

SOUTH YORKSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

ORDINARY MEETING

22 JUNE 2020

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

CFO A Johnson, DCFO C Kirby and S Booth
(South Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service)

M McCarthy, N Copley, S Loach, M McCoole, M Potter and
L Noble and M McCoole
(Barnsley MBC)

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

A Mullen
(RSM Risk Assurance Services LLP)

Apologies for absence were received from ACO T Carlin and
R Barnett

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

None.

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

None.

6 REPORTS BY MEMBERS

Councillor Frost referred to a visit to Barnsley Fire Station with ACO Carlin on 15 May 2020, where he had liaised with the crews regarding the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. He had thanked the crews for all of their hard work undertaken during this time.

Councillor Cave referred to his involvement in the review of SYFR's Performance Management Framework. He had attended a virtual meeting on 29 April 2020 with S Nicholson, N Smith, L Noble, and also a virtual meeting held on 1 June 2020 where J Patrick had given a presentation on the functionality of Power Bi. Councillor Cave considered that Power Bi was an impressive piece of software, which Members would be keen to use in order to provide 'real time' data on performance, not just across South Yorkshire but within their own local areas. He referred Members to the initial Power Bi briefing made at the Corporate Advisory Group (CAG) meeting held in December 2019, which had demonstrated the ability for the programme to drill down to both ward level and LSOA Level 2. It was important to note that the use of Power Bi put South Yorkshire ahead of the curve in terms of national fire data. He referred to the National Fire Chief Councils' Central Programme Priorities, which examined data interoperability, web development, local development, and software to feed into a national standard. Councillor Cave said that SYFR's Senior Leadership Team should be congratulated on the work done so far. Councillor Cave would continue to be involved in the development, and he suggested that Members should be provided with an update on Power Bi at a future CAG meeting, prior to Members receiving training on the programme and before it goes 'live'. The new performance framework would 'go live' later than expected due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The current performance framework was in place for a 12 month period.

Councillor Taylor agreed that Members should be provided with an update on Power Bi at a future CAG meeting.

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 REPORT OF A DECISION OF THE SOUTH YORKSHIRE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER AND CLERK AFTER CONSULTATION WITH THE CHAIR OF THE SY FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY - FIRE AUTHORITY MEETING ON 20 APRIL 2020

RESOLVED – That Members noted a decision of the South Yorkshire Chief Fire Officer and Clerk after consultation with the Chair of the SY Fire and Rescue Authority – Fire Authority Meeting held on 20 April 2020.

10 FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE: YEAR END OUTTURN REPORT 2019/20

A report of the Director of Support Services was presented to inform Members of the final revenue and capital outturn position for the financial year ended 31 March 2020. The report also included an updated total reserves position alongside a narrative commentary to help explain the key financial changes that had led to the year-end position, when compared to the approved revenue and capital budgets.

Members noted the constant financial challenges faced by the Service over the last 10 years, as a result of the reducing Government funding year on year. As the end of the multi-year government settlement reached a conclusion, it had marked the exit of the UK from European Union and the start of the global Covid-19 pandemic. Members were referred to the local challenges faced which had included the return of Close Proximity Crewing (CPC) stations to the 2-2-4 duty system, the IRMP agreement to enable four firefighters to ride on a fire appliance if so required, the lasting implications from the severe flooding incidents that had occurred in Doncaster in November 2019, and the emerging national issues, which would become clearer within the next 12 months.

Where possible, SYFR staff had been asked to work from home in response to the pandemic. The Service continued to play a major role within the community to respond to the pandemic by providing/receiving Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), and in delivering food or medical parcels to the most vulnerable people within South Yorkshire. It was anticipated that some of those events and the financial implications would continue into 2021 and potentially beyond.

S Booth referred to recent conversations held with the Treasurer regarding the medium term financial planning and the intention to review it more closely over the summer period, with a view to revisiting the medium term financial plan in November 2020. It was necessary to commence the process much earlier this year, due to the risks faced by both the sector and the Service, and the implications that it could potentially have on the Service from operational planning and financial planning perspectives. It was not anticipated that any significant Government announcements would be made in the near future to provide clarity on the sector and its future, other than the 1 year settlement. S Booth said it would be necessary for the Service and Members to assist with the financial planning process.

Members were referred to the proposal to create a Covid-19 reserve of £0.970m to provide assistance to financially shield or protect the Authority. The Service received a set amount of funding from business rates and council tax; some of those revenues were now at significant risk. A number of local authorities nationally had suggested that they may face financial difficulties. The creation of a Covid-19 reserve would assist the Service in managing the situation. The report also proposed to utilise the additional monies within the general reserve, over and above the balance of £5m to create a Service improvement reserve.

The Service had delivered a £42k underspend on a £54m budget, which had been a positive outcome. The financial strategy had looked to reduce the level of reserves from £25m - £26m a few years ago, down to below £10m by 2022; work was on course to achieve this objective. The Service had invested almost £5m capital investment in buildings, vehicles, ICT and operational equipment. The Service had requested a budget carry forward of £270k to support ongoing priorities i.e. uniform and firefighting equipment, service improvement and the IRMP modelling approach.

Councillor Ross highlighted a typographical error within section 30 of the report, which should have indicated that South Yorkshire had experienced severe flooding in November 2019. He referred to the £0.1m underspend which related to the lower number of apprentices recruited. He considered that moving forwards, it was important to keep the matter under close review as a public body, in order to potentially increase the number of apprentices recruited to SYFR in the future. This was important for both the financial recovery of the Sheffield City Region, as well as assisting young people who may be struggling to find employment.

S Booth noted Councillor Ross' valid point. He would ensure that sufficient detail on apprentices was provided within the financial reports in the future, to highlight the work undertaken in this area and the impact on the recovery within the South Yorkshire.

In relation to the reserves strategy, Councillor Ayris commented that it was difficult to understand the minimum revenue position compared with what had been agreed in the past, due to all of the changes that had happened over the recent period. He also queried in relation to the two reserves that Members had been asked to approve at today's meeting, where the funding for community risk related matters and the risk based attendance model i.e. consultancy fees, would come from.

S Booth stated that in relation to the minimum revenue reserves position, the useable general reserves position was currently £5.646m, which included this year's underspend of £42k. The suggestion was to take the £646k to be put into the Service improvement reserves. The minimum general reserve figure that was agreed within the Medium Term Financial Plan in November 2019 was £5m following discussions with the Treasurer, and SYFR was keen to preserve that figure. In relation to Councillor Ayris' second question regarding the funding of consultancy work, which may take place around the IRMP, the Service had identified the need to put £70k into carrying out the resource modelling work, as well as the consultation that may be required once a new IRMP model had been identified.

Councillor Richards queried whether the source of the Hatfield Moors fire had been identified, and what could be done to prevent such an incident in the future.

CFO Johnson stated that the most likely cause of the Hatfield Moors fire was a BBQ or the intentional starting of a fire. It was difficult to prove the cause of the incident due to the area affected by the fire. The Service would continue to work with Hatfield Moorlands Natural England to ensure that their site was maintained to try and ensure that any future fires could be prevented from spreading to such a

degree. The Service's Communications Department was working to encourage people not to use BBQ's and to be mindful of discarding cigarettes etc. when in the countryside.

Councillor Frost concurred with Councillor Ross regarding maximising the number of apprentices. He requested an explanation on the reference within the report to the Service's significant increase in energy this year.

S Booth stated that there were a number of reasons why the Service's energy costs had increased. He added that it had been remiss of himself not to have taken into account for this year's budget, the credits that had been in place in previous years. Therefore, the increase in costs had not been anticipated.

Councillor Haith referred to the Operational Resource Team (ORT) and the overspend position for the year. She queried whether the ORT was fully staffed or whether the budget would be increased.

CFO Johnson stated that the ORT was not currently fully staffed, which had been attributable to the increase in overtime costs to supplement the Team. The ORT would form part of the review which would result in less overtime costs. The Area Manager for Emergency Response would lead on this piece of work.

Councillor Hogarth queried whether the general reserve could be increased, rather than creating a Covid-19 reserve. He added that a situation may arise when the Covid-19 pandemic was over, as to where to move the allocated £970k funding to. He also queried the 30% increase to transport costs within the last year.

S Booth said the Service did not want to be seen as adding into its general reserve. A specific issue and associated risk had been identified from the Covid-19 pandemic and its impact on the local authorities, in particular the revenues around the business rates and council tax, which created an earmarked reserve in response to the circumstances, rather than to putting the amount into the general reserves. Consideration would be given as to whether the £970k would be a sufficient amount in the coming months, and as the financial plans were taken forward and the outcomes of the economy and the level of recession both within the national and local communities were known. It was anticipated the £646k would be put into the Service improvement reserve. The Authority had identified once again the importance of continuous Service improvement.

Members recalled the Service Improvement Plan which had been signed off at the last Authority meeting held in April 2020. A resource led plan was in place which would enable the Service to support and facilitate those actions with the intention to improve effectiveness and efficiency. By placing the monies within an earmarked reserve this provided greater accountability and transparency to both Members and other stakeholders. S Booth commented that in relation to transport insurance, there had been a general increase in premiums. The Service had received a number of insurance claims in relation to damages or incidents that had taken place. Vehicles are insured in the event that should a vehicle become involved in an accident where the Service was liable, then the Service would have to pay a

specific amount of money as part of that claim. Therefore there would be variability within the costs year on year.

Dr Billings gave thanks for the comprehensive report presented. He agreed with S Booth's comments regarding the precariousness of the financial situation moving forward and the unknowns to be contended with. He considered it to be good news to commence the financial planning earlier this year, and he presumed that the issues surrounding the collection fund would not be impacted on until 2020/21. He requested an explanation of the capital programme that had been approved for 2019/20 of £8.595m, which had been increased during the course of the year to £10.921m, and the final spend of £4.660m. He also queried whether any monies had been received from the Home Office under the Bellwin scheme, and whether these requests would go through the local authorities rather than as a direct request from SYFR.

S Booth expressed his thanks to Dr Billings for his positive comments on the comprehensive nature of the report. He stated that in relation to the collection fund, the Covid-19 reserve had been built in, as the impact would start to be felt on the collection fund accounts during this financial year. It was a question as to what extent the funding would be under threat, and the potential that collection funds could move into a deficit position. The Service had been optimistic in profiling the capital programme, specifically with regard to the refurbishment of its properties, the rebuild of Barnsley Fire Station and the refurbishment works at the former CPC sites. During the course of the year the optimism had been reduced to a more realistic level due to the delays experienced i.e. at Barnsley Fire Station due to planning issues. Some re-design of the new fire station had been needed to ensure it was fit-for-purpose for both staff and the communities it will serve. The Covid-19 pandemic had also attributed to a number of delays with the need to reschedule works at the four CPC sites. Therefore, only two of the four CPC sites had been completed during the financial year. Works at Aston Park Fire Station were now due to commence at the end of June 2020 and the works at Tankersley Fire Station were anticipated to commence in September 2020. Delays had been encountered with the heating and ventilation works at Fire Headquarters and the Estates condition works, which had been split in Phase 1, 2 and 3. Phases 1 and 2 were now complete, but Phase 3 remained outstanding, largely due to the delays incurred from the Covid-19 pandemic and to ensure that the package of works was as comprehensive as possible to address all of the legacy issues that had been identified from the condition survey works. Work was underway to better understand the capital programme, which was moving in the right direction. S Booth anticipated that, subject to the Covid-19 restrictions, which continued to impact upon the programme, by July 2021 the majority of the programme, which currently showed as an underspend or where not all of the money had been spent that had been expected to be spent, that the Service would be back up to speed and back on target. He considered that the Service was currently 12 months behind where it had expected to be. He anticipated that the outcomes to be achieved in 2021 would be very positive. The Service had made a claim under the Bellwin scheme (to which the Service would have to stand the first £105k). Any eligible costs that were over and above that amount could be claimed back from the Government, and it was hoped that that the costings would be received into the Service today.

RESOLVED – That Members:-

- i) Approved and endorsed the positive revenue operating outturn position of £0.042m underspend when compared to the budget, funding and movement on reserves.
- ii) Agreed the capital expenditure outturn of £4.660m.
- iii) Approved the proposal to establish a new reserve (COVID-19 Recovery Reserve - £0.970m), in line with the Treasurer's recommendation, to help shield the Service from any financial turbulence resulting from a reduction in future revenues generated and collected from both business rates and council tax as a result of the ongoing impact of COVID-19 as set out in Section C to the report.
- iv) Approved the proposal to use £0.604m of the existing General Reserve and the 2019/20 underspend of £0.042m (total £0.646m) to establish a new reserve to support Continuous Improvement in the Service as set out in Section C to the report. The Treasurer supported this proposal as he considered the remaining Minimum Working Balance of £5.000m to be adequate at this stage.
- v) Agreed the summary Statement of Reserves (Section C) which showed total useable reserves of £19.123m, split Earmarked Reserves £14.123m and General Reserves of £5.000m for the year ended 31 March 2020 subject to Recommendation d) being approved.
- vi) Approved the budget carry forward requests as set out in Section D of the report of £0.270m into 2020/21.

11 ANNUAL CORPORATE PERFORMANCE REPORT FOR 2019/20

A report of the Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive/Clerk to the Fire and Rescue Authority was presented to provide Members with information on how SYFR had performed against the Local Performance Indicators (LPis) during 2019/20, to enable Members to comment on the performance and explore in more detail the work behind the statistics. The report would also be presented to the Performance and Scrutiny Board meeting on 16 July 2020, for more detailed discussion and review.

DCFO Kirby introduced himself to those Members that he had not yet met since joining SYFR. He referred to the performance benchmarking undertaken across similar types of organisations to SYFR, which were generally Metropolitan fire and rescue services of a similar size, with a similar community profile, in order to provide an indication of how the Service performed. He was pleased to observe that Members were interested in the functionality of Power Bi, which would enable them to be provided with 'real time' performance information following completion of a training programme and the setting-up of access.

Members noted that there had been 71 fewer primary fires in 2019/20 in comparison to 2018/19. During 2019/20 there had been 70 fewer accidental dwelling fires in comparison to 2018/19, with an outturn figure of 472 for 2019/20, which was the lowest figure over the previous 11 years. From the benchmarking undertaken with other similar fire and rescue services, SYFR had performed the best within the reporting period, with just under eight of those types of these incidents per 10,000 dwellings. Cooking related fires equated to almost half of the number of accidental dwelling fires, and continued to be one of the most significant causes of dwelling fires within South Yorkshire. Members were referred to the preventative activity undertaken by the Service to address cooking related incidents, in order to further reduce the statistic.

During the period there had been 236 fires in non-domestic premises; it was critical to continue to address these issues in order to reduce the number of commercial property fires. The Service would always endeavour to work with commercial property owners and building managers within the Fire Protection Programme, in order to improve fire awareness. Sadly, during 2019/20 three people had died in accidental dwelling fires across South Yorkshire. There had been nine fatalities in 2018/19, five of which had involved accidental dwelling fires. The Service's Prevention and Protection Programmes, specifically for prevention in the home, were aimed towards identifying the most vulnerable, with the intention to reduce the fire risk through intervention measures i.e. the installation of smoke alarms. The total number of accidental dwelling fire injuries in 2019/20 was 34 in comparison to 57 in 2018/19; only four out of the injuries were thought to have been serious and had required hospital intervention.

Members noted a significant improvement in the number of secondary arson fires in comparison to previous years, with a drop of around 26% in deliberate secondary fires. There was a concerning trend in the increase of the number of deliberate vehicle fires, which had impacted on the primary fire and overall arson targets. A significant amount of this increase was attributable to gang related activity. Over the period 2019/20 there had been a significant reduction in the number of false alarms, road traffic collisions and the accident statistics looked positive, when comparing the data specifically to 2018/19. There had been a 15% improvement to the proportion of days lost to sickness absence during the period in comparison to 2018/19.

Members noted the vast amount of ongoing campaigns within the Service's dedicated Protection and Prevention Teams, involving operational crews and the Corporate Communication Team. DCFO Kirby gave credit to the Service's teams for their efforts to reduce the figures.

Councillor Richards referred to the number of deliberate vehicle fires within the east of inner Sheffield, one of which was the Ward she represented. The matter was now being reviewed by the joint chair of the ASB and Acquisitive Crime Group to gain an improved understanding. She queried when this information would be reported to Members as it would be useful to know the cause of this worrying trend. She also queried whether this related to 'Taking Without Owner's Consent' (TWOC).

DCFO Kirby stated that deliberate vehicle fires was a difficult indicator for the Service to influence specifically, as it related to gang and criminal activity. He would request the Sheffield District Commander P Heffernan to provide Councillor Richards with an update on the ongoing discussions to reduce some of the activity. He added that the number of deliberate vehicle fires could also relate to the increase in scrap metal prices. There were many external factors that could influence an increase or decrease of deliberate vehicle fires.

Councillor Ayris referred to the graph within the report, which indicated a downward trend for all performance indicators during February 2020, due to the Covid-19 lockdown together with an indication that there could be an increase, which could be a matter of concern as the lockdown period was eased. He queried whether this was a role for the Joint Community Safety Department.

DCFO Kirby commented that the Joint Community Safety Department was currently considering a range of performance indicators. He considered that the downward trend for all performance indicators in February 2020 could have been weather related, as this was prior to the Covid-19 lockdown. There were many initiatives in place to review over the border crime, and work was undertaken across the Joint Community Safety Department to identify trends that could be addressed through educational messages and campaigns.

Dr Billings welcomed DCFO Kirby to the meeting, and wished him a long and happy career with SYFR. He queried the reason why the Service's sickness absence levels were so high. He considered DCFO Kirby's verbal comments to be helpful in comparing the Service's performance against other similar Metropolitan fire and rescue services, and he requested that Members be provided with further performance comparisons in the future. He added that the easing of the lockdown period would enable the resurgence of gangs, which would result in an increase of criminal activity. SYP were taking steps to address the issue. Dr Billings would raise the arson issue with SYP, and he would pursue the matter further. He had visited residents following the flooding incident that had occurred in Doncaster in November 2019, and they had spoken very highly of the work undertaken by SYFR.

DCFO Kirby commented that the Service recognised the high sickness absence levels. A challenging target had been set in an attempt to try to reduce the sickness absence levels through a range of initiatives from a health and wellbeing perspective both internal and external. Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, staff had adhered to the guidance from a local station perspective in respect of cleaning and hygiene arrangements, together with the general restrictions within their personal lives, which had resulted in a significant reduction in sickness absence. It was anticipated that the sickness absence figures would improve once the policies were implemented following consultation and negotiation with the representative bodies. Cleveland Fire and Rescue Service had recently captured data in relation to sickness absence in comparison to other fire and rescue services. Whilst it was recognised that the Service continued to have sickness absence challenges, it was pleasing to note the improvements being made and that figures were moving in the right direction. In respect of vehicle fires, DCFO Kirby felt it would be very challenging to gather evidence if a fire had burnt a significant amount of the vehicle; CCTV and other I factors would be relied upon to provide any intelligence. SYFR's

influence in relation to such crimes and gangs was limited, and evidence would be reliant on conversations with partners.

Councillor Hogarth referred to previous corporate performance reports which had referred to ageing vehicles that had cost more to maintain in comparison to newer vehicles. He queried how there could be almost 100% availability on whole time pumps.

DCFO Kirkby commented that this related to both the availability of the vehicle and the crew to staff the vehicle. The Service's vehicle fleet was around 10 years old. Members noted that the more modern vehicles were able to travel further with the new technology and types of engines now available. The Service also had a resilience fleet which would enable a replacement fire engine to be made available whilst another fire engine was being repaired. In the event of a routine maintenance issue, a spare fire appliance would be sent to the local fire station before the fire appliance was taken away for mechanical work, therefore a fire appliance would always be available. The wholetime fire stations were all staffed 24 hours per day, 7 days per week, 365 days per year. The only occasion when the wholetime fire stations would be unavailable was when there was a four firefighter rota in place, and one of the firefighters was on sick leave. In this instance an additional firefighter would immediately be sent over to the station, which would result in the appliance being taken off of the run for a very short period of time.

Councillor Haith gave thanks to all SYFR staff for their hard work. She referred to the recent Pulse Survey which had reached a 25% completion rate, and queried what could be done to increase further staff participation.

DCFO Kirby commented that the Pulse Survey was a short survey that was issued to staff on a frequent basis. In terms of the low response rate, this could be due to 'survey fatigue'. Staff are encouraged to complete the surveys, with a commitment in respect of regular consistent feedback on areas of concern to address suggested improvements. The Pulse Surveys were well advertised through the weekly staff newsletters and bulletins.

CFO Johnson stated that a cultural survey would be launched either this year or in 2021, to include a campaign to achieve as many responses as possible. Although the number of responses to the Pulse Survey were not as high as would be preferred, this was not unusual. That said, the responses which had been received were positive and helpful.

RESOLVED – That Members:-

- i) Endorsed the contents of the report.
- ii) Scrutinised and commented on the information presented in the report.
- iii) Noted that eight out of the nine performance measures that were measured using tolerance levels, were within tolerance.

- iv) Noted that there were 70 fewer accidental dwelling fires in 2019/20, than in 2018/19.
- v) Noted that there were 95 more primary arson incidents in 2019/20 than there were in the previous year.
- vi) Noted that there were 1.44 fewer days/shifts lost to sickness during 2019/20 than in the previous year.

12 CLOSE PROXIMITY CREWING (CPC) - UPDATE

A report of the Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive was submitted to provide Members with an update in relation to the resourcing of SYFR's remaining Close Proximity Crewing (CPC) stations, Aston Park and Tankersley Fire Stations.

Members recalled the High Court ruling made in May 2018, which had determined that SYFR's CPC duty system was non-compliant, unless a collective agreement with the representative bodies could be made. Following a non-collective agreement, works had progressed to phase out the whole CPC duty system.

CFO Johnson provided Members with reassurance that SYFR was complying with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) requirements. To date, three out of the four fire stations had returned back to the 2-2-4 duty system, with Tankersley Fire Station being the outstanding fire station to be reverted, which could be delayed into 2021. On 1 June 2020, Aston Park Fire Station had been reverted back to the 2-2-4 duty system, with four wholetime shifts. Liaison continued with the HSE to keep them advised of the progress made. A number of the training courses i.e. water rescue training held in Wales had been cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic, but it was envisaged to resume training as soon as practicably possible. Work was underway to ensure that the correct staff and recruits were in place at the appropriate stations.

RESOLVED – That Members:-

- i) Noted the contents of the report.
- ii) Endorsed the ongoing, positive progress and improvements made so far to return the remaining stations back to the traditional 2-2-4 duty system.

13 SOUTH YORKSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE COLLABORATION

A report of the Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive was submitted to inform Members that since the last collaboration update with South Yorkshire Police (SYP), the collaboration had seen the start of the construction work at Eastwood workshop, Rotherham for the Joint Vehicle Fleet Management project and the development of the Outline Business Case for Estates and Facilities Management collaboration. The regional Fire and Rescue collaboration had progressed a Command Support Unit business case, an agreement and progression of regional command and support packs, and a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for regional Gold Command resilience. CFO Johnson,

Chief Constable Watson, the Police and Crime Commissioner and Councillor Taylor would meet shortly to further discuss the collaboration opportunities. The Police and Fire Collaboration Board continued to meet virtually.

DCFO Kirby referred to the ongoing regional collaboration projects, and the plans to progress regional command support involving a number of strands. A consistent template was now in place for the command support packs, which supported the incident command arrangements when arriving at a station, and would also provide support in assisting in over the border incidents. Discussions continued regarding the opportunity to share the command units. A draft MoU had been produced, in terms of a regional Gold Officers' rota, which involved the senior command officers that were committed to the Gold rota. He was impressed with the level of collaboration that was already underway. The Joint Community Safety Department had a shared facility at the Lifewise Centre, which involved numerous joint initiatives and campaigns where the resources could be pooled together, together with data intelligence sharing. SYFR had received an outline business case for the shared management of the respective estates and facilities, which had been discussed by both SYFR's and SYP's senior leadership teams. Members noted a number of efficiencies that had been achieved through the collaborative work i.e. the sharing of basic training courses. Regional fire and rescue collaboration would continue to be considered, together with a project to consider personal protective equipment (PPE) across the region, rather than being undertaken by each fire and rescue service.

DCFO Kirby referred to the HMICFRS inspection undertaken in 2019 which had highlighted, in addition to the collaborative work, a requirement to improve the amount of evaluation in this area. SYFR would shortly go out to tender to procure an independent evaluation of the work already undertaken, to provide assurance that improvements were being made in the delivery of services, whilst generating efficiencies with the collaborative activity that was underway.

Dr Billings was pleased to note DCFO Kirby's comments regarding the level of collaboration that was already underway in South Yorkshire. He considered that collaborative work was important and he emphasised the need for this to continue. He was pleased to note the financial savings that would be achieved for both organisations through sharing the basic training courses, and that it was necessary to make it absolutely clear that SYFR contributed much to the collaboration that SYP could not in terms of their experience and expertise. Both organisations had been able to benefit in many ways from the collaboration including efficiencies, effectiveness and general improvements.

DCFO Kirby thanked Dr Billings for his comments. He added that, since joining SYFR, he had been very impressed with the range of collaborative activity, and the amount of work already undertaken. He suggested that the Service should take a pause on matters to review the collaboration, whilst utilising the services of an independent company to undertake an evaluation of the existing work.

Councillor Taylor sought clarification on Recommendation B to the report.

DCFO Kirby stated that this related to the comments on the report presented at today's meeting, to ascertain Members' views on some of the activities currently being undertaken, any conversations undertaken by Members within their local authorities or respective surgeries, or any comments, observations or ideas that were generated from the public and could be fed into the collaboration programme. He considered that it was important for Members to feel that they had an opportunity to feed into the collaboration agenda.

RESOLVED – That Members:-

- i) Noted the progress for the South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue (SYFR) collaboration programme.
- ii) Feedback on the report prior to the Fire and Rescue Authority.

14 COVID-19 UPDATE: SYFR'S RESPONSE, RECOVERY AND LEARNING

A report of the Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive was presented to provide Members with an update of SYFR activity in relation to Covid-19. The report outlined SYFR's response strategy to date, the approach to recovery and how SYFR had contributed to the wider Local Resilience Forum (LRF) actions and assisted those within the community.

CFO Johnson referred to the daily bulletins and briefing notes that Members had received in relation to Covid-19. The Service continued to focus on employee health and wellbeing whilst maintaining its essential response services throughout the response phase. She considered that the Service's response to the Covid-19 pandemic had been good, with business continuity plans in place and a pandemic flu plan, supported by the Business Continuity Team actions. CFO Johnson chaired the Local Resilience Forum (LRF), assisting M Gladstone, Executive Director with Barnsley MBC. She had found this to be interesting in respect of how other organisations had responded to the pandemic. The Service's response activity had not been affected due to the pandemic, with sickness absence levels being at its lowest for a number of years. During the period, it had not been possible for the community safety officers to undertake the usual community visits, although engagement had continued by telephone with the most vulnerable. In relation to Business Fire Safety, the protection officers had adapted to the changing risks within the communities, and they had spent more time communicating with care homes and supermarkets both in person and via telephone. Over 300 telephone calls had been made throughout the period, to ensure that those companies were operating in a safe manner.

Members noted that most of the work had been undertaken in line with the national tripartite agreement, between the NFCC, the employers and trade union representatives. The Service had widened its work with partners i.e. the community safety officers had delivered food parcels and prescriptions to the most vulnerable within South Yorkshire. Teams had been based at the Nightingale Hospital in Harrogate, and individuals were on standby to return to the hospital if it was deemed necessary. The Service had also undertaken face fit testing for masks at Doncaster Hospital and at a number of hospices. A total of 2.5m pieces of PPE

had been received into the Training and Development Centre, which had been sorted by staff and redistributed across South Yorkshire. SYFR had been involved in 'gaining entry' into those homes where it was believed that Covid-19 was present. The Communications Team continued to ensure that key safety messages were shared through their social media platforms, and the ICT Team had enabled homeworking for staff wherever possible.

DCFO Kirby stated that he was leading on the internal recovery group, which consisted of representatives from all internal departments. A draft recovery plan had been developed for the Service, together with a local outbreak plan which the LRF's had specifically requested each local authority to produce. The Service also considered it beneficial to have a recovery local outbreak plan, in the event of a spike in cases in a fire station or building. The recovery local outbreak plan had been tested at one of the fire stations which had involved the operational staff being relocated whilst external contractors deep cleaned the station. The station had been reoccupied within 12 hours. Individual departmental recovery plans and reoccupation plans were also in place. One of DCFO Kirby's key priorities was to ensure that some of the support departments, where the majority of staff were currently working from home, were provided with an opportunity to start to reoccupy SYFR premises when the lockdown restrictions eased. It was not intended to rush the process, but to ensure that staff were confident to return to work, after having received the appropriate guidance and instruction. SYFR recognised the caring responsibilities and child care issues of some members of staff.

The Service was also linked to the National Fire Chiefs' Council which had established a recovery co-ordination group. DCFO Kirby sat on the Local Recovery Group which met on a weekly basis. Throughout the pandemic the operational firefighters and Control staff had attended work, albeit with changes made to their general cleaning and hygiene regimes, with social distancing implemented whilst accepting some calculated risks in attending emergencies. Strict re-occupation planning would be undertaken, and the joint Facilities and Estates Management Team had undertaken risk assessments of the buildings which had the predominance of support departments, and the Health and Safety Team was undertaking reviews. Individual equality impact assessments would be undertaken for staff returning to work, whilst recognising that staff from BME backgrounds or older members of staff may be more at risk to Covid-19. Learning would be captured from hosting virtual meetings, which would reduce travel costs and the impact on the carbon footprint.

Dr Billings referred to the final debrief report that would be produced to capture the lessons learnt from the pandemic. He queried whether the report would be made available to the public, and whether the lessons to be learnt from this lockdown period should be implemented immediately rather than in the longer term.

CFO Johnson stated that it would be a decision for the Members to determine whether the final debrief report should be made available to the public. A good response had been received from a review undertaken on the LRF. The Service recognised that a flexible approach was required around how staff worked; a number of employees had been permitted to return to work due for a variety of reasons. The Service also recognised the demand on office space, and the need

to determine the actual office space required. A review would be undertaken after the easing of the lockdown, to ensure that the decisions made were fact based.

Councillor Ayris expressed his thanks for the report presented. He considered that it was important that the learning from responding to the crisis should not be lost together with the links made with other the stakeholders during the response, and the involvement of staff representative bodies in drawing up the report. He queried how SYFR's local outbreak plan linked to each local authorities' outbreak plan.

CFO Johnson stated that it was important for SYFR to have its own local outbreak plan which, in the event of an outbreak, would immediately be reported to the LRF. The representative bodies were included in all matters where appropriate to do so.

Councillor Richards gave thanks to the Service for the assistance provided within her ward and some of the other wards in the delivery of notices to the community, which had been helpful. She welcomed the report, and queried whether there should also be Member input regarding the difference the response had made to Members of the Authority. She commented that she found virtual meetings difficult, and cautioned against completely losing physical meetings. She suggested that it would helpful to have a Member report to detail how matters would progress moving forward.

M McCarthy stated that a report would be brought back to the Authority to seek Members' opinion; he was currently in discussions with Barnsley MBC on the matter. The LGA had commissioned Counsel's Opinion around the scope for hybrid meetings, whereby a meeting could be attended by some of the Members, whilst others who would prefer to attend virtually could still take participate. The response received from the LGA had been circulated to all local authorities, which had indicated that the legislation did not currently allow for this arrangement; but this was not to say that the legislation could not be amended to accommodate this in the future. He added that Microsoft Teams and other platforms had, in the main, worked extremely well to host virtual meetings.

Councillor Taylor suggested that the report be referred to the Performance and Scrutiny Board for further scrutiny as the Covid-19 pandemic progressed, and for it to form an additional recommendation to the report.

RESOLVED – That Members:-

- i) Noted the contents of the report, enabling discussion on SYFR's approach to date and the proposed recovery.
- ii) Agreed that the report be referred to the Performance and Scrutiny Board for further scrutiny as the Covid-19 pandemic progressed.

15 DRAFT MINUTES OF THE AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE HELD ON 27 MAY 2020

RESOLVED – That Members noted the draft minutes of the Audit and Governance Committee held on 27 May 2020.

Actions Table

No.	Action	Timescale	Officer(s)	Status/ Update
1	To provide Members with feedback from the dedicated comprehensive spending review team for the sector.	When complete	CFO Johnson	
2	To include a revised update on the reserves profile within the Outturn Report.	FRA 22-06-20 (Ordinary)	S Booth	Item discharged
3	To provide Members with a briefing note to provide further clarity on the installation of the sprinkler systems – to include the role and responsibilities of Government, SYFR, local authorities, builders developers etc.	ASAP	R Brason	A presentation will be made to the next Stakeholder Planning Board Meeting on 22 July 2020
4	To present information to Members over the next 12 months to enable the Performance Management Framework to be shaped, prior to Authority approval.	CAG (timescales to be determined)	ACO Carlin	On the CAG agenda (provisionally) for Autumn 2020

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5	To provide Members with an update on Power Bi at a future CAG meeting.	CAG (timescales to be determined)	J Patrick	
6	To provide sufficient detail on apprentices within the Financial Performance Reports.		S Booth	
7	To provide Councillor Richards with an update on the ongoing discussions to reduce the number of deliberate vehicle fires within the east of inner Sheffield.	ASAP	AM P Heffernan	Update provided. Item discharged.
8	To provide a report to seek Members' opinion on virtual and hybrid meetings.	Future FRA Meeting	M McCarthy	
9	The Covid-19 Update report be referred to the Performance and Scrutiny Board for further scrutiny as the Covid-19 pandemic progresses.		GM S Nicholson	Performance and Scrutiny Board meeting on 10 September 2020.

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>