

AVON FIRE AUTHORITY**20 December 2018**

Present: Councillors Ashe, Butters, Davies (C), Davies (D) (Chair), Davis, Garner, Jackson, Johnson, Lake, Morris, Phipps, Pomfret, Shelford, and Windows.

The meeting began at 2.00pm.

47. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Eddy, Goggin, Hale and Wilton. Cllrs Scott and Williams were absent.

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, and introduced Kevin Woodward (Temporary Interim Treasurer), Shahzia Daya (Director of Legal Services, WECA) who would be acting as Legal Representative at the meeting, and Sally Burrell (Independent Person for Member Complaints).

The Chair noted that the meeting was being filmed and would be available on the Fire Authority's YouTube channel.

48. EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURES - the Chair outlined the arrangements.

49. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS - the Chair drew attention to the requirements of the code of conduct as set out in the Agenda.

50. CHAIR'S BUSINESS**Caring at Christmas at Temple Fire Station**

The Chair announced that Avon Fire & Rescue Service had teamed up with local charity Caring in Bristol to offer food and shelter over the Christmas period. On 29 December, firefighters and volunteers from across the Service would come together to open Temple Fire Station as a pop-up 'Caring at Christmas' style service to help people experiencing homelessness in the period between Christmas and New Year. Between 12pm and 2pm on this day, anyone would be welcome to pop into the station for a hot meal and somewhere dry and warm to rest.

The Chair thanked all staff involved in this worthwhile activity.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabularies and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS)

The results of the recent HMICFRS inspection had been published earlier that day and therefore the Chair and the Chief Fire Officer / Chief Executive (CFO) were likely to be interviewed by the BBC during the later stages of the meeting. If this was the case, then Cllr Jackson (Vice-Chair of the Fire Authority) would chair the meeting in the temporary absence of the Chair.

51. MINUTES OF THE AVON FIRE AUTHORITY**51.1 Ordinary Meeting held on 29 September 2018**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Fire Authority held on 29 September 2018 should be signed by the Chair as an accurate record of the meeting.

51.2 Extraordinary Meeting held on 13 November 2018

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Fire Authority held on 13 November 2018 should be signed by the Chair as an accurate record of the meeting.

52. PUBLIC ACCESS – None

53. MINUTES OF COMMITTEE

53.1 Audit, Ethics and Governance Committee – Adjourned Ordinary Meeting of 27 July 2018 held on 21 September 2018

RESOLVED to note the minutes.

53.2 Audit, Ethics and Governance Committee – Ordinary Meeting held on 21 September 2018

RESOLVED to note the minutes.

53.3 Performance Review and Scrutiny Committee – Ordinary Meeting held on 12 October 2018

Cllr Davis moved the recommendation in Minute 17 - Improvement Programme, recommendation from the Improvement Working Group – recommending that Recommendations 6, 18, 20, 22, 29 and 39 from the Fire Authority's 62-point action plan be considered as complete.

RESOLVED unanimously to approve the sign off of Recommendations 6, 18, 20, 22, 29 and 39 from the Fire Authority's 62-point action plan.

53.4 General Purposes Committee – Ordinary Meeting held on 25 October 2018

Cllr Windows moved the recommendation in Minute 17 - Energy Procurement:

RESOLVED unanimously to approve energy contracts above £250,000 being delegated to the CFO, subject to a report being made to the next meeting of the Audit, Governance and Ethics Committee.

54. URGENT ACTION UNDER STANDING ORDER 5.1

Cllr Jackson stated that he was concerned about the temporary appointment of a Treasurer. He understood that the background was that the Interim Treasurer was unwell. He asked for confirmation that all other avenues had been exhausted. The Chair confirmed that this was the case, noting that Kevin Woodward had considerable experience working with Fire Authorities.

RESOLVED to note that the Clerk, in consultation with the Chair and Group Leaders, had appointed Kevin Woodward as Temporary Interim Treasurer until 31 March 2019.

55. NEW CONSTITUTION

The Chair thanked Cllrs Butters and Pomfret for the work they had done on the new constitution. He stated that following the circulation of the draft new constitution

feedback had been received from Cllrs Shelford and Wilton. Cllr Shelford had made observations about grammar and language and Cllr Wilton had expressed concern about disposals and about Employment Committee structures.

The Legal Representative made the following observations:

- The new draft constitution was similar to that used by Bristol City Council and to the West of England Combined Authority.
- A single constitution would provide a useful framework and make clear the parameters within which all Officers and Members operated, allowing Officers to deal with operational matters within the framework set by Members
- The section regarding complaints about Members required further work.
- Looking ahead she hoped that nearby Local Authorities could agree to use the same report templates.

Cllr Garner stated that he was not happy with the new constitution, he would prefer that it was called a “draft preliminary constitution” and felt there was a risk of losing the ability to amend the constitution. Overall he felt that the Fire Authority was being talked into all sorts of things whilst not attending to the tasks it should be prioritising.

Cllr Shelford contributed that he had made 65 comments in his written response to the circulation of the draft document, these could be summarised under the following headings:

1) Difficult to read

The draft constitution was a big piece of work, 125 pages in length and was difficult to read. Although Cllr Shelford accepted that the constitution should be written, voted on and agreed, he felt it would be more appropriate to go through the draft constitution line by line to assess and improve it. He suggested that the document should be broken into chunks and groups of Members (with relevant skills and interests) brought together to tackle each chunk over the course of a year.

2) Legal language

The language used should be simple, non-legal and non-technical. For example, the word “impute” was used at one point and it would be best to use a more easily understood word such as “attribute” in this context.

3) Members roles and responsibilities

Cllr Shelford requested that operational and financial efficiencies should be included in the duties of Members.

4) General Purposes Committee (GPC) should be used on an exceptional basis only

Cllr Shelford noted that historically the use of the GPC to make a wide range of decisions away from the scrutiny of the full Fire Authority had caused problems. Although he accepted that occasionally an emergency GPC may be necessary to agree matters between Fire Authority meetings, he was convinced it should not be a routinely convened committee, and wanted its routine duties reallocated to the other committees of the Fire Authority. In the future, Cllr Shelford requested that the Fire Authority should resolve to agree the recommendations of the GPC and no longer note them.

5) Delegation of Power and Control

Cllr Shelford appreciated that the CFO needed delegated authority in order to run the organisation. However, he wanted the specific details of the

delegations to be examined to ensure that the Officers of the Fire Authority were clearly instructed about their decision making ability and also properly protected. He was particularly concerned about the disposal of vehicles and felt that greater clarity in this area was essential.

6) Arrangements for Complaints about Members' conduct

Cllr Shelford agreed that the section about Members' conduct and complaints required further work. Cllr Shelford asked if this section was simply a cut and paste of the previous Standing Orders regarding Members' conduct and complaints. The Legal Representative stated that she would report back to Members and later confirmed that the Code of Conduct was the existing one, although the procedure for dealing with complaints was new.

7) Official Hospitality

Cllr Shelford queried why this was included at all, and said that he was not sure that he agreed with it.

8) Specified Amounts

Cllr Shelford noted that the various amounts of money for items referenced in the constitution were usefully set out in a separate section at the end of the constitution. He expected that these figures would change regularly and it would therefore be much easier to accurately update the document if the amounts were listed separately as they now were.

The Chair stated that a separate review of the Committee structure was planned and hoped this information would answer Cllr Shelford's concerns about the General Purposes Committee. The Chair agreed that the constitution should be reviewed regularly but felt that getting all the Standing Orders into one document was the first step in facilitating regular reviews. The Chair stated that he would be happy to separate out sections of the constitution for consideration by different groups of Members.

Cllr Pomfret stated that the idea of the single constitution was to draw all the various Standing Orders of the Fire Authority together into one place. She felt that this would create a single highly-useable document in which it would be easy for Members to find an array of information. Some of the component Standing Orders had been reviewed as part of the Constitutional Review Working Group but other Standing Orders had been left as they were for the time being. The intention was that the new single constitution would be in place for the new Fire Authority when it began its work in May 2019, after elections in three of the four Unitary Authorities (UAs). The CRWG had tried to simplify old-fashioned language whilst pulling together the document but it was accepted that some may have been missed. Cllr Pomfret agreed that the Committee structure needed further work, but that element had proved too much to tackle in one go alongside the constitution. She emphasised that the work of the CRWG had been publicised to all Members, it was unfortunate that not many Members had attended the meetings of the CRWG.

Cllr Shelford stated that he had not known about the CRWG meetings. Cllr Pomfret replied that there had been several invites issued to all Members. Cllr Shelford asked if others had known about the meetings, and a number of members indicated that they had done, so Cllr Shelford apologised for his mistake.

Cllr Pomfret further contributed that at South Gloucestershire Council (SGC) the constitution was reviewed annually and that she would expect a similar process to take place at the Fire Authority in the years ahead. Overall the draft single constitution had tried to make a good start by changing the obvious matters and

pulling everything together. She felt that once the constitution was in place Members would be able to make further reviews and update as necessary.

Cllr Shelford felt that no Members would want to go through the draft single constitution in close detail at the meeting and suggested that the first meeting of the new Fire Authority could consider and finalise the document.

The Chair explained that there was concern that the new Fire Authority in May was likely to have had a significant change in membership and therefore relatively little knowledge of the Fire Authority, and the background to the constitution. For this reason it had been deemed sensible that Members who had the benefit of more time on the Fire Authority should devise the constitution.

The Chair asked if any other Members wished to speak.

Cllr Garner asked for more clarification about the changes to Committee structures which may be anticipated or required. He felt that the Panels had to be set up as they currently were.

The Chair replied that it was anticipated that Members would want to make changes to the organisation of Committees and Panels, and that Panels could be changed as long as any subsequent arrangements were lawful.

Cllr Garner asked if a Panel had to contain three people of different political persuasions. The Chair replied that the disciplinary process made some specific requirements in terms of the legality of the process and that it would not be helpful to discuss the detail of the Committee structure at the present time.

Cllr Garner felt that Members expressing reservations about the draft single constitution in advance were falling into a trap. He stated that those who had reservations and expressed them, but were not on the CRWG, would find that their complaints could be easily ignored. Cllr Garner stated that it would be more effective if Members voiced their concerns at a full Fire Authority meeting.

Cllr Davis spoke to acknowledge the amount of work carried out by Cllr Pomfret and her colleagues on the CRWG, he also wanted to acknowledge the legitimate concerns of Cllr Shelford. Cllr Davis felt that it was necessary to have a constitution in some shape or form in order to be able to change and adjust it and felt that adopting the approach recommended by Cllr Garner would mean that the Fire Authority would keep revisiting the same discussions. He asked that the Fire Authority voted, made a decision and moved on and therefore moved that the draft single constitution was accepted, if necessary with a condition of review to be carried out in chunks, as suggested by Cllr Shelford.

Cllr Jackson seconded the approach outlined by Cllr Davis.

Cllr Morris expressed concern that the draft single constitution had not been considered by the Committee Chairs of the Fire Authority. Therefore, she asked that the committee chairs should each be asked for their feedback prior to the next Fire Authority meeting, this would enable any necessary adjustments to be made to the draft single constitution and accepted by the Fire Authority. She explained that this would mean that further feedback had been sought throughout the Fire Authority and that the plan of handing a single constitution to the new Fire Authority appointed after the forthcoming May elections would stay on course.

Cllr Jackson stated that he would be happy to support Cllr Morris's proposal. He pointed out that the current Fire Authority had until March to agree the single constitution and agreed that input from the committees of the Fire Authority would be

helpful. He asked that the single constitution was submitted to all the Committees for consideration and then brought back to the Fire Authority at its March meeting.

Cllr Shelford was not happy to approve a draft document, feeling that any single constitution approved subject to further change or review, would be regarded as a fait accompli. Cllr Pomfret asked Members to remember that the draft single constitution was based on existing documents and standing orders. In response to a question from the Chair, Cllr Shelford agreed that he would be happy to note the draft. The Chair asked Committee Chairs to ensure that a review of the draft single constitution was included on the agendas of their respective committees during January and February.

Cllr Lake asked if it would be possible for the draft single constitution to be presented with each section clearly separated (i.e. started on a new page and indexed) as suggested by Cllr Shelford. This was agreed, together with any proposed changes to existing documents being clearly shown in the text.

Cllr Butters commented that the pulling together of the draft single constitution had been a huge task. The intention of the CRWG had not been to lay down the law to other Members of the Fire Authority, in fact the maximum contribution of as many Members as possible was sought. He hoped that many Members would now contribute their comments in preparation for the March meeting of the Fire Authority.

RESOLVED unanimously:

- 1) To note the draft single constitution as presented by the Constitutional Review Working Group.
- 2) To request all Committees of the Fire Authority to consider the draft single constitution during their meetings in January and February 2019.
- 3) To request all Committee Chairs to provide the feedback of their Committees
- 4) That the Fire Authority should reconsider the draft single constitution at its March meeting, having received feedback from Committee Chairs. This should be in a format showing each section within the constitution properly separated and any proposed changes/additions to existing documents clearly shown.

56. DRAFT SERVICE PLAN 2019 – 22

The CFO presented the draft Service Plan for 2019 - 22 to Members, making the following points:

- The Draft Service Plan had taken many months of careful work, and its focus was how the Fire Authority planned to keep people in Avon safe.
- Appendix 1 contained the Service Plan Road Map, with which had commenced a year ago with the organisation's plan for dealing with investigations, preparing for the HMICFRS inspection and the Fire Authority's Action Plan for improvement.
- The Service Plan had two key areas of focus:
 - 1) Making Communities Safer by matching resources to risk in communities under the headings of Preventing, Protecting, Responding and Resilience.
 - 2) Making the Service Stronger by improving the service and investing in staff.

- Appendix 2 contained the draft Service Plan. This was a 47 page document which examined the service and the risks in detail. Graphical presentation and plain English had been used to ensure the information was accessible.
- To underpin the draft Service Plan a series of pieces of work and documents have been completed which have focussed on risk.
- Members had participated in the development of objectives in a number of workshops and were thanked for their help. An outcome had been the establishment of a project team to investigate the option of moving to a risk-based response standard. Subsequently key areas were identified for inclusion in the Fire Authority's new Service Plan 2019/22 to 2012/22:
 - 1) Review the current response standards, which are based on population density and geography.
 - 2) Review the current response to automatic fire alarms.
- The objective was to match resource to risk and the proposal was to move to a set of response standards based on risk as follows:
 - 1) Critical
 - Fire and where life is at risk.
 - A target 8 minute average response time.
 - 2) Non-critical
 - Not a primary fire in a property (for example this could be an automatic fire alarm or a grass fire).
 - A target 12 minute average response time.
 - 3) Advice
 - Non-emergency assistance and guidance.
 - A target 60 minute average response time.

The CFO then asked Members to note the report entitled "Automatic Fire Alarms: The case for change". This report set out the business case for a changed approach to the Fire Authority's response to Automatic Fire Alarms. The CFO explained that at present all Automatic Fire Alarms were responded to by the Fire Authority, although 98% of these were false alarms. Further, he stated that it was incumbent on the Fire Authority to seek to match resources to risk and this indicated that a different approach was necessary. It was therefore proposed that a response should always be applied to higher risk premises (for example, where there was a sleeping risk), and that no response should be made to premises presenting little or low risk. In addition it was proposed that:

- Alarms would be call challenged regardless of risk, except for care homes which would continue to see a response without call filtering.
- Sleeping and high risk properties only would receive a response to an automatic fire alarm.
- The weight of attack would be reduced to one fire engine only.

The CFO stated that by matching resources to risk in this way, the level of road risk would be reduced, the number of mobilisations would be reduced and more resources would be available for the important work of the Fire Authority in the areas of community work and training.

Referring to the options analysis contained in the report, the CFO stated that some other Fire Authorities do not make any response to automatic fire alarms, and this

policy would make the greatest reduction in call-outs (98% reduction) in the Fire Authority area. He explained that Option 2 (Sleeping and High Risk response only) would ensure a reduction of 31% but pose less risk, and that this was the approach recommended to the Fire Authority.

In conclusion, the CFO stated that he commended the report to the Fire Authority and would welcome feedback on the proposals. The proposals would be put to the public in an eight-week consultation in which the Fire Authority would present the proposals via a carefully considered communications plan and presentation. If the proposal was approved, then the proposals would become effective from 1 April 2019.

The Chair thanked the CFO for the report, acknowledging the amount of work which had gone into the document and associated background work. The Chair stated that in the light of HMICFRS findings the report was timely.

Cllr Jackson added his thanks, stating that the report was easier to read and to understand than in the past. Cllr Jackson said that on page 44 of the draft Service Plan it was stated that the Fire Authority had saved £14.5m, however he felt it would be more accurate to say that the budget of the Fire Authority had been reduced by £14.5m. With regard to the proposed response standard changes, Cllr Jackson did not agree with the proposal going to consultation that the response standards should be focused on the time of arrival of the first appliance, he stated that this was effectively a reduction in the weight of attack.

The CFO reminded Members that by changing the response standards it was expected that the Fire Authority would have to respond to 1354 fewer calls, freeing up 1833 fire engine hours and 7332 firefighter hours.

Cllr Jackson responded that it would be helpful to place more emphasis on statistics such as these in the draft Service Plan. Cllr Jackson went on to say that he:

- Was opposed to the use of average times in monitoring service standards as he felt they often hid inefficiencies, for example several calls many responded to within 8 minutes, effectively masking a problem situation where a call was not responded to until 45 minutes had elapsed.
- Felt that the response standard was watered down by not timing the arrival of the second appliance.
- Would prefer it if the average was based on the arrival of the second appliance.
- Understood that where there were only four firefighters in attendance, they were not allowed to enter a house fire, therefore the arrival of a second appliance was necessary to provide a sufficient weight of attack to effect a house-fire rescue.
- Was concerned that in the situation outlined above, firefighters may put themselves at risk by entering premises before the arrival of a second appliance.
- Was concerned about jeopardising safety by changing the response standards.
- Believed that Fire Authority Members did not understand the significance of the need to time the arrival of the second appliance.
- Trusted the staff and managers of the Fire Authority but was concerned that the consultation exercise would make the proposed change in service standards look easy when it was not.

The CFO stated that HMICFRS was moving towards average response time standards. Cllr Jackson replied that there were no national standards in place and that the response standards adopted by the Fire Authority were a local decision.

The CFO replied that the proposal was to meet the response standard in 95% of cases, and that average responses across Fire Authorities were used more and more often. He was aware that views about the proposals differed and encouraged everyone to feed in their comments to the consultation process. In reply Cllr Jackson reiterated his point that there were no national standards and that it was up to each Fire Authority to set its own standards. He was not happy to see the standards watered down by removal of the consideration of the arrival of the second pump. He also continued to be unhappy with the use of average response times.

The Chair asked if Cllr Jackson would be happier with an average figure if it was reported alongside standard deviations from the mean arrival time. Cllr Jackson agreed that this would be preferable as it would enable poor arrival times to be identified.

Cllr Butters expressed alarm that the photograph on page 89 of the draft Service Plan showed a homogenous group of firefighters. The CFO stated that this would be changed prior to publication.

Cllr Butters explained that in the past he had managed a residential management training centre which had a sleeping risk. He stated that he was horrified to see so many false automatic fire alarms and asked what was going wrong with these systems. The CFO replied that many were old systems. Cllr Butters said that in Herefordshire he believed that establishments were "allowed" up to eight false alarms per annum and asked what the Fire Authority could do to reduce the number of false alarms; specifically he asked if the Fire Authority could issue fines to establishments with a prolific problem in this area.

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Service Delivery) (ACFO SD) reported that false alarm trends were monitored in commercial buildings and if a problem was identified then a letter would be written or a visit made. He stated that often an effective change was to replace a smoke detector with a heat detector. Other work was ongoing with the Fire Industries Association and also in monitoring structural and managerial changes in buildings. Cllr Butters suggested that this further information about false automatic fire alarms and associated work should be included in the draft Service Plan. The ACFO (SD) said that the Technical Fire Safety Team would continue to send letters and make visits to appropriate premises.

Cllr Morris thanked the CFO for keeping her safe for the price of 10p per day which she regarded as excellent value for money, she then asked for further information about the channels for consultation which would be used. Information was provided about the multi-channel engagement strategy which would be used involving: survey monkey, distribution of hard copies of the draft Service Plan (including in foreign languages if necessary), presentations in public venues and unitary authority neighbourhood forums / community engagement forums.

Cllr Garner expressed astonishment that the use of standard deviations was being proposed. He stated that the priority was to get to the target as soon as possible and that how this was measured made no difference.

Cllr Shelford apologised that he had omitted to thank Cllrs Pomfret and Butters along with Officers of the Fire Authority for their excellent work on the constitution. He felt this was a worthwhile and good piece of work.

Cllr Shelford asked for more information about the response time standards, making the following points:

- The metrics were helpful to aid understanding of the subject matter.
- Detail of the response standards used by other organisations would be helpful.
- He would like to know why, for example, 8 minutes had been proposed as the response standard rather than 10 minutes. He wondered what kind of difference a two minute change would make, further would 10 minute response standard but with the right level of attack be better?
- The correct level of attack was clearly different in different circumstances, for example a person trapped in a vehicle could be rescued by one appliance with appropriate cutting tools and expertise, in contrast, an incident at Hinkley Point power station could require a response from Fire Authorities across the whole of the South-West of England.
- It was difficult to find a means of measuring the correct weight of attack across multiple incidents.
- He agreed with Cllr Jackson that the correct level of service could not necessarily be established by measuring the arrival time of the first appliance, and asked if the proposed method had been proposed because it was simple and if therefore more work needed to be done.

The CFO replied that simplicity was helpful, the proposal was that a straightforward metric should be used and it was felt that this would be more easily understood by all the Fire Authority's stakeholders. Members were also informed that an animation would be available during the consultation to explain the proposals to the public in an accessible format.

The ACFO (SD) responded to Cllr Shelford's questions regarding target times by explaining that research undertaken by the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) indicated that a 10 minute response time gave survivability of close to 0% for anyone in a building on fire, however an eight minute response time provided an exponential rise in the chance of survival. He stated that the casualty loading (eg numbers of people who were frail or had a disability) of a building was a significant factor in survivability.

Cllr Shelford queried whether the two minute difference in arrival time on scene (the difference between eight and 10 minutes) was sufficient. The ACFO (SD) replied that operational practices could make an immediate difference to the rate of survival, such as applying hoses to the exterior of a building, further that the rapid deployment of the first appliance would affect the rescue of any trapped people.

Cllr Davis was pleased to hear the details of the consultation exercise, he said that most members of the public have no idea about the significance of the arrival of one or two appliances and it was necessary to explain to people what the Fire Authority was doing to keep people safe and how it was proposing to change the response standard.

The CFO thanked Cllr Davis for his comments and expressed regret that the animation had not been ready in time for the Fire Authority meeting; however he was confident that the animation would provide a reliable simplified message to talk the viewer through the rationale behind the proposals.

The Chair asked if Members wished to make any comments on the recommendations. Cllr Jackson proposed that the recommendations in the report should be approved, Cllr Shelford seconded the proposal.

RESOLVED unanimously to:

- 1) Approve the draft Service Plan 2019 – 2022 for public consultation.
- 2) Approve the Consultation Strategy for the Service Plan 2019 – 2022.

57. DRAFT BUDGET 2019/20

The Treasurer introduced the report, apologising that the report for the draft budget had not been available to be despatched with the main agenda pack and had been delivered separately to Members. He explained that the draft budget had been put together under difficult circumstances as the Interim Treasurer was on sick leave. The rest of the team had worked hard to collate the report. The Treasurer drew the following matters to Members' attention:

- Members would not be asked to make any decisions about the setting of council tax until the February meeting of the Fire Authority, however it was necessary to agree the draft budget so that consultation with the business community could go ahead. In turn, this would ensure that Members had the responses of the business community available to them in February.
- The referendum limit was set at 3%, therefore the first option presented was an increase of 2.99% to ensure that a referendum was not triggered. The second option presented was an increase of 1.99%. The Fire Authority is asked to consider whether if it would want any alternative options to be presented to the budget meeting in February.
- The Fire Authority had benefitted from a four-year funding deal covering the period 2016/17 to 2019/20. Therefore the draft budget presented was for the fourth year of the four-year funding period.
- The 2020 settlement figure was £15.76m, in line with the four-year plan. As part of this settlement there would be further reductions in the formula grant of £396,000 in 2019/20 over 2018/19.
- Uncertainties lay ahead for the Fire Authority and therefore a risk analysis had been carried out to identify potential problems, which included Brexit and interest rates amongst other factors.
- It had previously been assumed that settlements from 2020/21 onwards would be static, however that was now seen as an optimistic position. The Government spending review had protected grants to the NHS and for social care. This effectively meant that the situation was likely to be worse for other government departments. The Fire Authority would not know the figures for 2020/21 onwards until late 2019.
- With regard to a referendum, flexibility had been recently allowed by government for the police. This was why Avon and Somerset Constabulary had been able to increase council tax by £12 last year and now by £24 this year. If Avon and Somerset Constabulary are to take advantage of the £24 increase in 2019/20 then this would represent a 12% increase in council tax, however this option was not available to the Fire Authority and the limit was 3%. If the Fire Authority elected to conduct a referendum to increase council tax above 3% then it would have to bear the cost of holding a referendum, and should consider that the public would be not likely to vote for an increase in any case.

- For the year 2019/20 the Fire Authority must identify savings of £880,000, of this £500,000 had already been identified. A firefighter pay rise of 3% had been assumed in the budget.
- With regard to pensions, the new Firefighters Pension Scheme 2015 had been introduced to achieve savings. The announcement in September 2018 confirmed that employers' contributions would increase from an average of 17% to an average of 30% from April 2019. HM Treasury had indicated that some additional funding would be provided to mitigate most of this increase in the first year, but with no commitment beyond that time. It was therefore necessary to acknowledge the risk to the Fire Authority budget presented by the pension changes and therefore the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) forecasts had assumed that this grant would cease from 2020/21.
- The analysis of savings indicated a funding gap of £2.6m over the MTFP if Option 1 (2.99% increase to council tax) was selected. If the Fire Authority agreed Option 2 (1.99% increase in council tax) then the forecast funding gap would increase to £2.8m.
- The business rate retention system of funding of local authorities meant that the block grant system was being phased out and that local authorities would, in the future, be more reliant on their local tax base. This brought a level of risk to funding which had not previously been experienced. For example if a big business (and significant business rates contributor) left the local authority area a drop in income would be experienced by the local authority. A level of government protection had been indicated but it was not guaranteed for how long protection arrangements could be in place.
- Reserves had been earmarked for identified specific issues, and the Austerity Reserve could be used to facilitate changes that would result in reduced expenditure in the future. Reserves had been reduced and should now only be used if strictly necessary.

Members were asked if they had any questions.

Cllr Shelford thanked the Treasurer for the report and said that it was important that the Fire Authority planned for all the potential financial problems which it faced. He stated that Brexit planning needed more work and noted that 4% of the budget still had to be found. He also noted that pensions were a major issue for the Fire Authority. He also acknowledged that the demise of the block grant from central government, and the move to the business rate retention system, could mean that if businesses struggled with Brexit then there could be a loss of funds to the Fire Authority. In summary, he stated that the Fire Authority should plan for the worst possible scenarios to ensure the best possible outcome for the Avon area.

The CFO responded that the potential impact of Brexit was being examined nationally by the National Fire Chief's Council (NFCC) and by the Fire Authority's own finance team.

In response to a further question from Cllr Shelford, the Finance Manager stated that a Brexit report was not yet available as the team had been concentrating on budget preparation. Consideration of Brexit matters would be undertaken in the new year.

The Chair suggested that a paper on Brexit should be prepared for the Extraordinary Meeting of the Fire Authority to be held on 31 January 2019. Cllr Shelford agreed that this would be helpful and asked that the paper should consider the first and second years of Brexit. The Treasurer agreed to prepare the report.

Cllr Butters endorsed the concerns of Cllr Shelford, agreeing that the number of uncertainties facing the funding situation of the Fire Authority was concerning.

Cllr Garner proposed that the recommendations in the report were accepted, this was seconded by Cllr Butters.

RESOLVED unanimously to:

- 1) Approve the approach and the current assumptions being used to develop the 2019/20 budget and note the financial issues contained within the report and agreed to its release for consultation.
- 2) Note the need to agree a budget and set the Council Tax for 2019/20 after giving further consideration to the issues raised in this report, responses to consultation, result of representations and any further information that is forthcoming. Note that a further report will be presented to members at the meeting on 13 February 2019.
- 3) Maintain the level of working balance at £1.5m (approximately 3% of the proposed 2019/20 budget).
- 4) Note the projected level of reserves and the relatively low level of Usable Revenue Reserves compared to other Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs).
- 5) Note the current position in terms of the development of the MTFP as set out in paragraph 3.40 of the report, the forecast level of savings target contained within it and the identified financial risks.

58. EMERGENCY SERVICES MOBILE COMMUNICATION PROGRAMME (ESMCP) – PROGRESS REPORT

The ACFO (SD) presented the report written to advise Members of the current status of the ESMCP. He explained that:

- ESMCP was a government programme to deliver a modern communications system of the national emergency services which, in part, was intended to replace the existing FireLink communications system provided by Airwave for over 12 years.
- ESMCP would deliver a secure and resilient mobile broadband capability for the use of emergency services across the country. The programme was centrally funded as run by the Home Office. The resultant system would be called the Emergency Services Network (ESN) and aimed to be better, smarter and cheaper than Airwave.
- The increasing demand by users for broadband data (in addition to voice technologies) could not be met by Airwave technologies.
- Airwave FireLink was expensive compared to other European public safety systems.
- The ESMCP had been reset with the appointment of a new programme director, replanning and revision to the business case. The full business case would be released in the new year.
- Airwave had been expected to cease by the end of 2019, but this expectation had been reset to 2022 with a further one-year contractual extension until 31 December 2023.
- A formal letter setting out the concerns of the NFCC regarding the costs and delays of the new system had been sent to the Home Office.
- The ESMCP had been included on the national and local risk register.
- The Fire Authority planned to migrate to ESN when all products had been proven by others, this would be after August 2020.

The Chair said that he was disappointed to hear of the delays to ESMCP, and suggested that a representative from the National Programme Board should be invited to speak to the Fire Authority.

Cllr Garner asked if there was a real risk that the product would never work. The ACFO (SD) responded by saying that if the programme failed the backstop arrangement with Airwave would ensure provision of a service. He acknowledged this was a risk for all emergency services.

Cllr Garner then asked for confirmation that the new system was working in early-stage pilots. The ACFO (SD) said that there was coverage provided by EE and testing was taking place to ensure that this coverage was adequate. The next stage of development would be the development of products to use on ESN, this element would take place in the future.

Cllr Garner asked if ESN was similar to the old system, but using a different frequency. The Emergency Services do have some protection and priority when it comes to their essential communications networks. The new ESN will be a new system for the country.

Cllr Pomfret asked if safeguards against network failure had been built into the system and was informed that ESN diverts to other networks as a safeguard, it was confirmed that the intention was that network problems which affected mobile phones should not impact the emergency services' use of ESN.

It was proposed by Cllr Jackson and seconded by Cllr Pomfret that the recommendations in the report should be accepted by the Fire Authority.

RESOLVED unanimously to:

- 1) Note the report and the attached appendices.
- 2) Invite a representative from the National Programme Board to attend the Fire Authority's February meeting to discuss the Programme further.

59. FORWARD PLAN

The revised Forward Plan for the Municipal Year 2018/19 was presented to the Fire Authority.

It was proposed by Cllr Jackson and seconded by Cllr Shelford that the recommendations in the report should be approved by the Fire Authority.

RESOLVED unanimously to approve the revised Forward Plan 2018/19.

60. REPORT FROM THE MEMBER DEVELOPMENT WORKING GROUP – MINUTES

The report, which included a set of principles for minute taking of the Fire Authority and its Committees, was presented to the Fire Authority.

It was proposed by Cllr Shelford and seconded by Cllr Morris that the recommendations in the report should be approved by the Fire Authority.

RESOLVED unanimously to:

- 1) Approve the Minute Taking Principles recommended by the Member Development Working Group.

- 2) Agree that draft minutes of the Fire Authority and its Committees would be published within 28 days after the meeting.

61. SCHEDULE OF MEETING DATES 2019/20

The report presented to Members proposed a schedule of meetings for the Municipal Year 2019/20.

It was proposed by Cllr Garner and seconded by Cllr Windows that the recommendations in the report should be approved by the Fire Authority.

RESOLVED with none against, and one abstention, to approve the Schedule of Meetings for the Municipal Year 2019/20.

62. HMICFRS – INSPECTION REPORT

The Chair suggested that consideration of the HMICFRS report which had very recently been received by Members, should be deferred until February.

The CFO stated that this stage he had no further comments to add, and that the report spoke for itself.

Cllr Shelford noted that the Extraordinary Meeting of the Fire Authority in January already had a fairly full agenda, but asked if it would be appropriate to bring forward consideration of the inspection report to January.

The Chair was happy to support this suggestion if the CFO felt there was sufficient resource to make this practical. The CFO stated that he would investigate but agreed in principle. He further commented that much progress had been made within the Fire Authority since the inspection.

Cllr Windows stated that he had been unable to read the report as it had not been possible to access it on his Bristol City Council iPad. Cllr Jackson had experienced similar problems, although Cllr Lake (also from BCC) stated that she had been able to read the report. Cllr Shelford offered assistance to Cllr Windows but Cllr Jackson said he would deal with this and speak to BCC Democratic Services as necessary.

RESOLVED to consider the HMICFRS inspection report in January 2019.

63. SERVICE DELIVERY – RISK REDUCTION UPDATE

The ACFO (SD) introduced the report, highlighting the following points:

- A number of large scale deliveries have been made to SGS College and Weston College during the road safety campaign period.
- The new Safeguarding process went live on 1 November 2018. Operational personnel have given positive feedback and the changes also answer a concern raised by the HMICFRS report as actions are now reviewed once a referral had been made.
- Community Safety Workers have completed autism training, which would particularly assist during Home Fire Safety Visits to relevant members of the community.
- Staff have been working with partner agencies regarding issues over stands at the Bristol Rovers ground, the focus of attention had been means of escape.

- Work would begin shortly on the vehicle wrapping project; vehicles would be wrapped to display important safety messages.

RESOLVED to note the report.

64. FIRES AND OTHER INCIDENTS

The ACFO (SD) introduced the report which summarised recent fires and incidents.

There was also a summary of the proactive work undertaken by the Corporate Communications Team.

The ACFO (SD) particularly drew Members' attention to the fire at the Tropicana on 23 November 2018, where eight appliances attended after a fire broke out at a food outlet. 120 people were evacuated and one female was taken to hospital after smoke inhalation.

Cllr Butters stated that he was very concerned about the deliberate fire which had affected 10 buses in a bus depot. Cllr Butters reported that further drones had been spotted at Gatwick Airport and was concerned that the drone incident may give terrorists ideas.

The ACFO (SD) replied that with regard to the bus depot fire, the Fire Authority was working with the police. With regard to drones, the military had been called in to assist the police at Gatwick Airport, further he stated that safety at Bristol Airport was shared with the other members of the Local Resilience Forum. Members were reminded that in 2017 the Local Resilience Forum members had worked together to resolve the problems caused by an aircraft skidding off the runway.

RESOLVED to note the report.

65. DATE OF NEXT MEETING – Wednesday 13 February 2019 at 7pm (The Station, Bridewell, Bristol).

66. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

To resolve that the public be excluded from the meeting during the following items of business on the grounds that they contained exempt information pursuant to Schedule 12A, Part I of the Local Government Act 1972 and that in accordance with Schedule 12A, Part II, paragraph 10 of the Local Government Act 1972 the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

The Vice Chair of the Fire Authority assumed the Chair temporarily whilst the Chair and CFO were interviewed by the BBC.

67. CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF THE EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF AVON FIRE AUTHORITY HELD ON 13 NOVEMBER 2018

RESOLVED unanimously that the confidential minutes of the Fire Authority held on 13 November 2018 should be signed by the Chair as an accurate record of the meeting.

68. AVONMOUTH FIRE STATION REDEVELOPMENT – PROGRESS REPORT

The Deputy Director of Corporate Services introduced the report and then handed over to the staff working on the redevelopment project to give more detailed information to Members.

RESOLVED unanimously to:

- 1) Note the contents of the report and current position of the project.
- 2) Acknowledge that a final report would be presented to the Fire Authority in March 2019 regarding the award of the construction contract at a fixed budget.

69. AUDITORS' DUTIES AND LIABILITIES – INITIAL LEGAL ADVICE

The report, prepared by the Clerk, was presented to the Fire Authority by the Legal Representative.

RESOLVED unanimously to take the further steps agreed during the meeting.

Meeting closed at 4:45pm.

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Chair