



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY held on Wednesday, 23 June 2021 at Lecture Theatre - Sadler Road, Winsford, Cheshire at 10.30 am

PRESENT: Councillors Bob Rudd (Chair), Stef Nelson, Michael Beanland, Mike Biggin, David Brown, Razia Daniels, Phil Eastty, Phil Harris, Jill Houlbrook, Marilyn Houston, Gina Lewis, Nick Mannion, Rob Moreton, Karen Mundry, James Nicholas, Stuart Parker, Nathan Pardoe, Jonathan Parry, Rob Polhill, Peter Wheeler, Norman Wright and Steve Wright and John Dwyer, Police and Crime Commissioner

1 PROCEDURAL MATTERS

A Recording of Meeting

Members were reminded that the meeting would be audio-recorded. It was also broadcasted using Vimeo.

B Fire Authority Membership 2021-22

Appointed by Cheshire East Council (3 Lab, 3 Con, 2 Ind)

Labour	Conservative	Independent
Cllr Marilyn Houston	Cllr Rachel Bailey	Cllr Rob Moreton
Cllr Nick Mannion	Cllr Michael Beanland	Cllr James Nicholas
Cllr Jonathan Parry	Cllr David Brown	

Appointed by Cheshire West and Chester Council (4 Lab, 4 Con)

Labour	Conservative
Cllr Gina Lewis	Cllr Razia Daniels
Cllr Nathan Pardoe	Cllr Jill Houlbrook
Cllr Bob Rudd	Cllr Stuart Parker
Cllr Peter Wheeler	Cllr Norman Wright

Appointed by Halton Borough Council (3 Lab)

Labour

Cllr Phil Harris
Cllr Stef Nelson
Cllr Rob Polhill

Appointed by Warrington Borough Council (2 Lab, 1 Con, 1 Lib Dem)

Labour

Cllr Karen Mundry
Cllr Steve Wright

Conservative

Cllr Phil Eastty

Liberal Democrat

Cllr Mike Biggin

Note: The Police and Crime Commissioner for Cheshire, Mr John Dwyer, had also been afforded certain rights in relation to Fire Authority business, including the right to attend meetings.

C Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Rachel Bailey.

D Election of Chair

The Director of Governance and Commissioning asked for nominations from Members for the position of Chair.

Councillor Bob Rudd was nominated unopposed and was duly appointed Chair of the Fire Authority.

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Bob Rudd be appointed as Chair of Cheshire Fire Authority until the Annual Meeting in June 2022.

On taking the Chair Councillor Bob Rudd thanked Members for their continued support.

E Election of Deputy Chair

The Chair invited nominations for the position of Deputy Chair. Councillor Stef Nelson was nominated unopposed and was duly appointed Deputy Chair of the Fire Authority.

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Stef Nelson be appointed as Deputy Chair of Cheshire Fire Authority until the Annual Meeting in June 2022.

F Appointment of Group Spokespersons

RESOLVED:

That the following appointments of Group Spokespersons be noted:

Conservative: Councillor Stuart Parker
Labour: Councillor Bob Rudd
Democratic: Councillor Michael Biggin

G Appointment of Lead Members

RESOLVED:

That the following appointments of Lead Members be noted:

Cheshire East: Councillor Nick Mannion
Cheshire West and Chester: Councillor Gina Lewis
Halton: Councillor Stef Nelson
Warrington: Councillor Karen Mundry

H Chair's Announcements

The Chair advised that since the announcements were produced sad news had been received that former Councillor David Brickhill, more recently, Alderman Brickhill, who had been a Fire Authority Member had passed away on 11th June 2021, David was 83.

The Chair asked Members to note the content of the Chair's announcements that included details of activities carried out by Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service during the Coronavirus pandemic. Staff from across the Service continued to provide exceptional support to partners and the community in response to Covid-19 in a wide variety of areas. This was vital work to reduce risks and support the vulnerable in the community, making a huge difference too many lives.

I Declaration of Members' Interests

There were no declarations of Members' interest.

J Questions from Members of the Public

There were no questions submitted.

K Minutes of Fire Authority

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Fire Authority meeting held on 28th April 2021 be approved as a correct record.

L Appointments of Committees etc., Outside Bodies and Member Roles 2021-22

The Director of Governance and Commissioning introduced the report that covered the following items:

- a) Responsibilities of the Fire Authority and its committees, boards etc.;
- b) Political proportions on the Fire Authority;
- c) Political proportionality rules (where they apply and where they do not and their affect upon the allocation of seats on committees etc.);
- d) Appointment of Members to available seats on committees etc.;
- e) Involvement of independent (non-elected) members;
- f) Appointments to outside bodies;
- g) Appointment of Member Champions; and
- h) Endorsement of Member/officer buddy arrangements.

Completed versions of Appendices 2B, 3 and 4 were provided to all Members during the meeting in order for them to check the documents for accuracy prior to approval.

A complete list of the appointments made at the Fire Authority meeting (Appendices 2B, 3 and 4) is attached as an Annex to these minutes.

RESOLVED That:

- [1] the responsibilities of the Fire Authority set out in Appendix 1A be confirmed;**
- [2] the responsibilities of Committees, Boards and Groups set out in Appendix 1B be agreed;**
- [3] the political proportions on the Fire Authority set out in paragraph 4 be agreed;**
- [4] the approach to the allocation of seats explained in paragraphs 5 and 6 and the revised copy of Appendix 2A be agreed;**
- [5] the appointments required as set out in Appendix 2B be agreed (see Annex);**
- [6] the involvement of independent (non-elected) member (to act in an advisory capacity) as set out in paragraphs 10 to 12 of the report and shown in Appendix 2B be agreed (see Annex);**
- [7] the appointments to outside bodies set out in Appendix 3 be agreed (see Annex);**
- [8] the appointments of Member Champions set out in Appendix 4 be agreed (see Annex); and**
- [9] the continuation of the Member/officer buddy arrangements be agreed.**

M Programme of Member Meetings 2021-22

RESOLVED:

**N That the Programme of Member Meetings for 2021-22 be noted.
Constitution**

The constitution had been updated to include the changes made by the Fire Authority during 2020-21.

RESOLVED: That

The Fire Authority's Constitution be adopted.

2 END OF YEAR FINANCIAL REPORT 2020-21

The Treasurer introduced the report which provided a review of the Service's financial performance at the end of the 2020-21 financial year and reported on progress against 2020-21 capital projects.

The Treasurer informed Members that there was an underspend of £1.2m in relation to the Revenue Budget for 2020-21 as shown in the table at paragraph 11 of the report. He referred Members to the section of the report containing information on the Authority's Reserves and explained that the General Reserve was approximately £2.2m, which was broadly equivalent to 5% of the net revenue budget and in line with the approved Reserve Strategy.

Members were advised that the overall total of additional funding from Government, in respect of Covid-19 grants together with compensation for lost income, amounted to £1.5m. These grants straddle three financial years, with a proportion being used to meet additional Covid-19 expenditure in 2021-22.

The Treasurer drew Members' attention to the section of the report containing information on the Authority's Capital Programme. He explained that the table at paragraph 19 of the report contained details of proposed capital funding.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the outturn position (subject to audit and the finalisation of the local authorities non-domestic rates collection fund/Section 31 grant) be noted; and

[2] the movement in reserves as set out in Appendix 2 be approved.

3 TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REPORT 2020-21

The Head of Finance presented a report which provided a review of the Authority's treasury management activities during 2020-21. The report also provided information about compliance with the Authority's Treasury Management Practices during the

year.

The Head of Finance highlighted the key areas of the report which provided details on the following:

- a) the Authority's loans portfolio position at 31st March 2021;
- b) the Authority's investment portfolio position at 31st March 2021;
- c) a summary of performance for the year 2020-21; and
- d) the Authority's performance in 2020-21 against the key Prudential Indicators.

Members were reminded that all of the 2020-21 figures in the report remained subject to audit.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the report on treasury management activity for 2020-21 be noted; and**
- [2] the prudential and treasury management outturn indicators as detailed in the report be noted.**

4 EXTERNAL AUDIT PLAN FOR 2020-21

The Audit Manager, Liz Luddington, from Grant Thornton presented the External Audit Plan for 2020-21.

The Audit Manager advised that the Financial Reporting Council issued an updated ISA (UK) 540 (revised: Auditing Accounting Estimates and related Disclosures which included significant enhancements in respect of the audit risk assessment for accounting estimates.

The Audit Manager confirmed that the proposed audit fee for 2020-21 was £37,742. A Member queried the 19% audit fee increase. The Treasurer advised that there had been fee increases across all external audit due to additional responsibilities placed on external auditors.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the External Audit Plan for 2020-21;**
- [2] it be confirmed that the processes and controls, including judgements and assumptions in determining key accounting estimates, as set out by management in the document 'Informing the audit risk assessment for Cheshire Fire & Rescue Service 2020-21' are consistent with Members' understanding and are considered appropriate; and**
- [3] the external audit fee for 2020-21 be approved.**

5 ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY 2020-2025

The Director of Governance and Commissioning presented a report that sought approval of the new Environment and Sustainability Strategy 2020-25.

The Environment and Sustainability Strategy 2020-2025 was attached as Appendix 1 to the report and built upon the achievements of the previous Strategy and was intended to keep up the momentum that exists in a number of areas. The Strategy had been developed in line with the UK Government's 25 year environmental plan.

Underpinning the delivery of the Strategy would be an action plan that would be reviewed by the Environment and Sustainability Working Group on a quarterly basis. The Chair of the Performance and Overview Committee requested that the Performance and Overview Committee also received regular updates on the action plan.

Members welcomed the Strategy but required the name to be changed to the 'Environment and Climate Change Strategy 2020-2025'.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the Strategy renamed as the 'Environment and Climate Change Strategy 2020-2025' be approved.

6 2019-21 STAFF ENGAGEMENT FORUM

The Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive presented a report that provided an overview of the Staff Engagement Forum and update on the subjects considered by the Forum and the outcomes of work undertaken during 2019-21.

Emilie Salkeld, Co-Chair of the Forum and Robbi Urwin, Member of the Forum were in attendance a gave a presentation on the work of the Staff Engagement Forum through its tenure, which included information on the following:-

- Communications
- Appraisals
- Reward and recognition
- Covid-19
- Morale, health and well-being
- Learning and development
- Blue Light Collaboration
- Sports and welfare

Members welcomed the positive work of the Staff Engagement Forum and thanked the Members of the Forum for their hard work and commitment during the pandemic.

RESOLVED: That:

[1] the report and presentation be noted.

7 REVIEW OF MEMBER DEVELOPMENT 2020-21 AND MEMBER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME 2021-22

Consideration was given to a report of the Director of Governance and Commissioning that contained a review of the Service's member development activities over the last year that included a summary of the delivery of the Member Development Programme.

The report also presented the proposed Member Training and Development Programme for 2021-22 for approval.

Councillor Gina Lewis, Chair of the Member Training and Development Group thanked all Members of the Fire Authority for their attendance and contributions to the Authority's Member Training and Development Programme throughout the year and encouraged all Members to attend the training and development sessions planned for 2021-22.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the Member Development activities for 2020-21 as set out in Appendix 1 be noted; and**
- [2] the Member Development Programme for 2021-22 as set out in Appendix 2 be approved.**