



CLEVELAND FIRE AUTHORITY

MINUTES OF ORDINARY MEETING HELD ON FRIDAY, 30 NOVEMBER 2007

- PRESENT:**
- CHAIRMAN:**
Councillor Mrs Brenda Forster – Redcar & Cleveland
- HARTLEPOOL BOROUGH COUNCIL:**
Councillors Henery, Payne, Marshall, Cook
- MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL:**
Councillors Ismail, Jones, Porley, Williams
- REDCAR AND CLEVELAND BOROUGH COUNCIL:**
Councillors Cooney, Dunning, Briggs
- STOCKTON ON TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL:**
Councillors Dixon, Kirton, O'Donnell, Roberts, Salt, Woodhead
- AUTHORITY OFFICERS:**
Deputy Clerk , Treasurer, Legal Adviser
- FIRE BRIGADE OFFICERS:**
Chief Fire Officer
Executive Director
- APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** Councillor Stoker (Stockton) ,
Councillors Clark, Pearson, (Middlesbrough)
Councillor Ovens (Redcar & Cleveland)

92. WARWICKSHIRE FIREFIGHTERS

A minutes silence as a mark of respect for the Warwickshire firefighters who lost their lives on 2 November 2007 and the dates of the funeral reported to Members.

93. DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS INTEREST

It was noted no declarations of interest were submitted to the meeting.

94. MINUTES

RESOLVED: that the Minutes of the Cleveland Fire Authority Meeting held on 28 September 2007 be confirmed.

95. TO CONFIRM THE MINUTES OF COMMITTEES

RESOLVED - that the Minutes of the Executive Committee held on 26 October 2007; Policy Committees held on 5 October 2007 and 9 November 2007; Tender Committee 28 September 2007 be confirmed.

96. REPORTS OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

96.1 Draft Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) 2008/11

The Executive Director referred to the draft Integrated Risk Management Plan 2008/11 and outlined the 14 proposed options for making £1.8 million savings over the next five years. Members discussed each of the 14 options at length and referred to Option 6, (Closure of Marine Station) and questioned whether the proposed re-development in the Middlehaven area would affect the future risk profile. The Executive Director responded that appliances from nearby stations were able to meet the Brigade's existing response benchmarks for the Middlehaven area. It was reported that Marine station is in an area of high deprivation, low population base and exhibits anti-social behaviour fire incidents. The Executive Director acknowledged the re-development in the area which will affect the risk profile and noted that business/commercial premises will have modern design including fire engineered building safety solutions. He brought Members attention to Option 7, to Change Marine Station into a centre for arson reduction, keep the fire appliance to respond to low risk small fires in the Middlesbrough District during the day when the general demand on our fire engines is high, which would then give scope for a changes in the future.

The Executive Director circulated a draft Press Release entitled: Unjust, Unfair, Unwise which outlined the major issues and set the tone for the expected media interest. It was agreed that 'unacceptable' also be included. The Chairman urged members to lobby and raise public awareness of the serious impact of the cuts.

RESOLVED: That the publication of the Draft Integrated Risk Management Plan 2008/2011 for consultation be approved.

96.2 Consultation Strategy for the IRMP 2008/11

The Executive Director outlined the consultation strategy as recommended by the Policy Committee. It was reported that a 12 week consultation period would begin on Monday 3rd December 2007 and end on Sunday 24th February 2008.

RESOLVED: That the Consultation Strategy for the Integrated Risk Management Plan 2008/11 be approved.

96.3 Equal Pay Policy

The Executive director sought approval of the new Equal Pay Policy as recommended by the Policy Committee on 5 October 2007. He informed Members that both the FBU and UNISON had been consulted on the policy and their comments were appended to the report. It was noted that the policy would meet the brigade's obligations under the Equal Pay Act, Sex Discrimination Act, Gender Equality Duty and Equality Standard for Local Government and as a model employer we are committed to equal pay for all employees and to eliminate any sex bias in our pay system.

RESOLVED: That the Equal Pay Policy be approved.

96.4 Pay Protection Policy

The Executive Director reported that the pay protection policy had been discussed at both the Joint Consultative and Policy Committee meetings. He reported that the policy effectively gives a maximum of 3 years pay protection to individuals in a variety of circumstances as detailed within the Policy.

The Legal Adviser informed the meeting that the Authority were expected to demonstrate an element of objectivity in its approach and seek to cushion any impact over a specific time agreed by the Authority.

96.4 Pay Protection Policy continued

Members sought clarification regarding the former Station Officers pay and were informed that this is an issue to be determined at national level and that the Brigade would abide by guidance from the National Employers when it was issued and this would not affect the Brigades Pay Protection Policy.

RESOLVED: That the Pay Protection Policy be approved

96.5 Environmental Policy

The Executive Director reported that the Policy identifies its strategic approach to implementing measures to reduce and mitigate damage to the local and global environment and the Brigade have recognised the impact its daily activities have upon the local and global environment and that the health and well-being of the environment and people are closely linked. Members welcomed the opportunity of achieving significant savings as a result of the application of energy reduction measures.

RESOLVED - That the Environmental Policy be approved

96.6 Fire and Rescue Service National Framework 2008/11

The Executive Director informed Members of the receipt of the Consultation on 2008/11 FRS National Framework and the Fire and Rescue Service Equality and Diversity Strategy, which outlines proposed changes to the Fire and Rescue National Framework for 2008/11 and the Equality and Diversity Strategy for the Fire and Rescue Service. Members requested a more detailed briefing to enable their comments to be included within the consultation.

RESOLVED: That a briefing meeting be held in January to enable Members comments be included within the consultation response.

96.7 Information Pack – November 2007

- 96.7.1 Fire and Rescue Service Circulars
- 96.7.2 National Joint Circulars
- 96.7.3 Employers Circulars
- 96.7.4 Long Service and Good Conduct Medals

RESOLVED: That the report be noted

97 REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY SERVICE DELIVERY CHAIR

97.1 Corporate Assessment Submission

The Chair of the Scrutiny Service Delivery sought Members' approval of the draft version of the Corporate Assessment self assessment submission as part of the re-categorisation process. She reported that the Authority were rated as 'fair' in the Fire CPA2005, and following the last Direction of Travel assessment in January 2007, the Authority had made clear its intentions to apply for a re-categorisation at the earliest possible opportunity and this submission had been presented to the Scrutiny Service Delivery Committee on 23 November 2007.

The Executive Director reported that a central requirement of the process is the submission of a Corporate Self Assessment submission (see Appendix 1) prior to the on-site inspection in January 2008. He informed Members that the fair rating did not reflect the dedication and hard work of the staff.

97.1 Corporate Assessment Submission continued

The assessment team will undertake the on-site inspection from 21 – 25 January 2008. Members discussed at length the key lines of enquiry and the significant and sustainable outcomes we have delivered since the last assessment and the progress made against the national framework requirements.

RESOLVED: That the Corporate Assessment self assessment submission be approved.

97.2 Home Fire Safety Visit Evaluation Report

The Service Delivery Scrutiny Chair reported on the savings that can be demonstrated as a result of this initiative. She reported that the government contribution had been over £137,000 with the brigade's contribution being nearly £9 million in the time spent on this initiative. It was reported that initiative had led to 8 lives being saved, 424 accidental dwelling fires prevented; 6 less injuries and a large number of homes being made safer through risk reduction. The Chairman also reported that this evaluation had also been shared with the Members of the Fire Improvement Group.

In summary the Executive Director reported a total saving to the community of £21.6 million, made up of £11 million savings to government as a direct result of reductions in fire deaths, £10.6 million savings to government as a result of reductions in accidental dwelling fires. In addition, £1.6 million savings have been made to local social housing providers. Members commended the outcomes of the report which would also have a positive outcome on the environment by leading to a reduction in global emissions, but expressed great concern regarding the loss of funding for smoke alarms which would mean more inventive ways of carrying out these checks, possibly using non-uniformed staff or volunteers would have to be established.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted

98. REPORTS OF THE CLERK TO THE AUTHORITY

98.1 Amended Calendar of CFA Meetings and Committees

The Deputy Clerk reported that as a result of the IRMP consultation being later than planned, approval was sought to amend the schedule of Cleveland Fire Authority Meetings and Committees for 2007/08 as outlined at Appendix 1.

RESOLVED: That the revised schedule of meetings be approved

98.2 Councillor Mentoring Programme

The Deputy Clerk reported that the Member Development Group had recommended that the Authority establish a one-to-one mentoring programme aimed at new councillors and experienced councillors moving into new roles or representatives of outside bodies. The Member Development Group recommended that the Mentors should be representatives of all political and non political parties and Members who have experience of representing the Authority on outside bodies. Members agreed that the Mentoring Programme would be a useful addition to Members development and requested that ex Authority Members be also included as Mentors of the programme.

The Deputy Clerk informed Members that training for all Mentors had been arranged for 22 February 2008.

98.2 Councillor Mentoring Programme continued

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the Councillor Mentoring Programme be approved and adopted with the addition of ex CFA Members.**
- (ii) That member nominations be forwarded to the Deputy Clerk to become a mentor on the Councillor Mentoring Programme.**

98.3 Appointment of NE Regional Control LACC Director

The Deputy Clerk informed members of the resignation of Councillor Paul Kirton as one of the CFA Directors on the NE Regional Control Local Authority Controlled Company (LACC). Councillor Payne expressed his thanks to Councillor Kirton for the support and work he had undertaken as Director. Councillor Shaun Cook was nominated as the replacement Director to represent Cleveland Fire Authority on the NE Regional Control LACC with Councillor Payne.

RESOLVED: That Councillor Shaun Cook be appointed as the CFA Director of the NE Regional Control LACC.

98.4 Clerk's Information Pack

RESOLVED – That the report be noted

99. REPORT OF THE TREASURER AND LEGAL ADVISOR

99.1 New Dimension Transfer of Ownership Agreement

The Legal Adviser updated Members on the latest developments associated with the transfer of assets in respect of New Dimension. It was reported that the Fire Authority had received an initial request for comments on a draft Transfer Agreement to be returned to the CLG by 14th December 2007. It is proposed that recommendations be made to the Authority by Officers when the issues that are being raised are clarified by CLG on the re-issue of a revised version of the Draft Transfer Agreement, which is anticipated early in 2008.

Areas of concern raised by members included whether the agreement would cost the authority money, why repairs would be outsourced when the Authority has its own maintenance department and what happens at the end of the 10 year contract. The Legal Adviser reported that details regarding financial and contractual arrangements required further clarification and as this was only an initial consultation it may be some time before members receive greater detail.

RESOLVED: That Members endorse the actions proposed by the Treasurer and Legal Adviser to seek clarity on the contents and meaning of the Draft Transfer Agreement and that this joint approach be recognised as the most appropriate way forward.

100 REPORT OF THE TREASURER

100.1 Treasury Management Strategy Review

The Treasurer provided a mid term review of the Treasury Management Strategy for 2007/08. He advised Members of the current investment and borrowing strategy which included interest rates, economic outlook, investment strategy and counterparty risk. The Treasurer referred to the Prudential Code which enables borrowing to be undertaken to fund future capital expenditure for the following 3 years and that the Authority is currently under-borrowed in relation to its 3 year forecast Capital Finance Requirement (£4.6m as at 31st March, 2009/2010).

100.1 Treasury Management Strategy Review continued

The current outlook of interest rates indicates that it may be beneficial to align the level of borrowing with the underlying CFR and maintain the cash to back reserves. The Treasurer outlined the pros and cons of the three options open to the Authority, as outlined at paragraph 5 to the report. He reported that option three would seek to manage the overall risk of interest rate changes by managing the timing of new borrowings up to the level of the CFR and given the current uncertainty, this option provides a balance between long and short term risk.

The Treasurer reported that the level of investments as at 7 November 2007 was £8.8M and that a key element of the Authority's investment strategy is credit and counterparty risk. He then advised the Members that Treasury Management activities are being maintained with the agreed prudential indicators.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the report be noted**
- (ii) That the Borrowing and Investment strategy outlined within the report be approved.**

101. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Parliamentary Seminar – National Fire Sprinklers Network

The Deputy Clerk sought members wishes regarding attendance a Parliamentary Seminar, National Fire Sprinklers Network which is to be held at the Houses of Parliament on 4 February 2008. Sessions would include carbon footprints, safety of firefighters and reducing the impact of fire on the environment.

RESOLVED: That the Chairman and Vice Chairman or substitutes attend the Parliamentary seminar on 4 February 2008.

102. 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 paragraphs 1 and 3 of Schedule 12A to the Act namely information regarding an individual; information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding the information)."

103. CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES

RESOLVED – that the Confidential Minutes of Executive Committee Meetings held 26 October 2007 and 2 November 2007 and Tender Committee held 28 September 2007 be confirmed.

**COUNCILLOR MRS BRENDA FORSTER JP
CHAIRMAN**