complete and were part of business as usual. This update had also been provided to HMICFRS who would review progress as part of their inspection programme.

A Member asked for reassurance around ED&I as mentioned in the letter from HMICFRS as part of the progress.

The Head of Technology, Transformation and PMO advised that the first part of the letter listed the causes of concern which were identified back in May 2023. The Values and Culture Report came out in March 2023, Officers looked at the recommendations that came out of the Values and Culture Report, and the causes of concern that came out, and that was what had been brought forward into the Action Plan, this was to ensure they were all covered.

A Member asked about the recruitment of staff and diversity, what action was taken from the current year's report.

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.

Head of
Human
Resources

A Member asked why people were dropping out of the recruitment process.

The Head of Human Resources advised Members that individuals were not dropping out, there were just different processes and not everyone passed the different stages. Individuals would apply, the team would look at the application forms and some individuals would move forward to the next stage, and some would not, because they had not met the criteria. Reports were run to look at the protected characteristics to say why were some people not getting further, were there any trends, was there anything the Service needed to do, and that's why the Positive Action Plan was put in place.

RESOLVED –

That the HMICFRS Values & Culture update be noted.

FA28 HIS MAJESTY'S INSPECTORATE OF CONSTABULARY AND FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES (HMICFRS) – STANDARDS OF BEHAVIOUR

The Head of Technology, Transformation and PMO advised that the final HMCIFRS paper related to the most recent HMICFRS report on the Standards of Behaviour and the handling of misconduct in fire and rescue services.

HMICFRS inspected 10 services, and the report provided details on their findings and 15 recommendations. Of the 15 recommendations, all were owned by the Chief Fire Officer and two were jointly owned by the Fire Authority

(13 a and b). Both the Service and Authority continued to take the culture of its Service extremely seriously and welcomed the recommendations in this report. The recommendations had been reviewed by the Service and an Action Plan pulled together to show when the recommendations would be delivered and what the measures of success would be. The Action Plan would be reviewed and scrutinised at the HMICFRS Tactical and Improvement Board. Further updates to the Authority would be provided via HMICFRS updates to the Overview and Audit Committee and Fire Authority.

The Vice Chairman asked for clarification as to why the deadline on point 2 was showing 1 February 2025 and the narrative said in quarter three or four and quarter four would be after the 1 February 2025.

The Director of Finance and Assets advised that it was referring to the financial year not the calendar year but agreed it should be quarter three as quarter four would fall after 1 February 2025.

The Vice Chairman asked about number 9, introduction into case management where it said a case management spreadsheet was in place. A spreadsheet was not a system, it was part of a process, does it need more review.

The Head of Human Resources advised that with regard to the case management system, the Service had introduced this year Safe Call the whistleblowing and speak up service and as part of that, there was a portal where the case management information was added, but access to this was limited and so there was a comprehensive case management spreadsheet to ensure everything was tracked.

The Vice Chairman asked about number 12, as the deadline was now, was this the date it was written or today.

The Head of Human Resources advised it was in regard to the Service's welfare support and everything was in place, there was a Welfare Officer, Occupational Health Services, an employee relations team, and mental health wellbeing support officers. The Inspectorate had complimented the Service on its welfare support.

The Vice Chairman asked about number 13b, and what type of training would be available to Members.

The Head of Human Resources advised that she did not have any details at present, but it would be forthcoming.

The Vice Chairman advised that on number 15a it should be 1 February 2025 and not 1 February 2024.

Head of
Human
Resources

RESOLVED –

1. That the Fire Authority should accept the recommendations allocated to the Chief Fire Officer in full.
2. That the Fire Authority should accept the recommendations allocated to the Fire and Rescue Authority in full.
3. That the Service will fully engage and support the delivery of the remaining Recommendations.

FA29 SAFETY OF LITHIUM-ION BATTERIES IN E-BIKES AND E-SCOOTERS CAMPAIGN

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer advised Members that this paper was seeking the Authority's support and endorsement for the Lithium-Ion Battery Safety Bill, which had its first and second reading in the House of Lords. Electrical Safety First, a UK Charity dedicated to reducing the deaths and injuries caused by electricity was promoting 'The Safety of Electric-Powered Micromobility Vehicles and Lithium Batteries Bill.'

Many national organisations were already supporting the bill, including the National Fire Chiefs Council, many fire and rescue services, the Association of Ambulance Chief Executives, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents, and the Royal Society for Public Health.

The bill covered a number of clauses, Clause 1: Safety Assurance - this clause mandated a third-party safety assessment, conducted by a government-approved body, for all e-bikes, e-scooters, and their lithium-ion batteries before they enter the UK market. This process mirrors safety measures in place for other high-risk products like fireworks and heavy machinery.

Clause 2: Responsible Disposal - this clause required the Government to make regulations ensuring the safe disposal of lithium batteries once their lifecycle ends.

Clause 3: Comprehensive Fire Safety - this clause assigns the Government the responsibility of comprehensively addressing fire-related concerns. This involved enhancing safe usage, charging, and storage practices for these devices. It included setting standards for conversion kits and charging systems and considering a temporary ban on the sale of universal chargers that heighten fire risks.

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer advised Members that in addition to what was in the cover report, the Bill now had an additional provision: Before approving a planning

application for stand-alone Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) that consist partly or wholly of lithium-ion batteries, a planning authority must consult— (a) the Environment Agency, (b) the Health and Safety Executive, and (c) the local fire and rescue service for the relevant area.’

A Member advised that education was really important, informing people of the dangers so that it can be proactively prevented, were officers able to do that.

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer advised Members that it was a matter of concern for the Service and already formed part of its Prevention Strategy. It was also interwoven as a risk in the draft Community Risk Management Plan and would feature as part of the prevention offering to the public going forward.

RESOLVED –

1. That the Safety of Electric-Powered Micromobility Vehicles and Lithium Batteries Bill proposed by Electrical Safety First intended to ensure greater safety in the use and disposal lithium-ion batteries, which would hopefully have the effect of ensuring greater safety for both members of the public and Firefighters when attending such incidents, be supported.
2. That the position that any measures which have the potential to increase awareness, the safety of all along with protecting the environment is something Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority actively supports, be endorsed.
3. That the position that the Authority would like to see regulation and legislation to go further in respect of influencing building regulations for example and appreciates that the National Fire Chiefs Council is engaging with government departments to this end on behalf of UK fire and rescue services, be endorsed.

FA30 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

To note that the next meeting of the Fire Authority will be held on Wednesday 9 October 2024 at 11 am at The Oculus, The Gateway Offices, Gatehouse Road, Aylesbury, Bucks, HP19 8FF

THE VICE CHAIRMAN CLOSED THE MEETING AT 12.02PM