

HUMBERSIDE FIRE AUTHORITY

(SPECIAL MEETING)

31 JANUARY 2014

PRESENT:

Representing East Riding of Yorkshire Council:

Councillors Engall MBE, Hodgson, Ibson, Moore, Turner and Whittle

Representing Kingston upon Hull City Council:

Councillors Gemmell OBE, Mathieson, Petrini, Quinn and S Walker

Representing North Lincolnshire Council

Councillors Briggs (Chairperson), Swift, Waltham and Vickers

Representing North East Lincolnshire Council:

Councillors Baxter, Wallace, Wilson and T. Walker

Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Officer/Director of Operations, Assistant Chief Officer/Director of Safety, M Buckley, Acting Monitoring Officer and Secretary, Director of Finance & Assets/Section 151 Officer, Committee Manager were also present.

Mr D Hughes, Chairperson of Governance, Audit and Scrutiny Committee and Mr C Vertigans (Independent Co-opted Members) also attended as observers.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Armstrong, Chapman MBE and Mole.

The meeting was held at the Humberside Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters, Kingston upon Hull. Meeting commenced at 10.30 a.m.

4385 ACTING MONITORING OFFICER AND SECRETARY – The Chairperson introduced Mr M Buckley, who had been appointed to act as Acting Monitoring Officer and Secretary on a temporary basis.

Resolved – That Members ratify the appointment of Mr M Buckley as Acting Monitoring Officer and Secretary on a temporary basis.

4386 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST – There were no declarations. The Chairperson reported that all Members had been lobbied by the various trades unions during the consultation process on the Operational Efficiency Programme options.

4387 MINUTES – The minutes of the meeting of the Authority held on 16 December 2013 were submitted.

A Member referred to Minute 4377 (Humberside Fire & Rescue Service Medical Response Partnership with Yorkshire Ambulance Service and in view of the industrial action currently being taken by Ambulance staff sought clarification as the current situation from the Authority's viewpoint. The Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive replied that with regard to the proposals relating to the South Bank of the Humber discussions were due to take place with East Midlands Ambulance Service in February 2014.

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting of the Authority held on 16 December 2013 having been printed and circulated amongst the Members, be taken as read and correctly recorded and be signed by the Chairperson.

OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY PROGRAMME

4388 Presentation by Representative Bodies - At the invitation of the Authority a representative of the Fire Brigades Union and also the Fire Officers' Association addressed the meeting with regard to the views of their respective unions on the Operational Efficiency Programme Options that had been the subject of a public consultation exercise. The representatives spoke with regard to the written views which they had sent to all Members of the Authority. The Chairperson reported that the Retained Firefighters' Union had also been invited to give a presentation to this meeting but had declined the invitation, although the union had submitted a written response as part of the consultation process.

A Member expressed concern about the recruitment gap caused by long-term reduction of the wholtime establishment and asked that the issue should be included on a future Authority agenda.

The Chairperson, on behalf of Members, thanked the representatives for their presentations and confirmed that the information would be taken into account by Members when the Options were considered later in the proceedings for this meeting.

4389 Operational Efficiency Programme – Consultation Outcomes - The Deputy Chief Officer/Director of Operations submitted a report reminding Members that at the Special Meeting of the Authority on 9 September 2013 Members had considered the outcomes of engagement activity that had taken place during June/July 2013 on the Operational Efficiency Programme and had approved a reduced number of options to go out for formal 12-week public consultation starting in October 2013. At the subsequent Authority meeting on 27 September 2013 Members approved a range of combinations of those options that the consultation should include. The options which were approved for consultation included some that were originally part of the engagement process as well as some new options that were developed as a result of suggestions made by participants during that process. There were options to make changes at stations in the Hull, Immingham, Grimsby, Cleethorpes and Waltham areas, with a maximum saving potential of approximately £4.1m. The options that went out for consultation were set out at Appendix 1 to the report.

Formal public 12-week consultation commenced on 18 October 2013 and Members of staff, the public, partners and other stakeholders were invited to take part, either through completing the online survey on the Service's website or by attending one of the consultation events which were held across the Service area. The report now submitted was concerned only with the outcomes of the consultation. Elsewhere on the Agenda for this meeting was a separate report seeking approval for a number of options to be implemented. That report takes into account, and refers to, some of the outcomes reported within the report now submitted. A more detailed consultation pack had been circulated with the report for Members, which provided a more detailed data analysis of the consultation. That information was also available with the Fire Authority papers on the Service website. In addition, the actual returns were available for Members (and any other interested person) to view in the Corporate Communication office at Service Headquarters. An overview of the outcomes from the consultation process was attached at Appendix 2.

The objective of the consultation was to establish participants' most favoured options which were presented as part of the Operational Efficiency Programme. As such, the consultation was designed to provide the Authority with information to be considered when determining which options to approve for implementation. The consultation provided information on how implementation of the options would impact on both risk and cost, taking into consideration other factors such as response standard performance and workload. That

information was also available on the Service website with paper copies available at all the consultation events and on request. The feedback form was available to complete on the Service website and staff visits and open public consultation events were also held across the Service area. This gave the opportunity for staff and public to speak directly to officers about the options and ask any questions. The report outlined the arrangements made for staff and representative bodies and external stakeholders to participate in the consultation. In total, 258 feedback forms were returned (91 paper copies and 167 online forms). The overall analysis of the feedback was set out in Appendix 2 to the report and provided Members with an insight into the views of both staff and external stakeholders, which might assist the Authority in deciding which options should or should not be approved for implementation. The report summarised the general trends from the consultation feedback with regard to the options in the respective areas (Hull, Immingham and Grimsby). Copies of letters received from the trade unions and other respondents were submitted as part of the detailed consultation pack.

Resolved – That Members note the report and take into account its findings in their approval, or otherwise, of options contained within the Operational Efficiency Programme (Minute 4390 below refers).

4390 Operational Efficiency Programme – Options for Implementation - The Assistant Chief Officer/Director of Safety submitted a report reminding Members that they had previously received detailed reports and presentations, at a number of Fire Authority meetings and Member Days, on a range of options for the Operational Efficiency Programme. At its meeting on 9 September 2013 the Authority had considered the outcomes of engagement on those options and had approved a reduced number of options to go out for formal consultation with a view to incremental implementation in line with the Authority's budget shortfalls and staff retirement profile. The options consulted upon had previously been presented to Members in detail with particular focus on the following:

- First engine response standard performance
- Second engine response standard performance
- Risk of dwelling fire fatalities
- Risk of fire fatalities in other buildings
- Risk of special service fatalities
- Finances.

Further information on each option was also provided which included:

- General Service-wide information
- Station specific information
- The effect on the workload of other stations
- The peak times that incidents occur in areas
- Mapping of where most incidents occur
- Mapping of the fire engine travel times from stations.

The options consulted upon also included a number of suggestions which came forward from staff and the public during the engagement stage earlier in 2013. Whilst there were sixteen different options, detailed in Appendix 1 to the report, which were consulted upon, those options were effectively every possible combination of a number of "either or" choices which could be made in each of the three geographical areas as set out in paragraph 10 of the report. The options showed all of the possible combinations of a variety of changes to operational cover which could be implemented whilst still allowing the Service to meet the Authority's existing Response Standards. A list of the options consulted upon, and a brief analysis of them, was included at Appendix 1 to the report. Attention was drawn to the report on the outcomes of that consultation reported in detail earlier in this meeting (Minute 4389 refers).

The Strategic Plan and Integrated Risk Management Plan clearly laid out the importance of balancing the service delivery resources in Prevention, Protection and Response. Risk to communities had been progressively reduced during the past ten years by highly effective prevention work. That had seen an almost halving of emergency calls but very little reduction in the number of fire engines deployed. Whilst many of the options were predicted to increase risk those predicted increases would still mean that the risk would be below the level considered acceptable ten years ago. That downward trend in incidents continued. However the risk predictions were calculated assuming that the number of incidents would stay the same, therefore if the trend of incidents continued downwards then risk would also continue to reduce as a result and could in time be reduced to a level less than the current level even if options were implemented. The Service will continue to support preventative work which should give Members confidence in the potential for further incident reductions and associated future reductions in risk.

Whilst there was a need to make decisions on which options were to be implemented to ensure that the budget can be balanced in 2015/16, the intention was, to gradually, and sequentially, implement approved options in line with the Service retirement profile. Previous improvements in efficiency had been delivered in a timely and managed way to ensure that any changes had been timed to fit with the retirement profile. An indication of how the options might be implemented was included at Appendix 2 to the report, although it should be borne in mind that it was dependent on the actual retirement date of personnel, which could not be accurately predicted. If a number of options were approved the intention would be that the sequence of implementation would be determined by Officers based on a number of factors, including predicted risk, predicted effect on response standards, the likely effect on staff, for example taking into consideration the residency profile of firefighters and how implementation might minimise the need for staff to travel across the Humber to work, and also the skill sets required on particular stations. Prior to implementation of any approved changes, which will be carried out sequentially and gradually, a paper would be brought before the Authority seeking endorsement of the implementation plan relating to that particular change. There was however a need to start the process of implementation almost immediately. The current position was that due to the fact that more operational staff had retired in 2013/14 than was expected there was currently a small crewing shortfall on fire stations. That shortfall could be immediately remedied by implementation of any one of the options, with any further approved options being implemented over time; in line with the principles laid out in Appendix 2 to the report. A paper will be brought before the Authority in March 2014 seeking endorsement of the first implementation plan in line with paragraph 17 of the report.

If all of the options which had the maximum financial savings resulting from them were implemented then the overall saving to the budget would be £4.1 million. However, other factors such as risk and the effect on response standards will be considered by Members, alongside the financial savings, when considering the approval of options for implementation so the actual savings could be considerably less than that maximum figure. The Authority over the period 2011/12 to 2015/16 will have lost circa 27% of its external financing from Government. The expectation was that further reductions will take place beyond 2015/16. The financial projections for the Authority had been updated based on the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement for 2014/15 and 2015/16 announced on 18 December 2013, in broad terms the picture was as follows:

2014/15 – broadly balanced
2015/16 - £2.3m deficit
2016/17 - £5.6m deficit.

The Authority should be able to balance the budget for 2014/15. The years 2015/16 onward look far more challenging and therefore further efficiencies would require implementation during 2014/15 in order to assist with the balancing of the budget for the future years. Members were reminded that any recurring revenue efficiencies implemented in 2014/15

would help balance the budget in future years e.g. £2.3m of efficiencies implemented in 2014/15 would leave a further £3.3m (£5.6m less £2.3m) of efficiencies to be delivered in 2015/16. There was some uncertainty around the projection for 2016/17 given that no indication was available from Government on funding for that year at this stage and of course the General Election likely to take place early 2015 could also change the picture either positively or negatively for the 2016/17 year. The projections for 2014/15 and 2015/16 were more certain however as a result of the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement for 2014/15 and 2015/16. The position would be kept under review and updates brought to Members when the settlement has been confirmed. Therefore, whilst significant savings can be made, in time, through the options consulted upon as part of this programme, it was likely that further savings in excess of £1.5m will still have to be made by 2016/17. However, there was scope within this programme to deal with the projected budget deficit of £2.3 million in 2015/16 and go some way to dealing with the anticipated budget deficit of £5.6m in 2016/17 if sufficient options are approved for implementation.

The Chairperson stated that having had the presentations by representatives of the trade unions the Authority might wish to adjourn the meeting to allow Members the opportunity to reflect on the information received.

Resolved – That the meeting does not adjourn.

In response to a query by a Member the Assistant Chief Officer/Director of Safety reminded Members that Officers had previously indicated that all of the Options in the report could be implemented and therefore the report had been written with no specific recommendations, however the Officers' recommendations as to the Options to be approved were:

Option 5 (Hull)	Remove the second engine from East Hull Fire Station, crew all fire engines in Hull with four firefighters and crew a SFU.
Option 10 (Immingham)	Merge the Immingham Stations at Immingham East Station and remove one fire engine. (Officers would wish to split the fire engines so that both stations could be crewed at some times).
Option 16 (Grimsby, Cleethorpes and Waltham)	Merge Peaks Lane and Cromwell Road Stations and remove one engine, replace the fire engines at Cleethorpes and Waltham with SFUs and use them for small fires in the Grimsby, Cleethorpes and Waltham areas. (Officers would also wish to consider whether SFUs could be used for other activities i.e. medical response or road traffic collisions).

The Chairperson invited proposals with regard to the eight options set out in the report relating to Hull.

It was moved by Councillor Quinn and seconded by Councillor Hodgson -

“That Option 5 be approved with deep regret’

It was moved by Councillor Gemmell and seconded by Councillor Ibson as an amendment -

“That Option 3 be approved and that the Authority should increase its Precept for 2014/15 by 1.9% and aim to have no underspend on approved budgets.”

Councillor Swift indicated that he would wish to move as a further amendment -

“That the Authority rejects all the options in the report and re-examines the merit of having a vote on the Precept.”

The Acting Monitoring Officer and Secretary advised the Authority that the proposed amendment would not be valid as it was a direct negative to the original motion.

It was moved by the Chairman and seconded -

“That the Authority continues in considering the options on an area basis.”

Upon being put to the vote the voting on the motion was:

For: 11, Against: 8

Motion Carried

Resolved - That the Authority continue in considering the options on an area basis.

Upon being put to the vote the voting on the amendment moved by Councillor Gemmell and seconded by Councillor Ibson was:

For: 2, Against:17

Amendment Lost

Upon being put to the vote the voting on the motion moved by Councillor Quinn and seconded by Councillor Hodgson was:

For: 10, Against: 9

Motion Carried

The Chairperson invited proposals with regard to the two options set out in the report relating to Immingham.

It was moved by Councillor Wilson and seconded by Councillor Wallace -

“That the Authority rejects both options 9 and 10 relating to Immingham.”

Upon being put to the vote the voting was:

For: 10 (Councillors Baxter, Gemmell OBE, Moore, Petrini, Swift, S Walker, T Walker, Wallace, Waltham and Wilson)

Against: 9 (Councillors Briggs, Engall MBE, Hodgson, Ibson, Mathieson, Quinn, Turner, Vickers and Whittle)

Motion Carried

The Chairperson invited proposals with regard to the five options set out in the report relating to Grimsby, Cleethorpes and Waltham.

It was moved by Councillor Wilson and seconded by Councillor Wallace -

“That the Authority rejects all options 11 to 16 relating to Grimsby, Cleethorpes and Waltham.”

It was moved by the Chairperson (Councillor Briggs) and seconded by Councillor Hodgson as an amendment -

“That Option 16 be approved.”

The Acting Monitoring Officer and Secretary advised the Authority that the proposed amendment was also not valid as it was a direct negative to the original motion.

Upon being put to the vote the voting on the motion moved by Councillor Wilson and seconded by Councillor Wallace was:

For: 8 (Councillors Gemmell OBE, Moore, Petrini, Swift, S Walker, T Walker, Wallace and Wilson)

Against: 11 (Councillors Baxter, Briggs, Engall MBE, Hodgson, Ibson, Mathieson, Quinn, Turner, Vickers, Waltham and Whittle)

Motion Lost

It was moved by the Chairperson (Councillor Briggs) and seconded by Councillor Turner as a further motion -

“That Option 16 be approved.”

Upon being put to the vote the voting on the further motion moved was:

For: 10, Against: 8, Abstained: 1

Motion Carried

Resolved – (a) That Members approve the following options to be implemented from those consulted upon:

Option 5 (Hull) Remove second engine from East Hull Fire Station, crew all fire engines in Hull with four firefighters and crew a SFU.

Option 16 (Grimsby, Cleethorpes and Waltham) Merge Peaks Lane and Cromwell Road Stations and remove one engine, replace the fire engines at Cleethorpes and Waltham with SFUs and use them for small fires in the Grimsby, Cleethorpes and Waltham areas.

(b) that Members approve that implementation plans for the approved options will be brought before the Authority for endorsement, prior to any implementation taking place.

Meeting closed at 11.48 a.m.

