

SOUTH YORKSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

10 JANUARY 2022

PRESENT: Councillor T Damms (Chair)

Councillors: S Sansome, T Smith, B Johnson, S Ball, J Paszek, S Ayris and C Ross

CFO A Johnson, DCFO C Kirby, ACO T Carlin, S Slater, C Toovey and AM Strelczenie
(South Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service)

M McCarthy, G Kirk, S Loach, M Bray and L Noble
(Barnsley MBC)

In attendance remotely: Dr A Billings (OPCC) and M Buttery (Office of the South Yorkshire Police and Crime Commissioner)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor C Hogarth, Councillor P Garbutt, Councillor D Hutchinson, Councillor R Frost, N Copley, M Potter and S Norman

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 19 entitled ‘Sargeant Immediate Detriment’ 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 22 NOVEMBER 2021

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Authority meeting held on 22 November 2021 be signed by the Chair as a correct record.

10 COVID-19 UPDATE

Members were provided with an update on SYFR's response and recovery to the COVID-19 pandemic.

From the outset of the pandemic the Service had continued to monitor the impact it had on staff absence, which had remained relatively low throughout 2021. Members noted the good management practices that were in place across the Service, which were internally audited, in relation to the compliance arrangements for infection, prevention and control measures across the workplaces.

Following the emergence of Omicron, the new strain of COVID-19, the Service had experienced an increase in staff absence during December 2021, which had reached a peak of 71 individuals towards the end of December 2021, 42 of which had been COVID-19 related. Dedicated staffing officers had monitored the position to ensure that fire appliances were made available at wholetime fire stations, with the flexibility of firefighters to move around the different fire stations. A comfortable level of staffing had now resumed. As at 10 January 2021, the total of 71 staff absences had reduced to 46, and the 42 COVID-19 related staff absences had reduced to 24. The Service continued to report its staff absence figures twice weekly to the National Fire Chiefs' Council (NFCC). In the event that staff absences reached a trigger level of 30%, the fire and rescue services could request additional support or resilience from other fire and rescue services. To date, there had been no requirement for the Service to request additional support or resilience from other fire and rescue services.

A recruitment process would be undertaken into March 2022, with a view to recruiting 37 new firefighters (two new trainee courses consisting of 18 firefighters, with one firefighter transferring in from the on-call establishment into wholetime). A total of 6 retirees were anticipated between now and March 2022.

Following the Government's introduction of Plan B to work from home wherever possible, the Service had observed a reduction in the number of corporate and support staff working from SYFR Headquarters, the Lifewise Centre and the SYFR Training and Development Centre. The infection, prevention and control measures had been reiterated to those members of staff that had to come into the workplace, with the emphasis to continue to wear face masks specifically when it was not possible to maintain a safe social distance i.e. whilst travelling in the same vehicle including fire appliances. The matter would be kept under review.

Since the major incident had been declared at the outset of the pandemic, the Service had remained an active member of the Local Resilience Forum (LRF). On 31 December 2021 a major incident had been re-declared due to the concern of the Omicron strain of COVID-19. The LRF would continue to meet on a regular basis as a strategic co-ordinating group.

A number of the Service's staff were now trained to offer the COVID-19 vaccinations, and they had volunteered to provide assistance to numerous vaccination centres across South Yorkshire. To date, staff had volunteered approximately 150 hours of their time to deliver more than 1,600 vaccinations to members of the public across the county.

DCFO Kirby chaired the Service's COVID-19 Recovery Group which considered the ways of working within the organisation. Members were referred to agile working and other potential benefits for the Service which had emerged from the pandemic. The Group would continue to meet with a view to making further improvements.

In response to questions raised by Councillors Sansome and Ball, Members noted that the Service was unaware of any members of staff that had contracted COVID-19 from volunteering at the vaccination centres. Some members of staff had been identified by their GPs as suffering from the effects of long COVID-19, which was being addressed and monitored by the Service's Occupational Health Department.

The National Fire Chiefs' Council continued to monitor the number of firefighters that experienced the effects of long COVID-19, and worked with the Firefighters Charity to ascertain what measures could be taken to assist the individuals in their recovery.

RESOLVED – That Members noted the update.

11 COMMUNITY RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN 2022 TO 2025

A report of the Chief Fire Officer was submitted which presented the annual review of the Service's current Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) 2021 to 2024. The current IRMP had come into force from April 2021, following approval by the Authority in January 2021. There was a requirement for the Service to review the document annually.

Members noted the revised title of Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) 2022 to 2025, to be consistent with the rest of the fire and rescue sector. The CRMP provided an up-to-date analysis of local risk and described how the Service would effectively coordinate the prevention, protection, response and resilience work to improve public safety and save lives.

An updated version of the CRMP would be presented to the Authority Meeting scheduled to be held in April 2022.

DCFO Kirby chaired the IRMP Board (to be renamed as the CRMP Board), which ensured standardisation across the Service. The Board was scheduled to next meet later in January 2022 to discuss the revisions to the document, with specific focus on updating a number of the charts within the CRMP. There were no proposed changes to the service delivery resources that were held within the CRMP.

Councillor Ayris considered that it would have been helpful for Members to have been provided with a list of the changes made to the IRMP. He added that the CRMP did not include a section on consultation, which had been included within the IRMP. He queried the position in relation to the consultation undertaken with members of the public. He highlighted that the CRMP referenced that Oakes Park was located within Healey, but that it was located within the suburb of Norton in Sheffield.

In response, DCFO Kirby commented that Members would be presented with a list of the changes made to the CRMP at the Authority Meeting scheduled to be held in April 2022. The Service had introduced a new suite of service delivery strategies for prevention, protection, response and resilience which were referenced within the CRMP. Measures would be undertaken to ensure that when the new service delivery strategies were approved through the internal Service Delivery Board, that they were consistent with what was stated within the CRMP. Consultation would be undertaken with members of the public in the event of specific changes to be made within the service delivery model. It was envisaged that a larger public consultation exercise would be undertaken when the next three year CRMP was produced, subject to any proposed changes to service delivery.

In relation to climate change and severe weather problems, Councillor Sansome queried the types of pressures faced by the Service and the input that it had in relation to flood defences. He also queried the input that the Service had within the local authority planning applications in relation to the access and egress of vehicles, people and pets.

Members noted that the Service had minimal influence in relation to the planning applications for large scale flood defence infrastructure projects. During the summer period of 2021, a number of fatalities had been experienced by individuals venturing into cold and still water environments. The Service had engaged with communities at local parks to provide education on the dangers of swimming in cold and open water to predominately young people and children. The Service was a statutory consultee in relation to building applications, regarding the access and egress for fire appliances and the proximity and access to the water supplies in the event of a fire.

Councillor Ross queried the accuracy of the Money and Resources section of the CRMP, which stated that the Service continued to operate from the same number of fire stations. There was a need to ensure that the CRMP detailed that there was a reduction in the number of fire stations. He provided Members with reassurance that the Performance and Scrutiny Board was keeping a watching brief in relation to response times.

In response, DCFO Kirby commented that he would look to build the detail regarding the number of fire stations into the response section. It was pertinent to capture historical context regarding fire stations and fire cover within the response section of the CRMP. The Service had an internal Fire Cover Committee, which had been established in 2021, to monitor the Service's performance to the response times and to ascertain how to make improvements.

In relation to planning applications, Councillor Smith had observed that it was very infrequent that the Service contacted BMBC regarding access, especially in relation to flood areas.

CFO Johnson commented that the local authorities consulted the Service in relation to new housing estates regarding the distance between hydrants and whether the fire appliances could turn in specific areas etc. The Service had never been consulted upon as to whether fire appliances could access an area if it became flooded.

DCFO Kirby referred to the number of questions received by Members in relation to the Service's role in terms of the planning process. He suggested that the Business Fire Safety Managers provided Members with a presentation to a future Corporate Advisory Group regarding the circumstances in which the Service were consulted in relation to planning applications or infrastructure projects across South Yorkshire.

RESOLVED – That Members noted the contents of the revised CRMP 2022 to 2025.

12 ANNUAL SERVICE PLAN 2022/23

A report of the Chief Fire Officer was submitted which presented the final draft of the Service's Annual Service Plan for 2022/23, which provided an explanation of the main areas of work that the Service would focus upon over the next 12 month period to improve the service provided to members of the public and to its staff.

The Annual Service Plan had been developed following consultation with the Service's staff and corporate planning events which involved senior leaders and Fire and Rescue Authority Members to identify the Service's short and medium term priorities. Following approval at the meeting, it was intended that the Annual Service Plan would go live from 1 April 2022.

In relation to succession planning, diversity, recruitment and retention within the Service, Councillor Ayris queried whether succession planning included progression planning for the lower tiers of the workforce to achieve the higher levels of leadership.

CFO Johnson referred to workforce planning within the Service. A number of individuals were currently undertaking temporary roles which enabled them to gain an understanding of what the roles entailed. The Service continued to run women's development programmes, race and gender groups to gain an understanding of any barriers that individuals may have to progress through the organisation; this was a huge issue nationally. The Service had observed an increase in the number of women progressing through the ranks, however difficulties were still encountered with black and ethnic minority individuals progressing through the Service, due to the small number that joined the organisation. The promotion and selection procedures had been revised, which had resulted in an increase in the number of individuals applying for promotion. The Diversity and Equality Team continued to encourage individuals to join the Service.

Councillor Johnson queried whether it was necessary for the agenda packs to be printed out in colour in an attempt to reduce costs, sustainability and the impact on the environment.

In response, DCFO Kirby commented that Members were given the option to receive printed agenda packs or to view the agendas electronically on their devices during the meetings, and if Members wished to receive an electronic pack, rather than a printed pack, then they should liaise with the Barnsley MBC Joint Authorities Governance Unit. The vast suite of the Service's corporate and policy documents were stored electronically.

RESOLVED – That Members approved the Service's Annual Service Plan for 2022/23.

13 CONFERENCE REPRESENTATION - LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION (LGA) ANNUAL FIRE CONFERENCE AND EXHIBITION 2022 ON 15 - 16 MARCH 2022

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 2022 on Tuesday 15 March to Wednesday 16 March 2022, at the Hilton Hotel, Newcastle Gateshead.

Members recalled the recommendation made in 2018, for one Member from each District to attend the conference. Member attendance would be sought outside of the meeting.

RESOLVED – That Members considered and approved representation at the LGA Annual Fire Conference and Exhibition 2022.

14 KEY ISSUES ARISING FROM THE PERFORMANCE AND SCRUTINY BOARD HELD ON 18 NOVEMBER 2021

RESOLVED – That Members noted the key issues arising from the Performance and Scrutiny Board Meeting held on 18 November 2021.

15 DRAFT MINUTES OF THE AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE HELD ON 22 NOVEMBER 2021

RESOLVED – That Members noted the draft minutes of the Audit and Governance Committee held on 22 November 2021.

16 CPC CLOSURE 2021 UPDATE - PRESENTATION

AM Strelczenie provided Members with an update on the closure of close proximity crewing (CPC) Stations within the Service, which had concluded in 2021. On 1 November 2021, Tankersley Fire Station had been the last CPC station to revert to the 2-2-4 duty system, and significant recruitment at the station had been completed.

All ex-CPC fire stations had now reverted to the 2-2-4 duty system and refurbishment works had been completed. The Service had worked closely on the matter with the Health and Safety Executive and the Fire Brigades' Union.

Members were provided with the presentation slides.

RESOLVED – That Members noted the update.

17 NFCC FIT FOR THE FUTURE - PRESENTATION

AM Strelczenie provided Members with an update on Fit for the Future which was an initiative developed in partnership between the National Employers (England), the Local Government Association (LGA) and the National Fire Chiefs' Council (NFCC) to set out a proposal for establishing a common picture, or vision, for the future of fire and rescue services in England.

Members were provided with the presentation slides.

RESOLVED – That Members noted the update.

18 GRENFELL PROGRAM UPDATE - PRESENTATION

T/AM Toovey provided Members with an update on the Grenfell Program, which provided information on the 46 recommendations for the Service, 13 of which had been signed off by the Service Improvement Board.

Members were referred to the BBC Podcasts on the Grenfell Tower Inquiry which were available online.

In response to a question raised by Councillor Ayriss, T/AM Toovey commented that a building of 18 metres and above (5 floors and above) was considered as a high rise building.

Members noted the summary of the work to be undertaken over the next 6 month period which included the completion of the suite of 'Fires in Tall Buildings' policies, to develop and deliver the 'Fire in Tall Buildings' training course, to roll out the Electronic Command Support software Modas across the Service, recruitment of an Information System Officer, to develop and test the 'Hazard Alert' electronic system, and to aim to complete 21 recommendations. This would result in 12 recommendations remaining from the initial 46 recommendations.

Members were provided with the presentation slides.

RESOLVED – That Members noted the update.

19 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.

20 SERGEANT IMMEDIATE DETRIMENT

G Kirk provided Members with an update following the 2018 Court of Appeal judgement in Sergeant. An interim order had been made by the Employment Tribunal on 18 December 2019, which had provided that members who had brought claims (claimants) were entitled to be treated as if they had remained in the Firefighters' Pension Scheme 1992 (with further specific requirements).

Members agreed that an Extra Ordinary Fire and Rescue Authority Meeting would be held towards the end of January 2022, in order to discuss the matter in further detail.

RESOLVED – That Members:-

- i) Noted the update.
- ii) Agreed that an Extra Ordinary Fire and Rescue Authority Meeting would be held towards the end of January 2022, in order to discuss the matter in further detail.

Actions Table

No.	Action	Timescale	Officer(s)	Status/ Update
1	To present Members with a list of the changes made to the CRMP.	Fire Authority Meeting on 11.04.21	DCFO Kirby	
2	A presentation to be provided to Members regarding the circumstances in which the Service were consulted by the local authorities in relation to planning applications or infrastructure projects across South Yorkshire.	Future CAG Meeting	Business Fire Safety Managers	

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>