



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY held on Wednesday, 28 June 2023 at Lecture Theatre - Training Centre, Sadler Road, Winsford, Cheshire CW7 2FQ at 10.30 am

PRESENT: Councillors Stef Nelson (Chair), Gina Lewis, David Brown, John Bird, Kath Buckley, Steve Collings, Peter Coan, Razia Daniels, Felicity Davies, Brian Gallagher, Phil Harris, Marilyn Houston, Nick Mannion, Rob Moreton, Karen Mundry, Stuart Parker, Rob Polhill, Margaret Simon, Laura Smith, Peter Walker, Peter Wheeler and Norman Wright

1 PROCEDURAL MATTERS

A Recording of Meeting

Members were reminded that the meeting would be audio-recorded.

B Fire Authority Membership 2023-24

Members were asked to note the Fire Authority Membership for 2023-24. The new Members and returning Members were welcomed.

C Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Rachel Bailey.

D Election of Chair

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

Councillor Stef Nelson was nominated and seconded. As there were no other nominations he was duly appointed Chair of the Fire Authority.

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Stef Nelson be appointed as Chair of Cheshire Fire Authority until the Annual Meeting in June 2024.

On taking the Chair Councillor Stef Nelson thanked Members for their support.

E Election of Deputy Chair

The Chair invited nominations for the position of Deputy Chair.

Councillors Gina Lewis and Stuart Parker MBE were nominated. A secret ballot was conducted and Councillor Gina Lewis was duly elected Deputy Chair.

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Gina Lewis be appointed as Deputy Chair of Cheshire Fire Authority until the Annual Meeting in June 2024.

F Appointment of Group Spokespersons

A political group may appoint a Group Spokesperson. Three political groups exist for 2023-24, Labour (12 members); Conservative (8 members), and Independent (2 members).

RESOLVED:

That the following appointments of Group Spokespersons be noted:

Labour: Councillor Stef Nelson
Conservative: Councillor Stuart Parker
Independent: Councillor Robert Moreton

G Appointment of Lead Members

Each constituent authority may appoint a Lead Member.

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 Brian Gallagher

H Chair's Announcements

The Chair asked Members to note the content of the Chair's announcements which included details of Authority achievements and events Members had attended since the last meeting of the Fire Authority.

The Chair, on behalf of the Authority thanked former Members of the Fire Authority, Councillors Bob Rudd and Nathan Pardoe from Cheshire West and Chester and Councillors Michael Beanland, James Nicholas, Denis Murphy and Jonathan Parry from Cheshire East for their commitment and support to the Fire Authority over the years and wished them all the best for the future.

The Chair on behalf of the Authority took the opportunity to welcome new Members, Councillors Steve Collings and Felicity Davies appointed by Cheshire West and Chester Council and John Bird, Peter Coan, Margaret Simon and Laura Smith appointed by Cheshire East Council.

I Declaration of Members' Interests

The Chair informed Members that Item 1N included a recommendation concerned with possible changes to the Members' Allowance Scheme.

Whilst he reminded Members that a dispensation was in place, they were still required to declare a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest. All Members did so.

J Questions from Members of the Public

There were no questions submitted.

K Minutes of the Fire Authority

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Fire Authority meeting held on 26th April 2023 be approved as a correct record.

L Minutes of Brigade Managers' Pay and Performance Committee

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Brigade Manager's Pay and Performance Committee held on 21st April 2023 be noted.

M Grant of Dispensation to New Members

The Director of Governance introduced the report which asked Members to extend the benefit of the existing dispensations to the new Members of the Fire Authority. This would allow them to take part in debates and votes on the approval of the Members' Allowances Scheme (and any changes and/or additions to it).

The Director advised that Councillors John Bird, Peter Coan, Steve Collings, Felicity Davies, Margaret Simon and Laura Smith had requested that the dispensation be extended so they could benefit from it.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the dispensation granted to Fire Authority Members on 29th January 2020 be extended to benefit Councillors John Bird, Peter Coan, Steve Collings, Felicity Davies, Margaret Simon and Laura Smith, thereby allowing them to take part in debates and votes on the approval of the Members' Allowances Scheme (and any changes and/or additions to it).

N Appointments of Committees etc., Outside Bodies and Member Roles 2023-24

The Director of Governance 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) member;
- f) Appointments to outside bodies;
- g) Appointment of Member Champions; and
- h) Continuation 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) are attached as an Annex to these minutes.

NOTE: These have been updated to reflect a change in the appointments to the Fire Authority by Cheshire West and Chester Council since the meeting took place. Councillor Felicity Davies was replaced by Councillor Sherin Akhtar on 11th July 2023.

Councillor Sherin Akhtar took the place of Councillor Davies on the following:-

Governance and Constitution Committee
Member Champion Role for Young People
Member Champion Role for Mental Health

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 to 8 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 paragraph 10 of the report and reflected 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);
- [9] the continuation of the Member/officer buddy arrangements be agreed; and
- [10] a Members' allowance of £1,733.85 be introduced for the respective roles of Chair of Audit Committee and Chair of Local Pension Board – Firefighters Pension Scheme be agreed.

O Programme of Member Meetings 2023-24

RESOLVED:

That the Programme of Member Meetings for 2023-24 be noted.

P Constitution

The Director of Governance advised that the Constitution required some updating and would be reviewed by the Governance and Constitution Committee during the 2023-24 Municipal Year. In the meantime, Members were asked to agree changes to the officer responsibilities what were contained in the existing Scheme of Delegation (Powers of Officers).

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the Fire Authority's Constitution be adopted subject to the following amendments:
 - i) the Deputy Chief Fire Officer will become the Senior Information Risk Owner (with the Director of Governance deputising for the Senior Information Risk Owner);
 - ii) the Head of People and Organisational Development (in place of the Director of Transformation) be responsible for the following:-
 - a) leading, developing, implementing and reviewing strategies, policies and procedures relating to human resources and workforce transformation;
 - b) ensuring that individual and organisational development needs are established and met as far as reasonably practicable;
 - c) securing and managing payroll, pension and occupational health requirements;

- d) **maintaining a suitable policy and effective procedures intended to secure appropriate checks on potential (and current) employees and volunteers (e.g. DBS);**
- e) **fulfilling the role of lead officer for dignity at work issues;**
- f) **managing and chairing the JCNP and leading on trade union relations;**
- g) **acting as panel member in consideration and determination of applications for voluntary redundancy;**
- h) **fulfilling the role of Scheme Manager responsible for the management and administration of the firefighters' pension schemes;**
- i) **leading upon, developing, implementing and reviewing the Service's equality policies and procedures.**

2 FINANCE REPORT END OF YEAR 2022-23

The Treasurer introduced the report which provided a review of the Service's revenue outturn financial position and reported on progress against the capital programme at the end of the 2022-23 financial year.

The Treasurer referred Members to the summary of the estimated revenue outturn for 2022-23 shown in Table 1 of the report. There was an overspend against the revenue budget of £282k. Appendix 2 of the report showed the estimated capital outturn against the capital programme. There was an estimated underspend of £983k.

The audit of the Authority's accounts was planned to commence in July and should be completed in time for the accounts to be approved at the Authority meeting on 27th September 2023. Any changes to the outturn position as a result of the audit would be reported to that meeting.

The Treasurer referred Members to the section of the report containing information on the Authority's reserves and explained that the General Reserve would be maintained at a level of approximately £2.2m, which was broadly equivalent to 5% of the net revenue budget and in line with the generally accepted level.

The Treasurer drew Members' attention to the section of the report containing information on the Authority's Capital Programme. At the end of 2022-23, the Authority's capital programme was £26.83m, with a forecast outturn spend of £25.84m, an underspend of £0.98m.

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 Table 1 be approved.**

3 TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REPORT 2022-23

The Treasurer presented a report which provided a review of the Authority's treasury management activities during the 2022-23 financial year. The report also provided information about compliance with the Authority's Treasury Management Practices during the year.

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

- a) the Authority's loans portfolio position at 31st March 2023;
- b) the Authority's investment portfolio position at 31st March 2023;
- c) a summary of performance for the year 2022-23; and
- d) the Authority's performance in 2022-23 against the key Prudential Indicators.

Members were reminded that all of the 2022-23 figures in the report remained subject to audit.

A Member asked a question in respect of the ethical, social and environmental policies of those organisations in which the Authority invested surplus funds. In response, the Treasurer advised that investments were only made in line with the Authority's Investment Strategy, which formed part of the Treasury Management Strategy. The key priority of the Investment Strategy was to ensure that invested funds were secure. The types of organisations that the Authority invested in therefore generally had in place ethical, social and environmental policies. Whilst the Authority was unable to entirely control the investments which make up Money Market funds they do, by their nature, tend to be investments in well-known and organisations that were considered to be respectable.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the report on treasury management activity for 2022-23 be noted; and**
- [2] the performance against the prudential and treasury management indicators be noted.**

4 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED: That:

That under Section 100(A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) Order 2006, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the items of business listed below on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Schedule 12A to the Act in the paragraphs indicated:

Item 5 – Blue Light Collaboration

Paragraph

(3) Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)

Item 6 – Fire Station Modernisation Programme – Year Three

Paragraph

(3) Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)

5 BLUE LIGHT COLLABORATION

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer presented a report which provided information about the Blue Light Collaboration arrangements involving Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service and Cheshire Constabulary.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the content of the report be noted;

[2] the actions outlined in the report be noted; and

[3] the delegation in respect of the legal documentation be confirmed.

6 FIRE STATION MODERNISATION PROGRAMME - YEAR THREE

The Head of Service Improvement presented a report that provided an update in relation to the Fire Station Modernisation Programme and sought authorisation to proceed with the works at Congleton Fire Station.

RESOLVED: That

[1] authorisation be given to proceed to arrange the works to modernise Congleton Fire Station.