



Hereford & Worcester Fire Authority

Full Authority

Tuesday, 15 October 2019, 12:00

Chairman: Cllr R Phillips

Vice-Chairman: Cllr P Tuthill

Minutes

Members Present: Mr R C Adams, Ms P Agar, Mr A Amos, Mr T D Baker-Price, Mr B Clayton, Mrs E Eyre BEM, Mr A Fry, Mr I D Hardiman, Mr Al Hardman, Mr M Hart, Mrs K Hey, Dr C A Hotham, Mrs F M Oborski MBE, Mr R J Phillips, Dr K Pollock, Mrs J Potter, Professor J W Raine, Mr L Stark, Mr C B Taylor, Mrs D Toynbee, Mr P A Tuthill

Also in attendance: Mrs Tracey Onslow, West Mercia Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner

234 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Mr S Bowen, Mrs K Guthrie, Mr R Morris and Mr R Udall.

235 Declarations of Interest (if any)

Cllr R Phillips declared that he was a member of the Fire NJC, Fire Pension Scheme Advisory Board and Chairman of the LGPS Scheme Board.

236 Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman informed the Authority of the following:

- Agreed to a late item about Business Rate Pooling to be considered later on the agenda.
- Cllr J Kenyon had changed political parties and therefore was no longer a Member on the Fire Authority. Cllr K Guthrie would be re-joining the Authority in his place.
- Attended various meetings with the Fire Commission, NJC, Fire Pension Scheme Advisory Board and the Annual General Meeting.
- Attended the Service Exercise at Kidderminster Hospital.

- Attended the Annual Medals and Awards Ceremony on 6 September at the Guildhall in Worcester and would also be attending on 15 November 2019 at Hereford Town Hall where Group Commander Martin Lown would receive his British Empire Medal.
- Attended Group Leaders' meetings.
- The next Fire Authority meeting on 18 December 2019 was scheduled to be held in Hereford, however it would now be held at Wyre Forest District Council, Kidderminster to allow a visit to the new Wyre Forest Hub following the meeting.

The Chairman then asked the Head of Legal Services to update Members on the Judicial Review. Members were informed that the First Judicial Review (JR1) submitted to the Court on 14 August 2019 was still pending and no timescale had been received. The second Judicial Review (JR2) was pending the JR1 appeals.

237 Public Participation

(1) Mr McNally, a resident of Malvern, was registered to speak in order to voice opposition to the changes to night time fire cover at some fire stations. He also presented a petition demanding the Fire Authority to provide guaranteed night time cover at all wholetime stations.

[Professor J Raine entered the meeting at 12.08pm]

Mr McNally regarded the Authority's plans for reducing fire station numbers and the numbers of firefighters as completely unacceptable. He felt that no account had been taken of the increase in the number of residential and commercial properties in the two counties, the consequent population increase, the growing elderly population, the existence of a new rail station, the growth of many villages on a scale not seen before, the increase in road traffic and the need to deal with road traffic accidents.

Mr McNally concluded by asking the Authority to engage in consultation on the resources and funds needed to provide the staff, stations and equipment required and press the government to provide these funds.

(2) Ms Bailey and Mr Brown, on behalf of the campaign to Save Bewdley Fire Station were registered to speak in order to voice opposition to the proposed closure of Bewdley Fire Station. They also presented a petition of over 2,700 signatures requesting the Fire Authority to halt the closure of Bewdley Fire Station.

Ms Bailey was first to speak. She had concerns with the lack of

awareness amongst members of the public regarding the consultation process around the closure of the station and requested the Authority to pause the closure until a new Community Risk Management Plan had been finalised following public consultation.

Ms Bailey also stated that whilst she appreciated correspondence from the Chief Fire Officer and the Members of the Fire Authority, she disagreed that if Bewdley station was not closed that the funding received from central government would have to be repaid.

Mr Brown then followed by saying that the new Hub would no doubt facilitate better training for fire crews however why should it be at the expense of Bewdley fire station. He also stated that it was not a blue light hub as there was no ambulance service or Police apart from PCSOs and wanted to know what the financial benefits were from this reduced arrangement.

Mr Brown asked the Authority what value they place on public safety and had grave concerns with attendance times.

Mr Brown considered the decision to close Bewdley Fire Station had been made in isolation, with no meaningful, purposed consultation or desire to properly communicate with the residents of Wyre Forest. It was only through their campaign that the true impact had been realised, people made fully aware and this had finally given local people a voice to air their opposition to the Authority's plans.

Finally, Mr Brown concluded by asking the Authority to pause the closure of Bewdley Fire Station and work with the FBU, and community if necessary, to agree a new Service-wide Integrated Risk Management Plan.

Members were assured by the Chairman that the Chief Fire Officer would respond to Ms Bailey/Mr Brown's questions in writing within 10 working days.

238 Confirmation of Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Fire Authority meeting held on 12 June 2019 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

239 Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) Interim Update

The Treasurer presented Members with an early update on the Medium Term Financial Plan.

Members were informed that whilst the short term position appears to have improved (with less savings to find over the MTFP period) the Authority would still need to be spending £1.2m less from 2023/24 as was previously expected.

The Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner queried what costs had been set aside for the second Judicial Review. The Head of Legal Services confirmed that there was no specific budget set aside for the costs.

RESOLVED that the Authority:

i) note the updated MTFP provision; and

ii) note that the 202/21 data is still unconfirmed and that there is no further information on what will happen from 2021/22 onwards.

240 Strategic Fire Alliance – Alliance Agreement and projects update

The Chief Fire Officer presented Members with a report to adopt the Fire Alliance Agreement between Hereford & Worcester and Shropshire & Wrekin Fire Authorities and to note the overall progress on projects.

Members were advised that the priority projects agreed were Fire Control, IRMP/CRMP, ICT and Procurement.

Councillors commended Officers for their work in this project and looked forward to further updates.

RESOLVED that:

i) officers be authorised to enter into a formal agreement with Shropshire & Wrekin Fire Authority to give effect to the Fire Alliance, on terms approved by the Fire Alliance Strategic Board; and

ii) note progress on projects to date.

241 Employee Relations Update

The Chief Fire Officer updated Members on the recent progress that had been made in respect to employee relations' issues currently faced by the Service.

The following statement from the FBU was then read out by the Chief Fire

Officer:

"The FBU has been working closely with HWFRS, taking an opportunity to re-assess positions on a number of outstanding issues, which has resulted in renewed local engagement. Because of managements change of approach, we are able to be committed to exploring alternative options with HWFRS to resolve the matters highlighted in the trade dispute, understanding the pressures which will mean this will need to be delivered within the confines of the financial, organisational and legal restrictions facing the Service. We welcome this new approach and the proposal of the alternative Day Duty System. There remain a number of outstanding issues to be addressed but we will continue to tackle these, in good faith, through positive and constructive dialogue".

The Chairman and Members thanked Officers and Representative Bodies for their constructive engagement over the past few months.

RESOLVED that:

- (1) following the recent local agreement (in respect to a 12-Hour Day Duty System), between the Service, the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) and the Fire Officers Association (FOA) - the previous Fire Authority mandate to the Chief Fire Officer to progress with any dismissal / re-engagement process aimed at implementing a suitable day duty system into the contracts of firefighters and uniformed supervisory managers, be withdrawn;**
- (2) the previous 10-Hour Day Duty System that is within some existing employment contracts be withdrawn and the 12-Hour Day Duty System be incorporated into all relevant operational contracts of employment; and**
- (3) the Fire Authority extends it gratitude to both FOA and the FBU for their constructive engagement with the Service on this issue over the last few months, which has helped to facilitate viable options being presented to the Fire Authority today.**

242 Day Crewing Plus Consultation and Options

The Chief Fire Officer presented a report to agree and mandate the implementation of appropriate duty system(s) for the three fire appliances currently operating the Day Crewing Plus (DCP) system at Hereford, Worcester and Bromsgrove Fire Stations, in light of the legal challenge brought against South Yorkshire Fire Authority (linked to the Working Time Regulations (WTR)) by the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) and the

limitations of the Service's medium and longer-term financial position.

[Councillor P Agar left the meeting at 12.47pm]

Some Members expressed their concern at losing a second full time fire appliance at Hereford following discussions with firefighters as they felt slight tweaks without cost implications could provide 24 hour cover. The Chief Fire Officer commented that these ideas had not been sent through to the management team but that all options had been considered and enhanced cover at Hereford would only be achieved by reducing resources at other stations. On balance, the proposed arrangements provided the best overall cover across the Service area within the resources available.

[Councillor A Fry left the meeting at 1.00pm and returned at 1.04pm]

Members were grateful of the work from management and the local FBU.

The Chief Fire Officer assured Members that staff will be engaged throughout the transition period.

RESOLVED that:

- (1) Based on the assessment of the financial, legal and organisational risks involved, the continued use of the DCP duty system within the Service be ruled out;**
- (2) Bromsgrove Fire Station moves from DCP to a 2-2-4 shift crewing pattern to maintain an immediate 24/7 response capability, as soon as practicable on a date to be determined by the Chief Fire Officer;**
- (3) The second appliances at Worcester and Hereford Fire Stations (currently DCP) in future be crewed:**
 - (i) utilising the agreed 12-Hour Day Duty system during the daytime; and**
 - (ii) on the Retained Duty System at night.**

These changes to be implemented as soon as practicable on such date(s) as may be determined by the Chief Fire Officer.

243 HMICFRS Improvement Plan – Update Quarter 1, 2019-20

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer updated Members on the progress in

implementing the HMICFRS Improvement Plan.

Members were advised that good progress had been made during Quarter 1, 2019-20 and further progress updates would be reported each quarter.

[The Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner left the meeting at 1.15pm and returned at 1.20pm]

Members were delighted that the Fire Service was part of the GETSAFE agenda and congratulated the Service in getting involved.

RESOLVED that the Authority note progress on actions to deliver the HMICFRS Improvement Plan.

244 Business Rate Pooling 2020/21

The Treasurer presented a late item to Members to consider the Authority's membership of a Worcestershire Business Rates Pool (WRBP) for 2020-21. The deadline for submitting proposals for revised pooling proposals was 25 October 2019 and this matter had only arisen on 11 October 2019.

Members agreed that this was a sensible option and agreed to submitting a proposal.

RESOLVED that the Treasurer, in consultation with the Chair of the Authority, be authorised to enter the Authority into a Business Rate Pool for 2020/21 where appropriate.

245 Minutes of the Policy and Resources Committee

The Chairman of the Committee presented the minutes of the Policy and Resources Committee meetings held on 1 May 2019 and 19 September 2019.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Policy and Resources Committee meetings held on 1 May 2019 and 19 September 2019 be received and noted.

246 Minutes of the Audit and Standards Committee

The Chairman of the Committee presented the minutes of the Audit and Standards Committee meeting held on 30 July 2019.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Audit and Standards Committee

meeting held on 30 July 2019 be received and noted.

The Meeting ended at: 13:33

Signed:.....

Date:.....

Chairman