

SOUTH YORKSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

3 APRIL 2023

PRESENT: Councillor T Damms (Chair)

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

CFO C Kirby, ACO A Strelczenie, S Kelsey, AM P Heffernan, AM S Dunker, AM Matt Gillatt and S Locking (South Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service)

N Copley, S Ghuman and D Thorpe (Barnsley MBC)

Apologies for absence were received from: Councillor B Johnson, Councillor S Ball, Councillor P Turpin, Councillor A Cherryholme, Dr A Billings, M Potter, DCFO T Carlin, S Slater and M Buttery and C Smallman.

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were noted as above.

2 ANNOUNCEMENTS

Councillor Damms, in the Chair, formally congratulated S Kelsey on her appointment to the post of Director of People and Culture and looked forward to a drive towards cultural improvements within the service. Recognition was also given to employees of SYFR for their hard work in the difficult period which ultimately led to avoiding industrial action.

Councillor Alston raised a question on the topic of a recent report which explored discrimination in fire and rescue services, including misogyny, racism and homophobia. Councillor Alston questioned whether any complaints had been received, whether action had been taken against specific individuals and what support was available.

CFO C Kirby gave an initial response referencing further the report which Councillor Alston had referred to. It was explained the report considered all Fire and Rescue Services and went back as far as 2018, with acknowledgment given that it was difficult reading for those working within the sector.

CFO C Kirkby stated there was no place for some of the negative behaviours referenced and that SYFR's stance was that anyone who bullies or harasses others in the workplace was not welcome. All reports of this nature would be taken seriously.

S Kelsey advised Members that SYFR had policies in place to deal with grievances, complaints, and misconduct and that these policies were reviewed at least every 2-3 years. Concerns could also be raised anonymously if preferred. Training was

provided to managers on how to respond to complaints and conduct investigations. Managers were supported with all issues and each case was subject to review to ensure the organisation had opportunity to learn from the issues and improve how they were managed.

In response to Councillor Alston's specific questions, S Kelsey confirmed that complaints had been raised and that the quantities would suggest staff were reasonably comfortable in coming forward. Anonymous complaints had also been received in writing or through managers.

With regards to action taken, S Kelsey confirmed that every case raised was investigated and outcomes varied from sanctions, staff development, or both. Learning was taken from each case to seek prevention of reoccurrence and staff were regularly reminded of expected behaviours.

It was confirmed SYFR offered a range of support sources both within the service and through external partners. As an outcome to complaints of this nature, in most cases staff were allocated a welfare officer.

All employees had access to the employee assistance programme, staff groups, occupational health support and officers trained to deal with complaints. Other third-party independent organisations were signposted to as a means of support and in many cases, staff were also a member of a trade union.

Councillor Sansome queried whether reviewing policies every 2-3 years was appropriate if there were many complaints about a single issue.

S Kelsey confirmed that this timeframe was an absolute minimum, with some policies reviewed annually and many often reviewed more frequently due to legislative changes that need implementation.

Councillor Sansome secondly raised the strenuous and mentally challenging nature of the operational roles at SYFR and the importance of camaraderie and "banter" in getting these officers through their working life.

S Kelsey stated that the impact of the work of emergency services was recognised, but that there was equally a need to ensure the organisation was maintaining its values and behaviours. Staff needed to understand what was right and wrong and feel comfortable challenging negative behaviour.

ACO A Strelczenie elaborated on this point further, expressing that SYFR aspired to be a great place to work, however the report contained really harrowing examples of negative behaviours and it was important to ensure lines were not crossed.

Councillor Smith referenced harrowing stories that were being reported nationally at other Fire and Rescue Services and stressed the importance of ensuring similar incidents were not taking place and SYFR.

S Kelsey confirmed that cases reported at SYFR had not been any of those subject to national headlines, however there was no room for complacency.

CFO Kirby summarised that whilst the national-level report was recognised by the organisation, at the last inspection of SYFR a “good” rating was received in the key pillar known as “People”. This was really positive when compared to other services and it was found that most staff were aware of the positive values of the organisation, with senior leaders deemed to act as role models.

The values and aspirations were also a key feature of recruitment and development processes, including graduates pledging their support to these values as part of their graduation ceremony. In addition, all employees of SYFR had been invited to pledge their support to these values.

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

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 20 FEBRUARY 2023

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the authority meeting held on 20 February 2023 be signed by the Chair as a correct record.

10 DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME - PHASE 4

S Locking introduced the report, advising that Service Leads had been consulted on the project to transform systems to ensure continuous improvement, which in

doing so would help make services more efficient. Members were signposted to the appendices of the report which detailed the 22 areas of transformation tabled for Phase 3, of which 8 were still incomplete and would follow onto Phase 4.

Councillor Ayriss sought reassurance that SYFR had a thorough strategy and contingency plan should a data breach or cyber attack occur.

It was confirmed by S Locking that a project in this area had been delivered by the National Cyber Security Centre and that an assessment in March 2023 had a positive outcome, with the report happy with SYFR's cyber resilience.

Councillor Smith queried SYFR's position on the use of the TikTok social media platform.

It was confirmed that a position in line with national government had been adopted and TikTok was banned from all authority corporate devices.

RESOLVED – that Members endorse the latest phase of the Digital and ICT Development Programme 2023-2024 as a key enabler to modernising and facilitating improvements in the efficiency and effectiveness of SYFR functions and services.

11 FIT FOR THE FUTURE UPDATE

ACO A Strelczenie introduced the report which provided an overview of Fit for the Future (FfF) and the work undertaken to date by South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue (SYFR).

Members were informed of the work that had taken place in delivering the programme over the previous three years, developed by the National Fire Chiefs Council, and informed through consultation.

ACO A Strelczenie advised Members that three key themes and twelve improvement objectives had been identified, with ambitions set to be achieved in the next five years – evidence would continue to be gathered and presented in the Service Improvement Board quarterly update. The current workstreams of SYFR had been aligned with the themes and improvement objectives identified, as a means of organising work.

Councillor Sansome commented that it would be interesting to see how financial constraints impacted this work.

RESOLVED – That Members:-

- (i) Noted the work to date on the gap analysis against FfF.
- (ii) Agreed the Fire and Rescue Authority (FRA) reporting arrangements for FfF.

12 EMERGENCY SERVICES NETWORK (ESN) UPDATE

S Locking updated Members, advising the system had now been delayed due to issues with suppliers at central government level. 2025 was forecast as the earliest delivery date.

Councillor Sansome highlighted the importance of ensuring effective communications were in place, so the general public were informed how their Council Tax contributions were being spent.

ACO A Strelczenie acknowledged the potential for public challenge, clarifying however that the ESN system was being developed with funding from the Home Office.

RESOLVED – that the report be noted.

13 GENDER PAY GAP REPORT 2022

S Kelsey introduced the report which advised as a public sector employer with over 250 staff, South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue (SYFR) was required by law to carry out Gender Pay Reporting under the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties and Public Authorities Regulations 2017).

The report provided details on salaries and bonuses paid to employees by gender within SYFR on the snapshot date of 31 March 2022 and actions that were to be taken to address imbalance.

It was explained to Members that the “bonus” referred to in the report was a Continuous Professional Development (CPD) payment, paid to operational staff and clarified that this wasn’t an automatic payment. S Kelsey also advised Members that the report would be brought for approval in future years, as opposed to for endorsement only, with timescales being brought forward to accommodate this.

During Member discussion, Councillor Alston identified that one of the reasons for the gender pay gap was around job promotions, querying whether evidence was available that were given equal opportunity for promotion and were indeed encouraged to apply.

S Kelsey confirmed this to be the case, explaining particular support was being given to underrepresented groups and that as the pool of talent was smaller the sense of support was heightened.

Councillor Sansome raised questions around the personal development pay, what criteria had to be met to achieve this reward and expressed the need to ensure this was open and transparent.

S Kelsey explained to Members that this was a national framework, under which the payment would be withheld if there were formal misconduct or performance issues. In the vast majority of cases this payment was made.

RESOLVED – that Members noted the content of the report which was published on the service website www.syfire.gov.uk and gov.uk by the deadline of 31 March 2023.

14 STATE OF FIRE REPORT AND TRANCHE 3

AM M Gillatt introduced the report on the annual statement for 2022, released on 11 January 2023.

The report acknowledged additional challenges faced over a number of years and identified obstacles that were standing in the way of progress, with some of these already having been tackled. The report recognised fire standards and future inspections were to include this. Most services were improving and generally responding well to incidents.

For the round 3 inspection, the questions were to remain the same, however the grading system would be amended to include five grades rather than the current four.

Councillor Ayris questioned how updates on post-incident inspections would filter to Members.

AM M Gillatt advised that all recommendations were channelled through service improvement and Members were welcome to request updates on topics of interest.

RESOLVED – that the report be noted.

15 UPDATE ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WORKFORCE INVESTMENT AND EFFICIENCY PLAN 2023/24

Members were reminded of the Service's workforce planning policy and process in place including the opportunity for Function Heads to present business cases for investment and efficiencies in June each year.

S Kelsey advised that the business cases that had been approved by the FRA in November for 2022 2023-24 were in three areas: E-Learning, ICT and Occupational Health and Wellbeing.

The E-Learning business case had required additional investment and a vacancy had been filled. The remaining two business cases had been achieved through savings and recruitment was underway.

RESOLVED – that the report be noted.

16 CHARTER FOR FAMILIES BEREAVED THROUGH PUBLIC TRAGEDY

A report advising of South Yorkshire Fire & Rescue's signing and adoption of the Charter for Families Bereaved through Public Tragedy was presented to Members.

CFO C Kirby informed Members that the Charter had been developed so that the pain and suffering of families affected by the Hillsborough tragedy was not repeated in future tragedies, stressing that many of the findings did not relate to the Fire and Rescue Service. In signing the Charter, it was explained that SYFR would be more transparent, recognise its own accountability and be open to challenge – all of which were in the public interest.

RESOLVED – that the report be noted.

17 INDUSTRIAL ACTION UPDATE

ACO A Strelczenie introduced the verbal update, advising Members that subsequent to the most recent pay offer being accepted business continuity plans were being scaled back and SYFR was learning and debriefing in response to the avoided industrial action.

AM P Heffernan further updated Members, advising the first debrief session had taken place, with most stakeholders able to describe how they foresee the route to recovery.

More structured debriefs were being planned and SYFR was looking to neighbouring authorities as a means of benchmarking.

It was ultimately expected that a revised business continuity plan would be developed and tabled for Member input and decision, with this plan to look at contingency arrangements, training and recruitment.

It was stated the debriefing had been a useful experience so far with a lot more improvements to come centred around increasing efficiency and reducing impact.

RESOLVED – that the update be noted.

18 CULTURE REVIEW UPDATE

S Kelsey provided Members with a verbal update to give assurance that the immediate actions identified in the January 2023 report were being progressed, with analysis of the actions taking place with the management cohort that same month.

The six immediate actions had been acted upon, including bringing forward the Culture staff survey, to be launched in the coming months.

A review of the disciplinary grievance process was also underway, with work progressing to procure an independent third-party organisation for staff to raise concerns, in the coming weeks.

The handling of anonymous complaints was being progressed and further actions were planned.

RESOLVED – that the update be noted.

19 EXECUTIVE STRUCTURE

S Kelsey provided Members with a verbal update advising that the approved new structure was being appointed to. The Director of Culture and People post had been filled and recruitment for the Director of Finance and Procurement post was underway.

RESOLVED – that the update be noted.

20 MINIMUM SERVICE LEVEL BILL UPDATE

P Heffernan reminded Members of the CAG meeting which would focus on this topic scheduled for 04 April 2023, which would cover the essential services prescribed by regulations in the bill.

Open consultation was to close on 03 May 2023, and the survey associated with this was thorough insofar as it comprised 38 questions.

Views were being sought on the appropriate minimum service level during strike action, to maintain worker rights whilst mitigating risk to the public.

Councillor Smith asked a question on how SYFR determined whether a dangerous substance was dangerous, given the identity of substances wasn't always known.

AM P Heffernan advised that SYFR always works with local authorities and beyond to ensure safety of the public.

RESOLVED – that the update be noted.

21 DRAFT MINUTES OF THE AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE HELD ON 13 MARCH 2023

Councillor Ayriss raised that a briefing on procurement legislation was requested at this meeting.

AM S Dunker advised Members that conversations had taken place with the Procurement Manager and a briefing would be scheduled in due course.

RESOLVED – That Members noted the draft minutes of the Audit and Governance Committee held on 13 March 2023.

22 ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION IN THE ABSENCE OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

None.

No.	Action	Timescale	Officer(s)	Status/Update
1	A report to be presented to members on the State of Fire and the recommendations	In due course	ACO A Strelczenie	Update 03.04.23 – Report presented at the FRA meeting. ACTION DISCHARGED
2	Training for Members on Serious Violence Duty	In due course	AM Gillatt	

CHAIR