



CLEVELAND FIRE AUTHORITY

MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING HELD ON FRIDAY, 24 MARCH 2006

- PRESENT:** **CHAIRMAN**
Councillor R Payne – Hartlepool Borough Council
- HARTLEPOOL BOROUGH COUNCIL:**
Councillors Cambridge, Waller
- MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL:-**
Councillors Biswas, Clark, Jones, Mawston, Pearson, Porley
- REDCAR AND CLEVELAND BOROUGH COUNCIL:-**
Councillors Cooney, Dunning, Forster, Walker
- STOCKTON ON TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL:-**
Councillors Leonard, O'Donnell, Roberts, Salt, Woodhead
- PROPER OFFICERS:-**
Clerk, Treasurer
- FIRE BRIGADE OFFICERS:-**
Chief Fire Officer, Executive Director, Director Of Performance
- IN ATTENDANCE:-**
Steve Watson, Dave Howe - Fire Brigades Union (by invitation)
- APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** Councillor Flintoff - Hartlepool
 Councillors Blott, Jackson – Redcar and Cleveland
 Councillors Smith, Walmsley - Stockton

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Jones back following his recent illness.

115. MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the Executive Committee meeting held on 3 March 2006 and the Special Policy Committee Meeting held on 24 February 2006 be confirmed.

116. FIRE IMPROVEMENT GROUP

The Chief Fire Officer informed Members of the issues surrounding the estimated increase in costs for the visit to Chicago, Phoenix and Scottsdale Fire Departments from 22 to 30th April 2006 and reaffirmed how essential Members presence was and the potential benefits which would be realised from the visit. He reported that this would also enhance Members involvement in developing the strategic direction of the Authority as outlined within the CFA Improvement Action Plan 2005 (IP/01).

The Treasurer updated Members on the latest estimated costs for 10 people attending which was now £18,500 which also included a reasonable level of subsistence and advised Members that any less than 8 people attending would not be viable due to the group rates negotiated. He reported that there was adequate provision in the budget for the visit.

116. FIRE IMPROVEMENT GROUP

Members re-affirmed their continued support for visit due to the long term benefits which would be realised and agreed an attendance of 10 people with a 50% split between Members and Officers (4 Members, 4 Officers, 1 FBU representative, 1 Admin Support) and that substitutions now be allowed. Members agreed that final list of attendees needed to be finalised urgently and this was delegated to the Chief Fire Officer in conjunction with the Chairman and Vice Chair.

RESOLVED:-

- i) that Members reaffirmed their approval and support of the visit.**
- ii) that 10 people attend the visit with a 50% split between Members and Officers (4 Members, 4 Officers, 1 FBU representative, 1 Admin Support).**
- iii) that substitutions be allowed.**
- iv) that the final attendance list be finalised by the Chief Fire Officer in conjunction with the Chairman and Vice Chair.**

117. SAFETY IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2006/07

The Executive Director advised Members that at the Joint Consultative Committee on 24 February 2006 the Fire Brigades Unions had felt they had not been given enough time to comment on the feedback from the Safety Improvement Plan 2006/07 Consultation and this had been reported to the Special Policy Committee on 24 February 2006. Members of the Policy Committee had recommended that the Fire Brigades Union be given more time to present their views and concerns and that they also be given the opportunity to present their concerns to all the CFA Members at today's meeting. The Executive Director tabled additional information entitled "Improvement Action Plan 2005" and Summary of Improvement Areas requiring Investment".

Steve Watson, Fire Brigades Union (FBU) informed Members that prior to the commencement of the CFA meeting he had presented two petitions to the Chair of the Authority, which had been previously mentioned at the JCC Meeting on 24 February 2006. There was one petition with 1100 signatures on and another with just over 100 signatures against the Hartlepool proposals and he also reported that another 700 signed slips had been received. Members agreed that these would be taken into consideration

Steve Watson informed Members that the FBU's prime concern was the safety of its members and the public and that they did share the Authority's vision to be the best but do not believe this can be achieved by reducing Firefighters and appliances. He outlined various concerns within the consultation process (detailed in JCC minutes of 24 February 2006) and informed Members that the FBU felt there was no room for compromise within the Plan and were concerned about the operational response capability of the service and that the Plan did not identify how the improvements were going to be achieved. In the FBU's views the statistics fluctuated dramatically over a 10 year trend and asked the Authority to consider the high risks within the area.

Regarding the specific proposals within the Plan, Steve Watson reported the FBU have major concerns regarding:

- the proposed reduction of crew sizes at Thornaby and Redcar which they felt would compromise the safety of the Firefighters and public in those areas.
- The change of focus at the Headland Fire Station to prevention
- De-staffing of third appliance at Stranton, especially in view of commencement of co-responder.
- De-staffing Hydraulic Platform at Stockton, no details available re availability or costs.
- Staffing of Marine Station from 1200 to 2400, at odds with trends, not family friendly, 2 tier work force with staff at other stations and requested deferment until the outcome of the staffing review.

In summary, Steve Watson reported that the FBU believe in the IRMP process but feel that this is being used to manage Fire and Rescue budgets and asked the Authority not to compromise the safety of firefighters and public.

The Chairman thanked Steve for his comments and informed Members that he had received two petitions prior to the meeting and that the petitions were signed against "The loss/reduction of two operational fire engines from Hartlepool and the Headland"

117. SAFETY IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2006/07 continued

Councillor Waller proposed that the report be agreed in principle with the exception of the change of focus at the Headland Station which will remain unchanged at the present time. He suggested Officers prepare a report detailing the orders of priority for implementation of the Plan to the Scrutiny (Service Delivery) Committee in order for Members to consider and review the proposals and priorities prior to implementation. Councillor Waller felt that due to the many Human Resource issues within the proposals the Authority needed to ensure personnel were adequately trained in order to be re-deployed. All Members supported the proposal.

The Chief Fire Officer informed Members that there were no cuts or reductions within the Safety Improvement Plan and the Authority we are delivering services by relocating £2.25M of resources to protection and prevention. He also informed Members that Cleveland Fire Authority are leading the country in the fitting of smoke detectors. A discussion ensued regarding the take up of Home Fire Risk Assessments (HFRA's), especially with regard to the Headland who had the lowest uptake in the Brigade area and it was agreed that working with Hartlepool Housing and other partners would help increase the HFRA's. The Chief Fire Officer confirmed that if changes occur to the Brigade Profile then the Safety Improvement Plan is flexible enough to cater for this.

RESOLVED –

- (i) that the report be noted.
- (ii) that the Safety Improvement Plan 2006/07 Consultation and Feedback Report 2006/07 as outlined at Appendix 2 to the report, be approved in principle with the exception of the change of focus at the Headland Station which will remain unchanged at the present time.
- (iii) that Officers present to the Scrutiny (Service Delivery) Committee a report detailing the order of priority for implementation of the Safety Improvement Plan 2006/07 to enable Members to consider and review the proposals and priorities prior to implementation.
- (iv) that in order to meet ODMP IRMP guidance the service action plans within the final Safety Improvement Plan be amended as outlined in (ii) and (iii) above be published by 1 April 2006.

118. LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

RESOLVED - “That under Section 100(A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business, on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act namely information relating to a particular employee, former employee or applicant to become an employee of, or a particular office-holder, former office-holder or applicant to become an office-holder under the Authority.”

119. CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the confidential minutes of the Executive Committee Meeting held on 3 March 2006 be confirmed.

**COUNCILLOR ROBBIE PAYNE
CHAIRMAN**