

Minutes of a **meeting** of the **Combined Fire Authority for County Durham and Darlington** held at **Fire and Rescue HQ, Durham** on **16 September 2022** at **10.00 am**.

Present:

Durham County Councillors:

Councillors J Atkinson, A Batey, R Bell, J Blakey, J Cairns, T Duffy, B Kellet, L Kennedy, R Manchester, C Marshall, L Mavin, M McGaun, J Quinn, S Quinn, G Richardson, K Rooney, J Shuttleworth, W Stelling

Darlington Borough Councillors:

Councillors B Jones, G Lee, A Scott

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors N Jones, S Zair, H Crumbie, and Independent Person N Johnson

Independent Persons:

No independent persons present.

The Chair asked members to join him in a minute's silence as a mark of respect following the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. The Queen served the Country and the Commonwealth for over 70 years with unwavering and remarkable dedication to duty. She will be sadly missed by millions of people across the globe.

The Chair informed the Authority that the Service's Annual Being the Best Awards night took place on Thursday 08 September at Hardwick Hall. Despite a more sombre occasion, given the death of the Queen being announced shortly after the start of the event, it was a fabulous night and it was fantastic to hear about all the wonderful things the staff in the Service do every day.

A1 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

A2 Minutes of the meeting held on 11 July 2022

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 July 2022 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 Chief Fire Officer 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).

Discussion took place around grant funding and possible concerns for the Service following the employers' rejection of the 2% pay increase offer. Cllr Marshall stressed that as an Authority we should be writing to Government regarding current pay and asking for an inflation pay increase linked to how the fire service is funded. The Chair responded outlining that pay was dealt with at a national level through the NJC. Cllr Marshall asked if the Chair supported a pay award for firefighters. The Chair stated that he supported a pay award for all staff but that had to come with additional funding from the Government otherwise cuts to frontline services would be needed to fund any such award. The Chair also informed Members that he has written to the newly appointed Fire Minister regarding current budget concerns for the service. A separate letter of condolence had been sent to Kings Charles III.

Cllr Batey requested that correspondence to and from the Home Office is added to the Current Correspondence list so that all Members are kept informed of key issues.

ACTION: CFO Errington to add all future Home Office correspondence to the current correspondence list.

A4 Statement of Assurance

The Authority received a report providing Members with the 2021/22 Statement of Assurance.

The report was noted, the Statement of Assurance and its publication on the Service website was approved.

A5 Notes of the Performance Committee

The Authority received a report of the Chair of the Performance Committee which provided an update on the discussions and recommendations of the Committee held on the 8 September 2022 (for copy see file for minutes)

Cllr Marshall highlighted that he was in attendance at the committee meeting but has been noted on the report under the list of apologies. Cllr Marshall commended the service for the hard work carried out over a very busy summer period.

Cllr Batey put forward concerns regarding the recent spate of wildfires, in particular deliberate fires and the impact on climate change. CFO Errington explained a national document called Fit for the Future outlines how the service will look in the future and takes into consideration climate change.

ACTION: Minutes of the Performance Committee on 08 September to be amended to reflect Cllr Marshall's attendance.

ACTION: Link to the Fit for the Future document to be circulated to members.

Members noted the report.

A6 Recruitment of Independent Person to the Audit and Finance Committee

The Authority received a report updating on the position regarding the recruitment of an Independent Person to the Audit and Finance Committee

Members **agreed** and **approved** to re-commence the recruitment exercise to appoint an Independent Person on the Audit and Finance Committee until 30 April 2024.

A7 Any other Business

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

A8 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 as defined in paragraphs 3 and 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the said Act.

Part B

B9 Pay Claims and National Industrial Relations Issues

The Authority received a report of the Chief Fire Officer outlining the latest position in relation to pay claims in the Fire and Rescue Service sector, potential industrial action and the impact this would have on the Authority.

Resolved:

- I. Members **noted** the report
- II. Members **approved** the latest version of the Business Continuity and Industrial Action Resilience Plan
- III. Members **agreed** to receive further updates as more information becomes available

B10 Appointment of Chief Fire Officer (CFO)

The Authority received a report of the Chair seeking approval to appoint Deputy Chief Fire Officer (DCFO) Steve Helps as the next Chief Fire Officer.

At the final stage interview DCFO Helps scored 85%. The unanimous recommendation of the Appointments Panel was to appoint DCFO Helps as the next substantive CFO, commencing on 12th January 2023.

Resolved:

Members **approved** the recommendation from the Authority's Appointments Panel to appoint Steve Helps as substantive CFO from 12 January 2023.

B11 Estates Update

The Authority received a report of the Director of Corporate Resources updating members on the latest position in relation to the Estates Improvement Programme.

Members **noted** the report.

B12 Human Resources Committee Update

The Authority received a report of the Director of People and Organisation Development updating members following applications received for early retirement/voluntary redundancy within the corporate function of the service.

Resolved

Members **noted** the report.

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

CLOSE OF MEETING