

Minutes of a **meeting** of the **Combined Fire Authority for County Durham and Darlington** held at **Fire and Rescue HQ, Durham** on **20 June 2023** at **10.00 am**.

**Present:**

**Durham County Councillors:**

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

**Darlington Borough Councillors:**

Councillors G Lee, D Ray and M Snedker.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A Anderson and K Rooney.

**Independent Persons:**

Independent Persons to be appointed.

**A1 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**A2 Appointment of Chair**

The Clerk outlined the standing orders under which the appointments can take place. Members were asked for nominations for the Chair and Vice Chair of the Authority.

Appointment of Chair

Cllr R Bell proposed Cllr J Shuttleworth as Chair on behalf of the Joint Administration. This was seconded by Cllr S Zair.

Cllr C Marshall proposed Cllr S Quinn as Chair on behalf of Labour. This was seconded by Cllr A Batey.

A vote by show of hands took place with majority in favour of Cllr J Shuttleworth.

Members agreed to appoint Cllr J Shuttleworth as Chair of the Combined Fire Authority.

Appointment of Vice Chair

Cllr J Shuttleworth proposed Cllr S Zair as Vice Chair on behalf of the Joint Administration. This was seconded by Cllr G Richardson.

Cllr C Marshall proposed Cllr R Manchester as Vice Chair on behalf of Labour. This was seconded by Cllr A Batey.

A vote by show of hands took place with majority in favour of Cllr S Zair.

Members agreed to appoint Cllr S Zair as Vice Chair of the Combined Fire Authority.

The Chair welcomed Members to the meeting.

Members congratulated the Service, following the recent announcement that the number of accidental house fires across County Durham and Darlington is at the lowest level since records began.

### **A3 Appointment of Opposition Group Leader**

The Clerk asked Members for nominations for the Opposition Group Leader of the Authority. Cllr C Marshall proposed Cllr S Quinn as Opposition Group Leader, and this was seconded by Cllr A Batey. Members agreed to appoint Cllr S Quinn.

### **A4 Review of the Constitution**

The Authority received a report of the Chief Fire Officer and Clerk which sought approval for proposed amendments to the Combined Fire Authority Constitution (for copy see file of minutes).

#### **Resolved:**

- I. The contents of the report and suggested amendments to the constitution were **noted**.
- II. The amended constitution as outlined at Appendix A was **approved**.

### **A5 Appointment of Chairs and Committees**

The Authority considered a report of the Clerk which sought to approve the Chairs of the committees for the Authority for 2023/24 (for copy see file of minutes).

The Clerk highlighted that the remainder of committee membership would be agreed via group leaders following the meeting.

The Clerk asked Members for nominations for each committee Chair.

Appeals Committee

A proposal and second was received for Cllr D Ray.

A proposal and second was received for Cllr J Shuttleworth.

A vote by show of hands took place with majority in favour of Cllr J Shuttleworth. Members agreed to appoint Cllr J Shuttleworth as Chair of the Appeals Committee.

#### Audit and Finance Committee

A proposal and second was received for Cllr R Bell.

A proposal and second was received for Cllr B Kellett.

A vote by show of hands took place with majority in favour of Cllr R Bell. Members agreed to appoint Cllr R Bell as Chair of the Audit and Finance Committee.

#### Human Resources Committee

A proposal and second was received for Cllr C Martin.

A proposal and second was received for Cllr A Batey.

A vote by show of hands took place with majority in favour of Cllr C Martin. Members agreed to appoint Cllr C Martin as Chair of the Human Resources Committee.

#### Joint Consultative Committee

A proposal and second was received for Cllr I McLean. Members agreed to appoint Cllr I McLean as Chair of the Joint Consultative Committee.

#### Pension Board

A proposal and second was received for Cllr J Atkinson. Members agreed to appoint Cllr J Atkinson as Chair of the Pension Board.

#### Performance Committee

A proposal and second was received for Cllr J Blakey.

A proposal and second was received for Cllr C Marshall.

A vote by show of hands took place with majority in favour of Cllr J Blakey. Members agreed to appoint Cllr J Blakey as Chair of the Performance Committee.

#### **Resolved:**

- i Appoint Chairs for 2023/24 for:
  - a The chair of the appeals committee was agreed as Cllr J Shuttleworth
  - b The chair of the Audit and Finance Committee was agreed as Cllr R Bell
  - c The Chair of the Human Resources Committee was agreed as Cllr C Martin

- d The Chair of the Joint Consultative Committee was agreed as Cllr I McLean
- e The Chair of the Pension Board was agreed as Cllr J Atkinson
- f The Chair of the Performance Committee was agreed as Cllr J Blakey
  
- ii The appointment of the Chair of the Authority as Chair to the Appointments Panel and Salary Review Group in accordance with the constitution Section 3, Paragraphs 5 and 6 respectively were **agreed**.
  
- iii The Clerk in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Authority and the appropriate group leader to make any changes to the Committee that may arise during 2023/24 was **authorised**.

#### **A6 Representation on Other Bodies 2023/24**

The Authority received a report of the Clerk which sought agreement for the appointments process of Members of the Combined Fire Authority's to the Other Bodies for 2023/24 (for copy see file of minutes).

Cllr C Marshall requested that the LGA appointment work closely with the Labour representative for the benefit of the Service.

#### **Resolved:**

- i The Clerk in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair and appropriate Group Leader, to make appointments to the Other Bodies which the Authority are invited to nominate in accordance with the criteria that the appointment shall be in accordance with the overall political proportionality of the Authority was **authorised**.
  
- ii The Clerk, in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair and appropriate Group Leader, to make any changes to membership of the Other Bodies that may arise during 2023/24 was **authorised**.

#### **A7 Minutes of the meeting held on 28 March 2023**

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 March 2023 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair (for copy see file of minutes).

#### **A8 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).

## **A9 Notes of the Human Resources Committee**

The Authority received a report of the Chair of the Human Resources Committee which provided an update on the discussions and recommendations of the Committee held on 16 May 2023 (for copy see file of minutes).

Members **noted** the contents of the report

## **A10 Notes of the Audit and Finance Committee**

The Authority received a report of the Chair of the Audit and Finance Committee which provided an update on the discussions and recommendations of the Committee held on 6 April 2023 (for copy see file of minutes).

Cllr R Bell highlighted the corporate governance action plan update and the comments in relation to inflation, pay awards and funding.

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

## **A11 Member Champions**

The Authority considered a report of the Director of Corporate Resources which set out details of the Authority's Member Champion Roles and sought nominations for the individual roles for the forthcoming two year period (for copy see file of minutes).

### **Resolved:**

- a) Member champion roles as set out in the report and as detailed at Appendix A-F was **noted**.
- b) **Noted** that the expression of interest form Appendix G needs to be submitted by email by 30 June 2023.
- c) **Noted** that the Fire Authority will approve the Member Champions at the Combined Fire Authority meeting on 18 July 2023, if there is more than one expression of interest for a champion role a further report will be presented and a vote will take place to allocate roles.

## **A12 Member Buddy System and Affiliation with Fire Stations**

The Authority considered a report of the Director of Corporate Resources which confirmed the Service Leadership Team contacts for the Member 'Buddy' arrangements and the fire station affiliation list (for copy see file of minutes).

Cllr S Quinn requested that her contact telephone number be updated.

### **Resolved:**

Member Buddy and fire station affiliation details as set out in Appendices A and B were **approved**.

## **A13 Empty Building**

The Authority considered a report of the Director of Emergency Response which provided an update on ongoing work in respect of empty buildings in County Durham and Darlington (for copy see file of minutes).

Members commented on police involvement, costs to the Authority, community issues and statutory powers. Chris Williams confirmed that local Authorities have the majority of statutory powers. It was agreed that Chris Williams would circulate the following further details to members; a list of empty properties, list of contacts for local authorities, costs to the Authority and detail around police notification.

Cllr I McLean queried what more Local Authorities could do to support the Fire Service. Chris Williams noted that the Service worked closely with both local Authorities and the project had moved on considerably over the last couple of years, however some high risk buildings are boarded up with OSB which can be easily removed. A quicker and more robust response would assist with the issue.

Cllr Lee queried the support received from Darlington Borough Council. Chris Williams confirmed that the Service worked closely with Darlington Borough Council however they were not yet working from a shared list.

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

## **A14 Community Risk Management Plan 2023 Consultation Results**

The Authority received a report of the Chief Fire Officer which provided Members with information regarding the results of the Community Risk Management Plan Consultation which began on 17 February 2023 and ended on 11 May 2023 (for copy see file of minutes).

Cllrs I McLean, C Marshall and A Batey commented on actions of the government with regards to funding cuts and what further cuts would look like for the Service. Cllrs noted their opposition to approve the implementation of riding with 4 due to increased risk for staff and public. The Chief Fire Officer stated that planning within the Fire Service was done on a risk based approach, a range of mitigations were in place to support crews such as fire safety, enforcement and prevention. 80% of crews are currently riding with 4 on dayshift and 88% of crews are currently riding with 4 on nightshift. Discussion took place around this option which will protect the current fast response times.

Cllr P Sexton queried whether there was anything a crew of 4 couldn't do that a crew of 5 could do. The Chief Fire Officer confirmed there was nothing a crew of 4 could not do.

Cllr P Sexton questioned scope to review the precept cap. The Chief Fire Officer provided an update on the precept position and noted that lobbying would continue. A local precept would be challenging and expensive with not guarantee of success. Cllr P Sexton queried whether the local authority could take on the precept risk. The Chief Fire Officer confirmed that it was the Fire Service's responsibility.

Cllr J Quinn queried alternative options to riding with 4. The Chief Fire Officer confirmed that mitigating options had been discussed as part of the MTFP for years and all none operational options had now been carried out. The options list had been agreed and risk assessed at previous CFA planning days and riding with 4 was the preferred option from members. If Members decided to vote against riding with 4 the next options on the list would need to be considered.

Cllr S Quinn noted concern that crews were on standby covering other areas and requested clarification on the process. The Chief Fire Officer confirmed that the service's focus is always maximum and best cover across the Service area. Appliances are moved from time to time to ensure that coverage is maximised which is a standard business management tool.

Cllr G Lee commented on the position with funding and the impact of recent unplanned events such as covid and Ukraine. Cllr Lee noted his intention to vote to approve the implementation of riding with 4.

Cllr R Bell commented that the option of riding with 4 had been discussed for years, a lot of other services ride with 4 and CDDFRS are currently doing it in practice.

Cllr Shuttleworth reminded members that the CFA had always been a politically balanced committee and all members wanted to do the best for the Service.

A vote by show of hands took place with majority in favour of approving the CRMP for 2023-2026.

**Resolved:**

- a) The contents of the report were **noted**.
- b) Survey results to be **considered** as part of the decision-making process when assessing Service resources going forward.
- c) CRMP for 2023-2026 was **approved**.

**A15 His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Service's Update**

The Authority considered a report of the Director of Community Risk Management which informed Members of the action plan resulting from County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service inspection by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services and the appointment of a new inspector for the Northern region (for copy see file of minutes).

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

**A16 Values and Culture in Fire and Rescue Services Spotlight Report**

The Authority received a report of the Director of People and Organisational Development which informed Members of the outcomes of His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services Values and Culture report and the

internal review of County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescues Services practices against the recommendations made (for copy see file of minutes).

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

### **A17 Estates Update**

The Authority Received a report of the Director of Corporate Resources which provided an update on the latest position in relation to the Estates Improvement Programme and other matters relating to Service wide Estates (for copy see file of minutes).

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

### **A18 Any other Business**

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

### **A19 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 2 and 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the said Act.

## **Part B**

### **B20 Update on Pay and Industrial Action**

The Authority received a report of the Chief Fire Officer which informed members of the latest position in relation to the pay awards for Brigade Managers through the Gold Book pay claim (for copy see file of minutes).

Members **noted** the pay award for Brigade Managers through the Gold Book and the resolution to the outstanding pay awards for 2022 and 2023.

### **B21 Fire Fatality Presentation**

The Authority received a presentation from the Director of Emergency Response regarding a recent fire fatality.

Members discussed and noted the presentation.



**B22 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**