

KENT AND MEDWAY FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

MINUTES of a Meeting of the Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority held on Tuesday, 20 February 2024 at Kent Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters.

PRESENT: - Mr P Barrington-King, Mr A Brady, Mr D Beaney, Mr N Chard (Chair), Mr N Collor, Mr D Crow-Brown, Mr M Dendor, Mr P Harman, Mrs S Hohler, Mr M Hood, Mr D Jeffrey, Mr B Kemp (Vice-Chair) Mr S Manion, Mr V Maple, Mr J McInroy, Ms J Meade, Ms C Parfitt-Reid, Mr M Prenter, Mr A Ridgers, Mr C Simkins, , Mr B Sweetland, Ms Z Van-Dyke.

APOLOGIES: - Mr A Booth, Mr P Cole and Mr M Sole.

OFFICERS:- The Chief Executive, Miss A Millington OBE, QFSM; the Director, Finance and Corporate Services, Mrs A Hartley; the Director, Response and Resilience, Mr M Rist; Director Protection, Prevention and Customer Engagement, Mr J Quinn; Assistant Director, HR and Culture, Ms L Jell; Assistant Director, Response, Mr M Deadman; Assistant Director, Resilience, Mr C Else; Head of Finance, Treasury and Pensions, Mrs N Walker; Head of Policy, Dr O Thompson; and the Clerk to the Authority, Mrs M Curry.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: - Mr M Scott, Kent Police and Crime Commissioner, Mrs J Waterman, Independent Person and Mr P Cuttle, Grant Thornton.

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

31. Chairman's Announcements

(Item A1)

- (1) Members and Officers held a minute's silence as a mark of respect following the death of Chief Fire Officer Wayne Brown from West Midlands Fire and Rescue Service.
- (2) The Chair, on behalf of Members, gave thanks to John McGonigal, Head of IT for providing Members with a briefing session, prior to the main meeting, on the work the Authority is doing around Cyber Security.
- (3) The Chair welcome Paul Cuttle, Grant Thornton, to the meeting.
- (4) The Chair, on behalf of Members, welcomed to the Authority Lyndsey Jell as the new Assistant Director HR and Culture.
- (5) The Chair, on behalf of Members, sent best wishes to Mark Woodward – Assistant Director Customer and Building Safety on his retirement.
- (6) The Chair, on behalf of Members, gave congratulations to Leanne McMahon as the new Assistant Director Customer and Building Safety.
- (7) The Chair, on behalf of Members, gave congratulations to Suzanna Chisholm as the new Area Manager Building Safety.
- (8) The Chair, on behalf of Members, gave thanks to Bhupinder Gill, who is standing down as the Authority's Monitoring Officer with effect from 31st March 2024.

32. Minutes of the Audit and Governance Committee – 27 September 2023

(Item A4)

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Audit and Governance Committee held on 27 September 2023, be noted.

33. Minutes – 19 October 2023

(Item A5)

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Authority meeting held on 19 October 2023 be approved and signed by the Chair as a true record.

34. Community Risk Management Plan Consultation Finding and Next Steps

(Item B1 – Report by Chief Executive)

- (1) Members considered the findings from the responses to the public consultation on the Authority's Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) risk analysis and assessment document, 'Creating a Safer Future – Together'.
- (2) Members were pleased to learn that the number of responses received to the consultation this time around hit 1800, the biggest number received to date. Members requested that a message be sent out publicly thanking the respondents to which the Director, Prevention, Protection, Customer Engagement and Safety responded by saying that social media messages will be sent out after this meeting.
- (3) RESOLVED that: -
 - (a) the report of the responses to the public consultation on the risk analysis and assessment as set out in the 'Creating a Safer Future – Together' as well as the Council Tax options for 2024/25, be noted.
 - (b) the preparation of an action plan setting out the actions required to address the risks and strategic challenges as presented in the 'Creating a Safer Future – Together' document, be approved.

35. External Auditors Annual report 2022/23

(Item B2 – Report by Chief Executive)

- (1) Members considered the External Auditors Annual report for 2022/23; the assessment made on the Authority's Value for Money arrangements covering key criteria such as financial sustainability, governance and how the Authority has improved on economy, efficiency and effectiveness. Alongside this assessment Members also considered the Opinion of the Financial Statements for the year ending 2022/23.
- (2) Members thanked Paul Cuttle and the work of the External Auditors.
- (3) RESOLVED that: -
 - (a) the External Auditors Annual Report 2022/23, as attached at Appendix 1 to the report, be approved.
 - (b) the remaining contents of the report, be noted.

36. Financial Update for 2023/24

(Item B3 – Report by Director Finance and Corporate Services)

- (1) The Authority considered a report which provided a financial update for the 2023/24 financial year along with setting out the latest forecast outturn position for the Revenue and Capital Budgets, the forecast on year-end reserve balances and latest treasury position.
- (2) In response to a question raised by Mr Brady regarding the availability impacts of the on-call and when does this become operationally critical, the Chief Executive responded by

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saying that is a genuine risk which is why there is a need for a review of fire cover, it is no longer viable to just focus on keeping on-call retention, she added that people live their lives now in different ways. There is certainly a need to look at other methods of fire cover.

- (3) Mr Scott said that the challenge is not just within the fire sector, the Police force have the same issues with recruitment of Special Constables. He added that Kent Police have been working with other services, looking at best practice and moving towards specialised roles which in turn has increased availability. The Chief Executive said she was keen to learn more about what Kent Police are doing in this area.
- (4) RESOLVED that: -
- (a) the final reserve underspend be apportioned to the Transformation and Productivity Reserve and the Insurance and Revenue Reserve with the split being agreed at the July meeting of the Authority, be approved in principle.
 - (b) the remaining contents of the report be noted.

37. Draft Revenue and Capital Budgets 2024/25 and Draft Medium Term Financial Plan 2024-28

(Item B4 - Report by Chief Executive)

- (1) The Authority considered a report setting out proposals for its Revenue and Capital Budgets and Council Tax levels for 2024/25; the assumptions used in developing the Medium-Term Financial Plan for 2024-28; the Annual Treasury Management and Investment Strategy and related Prudential Indicators; the Reserves Strategy and Capital Strategy.
- (2) Members also considered the Statement of Assurance given by the Director of Finance and Corporate Services as the Authority's Treasurer (Chief Financial Officer).
- (3) Members placed on record their thanks to the Director of Finance and Corporate Services and her team for the excellent way in which the Authority's finances are managed especially in what has again been a very challenging year.
- (4) RESOLVED that: -
- (a) the Statement of Assurance given by the Director of Finance and Corporate Services as the Authority's Treasurer (Chief Financial Officer) be accepted.
 - (b) the revenue budget proposals and the resulting net budget requirement for 2024/25 of £94,730m, as set out in Appendix 2, be approved.
 - (c) a total requirement from Council Tax of £60,399m to be raised through the precept to meet the 2024/25 revenue budget requirements, which requires an increase in Council Tax of 2.99%, resulting in the following annual charges for each Council Tax Band be approved.

Council Tax Band	Annual Charge
A	£59.84
B	£69.93
C	£79.92
D	£89.91
E	£109.89
F	£129.87
G	£149.85
H	£179.82

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- (d) the Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Corporate Services, in consultation with the Chair of the Authority, make any late adjustments which may be required to the next revenue budget, arising as a result of any late changes to the Council Tax, Business Rates or Government Funding be approved.
- (e) the Capital Budget of £12,752m for 2024/25 and related expenditure commitments following on in later years, together with the sources of funding identified to fund the expenditure, as set out in Appendix 2 to the report, be approved.
- (f) the Capital Strategy, as attached at Appendix 3 to the report, be approved.
- (g) the Annual Treasury Management and Investment Strategy, including the appropriate Prudential Indicators as set out in Appendix 4 to the report, be approved.
- (h) the Reserves Strategy as set out in Appendix 5 to the report, be approved.
- (i) the assumptions being used to develop the Medium-Term Financial Plan for 2024-28 as set out in Appendix 2 to the report, be approved.

38. Productivity and Efficiency Plan 2024/25

(Item B5 – Report by Chief Executive)

- (1) The Fire and Rescue National Framework for England (Sections 4.6 and 5.3) require that fire and rescue authorities publish an annual efficiency plan.
- (2) In January 2024 the Home Office issued updated guidance about how fire and rescue authorities are to prepare efficiency plans, the name also being updated to a 'Productivity and Efficiency Plan'.
- (3) The Authority considered its Productivity and Efficiency Plan for 2024/25.
- (4) RESOLVED that: -
 - (a) The Productivity and Efficiency Plan for 2024/25, as attached at Appendix 1, be approved.

39. Pay Policy Statement 2024/25

(Item B6 – Report by Chief Executive)

- (1) The Authority considered the draft Pay Policy Statement for 2024/25, which the Authority is required by the Localism Act 2011 to publish before the start of the new financial year.
- (2) RESOLVED that: -
 - (a) the Authority's draft Pay Policy Statement for 2024/25, as attached at Appendix 1 to the report, be approved.

40. Disciplinary Policy for Dealing with an Allegation of Misconduct by a Senior Officer

(Item B7 – Report by Chief Executive)

- (1) The Authority considered a report which contained a disciplinary policy specifically aligned to Senior Officers and Statutory Officers, which is defined as the Chief Executive, a member of the Corporate Management Board (including Chief Financial Officer) and Monitoring Officer.
- (2) With the introduction of the Disciplinary Policy for Senior Officers, Members also considered the name change of the Senior Officer Appointment and Conditions Committee to Senior Officer Appointments, Conditions and Conduct Committee (SOACC); the revised Terms of Reference for SOACC; revisions to the Authority's Standing Orders and the revised Terms of Reference for the Hearings Panel.
- (3) RESOLVED that: -

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- (a) the Disciplinary Policy for Senior Officers and Statutory Officers, as attached at Appendix 1 to the report, be approved.
- (b) the name change of the Senior Officer Appointments and Conditions Committee to Senior Officer Appointment, Conditions and Conduct Committee (SOACC), be approved.
- (c) the revised Terms of Reference for the Senior Officer Appointment Conditions and Conduct Committee (SOACC), be approved.
- (d) the revisions made to the Authority's Standing Orders to reflect the procedure for dealing with an allegation of misconduct by a Senior Officer and Statutory Officer, be approved.
- (e) the revised Terms of Reference for the Hearings Panel, be approved.

41. Members' Allowances Scheme 2024/25

(Item B8 - Report by Clerk to the Authority)

- (1) It is a requirement of the Local Authorities (Members Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 that every local authority must formally adopt a new Members Allowances Scheme each year. The Authority consider the Scheme for 2024/25.
- (2) RESOLVED that: -
 - (a) the existing Members' Allowances Scheme, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, be formally re-adopted for 2024/25.

42. Monitoring Officer Provision

- (1) It is a statutory requirement for this Authority to appoint a Monitoring Officer to carry out the responsibilities set out within Section 5 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.
- (2) Following notification from the Authority's current Monitoring Officer that it was his intention to stand down from this role with effect from 31st March 2024, Members considered a report setting out proposals for a future Monitoring Officer Provision with Mid Kent Improvement Partnership (MKIP).
- (3) Since the initial report went to publication progression had been made further on the discussions with MKIP and therefore an addendum was presented to Members with revised recommendations.
- (4) RESOLVED that:
 - (a) the Authority continues its discussions with Mid Kent Improvement Partnership to secure a Monitoring Officer provision, be approved.
 - (b) that the Clerk to the Authority and Director Finance and Corporate Services, in consultation with the Chair of the Authority, agrees the appointment of the appropriate officer within MKIP, the Service Level Agreement and associated fees before reporting back to the Authority at its meeting in July, be approved.

43. Activity Update

(Item C1 – Presentation by Director Response and Resilience and Director Protection, Prevention and Customer Engagement)

- (1) The Authority received a presentation from the Director Response and Resilience on a noteworthy incident which covered the firefighting and rescue techniques that were

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employed, the equipment and resources used and what was learnt as a result of the incident.

- (2) The Director Protection, Prevention and Customer Engagement gave a presentation on a noteworthy building safety prosecution, the actions taken by the Authority and the outcomes leading on from that.
- (3) RESOLVED that: -
 - (a) the contents of the presentation be noted.

44. Information Update

(Item C2 - Report by Chief Executive)

- (1) The Authority considered information updates on: -
 - A. Inspection Update
 - B. Performance Update
 - C. Response and Resilience Update
 - D. Prevention, Protection and Customer Engagement Update
 - E. Freedom of Information Update
 - F. Policy and Governance Update
 - G. Insurance Information Update
 - H. Pensions and Pension Board Update
- (2) RESOLVED that: -
 - (a) the contents of the report be noted.

EXEMPT ITEMS

(Open Access to Minutes)

45. Channel Tunnel

(Item E2 – Report by Chief Executive)

- (1) Members received a report which provided an update on the latest discussions with regards to the Channel Tunnel contract.
- (2) RESOLVED that: -
 - (a) the recommendations contained within the report, be approved without opposition.