

# SOUTH YORKSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

12 OCTOBER 2020

PRESENT: Councillor R Taylor (Chair)  
Councillor T Damms (Vice-Chair)  
Councillors: S Ayris, A Buckley, T Cave, R Frost, P Haith,  
C Hogarth, P Price, S M Richards, C Ross and Dr A Billings

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

M McCarthy, I Rooth, M McCoole and L Noble (Barnsley MBC)

M Buttery (Office of the South Yorkshire Police and Crime  
Commissioner)

Apologies for absence were received from  
Councillor C Ransome, N Copley, S Loach, M Potter,  
S Norman, ACO T Carlin and A Mullen

## 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 Cave referred to the Equality and Inclusion Awareness Session that had been held for Members on 6 October 2020. He expressed his thanks to L Hayhurst and colleagues for the very useful, inclusive and interactive course that had been provided on a virtual platform.

Councillor Taylor echoed Councillor Cave's sentiments.

Councillor Damms referred to a telephone call he had received from a Councillor who had raised concerns regarding flooding at the Stocksbridge Leisure Centre. Councillor Damms had liaised with CFO Johnson, and the Service had provided the Councillor with the appropriate advice.

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 14 SEPTEMBER 2020

Councillor Ayris commented that he had not received the information regarding the number of disputes in relation to the staff grievance process, and whether there had been an increase in the number of disputes due to Covid-19.

L Noble stated that the information had been provided to Members via email on 29 September 2020. She would ensure that the information was resent to Councillor Ayris.

CFO Johnson reported that the collaborative LGA and NFCC submission on the Fire Spending Review proposal had been submitted to the Government. She had shared the document with the Joint Authorities Governance Unit and this would be forwarded onto Members. The detailed document covered the request for increased baseline funding, funding for flooding capability, precept flexibility regarding pay increases, detriment claims on McCloud and Sargent, the Fire Safety Bill and the Building Safety Programme etc. The Service continued to be informed that this would be 3 year settlement, although it was considered more likely to be a one year settlement. The overall funding settlement would be known just prior to Christmas 2020, and the Service would be informed of its actual funding settlement in the New Year.

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Authority meeting held on 14 September 2020 be signed by the Chair as a correct record.

10 THE PROCUREMENT SERVICE - A SIX MONTHLY UPDATE

A report of the Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive was submitted to provide a bi-annual update on Procurement Services, its activities and how it was effectively supporting the various aspects of SYFR businesses as well as a log of FS323 Request to Contracts Standing Orders (CSOs) Waiver activity in the preceding 6 months for the period October 2019 to April 2020.

Over the past 6 month period, the main focus of the Procurement Service had been in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. The Service had continued to maintain a stock of essential Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) including sanitising hand cleansers and equipment, and all of the fire stations had been adequately supplied at all times. A new pandemic stores had been established which stocked all essential items.

The SYFR structural firefighting kit had now been procured, with a regional award made to Ballyclare Ltd on 14 August 2020. This would achieve a saving of £26,600 for SYFR against the national framework for procurement of structural PPE, and the new kit will be rolled out for operational use in Quarter 3 of 2021. The rescue jackets had been purchased, and an after care service provision would be entered into to ensure that the kit was cleaned and returned within adequate time.

Members noted the stock check deficiency of -£591.51 for the year to April 2020.

Councillor Ayris suggested that it would be useful for Members to be informed of the number of tenders that were submitted under the various categories within the report. He queried the recommendations for improvements following the Compliance Review Audit. In relation to the end-to-end procurement review, he considered that it should be borne in mind that some of the previous practices had not initially been picked up by the previous internal or external auditors i.e. the roofing contracts and the servicing of the emergency stand-by generating plant. He queried whether a further explanation could be provided to the FS323 Request to CSO Waiver Log at Appendix A, together with further clarification of the discrepancies at Appendix C to the report.

D Nichols stated that a final audit report had not yet been issued. There had been some mismatch between the guidance documents, which had highlighted a need to ensure consistency across all of the documents. He would provide Members with a copy of the full request for waiver document. In relation to Appendix C to the report, there would be items within their own ticket i.e. catering, batteries and cleaning which would show both ups and downs against multiple items, and would achieve either a net loss or net gain.

S Booth highlighted that the Procurement Service report had been provided to the Authority on a six monthly basis for the last 3 ½ years. Over the past 3 year period, the audit recommendations had been subject to an annual audit from either KPMG, Deloitte or BMBC's Internal Audit. RSM UK Ltd, the new internal auditors, did not feel it necessary to undertake an audit this year given the conclusions derived from BMBC's Internal Audit. In relation to the recommendations, the outline detail had been presented to Members at the Audit and Governance Committee meeting held on 14 September 2020, on the procurement audit and findings. Members had been informed that the final report was awaited from BMBC's Internal Audit. He reassured Members that a positive assurance had been given on the work undertaken by BMBC's Internal Audit. He would ensure that any inconsistencies in some of the paperwork did not continue moving forwards. In relation to the Waiver Log at Appendix A to the report, details on the current status of the waivers had been included within the reports for at least the past 2 years. In relation to Appendix C to the report, he considered that the stock discrepancies should be seen as a very positive position, given the amount of stores held by the Service and

the value of the issues that went through those stores. He considered that overall, the report presented a very positive position. He did not believe that there was another procurement service that had received sign off by the internal and external auditors, and had opened itself up for scrutiny like SYFR's Procurement Service.

Councillor Richards referred to the current stock availability which had returned to normal and the pricing which had begun to return to pre Covid-19 levels. She queried whether any predictions could be made, bearing in mind a potential second wave of the Covid-19 lockdown.

D Nichols referred to the exercise underway to achieve accurate pricing. FFP3 and Type 2R masks had recently been sourced, and the Service had just over 15,000 masks currently in stock which equated to approximately an 8 week supply for use on all front line vehicles. Adequate supplies were available within the supply chain and the pandemic stores.

Councillor Haith queried the latest position regarding the replacement of the three boiler systems.

D Nichols stated that currently two of the three boiler systems were currently out to tender and had been awarded. The Training and Development Centre's (TDC) heating system required a major upgrade and would be replaced shortly.

In relation to the Procurement Services savings between May 2020 to October 2020, a number of Members queried whether the £129,633 within Appendix E to the report was, in fact, real savings as it related to the savings between the highest and lowest tender bids. Members also queried whether they could be informed of the real savings that had been made by the Procurement Services.

Members were informed that this was the standard reporting procedure that had been adopted by the sector throughout the country. The total of £129,633 indicated that by conducting a tender exercise, the Service had been able to obtain better pricing. Savings in the region of £2m had been made over the past 2 years, some of which had been real negotiated savings. There was a degree of artificiality around the figures which could be misinterpreted. Some of the savings related to cost avoidance by undertaking a competitive process, whilst remembering that some of the amounts related to a mixture of capital investment and revenue money, together with genuine budgetary savings.

Councillor Taylor stated that the report presented was consistent with previous reports. He requested that future reports provided an explanation in order to eliminate discrepancies.

S Booth would liaise with D Nichols to provide further transparency to the figures in future reports to enable Members to identify whether real budgetary revenue savings had been made, savings on the capital investment programme, cost avoidance or artificial savings.

Councillor Taylor requested that a vote be taken to determine whether the Procurement Service six monthly update report should become an annual update report.

**Councillors Ayris and Damms voted against the proposal for the Procurement Services report to be provided to the Authority on an annual basis.**

**All other Members voted in favour of the proposal for the Procurement Services report to be provided to the Authority on an annual basis.**

S Booth commented that any exceptional or extraordinary circumstances would be reported to the Authority as necessary.

RESOLVED – That Members:-

- i) Noted the contents of the report and endorsed the ongoing positive work of the Procurement Services team.
- ii) Agreed that future Procurement Service update reports be provided to the Authority on an annual basis.

## 11 COVID-19 UPDATE

DCFO Kirby gave an update on SYFR's response and recovery to the Covid-19 pandemic. Over the past couple of months, the focus had predominately been to update staff on the latest guidance, to consider staff welfare arrangements, to protect the critical 999 response service and to deliver prevention and protection services in a risk based manner.

SYFR's Headquarters and TDC had progressed to become Covid-19 secure workplaces. This had enabled a number of support staff to return back into those premises where it was considered appropriate, in a risk approached manner and on a rotational basis, to ensure that none of the departments exceeded a specific level of occupancy and that the total building occupancies had significantly reduced in comparison to pre-Covid-19 levels. However, communication had recommenced with support staff in relation to the increased requirements to work from home wherever possible, to align with Government guidance.

A workplace safety video had been produced together with relevant guidance documents to assist the support staff returning back into the workplace which included information on the general directional flow of people within the buildings, use of relevant hand sanitising workstations and to try to limit and reduce the number of contact points within the buildings. The Pulse Surveys had provided good staff feedback, and feedback was that the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) had taken their welfare and safety seriously to enable them to return back into the workplace.

Work had been undertaken with representative bodies and staff on the procedures to resume the broader prevention and protection work especially around home safety visits. The SLT had agreed a training plan to enable the safety critical training to resume, and two firefighter training courses had been successfully delivered.

The Government's recent increase in the Covid-19 threat level from 3 to 4 had started to potentially impose restrictions at a local level in an attempt to control the spread of the virus. A Government COBR meeting would be held today to discuss the current situation of increased community transmission, with an expected announcement on a new three tier alert level approach which would impose additional restrictions across the country. It was uncertain which tier South Yorkshire would come under. Operational activity parameters had been drafted to align to the three alert levels; it was also intended to align the Service's prevention and protection activity to these. The Service would continue to protect its 999 response service activity, which to date had not been impacted upon by the pandemic.

The Service was engaged with the Local Resilience Forums (LRF) which met twice weekly to focus on recovery and response to the pandemic, together with an LRF Compliance and Regulations Cell. The Service could also connect into the multi-agency communications cell that had been established to provide support on the broader communications across the local area. The Service's response to the pandemic has quickly evolved to respond to the rapidly changing situation, and the internal dedicated response meetings had been re-established. The Service would provide support to the increased compliance checks and enforcement activity throughout the county, provided that they were covered by the national tri-party agreement. The National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) was working at a national level with representative bodies to negotiate a potential extension to the national tri-party agreement to enable the continuation of work to support local partners into the New Year.

The Service would continue to communicate messages within the community regarding compliance with self-isolation and face coverings, which were aligned with the Local Resilience Plan process.

Since the re-opening of schools, there had been a slight increase in staff sickness levels, although this had not significantly impacted upon service delivery. A limit had been placed on the amount of time that the operational staff spent off station, with the exception of 999 response work and essential training at TDC. The 999 Control Room had been locked down to limit the number of visitors to protect those members of staff.

On 23 September 2020, the Senior Officers had taken part in an LRF strategic exercise in relation to the Service's response to Covid-19 together with additional Winter month challenges i.e. flooding incidents, which had tested the Service's plans and preparation.

The NFCC had been working with Public Health England in relation to the possibility of fire and rescue service staff being exempt from the requirement to self-isolate provided that the strict guidance was followed around compliance with

Covid-19 secure workplace arrangements. This presented a critical challenge when riding the fire appliances. The Service had followed guidance from the NFCC and had updated the internal guidance to enable firefighters to wear Type 2R face masks. Local PHE officials have confirmed that there is no guarantee that the Service's staff would be allowed to become exempt from the Track and Trace and isolation requirements.

Councillor Ayris expressed his thanks for the comprehensive update provided. He queried, ahead of the Government's imminent announcement, whether the Service would be presented with an issue in the event that the county was split into more than one tier.

DCFO Kirby commented that such a scenario would impact upon the Service's prevention and protection arrangements. Engagement had recently taken place with representative bodies on the potential issue. A request had been made from the LRF perspective and the four local authority Leaders, to apply a single tier across all of the local authority areas. The Service would continue to provide safety advice and information to people within their homes and businesses as undertaken since the initial lockdown period via electronic communication and telephone. Dedicated prevention staff would potentially undertake essential home visits to install vital safety equipment in order to protect the Service's dedicated 999 response, until the tier levels began to reduce.

CFO Johnson provided Members with an update on the hot debrief that she had attended on 25 September 2020, following the virtual HMI inspection during w/c 21 September 2020. The inspection had identified that the Service had up to date pandemic, flu and business continuity plans which had been activated and that the Service had been able to make an early response. The Service continued to provide its core statutory duty and the prevention and protection activities had continued in line with the NFCC guidance. The inspectors had commented that the Service's wholetime duty firefighters had not routinely been used for the additional Covid-19 activities, most of which had been carried out by non-operational staff. CFO Johnson had informed them that operational staff were on standby to drive ambulances to the Nightingale Hospital, and that a number of operational staff had assisted in the receipt and distribution of PPE. The inspectors had discounted the operational staff driving the ambulances as this had not been actively used. The inspectors had recognised that the Service had maintained its Control Room function despite staff shortages and had trained resilience staff. The inspectors had also recognised that the Service's finances had not yet been affected by the pandemic and that it had drawn down on the Covid-19 funding, but had not used reserves. The inspectors had been complimentary on the health and wellbeing of staff and the new ways of engagement with staff that had been introduced. The findings of the inspection were yet to be moderated, although CFO Johnson was cautiously optimistic of a positive result, which was expected in late December 2020/early in the New Year.

Councillor Taylor expressed his thanks for updates provided and for all of the work undertaken by the Service to protect its staff and to maintain the service provided to the people of South Yorkshire.

**RESOLVED** – That Members noted the update.

12 BID FOR SSCR FUNDING

A report of the Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive was submitted for Members to consider the application for funding from the SSCR Sprinkler Fund by Sheffcare, which was a major provider of Dementia care in South Yorkshire, for a 50% contribution towards the cost of the sprinkler system installation. The estimated cost of the installation was £105,420 which would require the Authority to provide a contribution of £52,710. The funding would enable Sheffcare to develop their ambition to sprinker all their buildings on a future programme, to be funded by themselves.

Members noted the following breakdown of costs:-

System with Pump and Tank	£67,650
Drawings of Building (unless suitable ones can be provided)	£5,700
Fire Stopping (mandatory requirement)	£4,000
Electrical Works for Alarm Systems and Pumps	£6,500
Extra's Decorating and making good	£4,000 (to be provided by another company therefore not included in contract)
<b>Total</b>	<b>£87,850 + 20% vat = £105,420</b>

Councillor Ross was very supportive of the application made to provide funding for these extremely vulnerable people within South Yorkshire.

RESOLVED – That Members accepted the application for joint funding for the installation of a fire sprinkler system in Knowle Hill Residential Dementia Care Facility in Sheffield.

13 KEY ISSUES ARISING FROM THE PERFORMANCE AND SCRUTINY BOARD HELD ON 10 SEPTEMBER 2020

Members were presented with the key issues paper arising from the Performance and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 10 September 2020.

Councillor Buckley requested an update in relation to the Halloween and Bonfire Night period and the Dark Nights initiative.

DCFO Kirby stated that there was a legislative requirement for the Service to ensure the compliance around the rules and regulations for the sale of fireworks. The Service was working across the LRF partnership to send out clear messaging to deter people from hosting bonfire/firework events within their own gardens, which were unlikely to be undertaken in a risk assessed manner. In relation to the Dark Nights initiative, he would arrange for a specific briefing to be provided to

Members by the Area Manager for Prevention. He was aware that arrangements were in place to support the partners across each of the local authority areas. The Bonfire Night period this year was of specific concern to the Service, due to the fact that no organised events would be held due to the pandemic.

Councillor Buckley also expressed his thanks to L Hayhurst and her team for providing the Equality and Inclusion Awareness Session that had been held for Members on 6 October 2020.

CFO Johnson stated that the Service inspected those premises which stored / sold fireworks. The LRF had discussed the issue of fireworks in some detail. The licensing, quantity and size of fireworks that could be sold to members of the public would also be looked at to try to deter large fireworks being procured for use within gardens. She would pass on Councillor Buckley's thanks to L Hayhurst and her team.

RESOLVED - That Members noted the key issues arising from the Performance and Scrutiny Board meeting held on 10 September 2020.

14 DRAFT MINUTES OF THE AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE HELD ON 14 SEPTEMBER 2020

RESOLVED – That Members noted the draft minutes of the Audit and Governance Committee held on 14 September 2020.

Actions Table

<b>No.</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Officer(s)</b>	<b>Status/ Update</b>
1	To provide Members with feedback from the dedicated comprehensive spending review team for the sector.	When complete	CFO Johnson	<b>Update 12-10-20</b>  The collaborative LGA and NFCC submission of the Fire Spending Review Proposal was emailed to Members.  <b>ACTION DISCHARGED</b>
2	To present information to Members over the next 12 months to enable the Performance Management Framework to be shaped, prior to Authority approval.	CAG	ACO Carlin	On the CAG agenda for 9 November 2020 (provisional date) <i>(NB: slipped from 8<sup>th</sup> Sept CAG due to IRMP)</i>

**Fire and Rescue Authority**  
**Monday 12 October 2020**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Officer(s)</b>	<b>Status/ Update</b>
3	To provide Members with an update on Power Bi at a future CAG meeting.	CAG	J Patrick	On the CAG agenda for 9 November 2020 (provisional date) <i>(NB: slipped from 8<sup>th</sup> Sept CAG due to IRMP)</i>
4	To provide sufficient detail on apprentices within the Financial Performance Reports.		S Booth	
5	Digital and ICT Development Plan 2020-2021 Update.	FRA 11-01-21	S Locking	
6	Workforce Development Strategy Report.	Future FRA meeting		
7	To present the final version of the IRMP.	FRA 11-01-21	DCFO Kirby	
8	To present a final Annual Service Plan to Members for approval.	FRA 11-01-21	DCFO Kirby	
9	To provide a final report on the SSCR Round 3 funding.		M McCarthy	
10	To resend to Councillor Ayris the information in relation to staff confidence and the grievance process, to inform on the number of disputes and whether there had been an increase due to Covid-19.		M McCoole	<b><u>Update 12-10-20</u></b>  Information provided by email.  <b>ACTION DISCHARGED</b>

<b>No.</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Officer(s)</b>	<b>Status/ Update</b>
11	To provide Members with a copy of the full request for waiver document.		D Nichols	<b><u>Update 20-10-20</u></b>  Information provided by email.  <b>ACTION DISCHARGED</b>
12	To provide further transparency to the figures in future Procurement Service reports to enable Members to identify whether real budgetary revenue savings had been made, savings on the capital investment programme, cost avoidance or artificial savings.		S Booth and D Nichols	
13	To provide Members with a specific briefing in relation to the Dark Nights initiative.		Area Manager for Prevention	<b><u>Update 20-10-20</u></b>  Information provided by email.  <b>ACTION DISCHARGED</b>

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>