



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY held on Wednesday, 25 September 2024 at North West Fire Control, Lingley Mere Business Park, Lingley Green Avenue, Great Sankey, Warrington WA5 3UZ at 10.30 am

PRESENT: Councillors Stef Nelson (Chair), Rachel Bailey, John Bird, Peter Coan, Steve Collings, Razia Daniels, Phil Harris, Mo Hussain, Gina Lewis, Nick Mannion, Phil Marshall, Rob Polhill, Geoff Smith, Peter Walker, Mick Warren, Peter Wheeler and Sagheer Zaman

1 PROCEDURAL MATTERS

A Recording of Meeting

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

B Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Sherin Akhtar, David Brown, Laura Crane, Karen Mundry, Phil Rimmer and Margaret Simon. Dan Price (Police and Crime Commissioner) also sent his apologies.

C 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.

Members were invited to attend the 'Wellbeing Marketplace' event at Headquarters on Thursday 10th October 2024 to celebrate World Mental Health Day. Further details would be circulated outside the meeting.

Members were reminded that a tour of North West Fire Control was due to take place at the rise of the meeting and Members were encouraged to take the opportunity to view the facilities and speak to Fire Control staff. In addition, the Chair invited Members to visit staff at North West Fire Control on 5th November 2024; this was one of their busiest times of the year.

D Declaration of Members' Interests

There were no declarations of Members' interests.

E Questions from Members of the Public

There were no questions submitted.

F Minutes of Fire Authority

The Director of Governance advised that since the last meeting had taken place there had been a change in appointments to the Fire Authority by Warrington Borough Council in July 2024. Councillor Tim Price had been replaced by Councillor Mo Hussain. Councillor Mo Hussain had been allocated the place/roles originally allocated to Councillor Tim Price i.e. a seat on the Performance and Overview Committee and Phoenix Boxing Club Board (Substitute Member).

The Annex to the minutes reflected the current position, i.e. at the date of the September meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Fire Authority meeting held on 26th June 2024 be approved as a correct record.

G Minutes of Brigade Managers' Pay and Performance Committee

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Brigade Manager's Pay and Performance Committee held on 8th July 2024 be noted.

H Minutes of Performance and Overview Committee

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Performance and Overview Committee held on 10th July and 11th September 2024 be noted.

I Minutes of Governance and Constitution Committee

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Governance and Constitution Committee held on 10th July 2024 be noted.

J Minutes of Audit Committee

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Audit Committee held on 10th July 2024 be noted.

K Notes of the Member Training and Development Group

RESOLVED:

That the notes of the Member Training and Development Group held on 9th July 2024 be noted.

L Notes of Local Pension Board - Firefighters Pension Scheme

Councillor Nick Mannion, Chair of the Local Pension Board – Firefighter Pension Scheme advised that he had recently attended the LGA Annual Firefighters’ Pension Scheme AGM and Conference. He commented that due to the McCloud Remedy and Matthews Remedy relating to the Firefighters’ Pension Scheme fire and rescue services were in a challenging position. However, he felt reassured that Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service and XPS the pension provider were well prepared to deal with the outcomes from the two remedies.

The Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive advised that all staff and retired staff affected by the McCloud Pension Remedy were update regularly on progress and all information was available on the Service’s intranet. The Service was also working closely with the representative bodies.

RESOLVED:

That the notes of the Local Pension Board – Firefighters Pension Scheme held on 13th August 2024 be noted.

2 ANNUAL REPORT 2023-24

The Head of Communications and Engagement introduced the report which sought approval for the release of the Annual Report 2023-24 in website and social media format.

Members were advised that this year it was proposed that the Annual Report 2023-24 would be presented in the form of multi-image social media posts, with live links to more detailed background information on the annual report section of the Service’s website. The social media posts would present headline performance figures in a graphic design style, under the title ‘Our Year in Numbers’ and would be published on the Service’s Facebook, X, LinkedIn, Instagram and TikTok accounts, which had a combined reach of 117,000 users.

Once the annual report was approved, the social media posts and supporting web page would be published before the end of September 2024.

Members welcomed the new format, however, asked how the Service would engage with local communities that did not use social media and with key stakeholders such as the Town and Borough Councils. In response, the Head of Communications and Engagement, advised that the Service had recently introduced an External Communications and Engagement Strategy 2024-28 which provided a framework for

the way the Service would talk, listen and respond to the public and its stakeholders using a range of different communication methods.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the release of the Annual Report 2023-24 in website and social media format be approved for publication.**

3 FIRE SERVICE MODERNISATION PROGRAMME PHASE FIVE - WINSFORD FIRE STATION

Katie Whitehead, Head of Service Improvement presented a report which provided an overview of the Fire Station Modernisation Programme (the Programme) to date and included information about Phase 5 of the Programme. The report sought approval to proceed with modernisation works at Winsford Fire Station.

Members were advised that in planning for Phase 5 of the Programme, officers had arranged for pre-construction activities to be undertaken which included defining a clear scope of work required, estimating the costs of project delivery and developing a detailed construction schedule. The work to modernise Winsford Fire Station had been priced at £2,143,899.02 and Appendix 2 to the report provided a summary of the intended works.

The Head of Service Improvement confirmed that the outcomes from the review of the programme would be presented to a future Member Planning Day.

RESOLVED: That:

- [1] the progress that has been made in delivering the Programme and the current funding position be noted;**
- [2] Officers be authorised to proceed with the modernisation works at Winsford Fire Station; and**
- [3] Officers be authorised to exceed the capital budget set for 2024-25 by drawing forward on the 2025-26 capital budget for Winsford Fire Station Modernisation.**

4 CREATION OF NEW HEAD OF DEPARTMENT POST

The Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive presented a report which sought approval for the creation of a new full-time head of department post.

Members were advised that in recent months a Review of the work carried out in the Governance Department had been commenced. This had, ultimately, led to further consideration of the recommendations from the Blue Light Collaboration (BLC) Review mentioned in the report and the broader support provided by the Director of Governance (Monitoring Officer).

Following the Review, it was concluded that the optimum solution for the Service/Authority would be to create a full-time post to replace the current part-time Director of Governance post. The post would be entitled Head of Governance (Monitoring Officer) and filled by a solicitor/barrister. A job description and person specification had been prepared for the new post and the job description was attached to the report as Appendix 1. The Joint Legal Service would continue to provide legal advice and support to the Service.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the creation of the full-time post, Head of Governance (Monitoring Officer) be approved.**