

At a **meeting** of the **Combined Fire Authority for County Durham and Darlington** held in Morton Room, Fire and Rescue Headquarters, Belmont Business Park, Durham, DH1 1TW, on **Tuesday 25 February 2020** at 10.00 am.

Present:

Durham County Councillors:

Councillors B Avery, A Batey, D Bell, J Bell, R Bell, C Carr, D Freeman, B Kellet (Substitute for C Carr), A Laing, L Maddison, J Maitland, R Manchester, L Marshall, C Potts, G Richardson, J Robinson, E Scott, J Shuttleworth, D Stoker, F Tinsley, and J Turnbull.

Darlington Borough Councillors:

Councillor B Jones.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors C Carr, D Hicks, H Crumbie, G Lee and A Scott.

Independent Person:

N Johnson

Apologies were received from A Simpson.

A1 Chief Fire Officer Commendations

Chief Fire Officer Commendations were awarded to FF Alex Donnison and FF Jonothan Hodgson for their outstanding and brave actions supporting the police during a violent attack on the night of 8th December 2019 in Church Street, Seaham.

The Chair noted thanks on behalf of the Authority to the Chief Fire Officer and all staff for their service during the poor weather conditions on 24 February 2020. It was agreed that a letter would be sent to Cleveland and Tyne and Wear FRS's to thank them for their support during the large incident at Peterlee.

The Chair welcomed Councillors J Maitland and B Kellet to the meeting.

A2 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

A3 Minutes of the Meeting held on 19 December 2019

Councillor L Maddison noted her attendance at the last meeting had not been documented and it was agreed that the minutes would be updated.

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 December 2019 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair (for copy see file of minutes).

A4 Current Correspondence

The Authority received an update from the Assistant Chief Fire Officer Service Support 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).

A5 Notes of the Finance Committee

The Authority considered a report of the Chair of the Finance Committee which provided an update on the discussions at the meeting held on 30 January 2020 (for copy see file of minutes).

Resolved:

That the contents of the report be noted.

A6 Local Government Association (LGA) Subscription

The Authority considered a report of the Chief Fire Officer which provided details of the LGA subscription for 2020/21 and sought a decision about continued membership (for copy see file of minutes).

Resolved:

The LGA subscription for 2020/21 was agreed.

A7 Budget 2020/21 Report under Section 25 of Local Government Act 2003

The Authority considered a report of the Treasurer which provided information on the robustness of the estimates and adequacy of reserves, so that members have authoritative advice available when making their budget decisions (for copy see file of minutes).

Councillor A Batey, as Chair of the Finance Committee confirmed support for the recommendations of the report.

Resolved:

- a) The Treasurer's assessment of the robustness of estimates and adequacy of reserves be noted.
- b) When approving the budget and the level of council tax for 2020/21 members have regard to this report.

A8 2020/21 Revenue Budget and Council Tax, Capital Programme and Medium-Term Financial Plan

The Authority considered a report of the Treasurer and Chief Fire Officer which set out the revised revenue budget for 2019/20 and proposals for the 2020/21 budget and medium-term financial plan, the capital budgets for 2020/21 to 2023/24 and the Authority's council tax requirement (for copy see file of minutes).

The Treasurer took the Authority through each section of the report providing an outline of the key information and proposals.

Councillor A Batey, as Chair of the Finance Committee confirmed support for the recommendations of the report and thanked Tony Hope and the team for the work that had gone into the financial planning.

Councillor R Bell commented on the likely funding settlement position and possible outcomes from the Sir Thomas Winsor State of Fire and Rescue 2019 Report.

Resolved:

SECTION B – Consultation

That Members take into account the views of those consulted as they consider the budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan proposals.

SECTION C – Local Government Finance Settlement

That the Authority notes the 2020/21 settlement funding assessment and the uncertainty around the funding position from 2021/22 onwards.

SECTION D – Reserves Strategy

That the Authority agrees to the policy for reserves, that the Authority will:

- i. Set aside sufficient sums in earmarked reserves as it considers prudent to do so.
- ii. Aim to maintain a general reserve of 5% of the net expenditure, currently £1.45m.

SECTION E – Medium-Term Financial Plan

That the Authority:

- (a) Agrees the Medium-Term Financial Plan.
- (b) Notes the Treasurer's comments on the robustness of the estimates, the adequacy of reserves and the risks in the budget, as set out in the separate report under Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003.

SECTION F – Revenue Budget

That the Authority adopts the following resolutions:

- (a) That the revised revenue budget for 2019/20, as set out in Appendix A be approved.
- (b) That the Treasurer be authorised to make any proper accounting transactions that would be in the interests of the Authority in relation to the accounts for 2019/20.
- (c) That the revenue budget for 2020/21, as set out in Appendix A be approved.

SECTION G – Capital Strategy 2019/20 to 2023/24

That the Authority approves the revised capital budget for 2019/20 and the capital budgets for 2020/21 to 2023/24.

SECTION H – Fire Authority Council Tax Requirement

- (a) That the Authority determine the level of Council Tax for 2020/21.
- (b) Based on the Net Expenditure of £29,173,399 and a Band D Council Tax of £105.48 the Authority adopts the following resolutions for the year ending 31st March 2021:
 - i. That the 'council tax base' for the whole of the Authority's area be £175,071.30.
 - ii. That there be no Authority expenses relating to a part only of the Authority's area.
 - iii. That the 'basic amount of council tax' be £18,466,520.72 and the amount of council tax for each category of dwelling be as set out in table 15.
 - iv. That the Net Expenditure be £29,173,399 and that, after taking into account revenue support grant of £3,479,823 business rates income of £1,503,334, top up grant of £5,691,126, and a surplus on the collection fund of £32,596, precepts totalling £18,466,520.72 be issued to Durham County Council and Darlington Borough Council.

SECTION I – Prudential Code

- (a) That the Authority notes the prudential indicators.
- (b) That the Authority approves the MRP Statement.
- (c) That the Authority approves the following limits for external debt in 2020/21:
 - i. Authorised Limit of £13.461m
 - ii. Operational Boundary of £12.237m

SECTION J – Treasury Management 2020/21

- (a) That the Authority continues to adopt the key recommendations of the CIPFA code.
- (b) That the Authority notes the Annual Treasury Management Strategy as set out in Annex K3.
- (c) That the Authority sets an upper limit on its fixed interest rate exposures for 2020/21, 2021/22 and 2022/23 of 100% of its net outstanding principal sum.
- (d) That the Authority sets an upper limit on its variable interest rate exposures for 2020/21, 2021/22 and 2022/23 of 30% of its net outstanding principal sums.

A9 Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services Update

The Authority considered a report of the Area Manager Training, Assets and Assurance which provided an update on the current position and next steps of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) (for copy see file of minutes).

Councillor R Bell noted the positive comments regarding CDDFRS in the efficiency summary of Part 2 of the State of Fire and Rescue report and requested clarity around two of the key

headlines from Part 1 of the report; the role of fire sector needs greater clarity and Chief Fire Officers need operational independence.

The Chief Fire Officer explained that the FRS had not had an inspection scheme since 2014 and therefore services had been able to take their own direction. It was also noted that the headline around clarity of the role of the sector could be linked to the ongoing pay dispute.

Resolved:

That the contents of the report were noted, and further reports received as appropriate.

A10 Grenfell Tower Inquiry: Phase 1 Report

The Authority considered a report of the Assistant Chief Fire Officer Service Delivery which provided a brief on the contents and recommendations from the Grenfell Tower Inquiry: Phase 1 Report and associated implications for County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service (for copy see file of minutes).

Resolved:

That the contents of the report were noted and further reports received as appropriate.

A11 Co-opted Governor of Belmont Community School

The Authority considered a report of the Chief Fire Officer which sought permission to become a Co-opted Governor of Belmont Community School (for copy see file of minutes).

Resolved:

That the request from the Chief Fire Officer to become a Co-opted Governor of Belmont Community School be considered.

A12 Any Other Business

There was no other business.

A13 Exclusion of 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 as defined in paragraphs 3 and 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the said Act.

B 14 Fire Fatality Presentation

The Area Manager Emergency Response delivered a presentation to members in relation to a fire at Kelloe.

B15 Options for the revision of the Service Leadership Team Structure following the early retirement of Assistant Chief Fire Officer

The Authority considered a report of the Chief Fire Officer which set out options for members to consider in relation to the structure of the Service Leadership Team following the early retirement of the Assistant Chief Fire Officer.

Resolved:

- a) That approval of option three of the structure options.
- b) That the formation of the Appointments Panel to oversee the appointments process for a Deputy Chief Fire Officer be approved.

Any Other Business

The Chief Fire Officer provided an update on LRF and internal planning for corona virus.

CLOSE OF MEETING