

MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

29 JULY 2021

MINUTES

Present: Cllr James Roberts (Chair) Councillors Elizabeth Hayden, Hugh Malone, Gillian Wood, Lesley Rennie, Andrew Makinson and Les Byrom

Also Present:

Apologies of absence were received from: Cllr Sharon Connor and Cllr Lisa Preston

1. Preliminary Matters

Members considered the identification of declarations of interest, any urgent additional items, and any business that may require the exclusion of the press and public.

Resolved that:

- a) no declarations of interest were made by individual Members in relation to any item of business on the Agenda
- b) no additional items of business to be considered as matters of urgency were determined by the Chair; and
- c) the following item of business required the exclusion of the press and public during consideration thereof, due to the possible disclosure of exempt information:

- **ITEM 8 APPENDIX D.**

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The Minutes of the previous meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee, held on 25th March 2021, were approved as a correct record and signed accordingly by the Chair.

3. REVENUE & CAPITAL OUTTURN 2020/21

Members considered report CFO/046/21 of the Director of Finance and Procurement, concerning the Authority's year-end financial position for 2020/21.

Members were given a brief overview of the report highlighting that the key assumptions around future costings, that were approved by Members in the Budget

and Medium Term Financial Plan at the Budget Authority Meeting on 27th February 2020, have remained robust throughout the year.

It was added that budget movements and actual performance is monitored closely throughout the year and reported to Members via the quarterly financial review updates with the last report, CFO/005/21, covering the period up to the end of December 2020. The report provides a summary of the budget movements for the year and specifically those budget adjustments made in the last quarter of 2020/21 for Revenue, Capital and Reserves. The revenue budget remained unchanged at £61.961m, with the most significant self-balancing movements relating to the use of and contribution to planned reserves. The 2020/21 capital budget was reduced by £6.8m as schemes were re-phased into future years, in particular the planned investment in the Training & Development Academy (TDA), NRAT asset refresh, and specialist appliance. At the start of the 2020/21 year the General Reserve stood at £3m and committed reserves at £18.766m.

Before year-end reserve adjustments, the net revenue outturn spend was £60.339m, resulting in a £1.622m net underspend. After taking account of year-end reserve requests of £0.210m, the underspend reduced to £1.412m. Members had previously approved the use of any revenue savings in the year to fund an increase in the new TDA reserve in order to keep borrowing costs down for this scheme. Therefore, an additional £1.412m contribution to the TDA/Capital reserve was made at the year-end, leaving the overall revenue outturn position consistent with the approved budget.

Members were provided with an explanation on the major revenue variances for 2020/21, and Appendix A1 – A3 provide Members with a detailed analysis of the revenue outturn position.

The financial impact of covid-19 on the Authority's finances shows that overall the Government grant support and other savings arising as a result of Covid-19 have covered the full financial impact of the pandemic on the Authority in 2020/21.

With regards to the Movement on Reserves, committed reserves increased by £7.316m over the year, mainly as a result of increasing the new TDA / capital reserve by a net £5.2m and the creation of a new collection fund deficit reserve of £3.8m. Appendix A4 provides a detail breakdown of the committed reserve movements in the year.

Looking at the Capital Outturn Position, £3.702m of planned 2020/21 spend has now been re-phased into 2021/22 and the table on page 20 of the report provides an explanation for the re-phasing. Appendix B provides a detailed analysis of the capital outturn position.

Members asked about the £91k planned spend on the Fire Service Museum within the capital programme and asked what that entailed. Members were advised that it is the intension to give the museum a refresh and a report will come back to Members on the proposals for approval.

Members questioned how the 2.5% annual pay award was decided and what the 2% general inflation refers to. Members were advised that the annual pay award was discussed at the Budget Strategy Day in February 2020 and it was agreed to assume a 2.5% award for all staff. The general inflation refers to all other non-employee spend such as equipment, utilities and clothing etc, and reflects the forecast average inflation rate expected for the year

Members resolved that:

- a. actual revenue spends compared to the approved budget delivered a net underspend of £1.622m before the creation of year-end reserves, as outlined in Appendix A1 to A3, be noted;
- b. this underspend be used for the required year-end reserves of £0.210m to fund projects that have been rescheduled from 2020/21 into 2021/22 and the increase in the capital reserve by £1.412m in order to contribute towards the funding of the proposed new Training & Development Academy (TDA), be approved;
- c. the re-phasing of planned capital spend from 2020/21 into future years of £3.702m, as outlined in Appendix B, be approved; and
- d. committed reserves of £26.082m and a general reserve of £3.0m as outlined in Appendix A4, be approved.

4. Core Code of Ethics

Members considered report CFO/042/21 of the Acting Monitoring Officer, concerning the Core Code of Ethics and its incorporation within the Members Code of Conduct as detailed in Appendix A.

Members were reminded that in May 2021, an amended Code of Conduct was approved which incorporated the Model Code of Conduct which had been amended to reflect to a localised version across Liverpool City Region. However further to the NFCC issuing a core code of ethics for Fire and Rescue Services the code was incorporated as an appendix to the Code of Conduct for Members which would allow the regionalised code to remain consistent as much as possible.

Members stated that this sounds good and that they were happy for this to be added.

Members resolved that:

- a) the Core Code of Ethics published by the National Fire Chiefs Council ('NFCC'), be noted;
- b) the incorporation of the core code of ethics into the Members Code of Conduct as detailed in Appendix A, be approved; and
- c) the constitution to be updated to reflect the inclusion of the Core Code of Ethics to the Members Code of Conduct (as per Appendix A), be approved.

5. Scrutiny forward work plan

Members considered report CFO/047/21 of the Acting Monitoring Officer, concerning the DRAFT Forward Work Plan (FwP) for the Authority's Scrutiny Committee.

Members were advised that the Scrutiny Committee had met and reviewed the Scrutiny FwP. As a result of this, it was agreed that items from the previous municipal years FwP, would be carried over to a new FwP as they had not yet been completed due to Covid-19 or technology.

Members were informed that items can be added to the Scrutiny FwP at any time.

Members resolved that the draft FwP for the Authority's Scrutiny Committee (attached at Appendix A), be agreed.

6. Learning & Development Contract

Members considered report CFO/043/21 of the Chief Fire Officer, concerning the extension to the current contract the Authority holds with Brathay Services Ltd ('Brathay') for the provision of specialist/high performing team development for one year, as permitted under the current contract.

Members were given an overview of the report and it was highlighted to them that the programme that the Authority has with Brathay, meets the Authority's requirements for team building and individual development for the new recruits and staff leadership.

Members were advised that the value of the 2-year contract for the programme is £270,000.

Members commented that this is essential to the service and that it had been visited by some Members who said that it is fantastic to see the training that takes place there.

Members resolved that the one-year extension of the current contract with Brathay as allowed under the current contract, be agreed.

7. Ofsted Inspection of Apprenticeship Programme

Members considered report CFO/044/21 of the Chief Fire Officer, concerning the outstanding assessment results and the highly positive report received following the Ofsted inspection of our Firefighter Apprenticeship process.

Members were advised that this report is a positive piece of news. They were informed that the Ofsted inspectors were looking at 3 specific areas:

- 1) how much progress leaders made in ensuring that the provider is meeting all the requirements of a successful apprenticeship scheme;

- 2) what progress leaders have made in ensuring the apprentices benefit from high quality training that leads to positive outcomes; and
- 3) how much progress leaders and managers have made in ensuring the effective safeguarding arrangements are in place.

Members were advised that the levels of grading the Ofsted inspectors use are slightly different from school grades and that **Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority (MFRA) received the highest level in all 3 areas**. MFRA is the only fire service to attain these results and MFRA will see the best firefighters resulting from this scheme.

Members praised the work that is done on the apprenticeship programme and thanked staff for attaining such a fantastic result.

Members resolved that the content of the report, be noted.

8. Appointment of Main contractor for New TDA pre construction works

Members considered report CFO/045/21 of the Chief Fire Officer, concerning the pre-construction services agreement (PCSA) for the works required for the new Training & Development Academy and superstation on Long Lane, Aintree.

Members were given a brief overview of the report and were asked to declare if any Liverpool City Councillors sat on the planning committee in relation to the Long Lane site – to which no one did.

No questions were raised relating to the report or the exempt appendix.

Members resolved that:

- a) the award of the PCSA contract to Wates Construction Limited to design the new TDA and superstation on Long Lane for a value of £991,848.46, be approved; and
- b) delegated powers to the Chief Fire Officer and Deputy Chief Fire Officer (as the Chair of the TDA Executive board), be awarded, to approve the provisional sums identified within the financial implications section (paragraph 46) if they are required.

Close

Date of next meeting Thursday, 16 December 2021