



CLEVELAND FIRE AUTHORITY

MINUTES OF ORDINARY MEETING HELD ON

FRIDAY, 27 MARCH 2009

PRESENT:

CHAIRMAN:

Councillor Porley – Middlesbrough Council

HARTLEPOOL BOROUGH COUNCIL:

Councillors Cook, Payne, Wright

MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL:-

Councillors Clark, Ismail, Williams

REDCAR AND CLEVELAND BOROUGH COUNCIL:-

Councillors Briggs, Cooney, Dunning, Forster, Ovens

STOCKTON ON TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL:-

Councillors Beall, Cherrett, O'Donnell, Salt, Stoker, Woodhead

PROPER OFFICERS:-

Legal Adviser, Treasurer, Deputy Clerk

FIRE BRIGADE OFFICERS:-

Chief Fire Officer, Director of Corporate Services, PFI Project Director,
Head of Fire Engineering

AUDIT COMMISSION:-

Ms L Snowball, Ms D Harold

**APOLOGIES FOR
ABSENCE:**

Councillors Brunton, Rogers (Middlesbrough)

Councillors Fleming (Hartlepool)

Councillor Fitzpatrick (Redcar & Cleveland)

Councillor Dixon (Stockton)

165. DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS INTEREST

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

166. MINUTES

RESOLVED - that the Minutes of the Cleveland Fire Authority Meetings held on 30 January 2009 and 6 February 2009 be confirmed.

167. MINUTES OF COMMITTEES

RESOLVED - that the Minutes of the Executive Committees held on 6 March 2009 and 20 March 2009, the Policy Committee held on 6 March 2009, and Standards Committee held on 3 February 2009 be confirmed.

168. AUDIT COMMISSION'S ANNUAL AUDIT AND INSPECTION LETTER

Ms L Snowball and Ms D Harold from the Audit Commission presented the Annual Audit and Inspection letter which provided an overall summary of the Audit Commission's assessment of Cleveland Fire Authority. The letter included a review of how well the Authority is performing, the audit of the accounts and value for money, local risk-based and additional work, and looking ahead to the new performance assessment framework, the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA).

Ms Snowball reported the Audit Commission's overall judgement was that Cleveland Fire Authority continues to improve well, and following last year's corporate assessment was recategorised from fair to good. Good arrangements are in place to manage its use of resources, and in particular its financial standing in light of the reduction of grant income and the current economic climate. Ms Snowball reported the Authority are improving

168. AUDIT COMMISSION'S ANNUAL AUDIT AND INSPECTION LETTER contd

outcomes for local people particularly those most at risk, and remained on track to achieve national targets in relation to reducing fire deaths and deliberate fires. Good progress had been made on equality and diversity, but the Brigade still employed few female firefighters.

She reported that progress had been made on delivery of the regional control centre but risk management arrangements could be strengthened, and there was no contingency plan in the event of a failure to deliver the final system at a national level which presented a risk to service continuity.

Councillor Briggs requested further details regarding the Financial Reporting score which had reduced from 3 the previous year to 2 this year. The Treasurer reported that this item had been affected by national guidance on the Final Audited Accounts relating to the Firefighter Pension Scheme, and confirmed this had now been adjusted and would not therefore have any impact on future assessments. Councillor Forster referred to point 25 and stated that Cleveland are fully prepared for regional control, however handover would not take place until it was known that the systems worked perfectly. Ms Snowball commented this was recognised under point 52. Ms Harold advised that a report had been presented to the RMB in October 2008 and things had moved on since this time.

Councillor Williams referred to the actions needed by the Authority (points 3,4,5 refer) and queried what the Authority needed to do to achieve a score of 4. Ms Snowball replied this was very difficult to answer as a new performance assessment framework, the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) was being introduced which was a risk based approach. CAA would result in reduced levels of inspection and better co-ordination of inspection activity. The first results of work on CAA would be published in the autumn of 2009 and would include the performance data from 2008/09. Councillor Beall queried if the CAA would significantly reduce the costs to the Authority. Ms Snowball advised the Audit Commission could not really answer that question as this would be a joint inspection moving away from cyclic inspection to a more risk based approach.

The Chief Fire Officer referred to the Key Messages and actions taken by the Authority, and stated it was pleasing that Cleveland is designated as 'Good, Improving Well'. However referring to the comment that we have only 4% of women front line firefighters, the Chief Fire Officer queried, notwithstanding the steps taken and processes put in place to address this issue, if the Audit Commission believed there was something further that needed to be done. Ms Harold replied a piece of work had been undertaken on this matter which she had not yet discussed with the Chief Fire Officer. The Chief Fire Officer stated this report, when received, would be shared with Members.

The Chief Fire Officer referred to the evaluation of the partnership approach and value for money, and stated a partnership strategy was being developed to address the challenges coming out of the Audit Commission report.

RESOLVED- that the Audit Commission's Annual Audit & Inspection Letter be noted.

169. REPORTS OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

169.1 Strategic Plan 2009/2010 and 2013/2014

The Chief Fire Officer reported that Policy Committee Members had received a draft copy of the Strategic Plan at their meeting held on the 16 January 2009. Following the consultation exercise, and in light of the very positive feedback which was presented to the Policy Committee of 6 March 2009, Members of the Policy Committee agreed to recommend to the Cleveland Fire Authority that the draft Strategic Plan 2009/2010 to 2013/2014 be approved for publication. Members unanimously supported the vision and corporate and cross cutting themes which had helped shape our top eight priorities for 2014.

The Chairman commented this was a very comprehensive piece of work, and thanked the Director of Corporate Services for the hard work undertaken in its production.

RESOLVED – that the Cleveland Fire Authority’s Strategic Plan 2009/2010 to 2013/2014 be approved for publication.

169.2 Review of Charges 2009/2010

The Chief Fire Officer outlined the way in which the Brigade’s scale of charges is currently structured and reported that Section 19 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 placed constraints on Fire Authorities preventing them from levying charges for special services above the amount of full cost recovery. After taking account of previous years’ trends and known variables, it was estimated that the combined effects of the review of charges would increase budgeted income by an average of 2.23%.

RESOLVED – that Members approved the Review of Charges 2009/2010 with effect from 1 April 2009 as set out in Appendices 1 and 3.

169.3 Chief Fire Officer’s Information Pack – March 2009

- 169.3.1 Fire & Rescue Service Circulars
- 169.3.2 National Joint Circulars
- 169.3.3 Permanent appointments to the posts of Director of Community Protection and Assistant Director of Partnerships
- 169.3.4 NE Regional Board Meeting – 26 March 2009
- 169.3.5 A & B Pay Points
- 169.3.6 Public Holidays

RESOLVED – that the report be noted.

170. NE FIRE CONTROL COMPANY BOARD UPDATE - LACC

Councillor Forster updated Members regarding an RCC First Wave Principal Officers meeting which had been held in the East Midlands on 2 March 2009, during which it had been apparent that the other first wave regions were all experiencing similar issues to the North East.

Councillor Forster advised the Fire Minister, Sadiq Khan, had visited the RCC on the 19 March 2009 as part of a planned visit to the region, and Members had found the visit to be both informative and productive.

RESOLVED – that the report be noted.

171. TO RECEIVE THE REPORTS OF THE CLERK TO THE AUTHORITY

The Chairman reported that unfortunately the Clerk to the Authority, Brian Dinsdale, was unable to attend the meeting. However, on behalf of Members of the Cleveland Fire Authority, Brigade Officers and staff, the Chairman wished to place on record their thanks and appreciation for the dedication and support Brian had given to the Authority over the last 13 years. The Chairman stated Brian had been the Clerk to the Authority since 1996 when Hartlepool were appointed as lead authority, and his advice and guidance had been invaluable in our journey to excellence. On behalf of everyone, the Chairman wished Brian very best wishes for the future.

171.1 Resignation and Appointment of Elected Member

The Deputy Clerk reported that Councillor J A Jones had resigned as a Member of the Cleveland Fire Authority on the 27 February 2009, and that Middlesbrough Council had appointed Councillor Janice (Jan) Brunton to Cleveland Fire Authority for the remainder of the current municipal year. Members views were sought regarding the vacancies on Committees and Outside Bodies following the resignation of Councillor Jones. After discussion, Members agreed to defer the appointment to vacancies on Committees and Outside Bodies until the Cleveland Fire Authority Annual General Meeting in June 2009.

RESOLVED –

- (i) that Members noted the resignation of Councillor J A Jones as a Member of the Cleveland Fire Authority**
- (ii) that Members noted the appointment of Councillor Janice (Jan) Brunton as a Member of Cleveland Fire Authority for the current municipal year**
- (iii) that the appointment to vacancies on Committees and Outside Bodies be deferred until the Cleveland Fire Authority Annual General Meeting in June 2009.**

171.2 Cleveland Fire Authority Meetings 2009/2010

The Deputy Clerk reported that the Member Development Group met on 23 January 2009 and discussed the timing and days that CFA meetings and committees are held. They recommended that CFA meetings continue to be held on a Friday at 2 pm at Cleveland Fire Brigade Headquarters, and the venue and time of committees be agreed by the committee Chairs in consultation with its Members and the Director of Corporate Services. It was also recommended that a summer recess was not required.

RESOLVED –

- (i) that full Cleveland Fire Authority meetings continue to be held at Fire Brigade Headquarters commencing at 2pm**
- (ii) that the venue and commencement time of committee meetings should be agreed by the Committee Chairs in consultation with its Members and the Director of Corporate Services**
- (iii) that the schedule of Cleveland Fire Authority meetings for 2009/2010 (Appendix 1 refers) be approved**

171.3 Member Development

The Deputy Clerk informed Members that the Member Development Group had discussed this item at great length and agreed that the annual member refresher training continue and in its original format. They also recommended that all new members should undertake an induction and a one-to-one Personal & Professional Development to ensure they were fully aware of their roles and responsibilities.

171.3 Member Development contd

The feedback from new members regarding the Induction Seminar was very good and members agreed this format remain unchanged. The Induction would also take place on 12 June 2009.

The Member Development Programme for 2009/2010 was approved in principle and would be linked into the new performance framework.

Members unanimously re-affirmed their commitment to Member Development.

Councillor Cherrett asked that consideration be given to establishing skill certificates for Members, an issue Councillor Beall advised had also been discussed in Stockton. It was agreed this would be considered by the Member Development Group.

Councillor O'Donnell referred to the CAA arrangements, and queried if this training programme would reflect the changes that would be taking place due to CAA. The Director of Corporate Services advised it was important to look at how the training aligned with the CAA requirements, and this issue would be further explored.

RESOLVED:

- (i) that Members noted the Member Development Seminar to be held on 12 June 2009
- (ii) that Members approved the programme of training and development for 2009/2010
- (iii) that the Member Development Group consider the issuing of certificates regarding training and development undertaken by Members of Cleveland Fire Authority
- (iv) that Members agreed the Chairman sign on behalf of Members to reaffirm their pledge made on 22 October 2007 to adopt good practice in member development

171.4 Information Pack

- 171.4.1 Standards Committee Annual Report
- 171.4.2 Member attendance at Conferences
- 171.4.3 Referrals to Standards Committee
- 171.4.4 Executive Committee called for 6 March 2009

RESOLVED – that the report be noted

172. - TO RECEIVE THE REPORT OF THE TREASURER TO THE AUTHORITY

172.1 Anti Money Laundering Policy

The Treasurer reported that the Anti Money Laundering Policy was scrutinised by the Audit and Governance Committee at their meeting on 27 March 2009, and recommended that the Policy be put to the CFA for approval. The Treasurer drew Members attention to the legal obligations of the Authority, ie:

- Appoint a Money Laundering Reporting officer (MLRO) to receive disclosures from employees of money laundering activity (their own or anyone else's)
- Implement a procedure to enable the reporting of suspicions of money laundering
- Maintain client identification procedures in certain circumstances
- Maintain record keeping procedures

Members discussed the Anti Money Laundering Policy and agreed that the Treasurer be appointed as the Money Laundering Reporting Officer.

172.1 Anti Money Laundering Policy contd

RESOLVED –

- (i) that the Anti Money Laundering Policy be approved and included within the Authority's Anti Fraud and Anti Corruption Strategy
- (ii) that the Treasurer be appointed as the Money Laundering Reporting Officer to receive disclosures from employees of money laundering activity (their own or anyone else's)
- (iii) that a procedure be implemented to enable the reporting of suspicious money laundering and that client identification procedures in certain circumstances and record keeping procedures be maintained
- (iv) that all staff are informed and will familiarise themselves of the requirements and procedures set out within the report

173. AUDIT & GOVERNANCE CHAIRS INFORMATION PACK

The Chair of the Audit & Governance Committee outlined the current issues being scrutinised by the Committee. He drew Members attention to the Good Governance Standards and Compliance Survey and sought Members endorsement that Members and 1st to 3rd tier officers complete the survey.

RESOLVED –

- (i) that the report be noted
- (ii) that Members endorsed the recommendation that all Members and 1st to 3rd tier officers complete the Good Governance Standards and Compliance survey

174. OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY CHAIRS INFORMATION PACK

The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee informed Members that Brigade staffing and sickness levels had been closely monitored over the last year, and the Brigade now have below average sickness absence for both corporate staff and firefighters as a result of the improvement measures taken.

A presentation regarding a recent fire fatality had also been given to the meeting of 13 February 2009, and Committee Members had requested this be repeated to the Cleveland Fire Authority at today's meeting. This would therefore be presented under agenda item 15.

RESOLVED – that the report be noted

175. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

175.1 Equality and Diversity Network Meeting

The Deputy Clerk sought Members wishes in respect of the Equality and Diversity Member Champion (or substitute) attending the Equality and Diversity Member Champion Network meeting, to take place on 21 April 2009 at Local Government House, London. After discussion it was agreed that, as Councillor Ismail (the Equality and Diversity Member Champion) was unable to attend on this occasion, Councillor Forster would attend this meeting.

RESOLVED – that Councillor Forster attend the Equality and Diversity Member Champion Network meeting, to take place on 21 April 2009 at Local Government House, London.

176. **LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT) (VARIATION ORDER) 2006**
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 the paragraphs below of Part 1 Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006".
Minute Numbers 177, 178 Paragraphs 1 and 3
Minute Numbers 179, 180 Paragraph 3
Paragraph 1 – namely information relating to any individual
Paragraph 3 – namely information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority) holding that information
177. **CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES**
RESOLVED – that the Confidential Minutes of the Cleveland Fire Authority meeting held on 30 January 2009 be confirmed.
178. **CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF COMMITTEES**
RESOLVED – that the Confidential Minutes of the Executive Committee meetings held on 6 March 2009 and 20 March 2009 be confirmed.
179. **PRESENTATION BY THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER**
Fatal Fire in Hartlepool
The Head of Fire Engineering outlined to Members details of a recent fire fatality in Hartlepool.

RESOLVED- that the report be noted.
180. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**
Estates Management Strategy Private Finance Initiative: Mini Outline Business Case
Members considered the recommendations within the report.

COUNCILLOR PETER PORLEY
CHAIRMAN