

Minutes of **the meeting of the Combined Fire Authority for County Durham and Darlington held at Fire and Rescue HQ, Durham on 20 January 2025 at 10.00 am.**

**Present:**

**Durham County Councillors:**

Councillors J Atkinson, A Batey, R Bell, C Hampson, B Kellett, R Manchester, C Martin, L Mavin, I McLean, E Peeke, J Quinn, S Quinn, G Richardson, K Rooney, K Shaw and J Shuttleworth.

**Darlington Borough Councillors:**

Councillors G Lee and M Snedker

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A Anderson, J Cairns, C Hugill (Independent Person), C Marshall, D Ray and S Zair.

**Members of the public:**

Andy Murray (FBU)

The Chair updated the Board that he had attended the passing out parade on the 6 December of Course 171. He congratulated them on behalf of the CFA and the 10 newly trained firefighters are now working at our fire stations.

#### **A1 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **A2 Minutes of the meeting held on 21 October 2024**

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 October 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 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).

#### **A4 Notes of the Human Resources Committee held on 26 November 2024**

The Authority received a report of the Chair of the Human Resources Committee which provided an update on discussions and recommendations from the Committee held on the 26 November 2024 (for copy see file of minutes).

Members **noted** the content of the report.

## **A5 Notes of the Audit and Finance Committee held on 27 November 2024**

The Authority received a report of the Chair of the Audit and Finance Committee which provided an update on discussions and recommendations from the Committee held on the 27 November 2024 (for copy see file of minutes).

Cllr Bell noted that investment and interest rates were high, and current underspend was approx. £268,000. External auditors were currently working towards a deadline of the end of February 2025 for accounts. 2022/23 accounts had been certified on 20<sup>th</sup> December 2024.

Members **noted** the content of the report.

## **A6 Notes of the Performance Committee held on 10 December 2024**

The Authority received a report of the Chair of the Performance Committee which provided an update on discussions and recommendations from the Committee held on the 10 December 2024 (for copy see file of minutes).

Councillor J Quinn highlighted the following areas from the Performance Report as follows:

- Accidental dwellings fires continue to reduce and are at their lowest ever level, however deaths and injuries from these accidents have increased.
- Prison fires have contributed to an increase in non-domestic fires although false alarm incidents caused by automatic fire detection equipment have fallen.
- Although only one of the response standards is being met, the actual average response times for attendance are under the set time.

Members **noted** the content of the report.

## **A7 Bonfire Campaign Evaluation 2024**

The Authority received a report from the Director of Community Risk Management providing members with an update on the Bonfire Campaign for 2024 which evaluates activities conducted as a result of the Joint Bonfire Strategy which is live from 24 October 2024 – 7 November 2024.

This year there was the following recorded:

- 40 deliberate primary fires
- 210 deliberate secondary fires
- 9 violence at work incidents.

Councillor G Lee asked if anyone had been identified or prosecuted for any of the incidents? BCairns said that to date the service have not been made aware of any prosecutions however Police enquiries were on-going.

Councillor A Batey said that it would be helpful to publicise more of the negative impacts of the incidents i.e. damage to appliances and expense incurred so the public were aware of this and include this in the information delivered to schools in future.

Members **noted** the report.

### **A8 Integrated Fire Control Collaboration (IFCC) Update Report**

The Authority received a report from the Director of Emergency Response which provided members with an update on the progress with the implementation of the new hosted control room system which is being procured jointly between CDDFRS, Hereford and Worcester FRS, Shropshire FRS and Cleveland Fire Brigade.

Councillor G Richardson asked why the service had chosen the cheapest option of Motorola for the control room system? RCherrie said that they already had a good established working relationships with the company and they are market leaders in this field.

Members **noted** the report.

### **A9 Local Resilience Forum Update**

The Authority received a report from the Director of Emergency Response which provided members with an overview of the purpose of the Local Resilience Forum (LRF) and in particular the County Durham and Darlington Local Resilience Forum (CDDLRF) which is hosted by County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service (CDDFRS).

R Cherrie encouraged all members to familiarise themselves with the Community Risk Register, link below and information on the LRF.

[CDDLRF Community Risk Register 2024-2026.pdf](#)

[County Durham and Darlington Local Resilience Forum | County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service](#)

Councillor R Bell asked what the threshold was for utilising the LRF. R Cherrie said that it would depend on the type and severity of the situation, i.e. weather warnings yellow, amber, red. If required a 'Tactical Co-ordination Group' (TCG) would be stood up and facilitated through the LRF who would then decide if escalation was required.

Councillor M Snedker asked about paragraph 13 in the report "greater roles and responsibilities" and the funding attached to the LRF. K Carruthers confirmed that when the LRF was first set up there was only 1 person per local area identified as LRF lead to carry out all statutory duties within the civil contingencies act, which was a large remit. Over recent years the funding for LRF's has increased enabling LRF's to recruit more staff to support this work.

Councillor G Lee asked who organises the Community Emergency Plans. R Cherrie confirmed that these are community led by 6 different groups across CD&D who work with local groups to set these plans up, the plans are also available to our fire crews.

Members **noted** the report.

### **A10 PCC Request to join the Combined Fire Authority**

The CFA Clerk presented the report to the CFA Members to consider the Durham Police and Crime Commissioner's (PCC) request to join the Combined Fire Authority (the Authority) as a member.

Cllr John Shuttleworth, Chair of the Authority, received a letter dated 20 November 2024 from the Durham PCC Joy Allen. The PCC has made a request to join the Authority as a voting member. In addition, a request was made for the Deputy PCC, Graham Hall, to deputise as a non-voting member in the PCC's absence.

Upon a vote being taken the request for the PCC to join the CFA as a member was refused. Cllr Atkinson requested a named vote and in accordance with the constitution the way in which he voted is recorded in the minutes. Cllr Atkinson voted to agree to the request of the PCC to join the CFA.

The outcome of the vote was to refuse the request based on the below agreed rationale:

- Whilst the benefits of collaborative working between the police and fire authority are well recognised it is considered that there are existing forums through which collaboration can be achieved and the PCC is encouraged to make use of the existing arrangements.
- It is considered that the request is premature given the Government's current direction of travel (away from PCCs and towards Regional Elected Mayors) as set out in the Devolution White Paper.
- Whilst there are areas of collaboration between police and fire the two organisations are different in nature and there is a concern that the PCC's involvement with the Combined Fire Authority could compromise the operational efficiency of the fire service.
- There is a concern that the relationship between police and fire would become asymmetric if the PCC were to hold a governance role on the Combined Fire Authority with no corresponding role for CFA members at the PCC's office.

JAllen would be informed of the outcome of her request to join the CFA via letter from the Chair and it was agreed that the decision would be publicly recorded by way of the minutes of the meeting.

### **A11 English Devolution White Paper**

The Authority received a report of the Chief Fire Officer which provided members with an overview of the elements of the English Devolution White Paper relevant to Fire and Rescue Authorities.

On 16 December 2024, the Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution Jim McMahon set out details of the government's plan for devolution in a Written Ministerial Statement. Alongside the Statement, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government published its Devolution White Paper.

In his Statement, the Minister states that "at its core, the White Paper sets out how the government will strengthen and widen the mayoral model of devolution across England.

Members **noted** the report

## **PART B**

### **A14 Strategic Planning Day 21 November 2024**

The Authority received an update from the Chief Fire Officer on the Strategic Planning Day held on 21 November 2024.

Members **noted** the report.

### **A15 Serious Fire Learning Review**

The Authority received a presentation from the Director of Community Risk Management regarding a recent fire fatality in Hilda Park, South Pelaw.

Councillor MSnedker asked if the feedback had been positive from the targeted hot strike and home fire safety visits in the area of Hilda Park following the fire. BCairns said yes engagement was good, with follow up visits taking place where required.

Councillor M Snedker then asked if those that had made contact with the service had made positive changes to reduce risk of fire in future? BCairns informed the Authority that following a Home Fire Safety Visit an evaluation process is in place to enable the service to receive feedback and understand if the messages provided are being adopted.

Members discussed and noted the presentation.

### **A16 Service Leadership Team Pay Review**

The Clerk presented a report to inform the Combined Fire Authority (CFA) of the outcome of the job evaluation and pay review process of the Service Leadership Team (SLT) and the recommendation from the Salary Review Group (SRG) on how to proceed.

Members were in **agreement** with the increase of the salaries of SLT members in line with paragraphs 17 and 19 of the report.

### **A17 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.

**CLOSE OF MEETING**