

SOUTH YORKSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

14 OCTOBER 2019

PRESENT: Councillor R Taylor (Chair)
Councillor T Damms (Vice-Chair)
Councillors: S Ayris, A Buckley, T Cave, R Frost, P Haith,
C Hogarth, C Ransome, S M Richards, C Ross and
Dr A Billings

DCFO A Johnson, T/ACO S Helps and S Booth
(South Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service)

A Frosdick, M McCarthy, N Copley, L Noble and M McCoole
(Barnsley MBC)

M Buttery
(Office of the South Yorkshire Police and Crime Commissioner)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor P Price,
S Norman, CFO J Courtney, QFSM and ACO T Carlin

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were noted as above.

2 ANNOUNCEMENTS

None.

3 URGENT ITEMS

None.

4 ITEMS TO BE CONSIDERED IN THE ABSENCE OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

Councillor Ayris queried the reason why agenda item 14 entitled 'Retirement of the Chief Fire Officer' would be taken as a private item.

Councillor Taylor stated that the item related to a personal nature rather than an organisational matter.

RESOLVED – That agenda item 14 entitled 'Retirement of the Chief Fire Officer' be considered in the absence of the public and press.

5 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS IN RELATION TO ANY ITEM OF BUSINESS ON THE AGENDA

None.

6 REPORTS BY MEMBERS

Councillor Richards reported that since the last Authority meeting she had attended the LGA Fire Leadership Essentials Course at the University of Warwick. She highly recommended Members to attend the course in the future, which had included a very moving and informative session on the Grenfell Tower incident and issues with tower blocks. The guest speaker had been Dr Sabrina Cohen-Hatton, Chief Fire Officer from West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service, who she considered to be a real tour de force.

Councillor Taylor had also attended the LGA Fire Leadership Essentials Course in November 2018. He recommended Members to attend the course in its new format.

7 RECEIPT OF PETITIONS

None.

8 TO RECEIVE ANY QUESTIONS OR COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE PUBLIC, OR COMMUNICATIONS SUBMITTED BY THE CHAIR OR THE CLERK AND TO PASS SUCH RESOLUTIONS THEREON AS THE STANDING ORDERS PERMIT AND AS MAY BE DEEMED EXPEDIENT

None.

9 MINUTES OF THE AUTHORITY MEETING HELD ON 16 SEPTEMBER 2019

Councillor Richards referred to the last Authority meeting, where a request had been made for Members to be provided with a briefing on SYFR's business continuity arrangements for Brexit.

DCFO Johnson stated that the Local Fire Resilience partners met on a weekly basis, to discuss the ongoing Brexit situation and the implications of a deal or no deal on 31 October 2019. Planning was difficult due to the uncertainty of the issue. From a blue light perspective, a business as usual approach was being adopted. Individual organisations were ensuring that their stocks of crucial consumables, particularly in relation to emergency response, were maintained to the appropriate levels including fuel levels; although there had been no concern expressed regarding fuel availability to date. Members would be kept informed of any developments.

Councillor Cave referred to his request made at the last Authority meeting for further information on SYFR's sickness absence. He expressed his thanks for the graphs that had been provided to Members since the meeting. He queried whether a full report would be submitted to the Performance and Scrutiny Board.

DCFO Johnson commented that work was underway to collate further detail on SYFR's sickness absence. She confirmed that a more detailed report would be presented to the next Performance and Scrutiny Board meeting in November 2019.

Councillor Ayris queried the current position in relation to the Reserves Strategy, and whether a report would be presented to the Authority or to the Audit and Governance Committee.

S Booth stated that it was intended to present an annual report to the Authority. Members noted that the slides on the updated Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and the Reserves Strategy position would be presented to the Corporate Advisory Group meeting on 25 October 2019. The presentation slides would then translate into a narrative report, to be presented to the Authority meeting in November 2019.

Councillor Ransome referred to the costings provided to Members regarding the car allowance and public transport costs that had been £7,900 over budget. She queried what exactly had been overspent, and she sought clarity on the meaning of detached duties.

S Booth referred to the information that had been circulated to Members after the last meeting regarding the public transport allowance overspend of £7,900. Detached duties referred to those firefighters that were deployed from their normal fire station to report to an alternative fire station, to ensure that operational crewing availability was in the correct area with the correct numbers. This had formed part of the overspend, and had involved additional mileage claims.

Councillor Ransome queried whether it would be possible for the responses to Members' questions to be included within the minutes of the meeting, as opposed to Members receiving an emailed response and paper copies of the responses circulated at the meeting. This would be to ensure more transparency for members of the public.

L Noble stated that the documentation emailed to Members was included on the Authority's website which could be accessed by members of the public.

Councillor Taylor referred to various discussions with Members on the matter. He would discuss the minutes and action management information further with L Noble to ascertain a way forward that would achieve greater openness and transparency for the public.

Councillor Hogarth stated that the Action Management Sheet had provided Members with the detail of the car allowance and public transport costs that had been £7,900 over budget, but that it did not explain the reason for the overspend.

S Booth stated that this was largely attributable to the activity of the firefighters on detached duties and as a result of SYFR having moved away from CPC, which had resulted in firefighters having to be brought into cover both Edlington and Lowedges Fire Stations, as a number of the firefighters had retired. The increased activity had led to an increase in cost.

Councillor Ross referred to the 5% overspend on the budget heading. He had expected to observe the measures being taken to address the overspend in order for this to be reduced in the rest of the financial year.

DCFO Johnson commented that the overspend had resulted from detached duties, and that the only way to reduce the amount would be to have less firefighters detached to different fire stations. Work was underway to balance the Watches, and once the CPC fire stations were returned to full strength, firefighters would be attached to particular fire stations and detached duties would no longer be required. She was unsure whether this would be achieved by the end of the current financial year.

Councillor Ross queried whether Councillor Taylor had any feedback from the LGA Fire Commission meeting held on 20 September 2019.

Councillor Taylor stated that the meeting had been attended by very few representatives from Metropolitan fire and rescue authorities and had mostly been attended from the Shire fire and rescue authorities. Various issues had been discussed at the meeting which had been pertinent to the individual fire and rescue authorities. Unfortunately the Home Office representative had not been in attendance.

Councillor Ayris suggested that the Members' briefing note should contain such items as remedial management action.

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Authority meeting held on 16 September 2019 be signed by the Chair as a correct record.

10 LOCAL PENSION BOARD - ANNUAL REPORT

A report of the Clerk to the Fire and Rescue Authority was submitted providing the Local Pension Board's fourth Annual Report.

The Local Pension Board had been established by the Authority, as Scheme Manager, on 1 April 2015 with the primary role to ensure effective and efficient governance and administration of the Firefighters' Pension and Compensation Schemes. Andrew Bosmans had been Chair of the Board since its inception.

L Noble stated that A Bosmans wished to convey his thanks to S Kelsey and C Davies at SYFR together with West Yorkshire Pension Fund for the advisory role provided to the Board. Members had been invited to attend the LGA Awareness Session to be held on 15 October 2019 in their capacity as Scheme Manager for the firefighters' pension schemes.

RESOLVED – That Members noted the fourth Annual Report of the Local Pension Board.

11 KEY ISSUES ARISING FROM THE PERFORMANCE AND SCRUTINY BOARD HELD ON 12 SEPTEMBER 2019

L Noble presented a key issues paper arising from the Performance and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 12 September 2019.

Dr Billings considered that Members should be provided with a fuller account of the Performance and Scrutiny Board meetings i.e. either the minutes from the meetings or reports to inform Members on the matters that had been discussed together with the outcomes. This would also assist with openness and transparency for the public.

M McCarthy commented that the Authority had raised the issue on a number of occasions. The Performance and Scrutiny Board had no delegated responsibilities and therefore the minutes were not required to be published. At that time, the Authority had taken the decision that an informal (Key Issues) note would be produced for the Authority, with an offer to provide the full agenda papers outside the meeting to any Member who requested them. This offer was still open. The Authority also had the option to request further, more detailed reports, on any item raised at the Performance and Scrutiny Board (a reverse 'call in' if you will), if there was sufficient interest or a requirement. The minutes of the Performance and Scrutiny Board often contained information that was not for public consumption, hence the 'Key Issues' paper, but it was accepted that it could, perhaps, be more detailed without breaching confidentiality.

As Chair of the Board, Councillor Buckley agreed that he would take on board the comments made by Dr Billings, and discuss with L Noble. He agreed that the information presented to Members today was fairly brief in nature, and that Councillor Taylor and himself had already discussed the way in which the minutes of the Board were presented, with a view to increasing the amount of information provided to the Authority to include an Action Plan. He was conscious that the officers' workloads were already fairly onerous, and he did not want to unnecessarily add to that workload. It was also noted that the Authority was regularly provided with presentations on the items that had been discussed at the Performance and Scrutiny Board.

RESOLVED:–

- i) That Members noted the key issues arising from the Performance and Scrutiny Board held on 12 September 2019.
- ii) That further discussions would take place on a revised report to the Authority on the issues discussed at the Performance and Scrutiny Board.

12 DRAFT MINUTES OF THE AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE HELD ON 16 SEPTEMBER 2019

Councillor Ayris referred to the Service Level Agreement with Barnsley MBC, and in particular the Counsel's Advice that was anticipated to be made available at the Audit and Governance Committee meeting in November 2019. He highlighted that not all of the Members sat on the Audit and Governance Committee. He queried

whether Counsel's Advice had been sought, and for absolute transparency he requested the name of the Barrister and whether the outcome of the advice could be circulated to all Members of the Authority.

A Frostick stated that the Authority had resolved that the Audit and Governance Committee would take a closer look at the issue at its meeting held on 16 September 2019. At that meeting, the report had suggested that it would be helpful and, in the spirit of openness and transparency, to seek to collaborate or to disagree with the advice that he had provided. The final draft of the papers was now complete and would shortly be despatched to Barrister James Goudie, Queen's Counsel, with a view to providing his response to the Audit and Governance Committee meeting in November 2019. All of the Authority Members would be provided with a copy of the report. He confirmed that, given Barnsley MBC had an interest in the matter, the costings for Counsel's Advice would be covered as part of Barnsley MBC's legal budget, and that no cost would fall to the Authority.

RESOLVED – That Members noted the draft minutes of the Audit and Governance Committee held on 16 September 2019.

13 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED – That under Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act and the public interest not to disclose information outweighs the public interest in disclosing it.

14 RETIREMENT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

Members were provided with an update on the arrangements regarding the impending retirement of Chief Fire Officer Courtney.

RESOLVED – That Members noted the update.

CHAIR

Please follow the link below for further information on the updates of the actions arising from the Fire and Rescue Authority meetings:-

<https://meetings.southyorks.gov.uk/ecSDDisplayClassic.aspx?NAME=SD1250&ID=1250&RPID=402996&sch=doc&cat=13039&path=13039&zTS=D>