

**FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**

**MONDAY 20 FEBRUARY 2023**

**Present:**

Councillor Tony Damms in the Chair

Councillors C Hogarth (Vice-Chair), S Sansome, T Smith, S Ball, D Hutchinson, S Ayris, A Khayum, A Cherryholme, S Alston and Dr A Billings

**Officers:**

CFO C Kirby, DCFO T Carlin, ACO A Strelczenie, S Slater, S Kelsey, AM Gillet, S Loach, D Nuttall, S Ghuman, D Thorpe, C Smallman

**Apologies:**

Councillor B Johnson, Councillor P Turpin, N Copley and M Potter

**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**

RESOLVED – That agenda item 24 entitled 'Review of the BMBC & SYFRA AND SYFR Service Level Agreement' 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**

None.

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 9 January 2023**

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Authority meeting held on 9 January 2023 be signed by the Chair as a correct record.

10 **Appointment of Monitoring Officer to the Authority**

RESOLVED – That Members agreed to appoint Sukdave Ghuman as monitoring officer.

11 **2023/24 Annual Revenue Budget and Council Tax Setting**

A report was presented to Members to approve the 2023/24 revenue budget and set the council tax and precept by the legislative deadline of 1st March each year. The report set out the implications of the Local Government Finance Settlement, the proposed 2023/24 revenue budget and an updated capital programme, including new 2023/24 capital investment schemes.

The cost of employee pay had increased to keep up with the cost of inflation, included within the 2022/23 budget was a provision of 2% for the increase in pay. Whilst support staff reached an agreement averaging 5.72%% for this year, the pay award for Operational staff (fire fighters) was an offer of 7% from 1 July 2022 and 5% from 1 July 2023. This had yet to be agreed, with industrial action a distinct possibility if no agreement was reached.

Therefore, the updated MTFP was set within the context of a number of ongoing uncertainties, risks and concerns for the Authority to consider:

- A one year only finance settlement for 2023/24, with significant uncertainty surrounding future funding.
- A council tax precept flexibility option of £5 for 2023/24.
- Future public sector funding reforms coupled with the current position of national public finances.
- Ongoing, unprecedented, negotiations with regards to employee pay awards.

- Supply chain issues and inflationary pressures, including interest rates and the impact this will have on the running of the service.

Councillor Sansome expressed that the current times are difficult but felt that the residents of South Yorkshire would understand the Council Tax rise. He asked if it was possible to have a transcript which could be passed onto residents. S Loach agreed to provide a summary for councillors to share with residents.

Both Dr Billings and Councillor Alston agreed that there seemed to be few alternatives other than to accept the proposed £5 Council Tax increase.

In response to a question raised by Councillor Alston, CFO Kirby commented that lobbying letters had been written to those that fund the fire sector and also treasury officials to increase awareness around the need for additional funding.

RESOLVED – That Members approved:

- (i) The Authority's 2023/24 Revenue Budget at Appendix A
- (ii) The Treasurer's Section 25 Statement (Section H) in support of the budget
- (iii) The Capital Investment Strategy (Appendix B) including the updated Capital Programme and new approvals as set out in Section E of the report
- (iv) The proposed approach for managing reserves as set out in Section D to this report, noting the decrease in reserves to address the funding gap in 2023/24
- (v) The Treasury Management and Investment Strategy in Section G
- (vi) The fees and charges schedule for 2023/24 in Appendix D
- (vii) The Council Tax increase of £5 for 2023/24

## **12 Service Plan 2023/24**

ACO A Strelczenie presented the service plan for 2023/24 for members approval and it was explained that progress towards achieving this would be monitored by the corporate management board. ACO A Strelczenie provided some context around the consultation and explained it was clear staff wanted to focus on longer term priorities. Members were referred to Appendix A which highlights the new senior leadership team structure.

RESOLVED – That Members approved the Service Plan for 2023/24.

## **13 Financial Performance Report Quarter 3 2022/23**

A report of the Chief Fire Officer, Chief Executive and Clerk and Treasurer was presented to Members in relation to Financial Performance (Quarter 3 2022/23) which outlined the likely outcomes for the year ending 31 March 2023.

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Based on the latest income and expenditure forecasts the Authority projected a net operating spend of £59.379m, net contributions to reserves of £0.191m and funding of £57.877m. The forecast result was an overall operating overspend of £1.693m or 3% of the budget.

RESOLVED – That Members approved:

- (i) The estimated revenue performance which shows a potential operating overspend of £1.693m for the financial year ending 31 March 2023
- (ii) The underlying and significant financial risks and uncertainties facing the Service and Sector during the remainder of this financial year and into 2023/2024 and beyond
- (iii) The latest estimated charge 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 in 2022/23, which is in line with expectations.

#### **14 Service Improvement Board Update**

ACO A Strelczenie provided Members with an update on the Service Improvement Plan.

In response to a question by Dr Billings, S Kelsey highlighted the importance of ensuring that training throughout the authority is at a good level, this would be monitored by the Service Improvement Board.

There was discussion around the leadership programme, S Kelsey explained that fast-track and direct entry arrangements are being scrutinised as currently there are pilots running across the country to determine their success rates.

ACO A Strelczenie stated that a future report could be provided to Members with specific timeframes for the individual improvements for each service area.

RESOLVED – That Members approved the contents of the report and agreed to provide further scrutiny and support to enable continual service improvement.

#### **15 SYFR HMICFRS Inspection Report**

The South Yorkshire Fire & Rescue HMICFRS Inspection report was presented to Members, it provided a summary of findings relating to effectiveness, efficiency and people.

Councillor Ayris asked if the information highlighted in paragraphs 35 and 36 of page 161 was separate to that of the quarterly service review and requested that a short report be put together on the state of fire and the recommendations.

ACO A Strelczenie commented that the fire report was published after the inspection and that a report would be presented at a future FRA meeting.

RESOLVED that

- (i) That Members noted the outcome of the SYFR HMICFRS Inspection.
- (ii) That a report on the State of Fire and Rescue annual report be presented at a future FRA meeting.

## **16 People Board Update**

S Kelsey provided Members with an update from the People Board. It was noted that the Board would be looking at Culture re. LFB and would be renamed 'People and Culture Board'.

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

## **17 Serious Violence Duty**

AM Gillatt provided Members with an update on the progress of the Serious Violence Duty programme with its two core components, readiness and implementation, in mind.

In response to a question by Councillor Smith with regards to anti-social behaviour, AM Gillatt explained that the figures on page 181 may not include attacks on firefighters specifically. CFO Kirby stated that there are examples of Fire Fighters being attacked whilst on duty, often correlating to specific times of the year such as Halloween or Bonfire Night, but this issue does not relate to this new Duty with previous campaigns around the Protect the Protectors Bill specifically focussed on specific occupations being given greater protection from being attacked during the course of their work.

Councillor Smith raised the issue of justice and what measures are put in place to ensure these criminals are dealt with in a timely manner. CFO Kirby highlighted how the service would work with Police to provide any evidence that would result in people who attack fire and rescue workers to be brought to justice.

Following a query raised by Councillor Hogarth, Matt explained training could be provided for members alongside further updates.

CFO Kirby responded to a comment from Councillor Hogarth regarding the lack of trust between the public and police, CFO Kirby stated that a collaborative effort needed to be utilised to tackle serious violence, supporting young or vulnerable people is a good starting point.

Dr Billings and Councillor Alston both highlighted the importance of the fire authority and police working in collaboration to reduce violence.

RESOLVED – That Members noted the contents of the report.

**18 Industrial Action Update**

Members were provided with a verbal update on the current Industrial Action and business continuity planning the Service was undertaking.

CFO Kirby informed Members that himself and the Chair met with the employer's side of the NJC on 6 February to discuss an improved pay offer, and Members had been consulted on the implications of improved pay awards in the briefing held on 3 February.

Members were informed that a new and improved offer of 7% backdated to July 2022 and 5% for 2023 had been proposed, and the FBU ballot would close on 6 March 2023. The executive council of the FBU had recommended that members accept the offer, and the consensus was that local officials also agreed with this stance.

It was noted that business continuity and industrial action planning would continue at the Service until it was certain that the new pay offer had been accepted.

RESOLVED – That Members noted the update.

**19 Draft Minutes of the Audit and Governance Committee held on 9 January 2023**

CFO Kirby informed Members of the difference between approval and noting of the reports submitted by the Service, and that the reports that were presented for noting were usually update reports.

RESOLVED – That Members noted the draft minutes of the Audit and Governance Committee held on 9 January 2023.

20 **Draft Minutes of the Appointments Committee held on 24 January 2023**

RESOLVED – That Members noted the draft minutes of the Appointments Committee held on 24 January 2023.

21 **Draft Minutes of the Appointments Committee held on 6 February 2023**

RESOLVED – That Members noted the draft minutes of the Appointments Committee held on 6 February 2023.

22 **Draft Minutes of the Local Pension Board held on 19 January 2023**

RESOLVED – That Members noted the draft minutes of the Local Pension Board held on 19 January 2023.

23 **Items for discussion in the absence 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.

24 **Review of the BMBC & SYFRA and SYFR Service Level Agreement**

A report of the Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive was presented to Members by DCFO T Carlin regarding the review of the current service level agreement. DCFO Carlin explained that the SLA was a long-standing arrangement, and a review was needed to ensure both parties are benefiting from the agreement.

S Ghuman commented that the review would be a beneficial exercise.

RESOLVED – That Members approved the review of the existing arrangements covered within the SLA between BMBC, SYFRA and SYFR during the 23/24 financial year.

**ACTIONS TABLE**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Officer(s)</b>	<b>Status/Update</b>
<b>1</b>	A report to be presented to members on the State of Fire and the recommendations	In due course	ACO A Strelczenie	
<b>2</b>	Training for Members on Serious Violence Duty	In due course	AM Gillatt	

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**Duration of the meeting: 2 hours**

Chairman at the meeting on  
Monday 20 February 2023