

SOUTH WALES FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY

MINUTES OF THE FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY MEETING HELD ON MONDAY, 28 SEPTEMBER 2020 AT 1030 HOURS VIA STARLEAF

22. PRESENT:

Councillor	Arrived	Left	Authority
D T Davies (Chair)			Caerphilly
S Bradwick			Rhondda Cynon Taf
D Ali			Cardiff
L Brown			Monmouthshire
M Colbran			Merthyr Tydfil
P Drake			Vale of Glamorgan
S Evans			Torfaen
A Hussey			Caerphilly
D Naughton			Cardiff
A Roberts			Rhondda Cynon Taf
V Smith			Monmouthshire
M Spencer			Newport
H Thomas			Newport
S Ebrahim	10:48		Cardiff
A Lister			Cardiff
D White			Bridgend
R Shaw			Bridgend
J Williams		10:55	Cardiff
J Harries			Rhondda Cynon Taf
C Elsbury	10:51		Caerphilly

APOLOGIES:

A Jones	Torfaen
H Jarvie	Vale of Glamorgan

ABSENT:

W Hodgins	Blaenau Gwent
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OFFICERS PRESENT: CFO H Jakeway; DCO S Chapman – Monitoring Officer; Mr C Barton – Treasurer; ACO A Reed – Director of People Services; ACFO R Prendergast – Director Technical Services; ACFO Dewi Rose – Director Service Delivery, G Thomas, Head of Finance & Procurement; Sarah Watkins – Head of Corporate Support; Ms A Butler, Audit Wales

23. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Each Member declared a personal non-prejudicial interest in each agenda item which affected their Authority.

Councillor S Evans advised that in relation to the Acquisition of Land to Accommodate the Relocation of New Inn Fire Station, he is a Member of the Planning Committee for his Authority and queried whether this would require recording as a conflict of interest.

The Deputy Chief Officer advised that as the Members are not being asked to approve submitting a planning application, this will be noted as a general non-prejudicial interest.

24. CHANGE TO AGENDA RUNNING ORDER

The Chair requested that, for ease of the running order of the Agenda that Members agree to move agenda item 6.vii and 6.iii Acquisition of Land to Accommodate the Relocation of New Inn Fire Station to the end of the agenda

RESOLVED THAT:

Members agreed to move Agenda Item 6.vii and 6.iii to the end of the agenda.

25. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Passing of Firefighter Dan Jones

It was with sadness the Chair announced the passing of Firefighter Daniel Jones of Kenfig Hill and Ely Fire stations, on 4th August following a medical emergency. Our thoughts are with his family, friends and colleagues at this time.

Passing of Firefighter Matthew John

It was with sadness that the Chair also announced the passing of Firefighter Matthew John of Whitchurch Fire station, on Sunday 30th August following a short illness. Our thoughts are with his family, friends and colleagues at this time.

He advised that condolences from the Fire & Rescue Authority will be sent to both families. A minute's silence was held.

Sue Pickering

The Chair advised that at their recent AGM, Rhondda Cynon Taf advised of a change of Fire Authority Member.

He confirmed that he had spoken to Councillor Sue Pickering and written to her thanking her for her tremendous service over the years and her very able

chairmanship of the HR & Equalities Committee and as the Authority's representative on the Welsh Strategic Pension Board.

He advised that Councillor Glynne Holmes will join the Fire & Rescue Authority, advising that Councillor Holmes was unable to attend today's meeting as the Authority had not yet received his declaration of acceptance of office.

Green & Grey Book Pay Award

The Chair advised Members that both a green book (support staff and auxiliaries) and grey book (operational) pay award has been nationally agreed and will be implemented accordingly by the Service.

Meeting with Deputy Minister

The Chair advised that he and the Chief Fire Officer met with the Deputy Minister on 17th September 2020, where a number of discussions took place in relation broadening the firefighter role, Community Safety and Pensions.

The Chief Fire Officer gave further detail, confirming that In relation to broadening the firefighter role, he and the Chair reaffirmed the organisation's commitment to ongoing discussions.

Regards Community Safety, the Chief Fire Officer advised the Deputy Minister that work, in particular Home Safety visits and activities, were down by around 60% in South Wales due to Covid. Practitioners are still getting to the high risk within our communities, she was also advised of the online tool available to the public to conduct their own home fire safety checks, resulting in a home visit where the risk is high. Also noted were the arrangements being put in place for the return of the Fire Cadets, into a Covid secure environment. The Chief Fire Officer confirmed that although there has been a delay due to Covid, all cadets will complete the programme.

A verbal update regards the low number of absences through Covid and activities carried out was given to the Deputy Minister. The Deputy Minister was pleased to note the low rate of absences, and the continued provision of services and activities to the communities.

Discussions took place in relation to the UK Government's Fire Safety Bill which is currently going through Parliament and had just finished its reading in the Commons. It was noted that The Bill would be extended to Wales as it makes important provisions to extend the Fire Safety Order, and there was insufficient time to legislate separately for Wales before the next elections to the Senedd. The Welsh Government was working on a Building Safety white paper for publication early in the New Year.

The Chief Fire Officer added that there are still high rise premises within South Wales which are high risk, and stated that to have the legislation in place as soon

as possible would be important as the current fire safety legislation does not adequately apply to residential settings.

He confirmed to Members that a report in relation to High Rise Buildings is being presented to the Cardiff PSB meeting, being held tomorrow (29th September).

The Chief Fire Officer advised that Pensions was discussed at length, adding that the landscape across pensions is very complex.

26. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

The minutes of the Fire & Rescue Authority held on 13 July 2020 were received and accepted as a true record.

The minutes of the HR and Equalities Committee held 24 February 2020 were received and accepted as a true record. Councillor D Naughton advised that he had attended the meeting but the minutes show him as absent. The Deputy Chief Officer will check the register of attendance and amend the minutes.

The minutes of the Finance Audit & Performance Management Committee held 15 June 2020 were received and accepted as a true record.

The minutes of the Finance Audit & Performance Management Committee held 27 July 2020 were received and accepted as a true record. Councillor R Shaw queried whether the Business Fire Safety Annual Summary Report 2019/20 could be circulated to all Fire & Rescue Authority members, the Deputy Chief Officer agreed.

27. UPDATE ON ACTIONS

The Deputy Chief Officer advised that all outstanding actions had been completed. She confirmed that the Proposed Strategic Themes and Objectives is required to be published by 31st October. A report is being taken to the next HR & Equalities Committee meeting on the revised Lease Car Scheme as a consequence of Members decisions at the previous Fire Authority meeting.

RESOLVED THAT:

Members note the update on actions.

28. REPORTS FOR DECISION

28.1 HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELLBEING ANNUAL REPORT 2019/20

The Director of Technical Services introduced the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Annual Report 2019/20. He was particularly pleased to advise that there have

been no major/specified injuries reported for 2019/20, which is the lowest over a five year period. Also, the total days lost has reduced considerably.

Regards the reporting of injuries, diseases and dangerous occurrences, he confirmed that figures are down a third from the previous year. There is concern that individuals are not reporting near misses, this will be addressed. Councillor L Brown queried if it is possible to include a breakdown of locations of near misses, to encourage the reporting from stations. The Director of Technical Services agreed and confirmed that a breakdown will be included.

Councillor P Drake queried whether Weil's disease is considered when training in water. The Director of Technical Services confirmed that the majority of training takes place in flowing water, all venues are monitored to the highest standards and all participants wear appropriate dry suits. He added that the floods posed a challenge as responders were wearing normal kit, he confirmed that the water strategy is being reviewed to incorporate learning from floods.

RESOLVED THAT:

- 28.1.1 Members accept the report on the performance of South Wales Fire & Rescue Service in the area of Health, Safety and Wellbeing
- 28.1.2 Members note the overall success achieved during 2019/2020 in the delivery of an environment that is supportive of the Health, Safety and Welfare of staff.
- 28.1.3 Members endorse and support the range of initiatives underway to proactively and reactively support the Health, Safety and Wellbeing of staff employed by South Wales Fire & Rescue Authority.
- 28.1.4 Thanks be extended to all involved.

28.2 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY (MTFS), RESERVE STRATEGY AND BUDGET UPDATE

The Treasurer gave an update to Members of the Medium Term Financial Strategy and Reserve Strategy of the Authority, together with an update on the Revenue Budget for 2021/22. He added that there are some issues ongoing such as the Welsh Government review into fire and rescue authority funding, ongoing review of firefighters pay, the complex pension situation, and also the Covid pandemic economy forecasting model.

He therefore advised that the main focus will therefore be on next financial year as it is currently still unclear what the WG response will be to some of the highlighted issues.

A key item for next year's budget will be pay, as the 2% pay award for the current year, is more likely to be 2.75% next year. There is also significant investment in ICT, this is within the approved capital programme.

He confirmed a 4.3% overall increase in budget, but acknowledged that there is no indication as yet as to what funding will be available to local authorities from Welsh Government.

He advised that for budget setting purposes, authorities are normally advised of Welsh Government allocations in early December, but he confirmed that this will now more likely be received in mid to late December, with final approval in February

Councillor D White queried EU Funding and how far forward has collaboration been taken. The Treasurer advised there are no direct EU funding streams available to the Fire & Rescue Authority, and no direct impact, but the situation is being monitored. He added that Covid temporarily hindered collaboration but this has now re-commenced.

Councillor D Naughton queried Covid funding available from Welsh Government. The Treasurer confirmed that the Service is recording all Covid expenditure and submitting to Welsh Government with the intention for them to provide funding in due course. Of note, Welsh Government will only fund 50% of ICT expenditure as this is seen as an investment and drives efficiencies for the future. The Treasurer will circulate a detailed summary of Covid spends.

Councillor L Brown noted that not all councils received the same support, and that her authority's allocation is always low, Councillor Brown wished it to be made clear that the anticipated cost increase is an average and will affect each authority differently. The Treasurer will make this clear in subsequent reports.

RESOLVED THAT

28.2.1 The Fire Authority agrees the report content as the basis of its financial planning framework.

28.2.2 The Treasurer to circulate a detailed summary of Covid spends

28.3 2019/20 ANNUAL TREASURY MANAGEMENT REVIEW

The Treasurer presented the results of treasury management activities for the year ending 31 March 2020, which are all in accordance with indicators set. He advised that capital spending was slightly lower, Covid pandemic has contributed to this.

RESOLVED THAT

28.3.1 Members note the annual treasury management review for 2019/20 and approve the actual prudential and treasury indicators set therein.

28.4 STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2019/20

The Treasurer introduced Ms A Butler, Audit Wales, who gave an overview of the ISA260 report into the Statement of Accounts for 2019/20.

Ms Butler was pleased to confirm that there were no significant changes to financial outturn and it is the intention to sign off the accounts.

Ms Butler advised that due to Covid, it has not been possible to adhere to normal timescales, which would see sign off by end of July. The draft Statement of Accounts has been updated following the audit and a revised Statement of accounts was attached to the agenda.

The Treasurer and Ms Butler summarized the findings via a presentation.

Thanks were extended to the Accountancy Team who put in significant amounts of work, thanks were also extended to external audit staff for their support.

Councillor R Shaw commented that it is very pleasing to receive an unqualified report especially during the current climate, and thanked the team for all their efforts. He further commented on the simple errors made within the draft accounts provided for audit and requested how this could be improved upon if current practices continue.

The Treasurer advised that there have been issues with agile working, comments will be taken on board. He confirmed that lessons learnt are always considered at the end of each process.

The Chair was pleased to add this is a continuation of receiving good audits, and thanked Ms Butler for such a positive report.

RESOLVED THAT

28.4.1 Members received the ISA260 report of the Appointed Auditor and note the letter of representation contained therein

28.4.2 Members noted the audited Statement of Accounts

28.4.3 Thanks be extended to staff for all their hard work.

28.5 HM TREASURY CONSULTATION CHANGES TO 2015 SCHEMES TRANSITION ARRANGEMENTS

The Director of People Services advised Members of the HM Treasury (HMT) consultation on proposals to rectify unlawful age based transitional arrangements in the 2015 Pensions schemes which also affects Fire pensions. She advised that Welsh Government have asked that the fire and rescue services submit a formal response as they will not be running a separate consultation.

The Director of People Services extended her thanks to Members of the Local Pensions Board for their valuable contribution. The Deputy Chair thanked the Director of People Services and the representative bodies for all their hard work.

Councillor R Shaw mirrored the Deputy Chair's thanks. Councillor Brown requested that the resolution be amended to require that Members endorsed the SABW response rather than just note this. This was agreed.

RESOLVED THAT

28.5.1 Members endorsed the response from the Scheme Advisory Board Wales (SABW) following HM Treasury's request for technical feedback,

28.5.2 Members endorsed the proposed draft Service response

28.6 STRUCTURAL FIREFIGHTER PPE REPLACEMENT PROCUREMENT

The Director of Technical Services gave the background to the all Wales procurement process for the replacement of Structural Firefighter PPE which included a working group comprised of staff from each of the Welsh Fire Services.

REOLVED THAT

28.6.1 Members endorsed the appointment of Ballyclare Ltd as the Service providers for manufacture and managed care of structural firefighters PPE for a period of up to ten years and noted the timelines for rollout of the new PPE across the Service

29. REPORTS FOR INFORMATION

29.1 FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME FOR FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY 2020/2021

The Deputy Chief Officer presented the Forward Work Programme for 2020/21.

30. TO CONSIDER ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIR DEEMS URGENT (PART 1 OR 2)

There were no items of business deemed urgent by the Chair.

31. NOT FOR PUBLICATION TO THE PRESS OR PUBLIC BY VIRTUE OF SECTION 100A AND PARAGRAPH 14 OF PART 4 OF SCHEDULE 12A OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 (AS AMMENDED)

32. ACQUISITION OF LAND TO ACCOMMODATE THE RELOCATION OF NEW INN FIRE STATION

The Deputy Chief Officer gave the background to the requirement for changes to be made at New Inn Fire Station and outlined the various options available to the fire and rescue authority which included redevelopment of the current building, demolition and rebuild on the same site or the acquisition of land to accommodate a relocation of the New Inn fire Station.

The Deputy Chief Officer advised Members about a site identified in Pontypool. The search took into account Fire Cover Modelling, and confirmed there is no projected increase in fire risk.

Some discussion took place around cost and value for money and Members were assured that this would be a key priority.

RESOLVED THAT

- 32.1 Members provided approval to submit an offer for the land which will be conditional on the matters outlined in the report.
- 32.2 Once all elements of the conditionality have been overcome, Members agreed that FAPM be given the authority to approve the purchase of land upto the maximum figure outlined in the report.