

SOUTH YORKSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

25 NOVEMBER 2019

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, C Ransome, C Ross and Dr A Billings

CFO J Courtney, QFSM, DCFO A Johnson, T/ACO S Helps,
S Booth and D Nichols
(South Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service)

A Frosdick, M McCarthy, M Potter, L Noble, G Richards and
I Rooth
(Barnsley MBC)

E Redfearn (OPCC)

Apologies for absence were received from
Councillor S M Richards, N Copley, S Norman, ACO T Carlin
and M Buttery

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were noted as above.

2 ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair, on behalf of the Authority, announced that their thoughts were very much with the families and businesses that had suffered during the recent flooding and wished them a speedy return to normality.

The Chair also acknowledged the excellent response from across the UK of the emergency services, armed forces and other agencies, with particular praise for South Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service who did themselves proud; they went above and beyond the call of duty and deserve recognition for this.

The Chair was also delighted to announce the appointment of Alex Johnson as the Chief Fire Officer of South Yorkshire; Alex had an exciting vision and determined focus and the Authority looked forward to working with her in the New Year.

The Chair noted that the position would not have been available except for the existing Chief's decision to retire in January; this therefore would be his last Authority meeting.

The Chair paid tribute to J Courtney who had left Merseyside in 2006 to come to South Yorkshire and within five years was appointed as CFO. He had brought visibility and approachability to the role whilst facing significant challenges, he had also made significant achievements including being awarded QFSM in 2018.

The Chair wished the Chief and long and happy retirement which had been earned and was well-deserved.

3 URGENT ITEMS

None.

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

RESOLVED – That the agenda item 16 entitled ‘Contingency Firefighting Arrangements’ and item 17 ‘Appointment of Independent Member – Audit and Governance Committee’ 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

Cllr Damms reported that, at the upcoming meeting of Sheffield City Council, he was hoping to move a motion thanking the Fire Service for all their hard work during the recent floods; it was hoped that this would be a cross-party motion.

Cllr Haith reported that she had attended the Pensions Board training in October and was thankful for the insight into the Firefighters’ Pension Schemes which was very useful and would be beneficial when making decisions in the future.

Dr Billings, on behalf of himself as PCC and South Yorkshire Police, wished J Courtney well for his retirement. He had helped to drive forward collaboration between Fire and the Police which was working well and Dr Billings thanked him for his efforts in this area. The efforts had borne fruit during the recent floods which had been a huge and complex operation involving multi-agencies which had drawn praise from the public, especially for the Fire Service and the Police.

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 OCTOBER 2019

In answer to a question from Cllr Ayris, it was confirmed that Counsel's advice with regard to the Service Level Agreement with Barnsley MBC had been circulated to all Members of the Authority.

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Authority meeting held on 14th October 2019 be signed by the Chair as a correct record.

10 2019/20 FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Authority considered the second 2019/20 Financial Performance report.

The report informed as to the likely financial performance for the year ended 31 March 2020. The report included an estimated revenue outturn position, an updated reserves position statement and an update on the capital programme with a narrative commentary to help explain the key financial changes that were contributing to them.

Members were reminded that the 2019/20 approved operating budget was £53.565m. Based on the latest expenditure and planned contributions from earmarked reserves, the Authority was projecting a net operating spend of £54.014m. However, this variance was more than offset by an increase in funding mainly from late Home Office notifications in relation to the pension deficit and other Section 31 grant funding. The latest funding projection was £54.222m, a £0.675m increase leaving a net operating underspend of £0.208m after any planned contribution to reserves.

Members were requested to continue to note the financial risks facing the Authority, in particular with regard to national pensions issues; the timescales for remedy were still uncertain.

S Booth informed Members that the Capital Programme had been re-profiled to take account of notable exceptions with regard to Barnsley Fire Station and the two former CPC sites at Aston and Tankersley.

In response to a question from Cllr Haith regarding a review of On-Call firefighters, the DCFO replied that it was a standard review to ensure there were the correct number of people to improve the on-call availability.

Cllr Hogarth queried the projected overspend on expenses of £10,000 asking why it was so much over budget, and the reason for the exact amount of £10,000.

S Booth replied that he would get back to Members with the answer.

In response to a question from Dr Billings, S Booth explained that the overspend was due to pensions liabilities which the Service had only been informed about after the budget had been set.

With regard to the Stronger, Safer Communities Reserve Fund, this was not part of the operating budget but was included for transparency and to give Members an understanding of the spend in this area.

RESOLVED – That the Authority noted:

- (i) The latest estimated revenue performance, which was showing a potential net operating underspend of £0.0208m for the financial year ended 31st March 2020.
- (ii) The latest estimated decrease in General Reserve of £0.052m for the financial year ended 31st March 2020, which was broadly in line with expectation.
- (iii) The likely net impact on known financial risks that are not fully quantifiable at this stage in the financial year.
- (iv) The re-profiling of the Capital Programme for 2019/20.

11 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2020 - 2023

A report was submitted which provided an early insight as to the likely financial performance and position of SYFR ahead of the proposed Annual Revenue and Council Tax Setting report that was due to be considered by Members on 10th February 2020.

Members were informed that, since the last budget report. Work had been progressing on reviewing the financial planning assumptions in the Medium Term Financial Plan. This provided a demonstration of the likely scale of financial challenges, risks and uncertainties facing the Authority, especially post the final year of the Multi-Year Funding Settlement.

The situation was only likely to become clearer when the Government was able to articulate the state of the nation's public finances post the General Election and Brexit and when it sets out its Spending Review beyond the current one year holding position.

To add to this uncertainty, there were also a number of funding reviews underway including Fair Funding, business rate retention and police collaboration; these could potentially have a big impact on Fire Authority funding.

However, in 2020/21 there was the promise of an inflated central government settlement which would mean the best funding for the last 10 years assuming that the pension grant was received during the year.

For the following two years it had been assumed that the Authority would receive the same level of funding less 5%. This had been the core assumption that the report had been based on.

The report detailed the key planning assumptions which the 'most likely' funding scenario had been based on. Members were informed that under this assumption the service would not have to move to riding four firefighters on a fire appliance more than currently was the case. Other scenarios were included for comparison.

The report also reaffirmed the reserves strategy and provided Members with a re-profiling of those reserves.

S Booth informed Members that the current approved Capital Investment Programme would come to an end within the next 18-24 months.

Therefore, as part of the budget setting process which would come to the Authority in February 2020, additional capital investment proposals would be brought for Members' approval.

In response to a question from a Member, S Booth confirmed that the Bellwin Scheme had been activated over a week ago. The threshold for Bellwin was approximately £105,000, anything above that amount could be claimed back from the government.

Cllr Ross welcomed the cautiously optimistic report and queried whether riding five firefighters on a fire appliance could be the norm in the future.

The DCFO replied that it was currently the aim to ride five and the Service was working with Occupational Health to maximise the productivity and efficiency of staff currently available.

S Booth advised caution as the long-term funding position would not be known until December 2020, but a moderate recruitment course of 18 wholetime firefighters commencing in June had been built into the plan.

In reply to a question from Cllr Ayris, it was confirmed that the reserves strategy would be re-visited in November 2020 when the funding position would be clearer.

Cllr Ransome referred to the 'other expenses' including BMBC charges and queried whether BMBC was responsible for facilities management.

S Booth confirmed that it was a nominal charge for the use of Barnsley Council's facilities e.g. meeting rooms.

RESOLVED – That the Authority:

- (i) Accept the updated Medium Term Financial Plan for the financial years 2020/21 to 2022/23, and note the contents of the report, the significance of the savings identified to date and the likely implications of the different funding scenarios for the operational service.
- (ii) Accept the proposed approach for managing reserves as set out in Section C of the report and note the likely use of the useable earmarked reserves over the term of the Plan.

- (iii) Note the up-to-date approved capital programme spending and financing projections 2019/20 to 2021/22 at Section D.
- (iv) Agree to consider new, additional capital investment schemes for approval into the current capital programme as part of the 2020/21 Budget and Council Tax Setting report at Section D.
- (v) Note the known financial risks, uncertainties and events that would need careful consideration and management in the run-up to and when setting the 2020/21 Budget and Council Tax (Section D).

12 DYNAMIC COVER TOOL (DCT) - INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN (IRMP)

A report was submitted to present information on the Dynamic Cover Tool (DCT) software as part of the Service's commitment to exploring technological aids to support the IRMP, reduce risk and manage resources more effectively.

Members were informed that the DCT was currently being used by Fire and Rescue Services in London, Surrey and the West Midlands to, amongst other things, optimise risk/incident cover from available resources, co-ordinate resources during major incidents and make forward planning decisions for overtime/detachments and distribution of staff and resources.

The DCT would enable staff to access a continuous live map of SYFR's risk, incidents and resource profile, actively displaying the areas where risk had increased or decreased due to resource coverage and its resulting impact on the area in which it was located.

The software also provided a platform for performance management and the Service's impact on community safety/risk management.

The indicative costs were £75,000 for the purchase, licencing, implementation, data migration and training and circa £37,000 annual support and ongoing licence.

It was confirmed that there would be the opportunity to collaborate with other Fire and Rescue Services, which could mean a reduction in costs.

The Tool could also be used with other agencies, e.g. the Police and would have been useful during the floods as it would have informed staff where they needed to move appliances to.

RESOLVED – That the Authority:

- (i) Note the contents of the report.
- (ii) Endorse the Service to progress engagement with stakeholders and other Fire and Rescue Services using the DCT and the required procurement process.

13 THE PROCUREMENT SERVICE - A SIX MONTHLY UPDATE

A report was considered to give an update on Procurement Services, its activities, its support of the roles of SYFR and a report on FS323 Request to Contracts Standing Orders Waiver activity in the preceding 6 months.

In April, Members had requested a six-month update report and the report detailed the progress of Procurement Services for the period April to October 2019.

Members were informed that there had been a slight restructure within Procurement with the loss of a Business Support Officer. It was intended to replace this role with an Assistant Category Manager.

The report gave details of the tenders the Service had been involved in, contracts awarded, ICT procurement, the relocation of the SYFR Central Stores and the reformation of a Regional Procurement Group with North Yorkshire, West Yorkshire and Humberside FRS's.

It was noted that the Service had, over the last 6 months, delivered procurement savings of £427,948,82, detailed analysis of the savings were at Appendix A to the report.

In answer to a question from Cllr Ayris it was confirmed that approved supplier lists were no longer used.

Cllr Ransome thanked D Nichols for an informative report and queried who was responsible for ongoing contracts management.

D Nichols responded that this was the responsibility of the relevant awarding officer and the client officer.

It was agreed that a further update would be provided in six months' time.

RESOLVED –

- (i) That the Authority notes the content of the report and endorses the positive work of the Procurement Services Team.
- (ii) That a further update would be provided to the Authority in six months.

14 LOCAL PENSION BOARD ISSUES

A paper was considered which reported on Local Pension Board issues.

Members were reminded that the Authority had ultimate responsibility as Scheme Manager for the Firefighters' Pension Scheme.

The role of the Local Pension Board (LPB) was to assist the Scheme Manager in ensuring that any delegation in place was managed appropriately and that the Scheme was compliant with the regulations and relevant legislation.

Members were informed that the LPB was responsible for receiving details of any breaches of the law which must be reported to The Pensions Regulator (TPR). Details of a breach were contained within the report and should be formally noted by the FRA. The breach had been reported to TPR.

RESOLVED – That the Authority:

- (i) Recognise and understand the FRA's role as Scheme Manager in owning all the risks associated with pensions, and agree that the LPB Risk Register be reported to them annually as part of the Board's annual report.
- (ii) Recognise and understand the LPB's role in identifying officers to update the risks and in escalating any issues of concern to the Scheme Manager as appropriate.
- (iii) Note the breach reported to The Pensions Regulator and the actions identified to prevent a reoccurrence.

15 LOCAL PENSION BOARD KEY ISSUES AND MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING HELD ON 15 OCTOBER 2019

L Noble presented a paper which provided a summary of the Key Issues discussed by the Local Pension Board at its meeting on 15th October 2019. The minutes and actions from that meeting were also provided to give further detail.

It was noted that the annual training and awareness session with the LGA's Bluelight Pensions Advisor was held before the last meeting of the LPB and was attended by five Members of the FRA.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

16 CONTINGENCY FIREFIGHTING ARRANGEMENTS

A report was submitted to update the Authority on Home Office expectations with regards to contingency firefighting arrangements in the event of industrial action.

The report detailed the current arrangements with regards to business continuity, the outcome of the recent OJEU compliance exercise which identified the market strength, along with a range of proposals and associated costs for the consideration of Members regarding the provision of resources during any period of Industrial Action.

RESOLVED – That the Authority:

- (i) Approve Option 1 through a 2-year retainer contract providing 'Officer in Charge' to staff 8 appliances in conjunction with SYFR's Contingency Crews.

The Chair and Cllr Hogarth abstained from the vote on the above matter.

- (ii) Note the mobilisation costs associated with SYFR's Business Continuity Arrangements, if invoked.

17 APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT MEMBER - AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

A report was submitted requesting the Authority to endorse the recommendation of the Evaluation Panel to appoint Andrew Dyson to the vacant role of Independent Member of the Audit and Governance Committee with effect from 24th October 2019.

RESOLVED – That the Authority:

- (i) Note the action to date to recruit an Independent member of the Audit and Governance Committee.
- (ii) Agree the recommendation of the Evaluation Panel and appoint Andrew Dyson to the vacant role of Independent member of the Audit and Governance Committee, subject to satisfactory references.
- (iii) Agree to an appraisal process after the first four-year term of appointment (October 2023).

Action Table

No.	Action	Timescale	Officer(s)	Status/ Update
1	Provide Members with an explanation for the overspend on expenses of £10,000.	By the next FRA 13-1-20	S Booth	Information provided to Members via email on 18.12.19 and available via the website link below.
2	To provide Members with a further update on Procurement	FRA June 2020	S Booth D Nichol	

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>