

Minutes of a **meeting** of the **Combined Fire Authority for County Durham and Darlington** held at **Fire and Rescue HQ, Durham** on **15 September 2023** at **10.00 am**.

Present:

Durham County Councillors:

Councillors J Atkinson, A Batey, R Bell, J Blakey, C Hampson, N Jones, R Manchester, C Marshall, L Mavin (substitute for C Martin), S McDonnell (substitute for J Cairns), E Peeke, J Quinn, S Quinn, G Richardson, K Rooney, P Sexton, J Shuttleworth and S Zair.

Darlington Borough Councillors:

Councillors A Anderson and D Ray.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J Cairns, L Kennedy, G Lee, C Martin and M Snedker.

Independent Persons:

Independent Persons to be appointed.

Before the business of the day the Chair welcomed the service liaison officer for HMICFRS, Andy Blades, who would be observing the meeting.

The Chair noted that on 3 August the Apprentice Cohort 7 families evening had taken place, 11 new apprentice firefighters started their training with the service.

A1 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

A2 Minutes of the meeting held on 18 July 2023

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 July 2023 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair (for copy see file of minutes).

A3 Current Correspondence

The Authority received an update from the Director of Emergency Response in relation to current correspondence received from government and other bodies relevant to the Authority and the status of each (for copy see file of minutes).

Members queried the financial settlement dates. The Deputy Chief Executive noted that the final settlement would not be received until February 2024 and that several scenarios would be planned whilst preparing the budget.

A4 Fire Standards

The Authority received a report of the Director of Community Risk Management which provided an update on the National Fire Standards and the alignment of CDDFRS against the published standards (for copy see file of minutes).

Resolved:

- a) Members **noted** the content of the report
- b) Further reports would be **received** as appropriate

A5 Draft Statement of Assurance

The Authority received a report of the Deputy Chief Executive which provided members with the 2022-23 Statement of Assurance for approval prior to publication (for copy see file of minutes).

Members noted that accidental dwelling fires had reduced and queried if this was sustainable. The Director of Community Risk Management noted how the service follows a data led approach to Home Fire Safety Visits and works closely with partners to assist with referrals.

The report was moved and seconded.

Resolved:

The Statement of Assurance 2022-23 was **approved**.

A6 Appointment of Independent Person to the Audit and Finance Committee

The Authority considered a report of the Deputy Chief Executive which informed members of the appointment of an Independent Person to the Audit and Finance Committee (for copy see file of minutes).

Members noted the contents of the report.

A7 Business Fire Safety

The Authority received a report of the Business Fire Safety Member Champion which provided an update on the business fire safety activity delivered across the service area (for copy see file of minutes).

Members queried the reasons for resignations within the team, the Director of Community Risk Management noted that due to increased opportunities in the private sector staff had left the service. Robust succession planning had been put in place to alleviate some of these issues moving forward. The Director of Community Risk Management also noted that fire safety audits were still continuing via crews.

Members **noted** the contents of the report.

A8 Retained Duty System Member Champion Report

The Authority considered a report of the Retained Duty System Member Champion which provided an update into the business areas and performance of the retained duty system for the service (for copy see file of minutes).

Members queried any national work that was being undertaken on recruiting and retaining RDS staff. The Director of Emergency Response noted the work that was ongoing with the NFCC. Members also noted the RDS was a springboard into the wholetime which was a great success.

Members **noted** the contents of the report.

A9 Changes to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act (Exemptions) Order 1975 and Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) eligibility

The Authority received a report of the Director of People and Organisational Development which provided an update on changes to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 and The Rehabilitation of Offenders Act (Exemptions) Order 1975 which has enabled fire and rescue services employees to be checked through the DBS at a standard or enhanced level (for copy see file of minutes).

Members queried how the changes could affect applicants. The Director of People and Organisational Development noted the work undertaken around spent and unspent convictions, costs and resource. Guidance is awaited to assist with the process. The Chief Fire Officer noted the practices already in place within the service.

Resolved:

Members **noted** the contents of the report and would await further updates from the FSB.

A10 NFCC Culture Statement and Action Plan

The Authority received a report from the Director of People and Organisational Development which highlighted the publication of the National Fire Chief's Council (NFCC) Organisational Cultural Statement and Culture Action Plan.

Members **noted** the contents of the report.

A11 Government Anti-Social Behaviour Action Plan

The Authority received a report from the Director of Community Risk Management which provided an update on the involvement of County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service (CDDFRS) with the Government's anti-social behaviour (ASB) action plan.

Members queried referral routes for the courses. The Director of Community Risk Management explained the process of referrals through the Youth Justice Team. The Chief Fire Officer noted that if any members believed they had young people who could benefit from this type of course he urged them to speak to their member buddies as the service had many contacts with other agencies which may be able to assist.

Performance from these initiatives would be monitored through the Performance Committee.

Resolved:

- a) Members **noted** the contents of the report
- b) Members to **receive** further reports as appropriate

A12 Any Other Business

Such other business as, in the opinion of the Chairman of the meeting, is of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration

Cllr Batey asked for thanks to be passed onto those involved in organising High Handenholds open day.

Cllr Quinn asked for thanks to be passed onto those involved in Bishop Aucklands open day.

A13 Exclusion to the Public

That under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information.

Part B

B12 Any Other Business

Such other business as, in the opinion of the Chairman of the meeting, is of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration.

CLOSE OF MEETING