

SOUTH YORKSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

21 NOVEMBER 2022

PRESENT: Councillor T Damms (Chair)
Councillor C Hogarth (Vice-Chair)
Councillors: S Sansome, T Smith, S Ball, S Ayris, A Khayum,
A Cherryholme and S Alston

Dr Billings – In attendance virtually

CFO C Kirby, DCFO T Carlin, S Slater, M Lloyd, P Heffernan,
C Winter and P Fieldhouse (South Yorkshire Fire & Rescue
Service)

S Loach, D Nuttall, M Bray, M Potter and A Shirt
(Barnsley MBC)

Apologies for absence were received from
Councillor B Johnson, Councillor D Hutchinson,
Councillor P Turpin, J Field, N Copley, S Norman, D Thorpe,
ACO A Strelczenie, S Kelsey and M Buttery

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were noted as above.

2 ANNOUNCEMENTS

Following the recent sad passing of Jim Andrews, a former Chair of the Authority, Councillor Damms sought Members' permission for a letter of condolence to be sent to his partner on behalf of the Authority.

Members agreed to the suggestion.

3 URGENT ITEMS

None.

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

RESOLVED – That agenda item 23 entitled 'Appointment of Independent Persons to the Ethical Standards Committee' and agenda item 24 entitled 'Executive Team Structure' 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 Sansome had attended the LGA Annual Firefighters' Pensions Conference in London in October 2022, which he had found to be very interesting. He referred to a report that had been presented at the recent Local Pensions Board meeting on pensions related issues from a Fire Brigades' Union (FBU) perspective. The Chair of the Board had requested that work should be undertaken to ascertain whether the Board could achieve any best practice learning moving forward.

Councillors Sansome and Ball expressed their thanks for being permitted to attend the LGA Fire and Rescue Leadership Essentials Training session held in November 2022, which they had found to be interesting and informative. The White Paper Reform had been the hot topic for discussion. Councillor Ball encouraged Members to attend the training session in the future.

Councillor Ball voiced his concerns regarding the number of Fire Authority related meetings that had been held over the past week, which had impacted upon the workload of Members and the BMBC officers to facilitate the meetings. He suggested that consideration should be given to reviewing the meeting schedule, with a view for the meetings to be held wider apart in the future.

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 10 OCTOBER 2022

CFO Kirby provided Members with an update in relation to the current pay situation across operational roles in the fire and rescue service at a national level. At present, the representative bodies for the corporate staff roles had accepted a pay offer made by the Employers side of the National Joint Council for an uplift in pay of £1,925 for all pay grades to be back dated to April 2022. As part of the agreement, an additional one day of leave would be allocated for all members that were under the Green Book terms and conditions. In relation to the Grey Book members of staff, the FBU had conducted a consultative ballot which closed on 14 November 2022, which was in response to an improved offer of pay by the Employers side of the National Joint Council of 5%. The results of the ballot had indicated that the majority of voters being 79%, had voted to reject the improved pay offer of 5%. There had been a 78% turnout of eligible members to vote.

Members noted that a letter that had been received from M Wrack, General Secretary of the FBU which had provided a timeline that would follow him writing to the relevant Government Departments, Ministers and the Employers side of the National Joint Council to provide them with the outcome of the ballot. The timeline for the members to be balloted for strike action was noted as follows:-

- On 21 November 2022, letters to be submitted to the employers to indicate that there was a trade dispute regarding pay.
- On 28 November 2022, all employers would be notified of the intention to ballot their members for strike action in relation to pay.
- On 5 December 2022, it was intended to commence a postal ballot for all members, with the intention to recommend to vote 'yes' for strike action.
- The ballot would close on 23 January 2023.

The Service, along with other fire and rescue services nationally, would continue their preparation for business continuity arrangements for periods of industrial action. Members would continue to be provided with regular updates.

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Authority meeting held on 10 October 2022 be signed by the Chair as a correct record.

10 WORKFORCE INVESTMENT AND EFFICIENCY PLAN DECEMBER 2022 – MARCH 2024

A report of the Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive was presented in relation to the Workforce Investment and Efficiency Plan December 2022 – March 2024, which outlined the business cases that were approved in principle by the Senior Leadership Team at the workforce planning event held in June 2022 and at a subsequent follow up event held in October 2022, for Authority Members to consider as an investment as part of the wider Service Improvement Plan.

RESOLVED – That Members approved the business cases contained within the Workforce Investment Plan to support the Service's strategic objectives and Service Improvement Plan.

11 CONFERENCE REPRESENTATION: LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION (LGA) ANNUAL FIRE CONFERENCE AND EXHIBITION 2023 ON 7- 8 MARCH 2023

A report of the Clerk to the Fire and Rescue Authority was presented which sought expressions of interest from Members to attend the LGA Annual Fire Conference and Exhibition 2023 on Tuesday 7 March – Wednesday 8 March 2023 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, Nottingham.

Members were requested to inform M Bray if they wished to attend the event.

RESOLVED – That Members considered and approved representation at the LGA Annual Fire Conference and Exhibition 2023.

12 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2023 - 2026

A report of the Clerk and Treasurer was submitted which provided an insight to the likely financial position of SYFR. The report was presented ahead of the Government's Spending Review and financial settlement for stand-alone Fire and Rescue Authorities which should be known by December 2022. The proposed 2023/24 Annual Revenue Budget and Council Tax Setting report was due to be considered at the Authority meeting scheduled to be held on 20 February 2023.

Members were referred to the work that has been progressing on reviewing the financial planning assumptions in the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for the period through to 2026, alongside the Fire Spending Review Proposal, since the last budget report that had been presented to the Authority in February 2022.

The current MTFP that had been agreed by the Authority, had been cautiously optimistic and anticipated some financial pressures. The country was facing extremely difficult economic times. A survey had been undertaken to determine the financial impacts across the English fire and rescue services which was estimated to be c£145m pressures as a result of the agreed pay awards and the significant increases in utility and fuel costs; this did not include the current pay negotiations in terms of firefighter pay.

In response to question raised by Councillor Ayris, S Loach commented that the Government had announced that the local government finance settlement would be announced on 21 December 2022. Following which, S Slater and himself would work on the figures during the Christmas period and into the New Year. Members would be updated as soon as possible.

Following a query raised by Councillor Sansome, S Slater referred to the scenario planning that was undertaken by the Service, which provided an idea of the gap and severity of the work involved. It was still unknown whether a 3 year settlement would be made this year. The Service's largest challenges were inflation, utilities and pay awards. A Member session on the budget setting process would be held as usual. The base budget from the previous year would be utilised and Members would continue to be provided with the quarterly reports.

CFO Kirby commented that the funding scenarios were very wide. He considered that it was frustrating that the fire and rescue services had to operate within the uncertain financial picture, which made it difficult for future planning. Councillor Damms and himself had co-written to the Ministers at the Home Office and the Central Government's Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities, with the Chief Secretaries to the Treasury having been copied into the letter, to raise some of the funding challenges across SYFR and the wider fire sector to request for Government funding which matched inflation together with the potential for precept flexibility moving forwards. The Service's workforce investment plan was modest in comparison to previous years, due to the likely financial challenges that could be faced in future years.

RESOLVED – That Members:-

- i) Accepted the updated MTFP for the financial years 2023/24 to 2025/26 noting the contents of the report, and in particular the likely implications of the different funding scenarios for the operational service and future financial position.
- ii) Endorsed the proposed approach for managing reserves as set out in Section C to the Report.
- iii) Noted the up to date approved capital investment programme spending and financing projections 2023/24 to 2025/26 (Section D).
- iv) Agreed to consider new, additional capital investment schemes for approval into the current capital programme as part of the 2022/23 Budget and Council Tax Setting Report (Section D).
- v) Noted the known financial risks, uncertainties and events that will need careful consideration and management in the run up to and when setting the 2023/24 Budget and Council Tax (Section E) and beyond this date.

13 FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE REPORT QUARTER 2 2022-23

A report of the Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive and Clerk and Treasurer was presented as the second in a series of reports that Members would receive throughout the financial year, to inform them as to the likely financial performance for the year ended 31 March 2023.

The report detailed the estimated revenue outturn position in comparison to the annual budget set on the 21 February 2022, an updated reserves position statement and an update on the Capital Programme.

The approved operating budget for 2022/23 was £57.877m, funding was £58.827m resulting in a planned contribution to reserves of £0.950m, reflecting the one-off services grant for 2022/23 only.

The approved Capital Programme for 2022/23 totalled £8.773m, which was funded predominantly by external borrowing. Following the 2021/22 Outturn Report which was approved on 20 June 2022, the programme had been adjusted to £10.384m. Based upon the projections within the report, this would indicate a net decrease in general reserves of £1.204m, this being the in-year estimated overspend.

In response to a question raised by Councillor Sansome regarding whether the capital rates would be sustainable in 2023, S Slater commented that the reserves had a one-time only use. Since the rates had been revalued this had reduced the rates budget, which was kept under review, and was the permanent recurrent reduction in budget which helped towards any efficiencies and savings. It was proposed to use the earmarked reserve in the rates to cover the current year's overspend which was unprecedented in gas and electric, which had not been predicted when the budget had been set at the beginning of the year. This had

reduced the £1.2m from the emerging risk reserve which would protect the emerging risk reserve to help cover any emerging deficits in the budget in 2023.

RESOLVED – That Members noted:-

- i) The emerging underlying estimated revenue performance which was showing a potential operating overspend of £1.204m for the financial year ended 31 March 2023.
- ii) The underlying and significant financial risks and uncertainties facing the Service and Sector during the remainder of the financial year and into 2023/2024 and beyond.
- iii) The latest estimated change in General and Earmarked Reserves as set out in Section C of the report.
- iv) The updated position of the Capital Programme for the financial year ending 2022/23, which was in line with expectations.

14 EXTREME WEATHER JULY 2022

A report of the Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive was presented which provided Members with an overview of the operational activity levels during the extreme weather of July 2022 and SYFR's response to the challenges presented by the extreme prolonged heat. The report also contained information on the lessons learned and the contingency plans that were in place together with any additional measures that SYFR may adopt following learning from the events in summer 2022.

On 19 July 2022, SYFR had received a total of 1,645 emergency calls and three significant property fires had occurred. A total of 10 property fires had occurred within 37 minutes, which had required 10 fire appliances and two turntable ladders. There had been multiple 'stacked' calls during the peak demand periods during the day and the SYFR Control staff had triaged the calls, whilst prioritising those involving threat to life and property. A total of 60 calls had been 'stacked' during one period.

Following the high proportion of emergency calls that had been received from members of the public in South Yorkshire during the late afternoon of 19 July 2022, SYP had requested that a Local Resilience Forum (LRF) Strategic Coordinating Group Meeting be held. The first meeting had been held at 5pm on 19 July 2022, where the LRF had declared a multiagency major incident. A second LRF Strategic Coordinating Group Meeting had been held at 9.00pm on 19 July 2022 and a third meeting had been held on 20 July 2022 where the major incident had been stood down. A debrief had been held and the learning had been captured and brought into SYFR. A further debrief on the LRF would be undertaken. All of the debriefs from an SYFR perspective had now been completed.

The Operational Support Cell had been running since 13 July 2022 which had focused upon planning and logistics to enable the Control Room to focus upon more front end call handling.

In relation to accident rates for firefighters, a total of 5 accident reports had been received from operational crew members on 18 and 19 July 2022 who had suffered the ill effects of extreme heat, all of which had been investigated at Health and Safety Level 2 status.

Members noted that since the production of the report, SYFR had undertaken a project to introduce the wildfire capability. The project group had already met and was reviewing the new wildfire provision following the events that had occurred on 19 July 2022.

RESOLVED – That Members noted the information and ongoing work.

15 THE PROCUREMENT SERVICE - AN ANNUAL UPDATE

A report of the Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive was submitted which provided an annual update on Procurement Services, its activities and how it was effectively supporting the various aspects of SYFR business. An outline of the completed tender programme for October 2021 to September 2022 was included at Appendix A to the report.

In terms of governance, the internal audit report that had been published in February 2022 had provided substantial assurance that the processes being followed by the Procurement Department were good and reasonable.

Members were provided with an overview of the work undertaken by the Procurement Department which included involvement in the tender process for the new community building and training area refurbishment at Barnsley Fire Station, to secure £25k of funding from ChangingPlaces.org to support the provision of the Changing Places room, which was scheduled for completion in December 2022. The Procurement Department had been involved in the decarbonisation of the whole estate, which involved an LED lighting programme and the installation of a building and energy management system, which was due for completion by the end of April 2023. Alongside which, the Procurement Department continued to support the work of the Facilities Management Team to replace the Computer Assisted Facilities Management System, which would achieve a £6.1k saving against the previous system which had a revenue budget of £13k. The Procurement Department had also been involved in the new contract for the replacement of the current Fuel Management System, which would achieve a saving of £8.6k per year for the annual subscription of delivery against the previous cost of £14.5k.

In response to a question raised by Councillor Smith regarding whether the Service still operated under EU conditions for procurement, M Lloyd referred to the current transition arrangement. There was no longer a requirement to publish those tenders that were above the threshold into the European Journal, which had since been replaced by the Government's find a tender service. A procurement White Paper was currently being taken through the Government.

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

16 PLANNING FOR INDUSTRIAL ACTION

CFO Kirby provided Members with an update on the Service's planning arrangements for industrial action.

At a national level, the Chief Fire Officers continued to hold weekly planning meetings to discuss the broad arrangements across the Government levels, and concerns were being discussed at a national level regarding the potential for firefighter strikes which had significantly increased with the FBU having issued its timeline to ballot its members. As part of the national discussions, there was a notional requirement for fire and rescue services to aim to deliver approximately 25% – 30% of their normal capability. In terms of SYFR, this would equate to ensuring that 8 fire appliances were made available during any period of industrial action. This would be delivered through an external contract to provide officers to riders in charge of fire engines to cover periods of strike and to engage with a number of contingency workers to be trained in basic skills, firefighting capability and basic rescue capability. SYFR continued to recruit and train contingency workers. However, SYFR had observed a slight reduction in the numbers following the announcement of the likelihood that the industrial dispute had increased. SYFR continued to advertise and recruit a capability which was a legal requirement for Chief Fire Officers and their respective governance bodies, to provide some capability during periods of strike action. Through blending the approach with messages around fire prevention and fire protection, the Service would trigger a broader communications piece of work to raise the profile for the potential of firefighters to take strike action, to enable them to become more vigilant in their every day lives. This could potentially reduce the demand on the emergency services.

The Service held regular internal business continuity crisis meetings and continued to train contingency workers at the SYFR Training and Development Centre. The Service continued to prioritise ticket status for safety critical courses, whilst recognising that during this critical period some of the firefighters may not maintain their ticket status for competences in terms of their assessments.

Members noted that the current acquisition course would commence on 21 November 2022 which would run for a 3 week period, and the recruitment remained open. The more informal Member briefing sessions would continue to be held.

In response to a query raised by Councillor Sansome regarding whether the ongoing discussions continued with the local authorities regarding the emergency plans, CFO Kirby commented that he had written to the Chief Executives at the four local authorities as soon as the FBU timeline was known to ballot its members for strike action. He had also provided the information to the Chief Constable at SYP. The Service had offered to attend any local authority meetings where they may wish to discuss the Service's plans for strike action in further detail.

RESOLVED – That Members noted the update.

17 PEOPLE BOARD UPDATE

A report of the Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive was submitted which provided a summary of the items raised and discussed at the People Board in Quarter 2 2022/23. One meeting had been held during this period on 6 September 2022. The People Board provided a strategic and critical role as a guardian of the SYFR People Strategy, in safeguarding and promoting a positive culture and ensuring a modern, sustainable and healthy working environment for its staff and volunteers.

DCFO Carlin referred to an administrative error in the production of the agenda pack, which had included the Annual EDI and Annual Workforce Profile Report that had previously been approved at the Authority Meeting held in September 2022. Members were provided with updates on SYFR workforce planning at the Joint Liaison Forum Meetings. Work was underway to refresh the People Strategy 2023-26.

Members noted the SYFR recruitment figures for 2023. Two recruits courses would be held in 2023 with 36 offers made, 18 offers in January 2023 and 18 offers in April 2023, together with 3 reserve offers. Of the 39 offers, a total of 31% of which were from underrepresented groups; it was hopeful that this figure would continue to improve. From mid-October 2022, the total number of riders was at 374 establishment with a substantive strength of 379 and an actual of 372. The total number of non-riders was at 64 establishment with a substantive strength of 53 and an actual of 68.

Councillor Khayum was pleased to observe the range of work undertaken to increase the diversity within the Service. In relation to recruitment, he queried whether there was anything further that could be undertaken to increase the number of underrepresented groups within the initial pool of applicants received.

In response, DCFO Carlin provided reassurance of the work undertaken to increase the number of underrepresented groups within the initial pool of applicants through online targeting of direct groups and also at schools and colleges.

RESOLVED – That Members noted the contents of the report and provided further scrutiny and support to enable continuing effective management of people issues.

18 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. The plan included actions which related to SYFR, His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) Inspection Report, Grenfell Tower Inquiry, State of Fire and Rescue Reports and published Professional Fire Standards. The improvements that were generated through local and national learning from emergency incidents were also captured within the plan, which included learning through the COVID-19 pandemic.

A total of 17 areas for improvement had been identified for SYFR from the HMICFRS inspection report, all of which had been classed as high priority. From the 17 priority actions, 13 actions had now been completed, 1 action was on schedule and 3 actions were behind schedule.

SYFR would continue to monitor the actions arising following the analysis of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 1 Report Overview through the Service Improvement Plan.

In relation to the HMICFRS inspection update for SYFR, a hot debrief had been held in June 2022 and a final report was intended to be published in January 2023.

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

19 FIT FOR THE FUTURE (PLUS PRESENTATION)

A report of the Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive was submitted which provided an overview of Fit for the Future (FfF) and the work undertaken to date by SYFR.

For more than three years, collaborative working had been undertaken by the National Fire Chiefs Council and the National Employers (England) to continue to develop a joint picture of the future for all fire and rescue services in England. The intention of FfF was to genuinely drive change in the fire and rescue services that the public received.

Members noted the 12 improvement objectives within the three key themes. Members were provided with a presentation which highlighted the key areas of focus.

C Winter commented that Members would be requested to become involved in the gap analysis against Fit for the Future.

RESOLVED – That Members noted:-

- i) Fit for the Future.
- ii) SYFR have started work on a gap analysis against Fit for the Future.

20 SUSTAINABILITY AWARENESS UPDATE - PRESENTATION

Members were provided with a presentation which provided an update on the Service's sustainability awareness.

The Service's Green Strategic Anchors consisted of the draft Green Plan, the agreed Green Plan Statement of Intent which set out the Service's vision to become net zero by 2023, and the signed Emergency Services Environment and Sustainability Charter. Members noted the current live projects that were underway together with a number of projects that were on the horizon.

In relation to the LED lighting upgrade, the return on investment was envisaged to take 1.3 years, with a forecast saving of £245k on bills per year.

The Building Management System would regulate the electrical and mechanical equipment within the Service's buildings i.e. power system, lighting and ventilation to confirm sustainability. The current milestones included phase 1 implementation. Work had been completed at Thorne, Doncaster and Barnsley fire stations.

In relation to the Decarbonisation Project, the Service had been awarded £532k low carbon skills funding through Salix. Stages 1 and 2 of the technical surveys had been completed. The surveys would create costed building designs, which would enable the prioritisation of estate improvement work using expert knowledge.

In response to a number of questions received from Councillor Ball regarding the number of the Service's fire stations that currently utilised gas powered boilers and the solar aspect to heat hot water, P Fieldhouse commented that there were currently 15 gas powered boilers which were used across the estate. In terms of resilience, there was a possibility that the Service would not be able to go fully sustainable without an element of a water boiler at the fire stations i.e. gas or otherwise. Work was underway to reinstate the solar thermal and solar PV that were located at a number of the Service's fire stations, together with ascertaining a resilient model.

The Service was taking a holistic approach to agile working.

RESOLVED – That Members noted the update.

21 DRAFT MINUTES OF THE LOCAL PENSION BOARD HELD ON 6 OCTOBER 2022

RESOLVED – That Members noted the draft minutes of the Local Pension Board held on 6 October 2022.

22 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.

23 APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT PERSONS TO THE ETHICAL STANDARDS COMMITTEE

A report of the Clerk to the Fire and Rescue Authority was submitted to seek the Authority's approval to appoint Independent Persons to assist the Monitoring Officer in dealing with Ethical Standards complaints, as required by the relevant provisions of the Localism Act 2011.

RESOLVED – That Members approved the appointment of the Independent Persons under the Member Code of Conduct.

24 EXECUTIVE TEAM STRUCTURE

A report of the Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive was presented to discuss the SYFR Executive Team structure.

Members agreed that in the event the Service encountered difficulties to attract applicants into the roles, that the matter would be discussed at a future Authority meeting to determine the best way forward.

RESOLVED – That Members considered the options presented and agreed that Option 2 as outlined within the report, was the most appropriate model to ensure effective executive leadership of the Service for the future.

Actions Table

No.	Action	Timescale	Officer(s)	Status/Update
1	A report to be presented to a future Authority meeting to outline the lessons learnt and the contingency plans to be put in place following the high volume of fires that had occurred during the extreme weather conditions on 19 July 2022.	To a future FRA meeting	DCFO Carlin	<p><u>Update 12.09.22</u></p> <p>A report to be presented to the Members within the upcoming couple of Authority Meetings.</p> <p><u>Update 10.10.22</u></p> <p>It was envisaged that a report would be provided to the Authority Meeting in November 2022.</p> <p><u>Update 21.11.22</u></p> <p>Members had been provided with an update at the Authority Meeting held on 21.11.22</p> <p>ACTION DISCHARGED</p>
2	To provide Members with a copy of the briefing for the active pension members regarding their pensions benefits.	In due course	S Kelsey	

CHAIR