

West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority

10 October 2022 at 1100 hours

Conducted as a public meeting at Headquarters and digitally via
Microsoft Teams

Present: Councillor Brackenridge (Chair),
Councillor Iqbal (Vice Chair),
Councillor Barrie, Councillor Dehar, Councillor Hogarth, Councillor
Hussain, Councillor Jalil, Councillor Kettle, Councillor Miks,
Councillor Spence, Councillor Waters, Councillor Young.

Virtual: Councillor Lloyd, Councillor Miller, Mike Ager – Independent
Member, Professor S Brake - co-opted member, Wasim Ali –
APCC, Maurice Carter – Unison, Sarah Middleton, Co-opted
member.

01/22 **To receive any apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from Councillor Gurdial Atwal Singh, Phil
Loach - Chief Fire Officer, Wayne Brown – Deputy Chief Fire
Officer, Steven Price-Hunt – Fire Brigades Union.

02/22 **Declarations of interest**

The Chair declared a personal non-pecuniary interest due to being
a member of the Firefighters Pension Scheme(s). Councillor
Hogarth and Councillor Kettle declared a non-pecuniary interest due
to a local government pension fund.

03/22 **Chairs Announcements**

The Chair welcomed all attendees to the meeting of the full Fire
Authority, with a special welcome to the new Coventry
representative Cllr Gavin Lloyd who had joined online due to being
on his honeymoon.

The Chair advised that he and the Chief Fire Officer had/would continue to lobby nationally the need for fairer pay for fire fighters. A new pay offer of 5% had been offered by the NJC and would be balloted by Union members. The Home Office had confirmed that unlike other sectors such as the Police service, funding would not be provided to Fire Services to assist with the additional cost of pay rises.

The Chair thanked all members of staff involved in the UKRO Festival. He had been pleased to see the volume of school children involved in the event.

04/22 **Chief Fire Officer's Announcements**

Gary Taylor, Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO), welcomed all attendees to the meeting with a special welcome to Cllr Gavin Lloyd.

The ACFO endorsed the comments of the Chair of the Authority on the success of UKRO. He advised that additional equipment had been sent to Ukraine including a convoy that would be transported by members of staff across Europe over seven days. The volunteers had been Crew Commander Sam Wickett and Firefighters Zoe Taylor and Joshua Stanton along with Watch Commander Shaun Crone.

The ACFO advised that the National Breathing Apparatus Challenge took place on 8 October at the Fire Service College. Congratulations was given to West Midlands Fire Service Foleshill Red and White teams with the team from Foleshill Red Watch coming 2nd overall, with Richard McMenemy winning 1st place in Fire Ground Management, while Dannielle Maisey and Sam Blanche won 1st place BA team.

Congratulations was also given to Deputy Chief Fire Officer Wayne Brown who won the individual 'Senior Leader' award at the Evenfields Black Talent Awards held on 29 September.

05/22 **Minutes of the Fire and Rescue Authority held on 27 June 2022**

Resolved:

1. That the minutes of the Fire Authority meeting held on 27 June 2022 be approved as a correct record.

06/22 **Membership of the Authority 2022-2023, Questions of Discharge and Committee Membership**

Karen Gowreesunker, Clerk to the Authority, presented the Membership of the Authority 2022-2023, Questions of Discharge and Committee Membership report.

The Authority were advised that due to the sad passing of Councillor Seamus Walsh, Councillor Gavin Lloyd had been appointed by Coventry Council as their second representative on the Authority. They had nominated Councillor Miks as their S41 Officer. Due to the change in Membership, changes had been made by the Chair of the Authority to committee memberships as outlined within the report. Congratulations was given to Councillor Miks on her appointment as the S41 Officer.

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed the Membership of the Authority for 2022-23 be noted.
2. That it be agreed that the members, as per the report, be nominated to answer questions on the discharge of functions of the Authority as required by Section 41 of the Local Government Act 1985, be approved.
3. That it be agreed that the changes to the membership of committees for 2022-2023, as per appendix 1, be approved.

07/22 **Portfolio Management (3PT)**

Gary Taylor, Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO), presented the Portfolio Management (3PT) report, that outlined a strategic summary of the progression of the delivery of Portfolio Management through 'Our Plan'.

The Authority were advised that Martin Ward-White formerly Strategic Lead for Organisational Policy, Assurance and Response had moved into a new role, overseeing our operational response function as Area Commander (Strategic Enabler) for Operations.

The key work by the Community Reduction Risk Programme (CRR) during the recent heatwave was highlighted. The Heatwave Plan had been implemented as a result of receiving over 50 incidents over a 30-minute period for two hours or more. The Dynamic Cover Tool (DCT) and Risk Based Crewing (RBC) model had been successful and ensured the services response had been dynamic, resourcing incidents via a people-based mobilisation. Digital enhancements had been implemented and Fire Control were now using Vision 4 mobilising system with an app-based approach to fire safety. Collaboration work had also been underway with transport for West Midlands about use of/access to road network CCTV cameras in the control room. This would allow Fire Control (FC) to utilise cameras to support resourcing incidents.

As part of the prevention work, SPARK visits to schools had now resumed face-to-face. A hybrid approach would continue with the services Safe and Well visits and feedback would continue to be sought following visits. WMFS was now a member of the three new Integrated Care Partnerships (ICP) which would assist with referrals to Safe and Wells.

The Authority were advised that two Fire Engineers had completed their 4-year course and successfully graduated with First Class Honours. The Reward and Recognition (R&R) events had reconvened, following their pause during the pandemic. Members were invited to the 20/30-year recognition ceremony taking place on 15 December. A Mission to Mars Project of recognition to staff was also underway. 100+ nominations for employees recognised for their achievements within each category, had been received. The winners from each category would be announced in due course.

Positive work had been conducted in pushing the boundaries for Breathing Apparatus (BA) sets by pushing the sector to advance technology to take into account facial hair. The current policy on BA

had been reviewed and feedback would be sought. Praise was given to the service on their approach. Following queries around the resumption of cadets in Bloxwich, it was agreed that Gary Taylor would correspond with Pete Wilson and provide an update to Councillor Young.

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that the Portfolio Management (3PT) report be noted.
2. That it be agreed that Gary Taylor would correspond with Pete Wilson and provide an update to Councillor Young on the resumption of cadets in Bloxwich.

08/22 **Business Continuity Arrangements**

Gary Taylor, Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO), presented the Business Continuity Arrangements report, that outlined the context for uprating Corporate Risk 6.1 to 16 (RED) and potential steps to mitigate the risk.

The Authority were advised that a verbal update had been provided to Audit and Risk Committee in July, followed by an extensive report on 26 September. The Committee had recommended that Fire Authority approve a Scrutiny Review to take place on the current Business Continuity Arrangements, as outlined within the report. A further detailed summary on the cost implications would be covered in item 13 Business Continuity Costs and Considerations private report.

The Authority were advised that Corporate Risk 6.1 had been escalated from 12 to 16 (impact 4, likelihood 4), the highest risk level, as the service felt it did not have the confidence that services could be provided should there be strike action. The Fire and Rescue Service National Framework, Fire and Rescue Authorities were required to assess any risk of emergencies occurring and ensure business continuity. Alongside this, Section 2 of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 contained contingency/business continuity plans that the Authority had a statutory duty to assess, plan and advise upon. Risks were reported monthly to the Chief Fire Officer

and six monthly via the corporate risk report to Audit and Risk Committee.

Following a Scrutiny Review in October/November 2019, a report was submitted to Fire Authority to greater strengthen business continuity resilience arrangements. The recommendations were rejected, following a report from Scrutiny Committee to continue with existing business continuity arrangements. Given the change in climate as a result of the cost of living, and other sectors already taking industrial action, the service had a duty to advise the Authority that they did not have confidence with the current arrangements of volunteers which was reflected in the escalation of Risk 6.1. A 2% pay award had already been rejected by Grey-Book staff, with a 5% offer currently being voted upon.

A survey commissioned by the Home Office to assess resilience arrangements in the case of industrial action, found that West Midlands Fire Service had limited assurance and would be considered high risk (red RAG rated). The Home Office would confirm the next steps for action to the Chair of the Authority and Chief Fire Officer in due course. The two mitigation options highlighted to the Authority were:

1. Retention of external resilience provider
2. Contingency or resilience contracts for existing employees

The Authority were advised that the use of external providers would provide high assurance and would be implemented relatively quickly but entailed a cost implication that would be covered in item 13 on the agenda. The use of contingency or resilience contracts for existing staff would have a smaller financial impact, however, would take longer to implement due to training required and there had been no guarantee on the numbers of employees that would sign up.

The Clerk and Monitoring Officer emphasised the need for the review to take place within four weeks due to the urgent nature of the issue and the need for representative bodies and Home Office to be involved.

Representative Bodies expressed their disapproval for the mitigation proposals outlined within the report and the impact it would have on industrial relations. The ACFO expressed to members that the service made no judgement on those wishing to strike and knew the impact this would be having on staff; however, the service did have a legal duty to ensure that services could still be provided in the event of strike action. It was agreed that a full Scrutiny Review on the current Business Continuity Arrangements take place in the next four weeks.

Resolved:

1. That the increase in Corporate Risk 6.1 relating to Business Continuity, as reported verbally to Audit and Risk Committee on 18 July 2022 and further discussed at Audit and Risk Committee on 26 September 2022, be noted.
2. That it be agreed that a full Scrutiny Review on the current Business Continuity Arrangements take place in the next four weeks.

09/22 **Monitoring of Finances**

Mike Griffiths presented the Monitoring of Finances report that outlined the finances of the Authority for the current financial year and covered revenue expenditure/capital programme.

The Authority were advised that, as per appendix A of the report, the revenue budget and the actuals were compared up to the 31 August 2022. Actuals spend to August 2022, including commitments, was £44m compared to the projected budget of £43m. this had resulted in an overall adverse variance of £0.4m. This had mainly been a result of an overspend on pay budgets and an increase in utility/fuel costs. As part of the Authority's 2023/24 budget setting process, the current year's budget would be reviewed, and focus would be given to those areas reflecting an overspend. It was highlighted that Appendix A did not reflect the revenue budget pressures anticipated to arise from pay awards in the current year 2022-2023.

Following queries on the continuation of vehicle replacements, Mike advised the Authority that this issue was regularly reviewed and the appropriate time scales for vehicle life continued to be looked at. One CRMP project, for Risk Based Crewing, would potentially have an impact on the number and types of vehicle required. It was acknowledged that Orders for vehicles placed would take around 12-18 months to receive. A review of the Vehicle Replacements Programme, including a review of vehicle life cycles, would take place before February's Budget report.

Resolved:

1. That the Monitoring of Finances report be noted.

10/22 **WMFRA Calendar of Meetings and Member Allowances 2022-2023**

Karen Gowreesunker, Clerk to the Authority, presented the WMFRA Calendar of Meetings and Member Allowances 2022-2023. She advised that as per Appendix 2 of the report, the member allowance scheme was last reviewed by an Independent Review Panel and a report presented to the Authority in November 2018. Despite the outcomes of the review the Authority agreed to maintain its current members' allowance scheme for 2019/20 and 2021/22. This scheme continues for 2022/23.

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that the calendar of meetings for 2022-2023 as set out in Appendix 1, be approved.
2. That it be agreed that the Members' Allowances Scheme for 2022-2023 as set out in Appendix 2, be approved.

11/22 **Minutes of the Previous Public Committee Meetings**

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that the minutes of the following committee meetings, be noted:
 - Audit and Risk Committee Monday 6 June 2022 and Monday 18 July 2022

- Collaboration and Transformation Committee - Monday 25 April 2022

12/22 **Exclusion of the public and press**

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that the public and press be excluded from the rest of the meeting to avoid the possible disclosure of exempt information under Paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.

13/22 **Business Continuity Arrangements – Costs and Considerations**

Gary Taylor, Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO), presented the Business Continuity Arrangements – Costs and Considerations report, that outlined the financial implications of potential measures designed to mitigate the impact of Industrial Action.

Following the cost of both options being outlined, the need for the Scrutiny Committee to review any cost implications was emphasised.

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that Scrutiny Committee consider the cost implications as part of their Scrutiny Review on Business Continuity Arrangements.

14/22 **Pay Award Update and Associated Budgetary Pressures**

Gary Taylor, Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO), advised the Authority that a request by the NJC had been received on 30th September, seeking the views of the authority on potential pay offers and how these would be funded. Due to their deadline of 3 October, a Matter of Urgency had been approved and superseded the report held within the agenda pack.

The Matter of Urgency had determined that the service could support a pay offer of 5% that would be funded by reserves for

2022-2023. It was highlighted that should the 5% offer be accepted; this would reduce the reserves significantly by £2.4m. A review of reserves was conducted regularly, and the impact of this reduction would inevitably reduce commitments in other areas. The use of reserves for 2022-2023 would resolve the issue this year however, the current services and budget would need to be looked at for following years. It was anticipated that the government funding to be provided to the service would be announced in December 2022 which would assist in the preparation for 2023-2024 budget planning.

Members were asked to raise the issues around the lack of funding and the implications this has on the services with their councils and MPs. Councillor Waters advised that she had been corresponding with her MP, the current Chief Whip, on the matter.

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that the Matter of Urgency report superseding the Pay Award Update and Associated Budgetary Pressures be noted.

15/22 **Planned Procurement Exercise for 2022-2023**

Mike Griffiths, Treasurer/Section 151 Officer, presented the Planned Procurement Exercise for 2022-2023 report that provided the rationale for the planned tender exercises over £250k, as per report.

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that the following tender exercises for the provision of various works, goods and services to West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority during 2022/23 be approved:

1.1 PHASE 2 BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION

1.2 UNIFORM

The meeting ended at 12:22 hours.

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