

MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

20 OCTOBER 2015

MINUTES

Present: Cllr Dave Hanratty (Chair) Councillors Linda Maloney, Robbie Ayres, Peter Brennan, Roy Gladden, Mike Kearns, Barbara Murray, Lesley Rennie, Denise Roberts, James Roberts, Jean Stapleton, Sharon Sullivan, Paul Tweed and Marianne Welsh

Also Present:

Apologies of absence were received from: Cllr Les Byrom (Vice-Chair), Cllr Ray Halpin, Cllr Jimmy Mahon and Cllr Steve Niblock

10. Chair's Announcement

Prior to the start of the meeting, information regarding general housekeeping was provided by the Chair to all in attendance.

The Chair confirmed to all present that the proceedings of the meeting would be filmed and requested that any members of the public present who objected to being filmed, make themselves known.

No members of the public voiced any objection therefore the meeting was declared open and recording commenced.

The Chair also informed all present that the meeting of the Policy & Resources Committee scheduled for 17th December 2015, would now be a meeting of the Full Authority.

1. Preliminary Matters

The Authority considered the identification of any declarations of interest, matters of urgency or items that would require the exclusion of the press and public due to the disclosure of exempt information.

Resolved that:

- a) The following declarations of interest were made by Members in relation to items of business:
 - Cllr Mike Kearns declared a prejudicial interest in Agenda Item 8 – “Proposed New Fire Station at Prescot”, due to being a member of the Planning Committee within Knowsley Council; and the proposed site for the new station being within his Ward.

It was therefore agreed that Cllr Kearns would leave the room during consideration of this item.

- b) The following additional items of business were determined by the Chair to be considered as matters of urgency:
- Agenda Item 9 – “Enabling Closer Working Between Emergency Services Consultation Response”.
- c) no items of business required the exclusion of the press and public during consideration thereof because of the possibility of the disclosure of exempt information.

However it was noted that Appendix B to Agenda Item 8 – “Proposed New Fire Station At Prescot”, contained EXEMPT information by virtue of paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972; and should discussion around this Appendix be required, members of the press and public would need to be excluded before discussion commenced.

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Cllr Kearns indicated that he was present at the meeting, although this was not reflected in the Minutes. Therefore, it was requested that the Minutes be updated to include Cllr Kearns’ attendance.

With the inclusion of the above, the Minutes of the previous meeting of the Authority, held on 30th June 2015, were approved as a correct record and were signed accordingly by the Chair.

3. Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting

The Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting of the Authority, held on 14th July 2015, were approved as a correct record and signed accordingly by the Chair.

4. Minutes of Consultation and Negotiation Sub-Committee 24th March 2015

The Minutes of the final meeting of the Consultation & Negotiation Sub-Committee, held on 24th March 2015, were approved as a correct record and signed accordingly by the Chair.

5. Deputation: Allowances and Expenses paid to Councillors

A spokesperson for the deputation was invited to address the Authority for up to 5 minutes.

Mr John Brace proceeded to address the Authority on behalf of the deputation. He stated that in a report concerning Members Allowance Payments, considered by the Authority at its Annual General Meeting in June 2015, the table appended to the report only showed reimbursements for time and expenses incurred by Members and claimed back through the Authority's Scheme of Allowances, not payments in relation to travel and event bookings made directly by MFRA.

Mr Brace stated that the Local Authorities (Members Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003, require all payments made under the Members Allowance Scheme to be published, irrespective of whether they were paid directly by MFRA or claimed back by Members.

Mr Brace asked for reassurance from the Authority that the figures published for 2015/16 will reflect the actual cost of Members allowance and expenses, including payments made directly by MFRA; and all on costs.

The Chair then asked Mr Brace if it was the case that a number of emails regarding this matter had been exchanged with Officers of the Authority.

Mr Brace confirmed that this was the case.

The Chair then asked Mr Brace if it was the case that this information had also been shared with the Authority's External Auditors.

Again, Mr Brace confirmed this to be the case.

Mr Brace was then asked if it was the case that the Authority's External Auditors – Grant Thornton had confirmed that they were content with the way this information is presented to the Authority.

Mr Brace stated that the External Auditors had accepted that the amounts he referred to are reported within the Statement of Accounts.

The Chair of the Authority then informed Mr Brace that he has therefore been provided with the Authority's response to the issues raised.

The Chair of the Authority then commented on the amount of time and resources that are being spent on dealing with such requests for information, commenting that when the Authority's resources are diminishing in the way they are, individuals need to consider the impact that responding to such requests has on officer's time and the Authority's resources.

The Chair suggested that the Authority examine this with a view to reporting back to the appropriate Minister regarding the potential for Freedom of Information requests to be open to abuse by individuals.

The Authority then noted the deputation.

6. IVF Policy

(CFO/085/15)

Members considered Report CFO/085/15 of the Deputy Chief Fire Officer, concerning the proposed in-vitro fertilisation (IVF) Service Instruction.

Members expressed their support for the Service Instruction.

Resolved that:

The Service Instruction regarding IVF, be approved.

7. Procurement Strategy

(CFO/071/15)

Members considered Report CFO/071/15 of the Clerk to the Authority, concerning the adoption of a new Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority Procurement Strategy and associated Policy.

Members were provided with an overview of the report and the Procurement Strategy 2015-18, which sets out the role of Procurement within the Authority and defines the procurement priorities for 2015-18. The Strategy outlines what procurement is, what it applies to; and the procurement principles, such as value for money, sustainable procurement and equality and diversity.

Members were informed that a new Procurement Social Value Policy has also been developed, which combines two previous policies for equality and diversity in procurement and sustainable procurement; and takes account of the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012. This Policy explains what social value is and provides examples of social value in procurement.

Discussion took place around encouraging contractors to adopt “the living wage” and avoid the use of zero hour’s contracts; and the appropriate weighting for each in the tender process.

Members Resolved that:

- a) The wording within the Procurement Strategy 2015-18 document, under the heading “Continuous Improvement”, be amended from:

“At times, internal customers may be requested to complete a satisfaction questionnaire...”

To:

“Internal customers will be encouraged to complete a satisfaction questionnaire...”

- b) With the inclusion of the amendment above, the Procurement Strategy 2015-18, be approved.
- c) The Procurement Social Value Policy, be approved.

8. PROPOSED NEW FIRE STATION AT PRESCOT

(CFO/083/15)

Cllr Mike Kearns left the room prior to this item being considered.

Members considered Report CFO/083/15 of the Chief Fire Officer, concerning final approval to build a new community fire and rescue station; incorporating a neighbourhood Police station, on land at Manchester Road, Prescot.

Members were provided with an overview of the report, which included a summary of progress to date.

Members were informed that Merseyside Police have now confirmed that they will co-locate at the Manchester Road site. However, North West Ambulance Service (NWAS) have now indicated that they will not be co-locating, which has had implications in terms of the amount of land required; and negotiations with NWAS have delayed progress on the submission of the planning application.

Members were informed that plans have now been drawn up and are available to view; and that a timetable has been derived for the build project, with an anticipated build completion date of March 2017.

Information was provided to Members concerning the estimated costs of the build, which have increased from those previously predicted.

Members Resolved that:

- a) The building of a new community fire station, including a neighbourhood Police station, on land at Manchester Road, Prescot, be approved.
- b) The increase in costs from the initial £3.1m (estimated) cost to £5.350m, be noted.
- c) The drawdown of an additional £1.550m from the capital investment reserve to fund the increase in the capital cost not covered by partners, be approved.

9. Enabling Closer Working Between Emergency Services Consultation Response

Members considered Report CFO/088/15 of the Chief Fire Officer, concerning the proposed response from the Authority to the Government consultation on "Enabling closer working between the Emergency Services" issued on 11th September 2015.

Members were provided with an overview of the questions within the consultation document; and the proposed responses from MFRA.

Members were advised that the deadline for submitting responses to the consultation is Friday 23rd October 2015.

Resolved that:

The response to the consultation as set out at Appendix A, be approved.

Close

Date of next meeting Thursday, 17 December 2015

Signed: _____

Date: _____