

SOUTH YORKSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

11 OCTOBER 2021

PRESENT: Councillor T Damms (Chair)
Councillor C Hogarth (Vice-Chair)
Councillors: S Sansome, P Garbutt, T Smith, J Paszek, S Ayris,
R Frost and Dr A Billings

CFO A Johnson, DCFO C Kirby, ACO T Carlin, S Booth and D Nichols
(South Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service)

M McCarthy, G Kirk, M Potter, L Noble and M Bray (Barnsley MBC)

Apologies for absence were received from
Councillor B Johnson, Councillor S Ball, Councillor D Hutchinson,
Councillor C Ross, S Norman, M Buttery and N Copley

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 Sansome had attended an On-Call Firefighter Graduation Ceremony at the SYFR Training and Development Centre on 25 September 2021. He had also attended an event hosted by RMBC, where a bravery award had been presented to an individual who had performed CPR on an individual. As part of his induction onto the Authority, Councillor Sansome had attended the LGA Fire Leaderships

Essentials Course. As part of the Home Office session, delegates had been informed that it was unlikely there would be forced collaboration between the fire and rescue services and the police force.

On 28 September 2021, Councillor Frost had visited the new Barnsley Fire Station, which he considered to be a very good asset to the Service.

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 13 SEPTEMBER 2021

Councillor Frost referred to Item 16 on the minutes of the last meeting, in respect of the Local Pension Board. The following matters had been raised at the recent Local Pension Board meeting held on 7 October 2021, and are fed back to the FRA as Scheme Manager:-

- There had been a discussion around the LPB's Risk Register and, in particular, Risk 010 in respect of the McCloud and Sergeant case. This risk was currently RAG rated as red, 'Failure to ensure employers pay the correct contributions to the scheme, and that their employees are contributing appropriately'. The Board had agreed the risk should remain as red for the time-being.
- Members had queried whether a new risk should be added, or an existing risk be amended in respect of the issues around the 'divorce' settlement and the Authority's capacity to deal with complex cases. The Board was assured by West Yorkshire Pension Fund that this was not an issue, but the Service will consider including some narrative within an existing risk.
- A number of the Service's employees had not been issued with their pension forecast in a timely manner prior to retirement. West Yorkshire Pensions Fund require 6 weeks' notice of retirement and this is not always adhered to. It was agreed that a joint communication from the Service and the Fire Brigades' Union would be circulated to remind employees to notify HR at least 6 weeks prior to retirement to ensure their pension forecast could be prepared in time.
- The Board's Constitution has a maximum tenure of two terms of three years (six years in total) for the Independent members – one of whom is Chair. The Board wish to extend the tenure for both independent members by another three years.

L Noble commented that, for good governance, a report would be presented to the next Authority meeting to seek Authority approval to extend the term of office for A Bosmans and J Weston to November 2024.

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Authority meeting held on 13 September 2021 be signed by the Chair as a correct record.

10 COVID-19 UPDATE

Members were provided with an update on SYFR's response and recovery to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Service remained aware of the Government's plan for recovery from the pandemic. The Service continued to implement specific staff guidance for the adherence of social distancing measures, which included wearing face masks around the workplace.

The Service continued to review measures with its Health and Safety Team, whilst taking into account national Government guidance and guidance from the National Fire Chiefs' Council (NFCC). The majority of the Service's functions had now returned to 'business as usual' whilst maintaining an agile working policy.

COVID-19 sickness levels within the Service continued to be monitored and remained low. Work had been undertaken to improve the welfare provision within the Service, together with collaborative work with SYP in relation to training.

The Service remained actively involved in the Local Resilience Forum, which dealt with the response and recovery measures.

Members noted that the Service's home and business fire safety visits had now resumed to pre-pandemic levels.

Councillor Sansome queried the wellbeing and mental health support that had been offered to support those firefighters that had worked overtime during the pandemic.

DCFO Kirby commented that the demand on overtime had increased at specific times during the pandemic, where up to 70 members of staff had been unable to come into work due to shielding, self-isolating or having contracted the virus. A recruitment exercise was currently underway and 36 new firefighters would join the Service next year, which would reduce the demand on overtime. Measures would be undertaken over the next 6 months to ensure that the Service returned to the usual the working conditions. Welfare provisions were in place and line managers would signpost if an individual required additional support, either internally with the occupational health nurse or with external organisations.

In response to a question received from Councillor Smith, DCFO Kirby commented that new buildings were required to be fitted with hardwire smoke detection, which did not require the Service to retrofit the battery smoke alarms. The Service would still undertake a home safety visit if it was deemed that an individual was at risk. Additional smoke alarms would be installed if an individual had any lifestyle behaviours which could elevate their risk to fires within the home.

Councillor Smith queried whether the Service was provided with the details of disabled young people that were at risk from a home fire.

Members noted that the Service did not receive the details of everyone that was registered with a disability within South Yorkshire. However, the Service had formal partnerships with the four local authorities and arm-length organisations who trained their staff to spot vulnerabilities to fires within the home, and would refer those individuals directly to the Service. Many of the home safety visits undertaken by the Service were as the result of partner referrals. Following a visit made by an agency to a vulnerable person, there was an ability for them to transfer the individual's details onto a third party for health and safety reasons, such as the Service. The Service also had specific data sets which had been agreed nationally, together with the NHS Exeter data which included the names and addresses of individuals that were over the age of 65 and were registered with a GP. This would allow the Service to focus on specific categories of vulnerability. Consent may be required to share generic data with the Service.

RESOLVED – That Members noted the update.

11 SERVICE IMPROVEMENT BOARD UPDATE

A report of the Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive was submitted which provided an update on progress against the actions on the Service Improvement Plan and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) inspection activity. Actions and objectives were included within the Service Improvement Plan, which related to various local and national issues that affected South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue. The Service Improvement Plan also captured all of the recently published national Fire Standards, in order to monitor the Service's progress against those standards. The internal Service Improvement Board monitored the progress made against all of the objectives.

In response to a number of questions received by Members, DCFO Kirby provided the Authority with an update. A new Member development session would be held virtually on 13 October 2021, which would provide more detail around the Integrated Risk Management Plan, but DCFO Kirby was more than happy to offer additional sessions around – for example – the Service Improvement Plan. DCFO Kirby encouraged Members to engage with their respective District Commander (details had been provided during Induction).

The Service had recently undertaken a breathing apparatus (BA) test at St. Paul's Tower in Sheffield, which was the highest residential building in South Yorkshire. Further BA exercises would be undertaken in other high rise buildings. Digital radio testing had also been undertaken to identify any specific issues. A more detailed Grenfell Tower Inquiry report would be presented to Members in due course, and this remained a high profile issue within the fire sector.

The aim of the inspection programme was for the operational crews to capture relevant operational information, which would support the tactical decision making.

A new Sustainability Officer would be recruited into the Service, and a Green Plan would be developed with a view to ascertaining further decarbonisation initiatives. Further information would be provided.

The Service had undertaken an internal awareness campaign to ensure that staff understood how to access health and wellbeing support. Training had been provided to the dedicated Critical Wellbeing Officers, who provided critical wellbeing debriefs to firefighters who had witnessed distressing incidents. The Service engaged in suicide awareness training and there was good internal workforce support in place to spot the signs of vulnerability with colleagues.

The Service approached the workforce planning process for additional resources through a standardised and consistent approach by the Senior Leadership Team, which was undertaken annually. Standardised business case templates and presentations would be utilised whilst ensuring that there were clear links to the Service Improvement Plan and Action Plan.

Councillor Smith referred to the Grenfell Tower Inquiry and the high priority action updates at Appendix B to the report, which referred to the lack of plans in place for evacuating a high rise building should the need arise. He queried the plans in place to evacuate high rise residential buildings.

DCFO Kirby commented that many of the UK high rise residential buildings had been designed without the intent for mass evacuations and to contain a fire within a flat. This would enable firefighters to deal with an isolated fire within a flat before it spread further into the building. The Grenfell Tower had been wrapped in combustible cladding materials, which had enabled the fire to spread quickly. There was a requirement for each building owner to have a dedicated person with emergency evacuation plans in place. The dedicated person would flag up to the Service any vulnerable individuals that would require assistance in evacuating a building. Through the Service's training programmes, measures had been implemented to receive fire survival calls from individuals that were unable to evacuate a flat when there was a fire in the building; firefighters would be deployed to assist those individuals. The Service had limited legal ability to enforce the building owners to undertake all of the required actions.

Members noted that water pipes were installed in all high rise residential buildings that were 18 metres and above in height. During visits, the Service would ensure that the water pipes remained fit for purpose. The Service's fire engines and equipment included dedicated high risk packs, and turntable ladders to access fires at a height of up to 28 metres. In the event that residents considered a high rise building posed a risk, the Service could issue a prohibition notice until measures were implemented to make the residents feel safer.

The Service had adopted the Code of Ethics from the NFCC, which sat within the current policy.

Councillor Garbutt referred to the recruitment and retention of women and BAME people into the sector. He queried whether there was any toxicity towards women within the Service and, if so, whether there were any policies in place to combat it.

CFO Johnson commented that the Service, nationally, is a male dominated environment, with far more white males in comparison to the number of female members of staff. Work continued to encourage more women and individuals from under-represented groups to join the Service, alongside initiatives to continue to improve the culture of the organisation, to lead by example and to treat people with respect. Policies and procedures were in place within the Service to deal with any individuals that did not comply with this ethos. Collaborative working with representative bodies would be undertaken in relation zero tolerance.

RESOLVED – That Members noted the contents of the report and provided further scrutiny and support to enable continual service improvement.

12 CLOSE PROXIMITY CREWING (CPC) UPDATE

A report of the Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive was presented which provided Members with an update in relation to the resourcing of South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue's remaining Close Proximity Crewing stations (CPC). The report aimed to provide Members with assurance that the Service was meeting the requirements set out by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

In May 2018, the High Court ruling had delivered the judicial review of the CPC arrangements. There was no collective agreement with the representative bodies, therefore the Service had progressed matters to phase out the CPC duty system which had been introduced at Edlington, Aston Park, Tankersley and Lowedges Fire Stations.

Following a concern raised regarding the number of hours worked by a small group of individuals on CPC and potentially other contracts, AM Strelczenie had recently met with the HSE. The HSE had understood the issues faced, had been satisfied with the Service's response and the subsequent measures that had been implemented to combat the issue. This was currently a verbal response, but it was anticipated that Members would receive the response in writing in due course.

Councillor Hogarth requested the figures in relation to the Service's potential establishment position by the end of December 2021, as identified within Appendix C to the report.

CFO Johnson commented that Members would be provided with the figures.

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 PROGRESS REPORT ON ESTATES AND FACILITIES SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS

A report of the Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive was submitted which provided Members with details on the progress to improve the Estates and Facilities Service within South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service. The report was the latest in a series of reports that had been presented to Members since June 2017 regarding the improvement plan for the Estates and Facilities Service.

Since the last report presented to the Authority, the decoupling of the SYFR and SYP property function had been completed. The Service had implemented an interim management team, and recommendations had been presented to the Senior Leadership Team.

Dr Billings queried the order of the appendices presented with the report. He considered that the Strategy should become the overarching key document which should include the Green Plan, and for the policies to follow thereafter.

In response, S Booth highlighted that the documents presented to the meeting had been created through the previous joint management structure. He acknowledged Dr Billings' suggestion for the Green Plan to form part of the Strategy document, which would be presented to the Authority in 2022.

Councillor Garbutt queried where the incoming Sustainability Officer would sit within the proposed new structure. He also queried whether the Service had received training in relation to the Green Plan.

S Booth commented that the current focus was to create the Green Plan, following which the position of the Sustainability Officer within the new structure would be ascertained. An external advisor was currently providing the Service with support on the development of the Green Plan, together with establishing a network of champions across all aspects of the organisation. It was envisaged that progression of the Green Plan would be completed over the next 4 – 5 month period.

RESOLVED – That Members:-

- i) Noted the contents of the report.
- ii) Endorsed the ongoing, positive progress and improvements made so far in Estates and Facilities as part of the Service's improvement journey and its continuation towards being an effective and efficient support service of SYFR.
- iii) Noted the arrangements made for the new service and operating delivery model for SYFR Estates and Facilities post decoupling.

14 THE PROCUREMENT SERVICE - AN ANNUAL UPDATE

A report of the Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive was presented which provided an annual update on Procurement Services, its activities and how it effectively supported the various aspects of South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue

Service's businesses together with a log of FS323 Request to Contracts Standing Orders Waiver activity in the preceding 12 months.

At the year-end 2020/21, the value of stock was £386,380.59 and the total discrepancy at stock check was £2,301.29. The focus of activity during the period had related to the procurement of the new structural fire kit and rescue jackets which had gone live within the Service on 2 August 2021, and the care and maintenance package for operational garments through a new laundry and aftercare contract.

A total of £804,568.63 procurement savings had been achieved by the Service over the last 12 month period.

Members noted the changes to the Contracts Standing Orders at Appendix A to the report, which brought them in line with post Brexit legislation and changes in threshold limits, together with a number of changes to operational matters.

In response to a question raised by Councillor Ayris in relation to Compressor maintenance, Members noted that there had been concern that the TDC Compressor could have broken down, which would have prevented the new recruits course from having taken place. Therefore, a new Compressor had been installed at TDC within a suitable timeframe, as a one-off specialist requirement, by a different company to the one that was utilised for the Service's ongoing Compressor maintenance. Future reports would contain information on the Compressor maintenance contract.

RESOLVED – That Members noted the contents of the report and endorsed the ongoing positive work of the Procurement Services team.

15 SYFR ANNUAL SERVICE PLAN PROGRESS UPDATE

A report of the Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive was submitted which provided an update on the progress the Service had made against its Annual Service Plan for 2021/22. The report was the first of the six monthly progress updates to be presented to the Authority. The appendix to the report provided a brief update on the progress against each of the priority objectives.

Members had approved the initial draft Plan at the Authority meeting held in January 2021, which then went live in April 2021.

RESOLVED – That Members noted the contents of the report and the progress the Service had made against its Annual Service Plan 2021/22.

16 POLICE AND FIRE COLLABORATION BOARD MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 2 SEPTEMBER 2021

RESOLVED – That Members noted the minutes of the Police and Fire Collaboration Board Meeting held on 2 September 2021.

17 KEY ISSUES ARISING FROM THE PERFORMANCE AND SCRUTINY BOARD HELD ON 9 SEPTEMBER 2021

RESOLVED – That Members noted the key issues arising from the Performance and Scrutiny Board Meeting held on 9 September 2021.

18 DRAFT FIRE AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 13 SEPTEMBER 2021

RESOLVED – That Members noted the draft minutes of the Audit and Governance Committee held on 13 September 2021.

Actions Table

No.	Action	Timescale	Officer(s)	Status/ Update
1	To provide Members with the grading structures for SYFR and SYP.	ASAP	DCFO Kirby	<p><u>Update 29-09-21</u></p> <p>SYFR has requested details from SYP on grading structures within certain depts. This will be anonymised but making comparisons will be difficult as the department structures will be different, with different responsibilities, role maps and grading processes.</p> <p>SYFR has also requested further details from Rose Regeneration on the wording in their report that gave rise to this query at the September FRA meeting. This may also provide some clarity on the matter for FRA Members.</p> <p><u>Update 08-11-21</u></p> <p>Information was provided to Members via email.</p> <p>Please see the information sheet attached to the minutes.</p> <p>ACTION DISCHARGED</p>

2	To provide Members with the figures in relation to the Service's potential establishment position by the end of December 2021.	ASAP	CFO Johnson	<u>Update 21-10-21</u>																								
				<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th style="text-align: center;">SYFR Total Uniform Establishment</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Jul-20</td> <td style="text-align: center;">592</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Oct-20</td> <td style="text-align: center;">592</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Jan-21</td> <td style="text-align: center;">592</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Apr-21</td> <td style="text-align: center;">590</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Jun-21</td> <td style="text-align: center;">591</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Jul-21</td> <td style="text-align: center;">591</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Aug-21</td> <td style="text-align: center;">591</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Sep-21</td> <td style="text-align: center;">591</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Oct-21</td> <td style="text-align: center;">591</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Nov-21</td> <td style="text-align: center;">608</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Dec-21</td> <td style="text-align: center;">608</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		SYFR Total Uniform Establishment	Jul-20	592	Oct-20	592	Jan-21	592	Apr-21	590	Jun-21	591	Jul-21	591	Aug-21	591	Sep-21	591	Oct-21	591	Nov-21	608	Dec-21	608
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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>

Action 1 - Grading structures for SYFR and SYP

In presenting the Rose Regeneration Collaboration Evaluation report to FRA Members in September, Cllr Hogarth made reference to the report which suggested that staff undertaking broadly similar work at SYFR and SYP felt that they were experiencing different pay and conditions.

As part of the Estates and Facilities Management restructure that was reported to FRA Members in October, SYFR have diligently reviewed and updated all job and person descriptions for each of the new roles and have had the Human Resources function carry out an independent pay and rewards evaluation to ensure that the pay attributed to each new role is:

- fair for the proposed duties being undertaken / skills and qualifications required; and
- comparative to other relevant functions / services within SYFR.

The recruitment process will ultimately determine the extent to which SYFR is able to attract and select appropriately qualified/skilled/experienced candidates for each role. Under current HR policies if it has not been possible to recruit after 2 rounds of job advertisement, then it is possible to award a market supplement up to 10% of the proposed starting pay, subject to Executive approval.

Recruitment Agencies actively monitor the recruitment market and frequently identify that for all building and facilities management professions, demand is outstripping supply leading to a higher pay and reward expectation. This is a current issue for all public sector employers, including SYFR. To help manage this perceived gap, SYFR is also keen to look at new ways of marketing job opportunities including making potential applicants aware of the 'other' benefits in working for the organisation.