

Minutes of **the meeting of the Combined Fire Authority for County Durham and Darlington held at Fire and Rescue HQ, Durham on 16 September 2024 at 10.00 am.**

Present:

Durham County Councillors:

Councillors J Atkinson, A Batey, R Bell, J Cairns, T Duffy, C Hampson, N Jones, R Manchester, C Martin, I McLean, E Peeke, J Quinn, S Quinn, G Richardson, K Rooney, K Shaw and J Shuttleworth.

Darlington Borough Councillors:

Councillors A Anderson, G Lee and M Snedker

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors I Cochrane, C Marshall, J Quinn, D Ray and S Zair.

Independent Persons:

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The Chair advised that meetings have taken place with newly elected MPs, Liz Twist, Alan Strickland and Luke Akehurst where future funding for the sector was discussed.

A1 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

A2 Minutes of the meeting held on 29 July 2024

The minutes of the meeting held on 29 July 2024 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 Community Risk Management 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).

A4 Member Champions

The Authority received a report of the Chair of the Director of People and Organisational Development which provided details of the CFA Member Champions for each area of the service and their officer contact.

Resolved:

Members **approved** the list of Member Champions.

A5 Statement of Assurance

The Authority received a report from the Deputy Chief Fire Officer providing members with the 2023-24 Statement of Assurance for approval prior to publication.

Members **approved** the 2023-24 Statement of Assurance.

A6 Annual Report

The Authority received a report from the Chief Fire Officer providing members with the 2023-24 Annual Report.

Cllr Batey commented that the report is user friendly and reads well. Cllr Batey asked if the contact details for the Fire Authority could be added to the document.

Cllr Cairns agreed that the Annual Report is very clear and concise but contact details for specific services within the organisation would be useful.

ACTION: Contact details for the Fire Authority and CDDFRS services to be added to the Annual Report.

Members **noted** the 2023-24 Annual Report.

A7 Retained Duty System

The Authority received a report from the Retained Duty System Member Champion providing members with update and insight into the business areas and performance of the Retained Duty System within County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service.

Cllr Bell queried if there is any flexibility to change the 11-hour rest period in accordance with number of incidents attended. S Helps explained that a conversation is taking place with staff and management regarding the opportunity to introduce an element of flexibility with the aim of maximising the availability of fire appliances.

Members **noted** the report.

A8 Standards of Behaviour: The Handling of Misconduct in the Fire and Rescue Services

The Authority received a report from the Director of People and Organisational Development informing members of the outcomes of His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) Standards of behaviour: The handling of misconduct in fire and rescue services report.

Cllr Atkinson stressed that careful consideration should be given to the content of the report and that as a Combined Fire Authority should be accountable.

Cllr Batey welcomed the recommendations of the report but shared concerns about the cost implications involved.

Cllr Lee raised concerns regarding a recent investigation and queried the current processes that are in place within the organisation for dealing with allegations of misconduct. Cllr Batey expressed discomfort regarding investigations being discussed at a public meeting.

Cllr Bell noted he was happy with the content of report but did not agree with endorsing all national recommendations, some of which may not be relevant to County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service.

Resolved:

- (a) Members **noted** and **commented** on the content of the report and proposed actions.
- (b) Members **agreed** with proposed monitoring arrangements through the HR Committee

A9 Any Other Business

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

The Chair confirmed that there was no other business.

A10 Exclusion to the Public

Resolved:

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 the schedule 12A of the said Act.

PART B

B11 Any Other Business

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

Cllr Duffy raised concerns regarding the potential increase of paraffin heaters being purchased for the winter and the fire safety risks they pose and queried if the service were doing anything in this regard.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer highlighted the ongoing partnership winter planning work that the service was involved with, in both local authority areas, which included unsafe heating and the promotion of safer methods of heating such as oil filled radiators. Education campaigns were also planned for social media.

CLOSE OF MEETING