

SOUTH YORKSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

17 JUNE 2024

PRESENT: Councillor C Hogarth (Chair)

Councillors: M Elliot, J Ridler, D Hutchinson, S Ayris, S Alston,
C Ransome, McKiernan, Knight, L McClean and
Councillor M Morrell

CFO C Kirby, DCFO A Strelczenie, ACFO S Dunker and
L Haigh, M Lloyd and S Locking (South Yorkshire Fire &
Rescue Service)

K Charlton, N Copley, C Smallman and D Thorpe (Barnsley
MBC)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor
A Cherryholme and M Potter

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies as above.

2 ANNOUNCEMENTS

None.

3 URGENT ITEMS

Asset Management Board Update Q4.

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

Item 24.

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 15 APRIL 2024

Agreed that the minutes be signed as an accurate record.

10 WHISTLE BLOWING POLICY

Members were informed that the Fire and Rescue Authority's Whistleblowing Policy had been updated. This document forms part of the constitution of the Authority therefore required approval by the Fire and Rescue Authority.

The formatting of the document had been changed extensively to make it more accessible and understandable. The principles of the policy remain the same, the document had been updated to reflect current personnel and their contact details and the formatting was more accessible and understandable for those who may choose to use it.

Councillor Alston commented that the policy was user friendly and clear. She queried because the policy refers to several other related policies if these policies were displayed together.

S Kelsey responded that all policies were available on the intranet and the Service were looking at creating a simple guide for staff.

Councillor Ayris commented that the policy was easier to read than the previous version and referred to the reference to the blue light reporting facility and asked if it was for members of the public or SYFRA employees.

S Kelsey informed Members that the national blue light whistleblowing service was still in development and would be fully operational later in the year for members of the public.

Councillor Ransome queried if a lot of complaints were received through whistleblowing.

S Kelsey responded that the Service did not get many whistleblowing complaints, it was usually via speak up service or via representative bodies.

S Kelsey further informed Members that the Service did have a lot of support around staff, such as representative body support and allocated liaison officers.

RESOLVED that Members approve the new Whistleblowing policy.

11 PROCUREMENT STRATEGY AND POLICY 2024-2027

Members were presented the Procurement Strategy and Policy for agreement to cover the period 2024 to 2027. A review had been completed of the current

strategy to consider the strategic approach against current performance, development areas highlighted from internal and external sources and changes in national legislation. The main differences from the last Strategy were twofold.

The Strategy and Policy had been separated to provide greater clarity on high level and tactical approaches. The work plan included in the last version of the strategy had been removed and would be issued annually to provide greater focus on developments and audit requirements.

Councillor Alston queried if procurement was undertaken alongside other authorities, were the arrangements flexible enough.

M Lloyd responded collaborations were a key part of procurement. The key focus was on robust processes and effective governance.

RESOLVED that Members:-

- (i) Approve the Strategy and Policy Note; and
- (ii) Noted contents of the report and endorse the ongoing work of the Procurement Department.

12 FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE REPORT QUARTER 4 OUTTURN 2023-24

Members were informed that at 31 March 2024, the revenue outturn for the 2023/24 financial year was a surplus of £1.505m, a favourable movement compared to the approved budget deficit for the year of £1.420m and the Q3 forecast outturn surplus of £1.413m. The budget deficit was approved to be funded from the Emerging Risk reserve; the forecast surplus would be a contribution to this reserve. The three main reasons for the favourable outturn were 1) higher Section 31 grant funding for business rates relief and inflation and more from the collection fund than budgeted, 2) a reduced wholtime pay forecast £1.471m and 3) a reduced capital financing forecast £0.471m.

The surplus position against a deficit budget in 2023/24 had been achieved through higher section 31 grant funding, vacancies in wholtime and corporate and through reduced capital financing costs. The vacancies and capital financing savings were reported within the £3.270m of efficiency savings achieved in 2023/24. These savings were not expected to occur in future years per the February 2024 MTFP. South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue (SYFR) needs to deliver more recurrent efficiencies to remain sustainable for the medium term.

RESOLVED that Members:-

- (i) Approved the outturn surplus of £1.505m (subject to audit) which is favourable by £3.271m compared to revised budget (Section A);
- (ii) Noted the underlying and significant financial risks and uncertainties facing the Service and Sector during the remainder of this financial year (Section A) and into 2024/25 and beyond (Section C);

- (iii) Approved the movements in Reserves/ Virements and the Reserves Balances (subject to audit) (Sections C & G); and
- (iv) Approved the capital outturn of £5.098m for the financial year ending 2023/24 (Section E). Note, that the favourable variances in 2023/24 are not expected to continue in future years so further recurrent efficiencies must be delivered to remain sustainable in the medium term.

13 ANNUAL STATE OF FIRE REPORT 2023

Members heard that His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) had published the latest annual assessment of the effectiveness and efficiency of fire and rescue services in England, based on the inspection reports published between 20 January 2023 and 31 March 2024. The State of Fire Report: The Annual Assessment of Fire and Rescue Services in England 2023 drew on findings from inspections of fire and rescue services to provide an overall view of the state of the fire and rescue sector.

Councillor McKiernan questioned how the recommendations would contribute to cultural improvement.

DCFO Strelczenie responded that these were national recommendations however SYFR has its own actions within service which were being addressed via internal mechanisms such as the culture survey.

Councillor Ayris asked when the next expected inspection was.

DCFO Strelczenie informed Members the service next inspection is due January 2025 and the HMICFRS misconduct report was due in the summer.

RESOLVED that Members note the contents of the State of Fire Report 2023.

14 THE PROCUREMENT SERVICE ANNUAL REVIEW

This report was presented at the request of the Chief Fire Officer to align annual reporting for the Procurement Service with financial reporting at the start of the financial year. In recent years previous reports had been made in November, which was not in line with other financial planning routines. The report covered current governance arrangements, the procurement restructure agreed in September 2023 and category reviews for current procurement activity.

The report set out short term developments from November 2023 as follows;

- Information about governance to provide assurance to members
- Information about audit recommendations and how these have been anticipated and addressed by the restructure.
- A progress report about the Procurement restructure.
- Information about the Procurement Strategy review that commenced in the summer of 2023.

Councillor Ayris asked where the compliance team sat in the new structure.

M Lloyd responded that compliance sat with himself and three other colleagues.

RESOLVED that Members note the contents of this report and endorse the ongoing positive work of the Procurement Services team.

15 FIREFIGHTERS PENSIONS UPDATE - PROGRESS ON IMMEDIATE DETRIMENT AND MATTHEWS

Members were provided with information regarding the progress of work to address legal rulings on pension cases against the Local Government Association (LGA) proposed timeline. There was a significant amount of work involved for the payroll and pension team at South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue (SYFR) and West Yorkshire Pensions. The report shows that no key deadlines had been missed and progress is within the timelines, but there had been recruitment challenges within SYFR, pauses in progress as a result of HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) rulings, reported capacity challenges with pension providers nationally and it was noted that this entailed complex work. Work was ongoing to mitigate the risks to the timetable and to ensure members were informed of progress.

Councillor Alston commented that individuals were affected by this and asked if timescales were in place.

L Haigh responded that recruitment was underway and national discussions were taking place on processing times, but timeliness remained a key priority for the Service.

The Chair informed Members that he was confident that the timelines outlined would be met.

L Haigh further added that the Service was doing everything they could to meet deadlines and were working with SY pensions with concerns escalated through the LGA.

RESOLVED that Members considered whether the report provides sufficient assurance on progress against the LGA timeline.

16 DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME UPDATE

Members were provided with an update regarding the Digital Transformation Programme Update.

In 2019 South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue, (SYFR) developed its first Digital and ICT Development Plan and Programme. Since then, an annual update and incremental development plan had been put in place and delivered. This new plan represented phase 5 of Digital Transformation, and when fully delivered, would signify a significant digital shift in SYFR's operating and business model across all functions and services. The estimated cost of implementing and delivering the Programme was contained within the 2024/25 Capital Investment Budget.

Councillor Alston asked how safe and secure the Service's systems were.

S locking responded that security was a key focus, the Service geofenced all systems and blocked other countries from accessing systems.

S Locking further added that the move to Office 365 would mean more security through multifactor authentication.

RESOLVED that Members endorse the latest phase of the Digital and ICT Development Programme 2024 - 2025 as a key enabler to modernising and facilitating improvements in the efficiency and effectiveness of SYFR functions and services

17 SERVICE IMPROVEMENT BOARD UPDATE

Members were provided with an update regarding the Service Improvement Board. The report provided a summary of the items raised and discussed at the Service Improvement Board in Quarter 4 2023/24. One meeting was held during this period on 19 March 2024. The Service Improvement Board provided a strategic and critical role as a guardian of the South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue (SYFR) Service Improvement Plan.

RESOLVED that Members noted the contents of the report and provide further scrutiny and support to enable continuous service improvement.

18 CULTURE REVIEW UPDATE

Members were provided with a verbal update regarding the Culture Review.

A draft action plan would go out to all staff to comment on. Another area Members would be aware of was the 360 feedback for managers with a full evaluation due to be completed in September. Extensive training for line managers was available, including constructive conversation and training to deal with things at a local level whilst not letting issues escalate. There were legislation changes in regard to DBS checks in which all staff would have to have a valid DBS, the Service had commenced this process.

RESOLVED that Members note the update.

19 PAY AWARDS UPDATE

Members were provided with a verbal update regarding the Pay Awards.

Members were informed that the operational staff pay award had been agreed and was in place from 1st July.

The pay award for corporate staff not yet been settled. The three main unions were currently out balloting their members and it could take months for a settlement to be agreed.

RESOLVED that Members note the update.

20 DRAFT MINUTES OF THE APPEALS AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE HELD ON 7 MAY 2024

RESOLVED that Members note the draft minutes of the Appeals and Standards Committee held on 7 May 2024.

21 DRAFT MINUTES OF THE APPEALS AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE HELD ON 8 MAY 2024

RESOLVED that Members note the minutes of the Appeals and Standards Committee held on 8 May 2024.

22 DRAFT MINUTES OF THE APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE HELD ON 22 APRIL 2024

RESOLVED that the Members note the minutes of the Appointments Committee held on 22 April 2024.

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 UPDATE ON SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT

The Chief Fire Officer provided Members with an update on the Service Level Agreement between SYFR and Barnsley MBC.

RESOLVED that Members:-

- (i) Noted the detail in the main report and the SLA review (appendix A);
- (ii) Approved Option 3 as presented in the report;
- (iii) Endorsed the transition plan as outlined in the report;
- (iv) Noted proposed investment and efficiencies as detailed in table 4; an
- (v) Approved the creation of relevant establishment posts (internally) subject to Option 3 being decided with a financial envelope no greater than current SLA costs

25 ASSET MANAGEMENT BOARD UPDATE Q4

Members were provided with an update regarding the Asset Management Board,

The Asset Management Board provided a strategic and critical role as a guardian of South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue's (SYFR) assets. The Asset Management Board's objectives were to achieve sustainable finances and efficient (and effective and compliant) use of property, fleet, operational, information assets and stock. The report provided a summary of the quarterly Asset Management Board held in May 2024.

RESOLVED that Members noted the contents of the report and provide further scrutiny and support to enable continuous and effective management of assets.

CHAIR