

## KENT AND MEDWAY FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

---

MINUTES of a Meeting of the Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority held at Kent Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters on Monday, 21 February 2022.

PRESENT:- Mr N Chard (Chair), Mr P Cole, Mr D Crow-Brown, Ms M Dawkins, Mr P Harman, Mr B Kemp, Ms S Hudson, Mr S Manion, Mr C Simkins, Mr S Tranter and Mr M Scott, Kent Police and Crime commissioner.

APOLOGIES:- Mr P Barrington-King, Mr A Booth, Mr D Beaney, Mr N Collor, Ms K Constantine, Mr D Daley, Mr M Dendor, Ms S Hohler, Mr D Jeffrey, Mr R Love OBE, Mr V Maple, Mr J McInroy, Ms L Parfitt-Reid, Mr A Ridgers, Mr R Thorne and the Authority's Independent Person, Mrs J Waterman.

OFFICERS:- The Chief Executive, Miss A Millington QFSM; the Director, Response and Resilience, Mr M Rist; Director Prevention, Protection, Customer Engagement and Safety, Mr J Quinn; Director Finance and Corporate Services, Ms A Kilpatrick; Assistant Director, People and Learning, Mrs K Irvine; Assistant Director, Corporate Services, Mr J Finch; Assistant Director, Response, Mr M Deadman; Assistant Director, Resilience, Mr C Else; Assistant Director, Customer and Building Safety, Mr M Woodward; Head of Finance, Treasury and Pensions, Mrs N Walker, Head of Finance, Treasury and Pensions, Mr B Fullbrook and the Clerk to the Authority, Mrs M Curry.

IN ATTENDANCE:- Grant Thornton (External Auditor), Mr P Cuttle via MS Teams

### UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

#### **33. Chairman's Announcements**

*(Item A1)*

- (1) Members and Officers held a minute's silence to pay their respects to SECAmb Paramedic, Alice Clark, who sadly passed away following an incident on 5<sup>th</sup> January.
- (2) The Chair welcomed Mr Paul Cuttle, from Grant Thornton to the meeting
- (3) The Chair welcomed Ms Suzanna Chisholm, Building Safety Team Lead to the meeting.

#### **34. Minutes – 14 October 2021**

*(Item A4)*

- (a) RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Authority meeting held on 14 October 2021, be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

#### **35. Minutes of the Senior Officer Appointment and Conditions Committee – 14 October 2021**

*(Item A5)*

- (a) RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Senior Officer Appointment and Conditions Committee held on 14 October 2021, be noted.

#### **36. External Auditors Annual Report for 2020/21**

*(Item B1 – Report by Director Finance and Corporate Services)*

- (1) The Authority considered a report which informed that the evaluation and report requirement of the annual Value for Money Assessment was changing this year and as such, the Authority's external auditors, are no longer required to give a qualified/unqualified opinion on the VFM conclusion. Instead, the auditors are required to report in more detail on the Authority's overall arrangements, as well as highlight any key recommendations on significant weakness identified during the Audit as set out under the National Audit Office Code of Practice.
- (2) The Authority considered the first external auditors annual report of its kind, taking into consideration the changes already mentioned in relation to value for money. It was

21 February 2022

pleasing to report that the external auditors' identification of only one suggested improvement is particularly good when compared to other authorities of a similar standing.

- (3) Mr Chard acknowledged the great work undertaken by the National Procurement Hub which is a collaboration project for procurement nationally, and is led by the Chief Executive of KFRS. To date this project has saved £36m.
- (4) RESOLVED that: -
  - (a) the External Auditors' Annual Audit Report, attached at **Appendix 1**, be approved;
  - (b) the contents of the report be noted.

**37. Financial Update for 2021/22**

*(Item B2 – Report by Director Finance and Corporate Services)*

- (1) The Authority considered a report which set out the latest forecast outturns against the revenue budget of £71.573m and the revised capital budget of £2.871m for the 2021/22 financial year, a proposal for the use of the 2021/22 revenue budget underspend as well as a number of other financial updates.
- (2) RESOLVED that: -
  - (a) the final revenue budget underspend be transferred to the Service Transformation and Productivity Reserve and the Insurance and Resource Reserve, with the final allocations to each reserve being formally agreed by the Authority at a later date, be approved in principle;
  - (b) the remaining contents of the report be noted.

**38. Draft Revenue and Capital Budgets 2022/23 and Draft Medium Term Financial Plan 2022-26**

*(Item B3 - Report by Chief Executive)*

- (1) The Authority considered a report setting out proposals for its Revenue and Capital Budgets and Council Tax levels for 2022/23; the assumptions used in developing the Medium Term Financial Plan for 2022-26; the Annual Treasury Management and Investment Strategy and related Prudential Indicators; the Reserves Strategy and Capital Strategy. The report built on information presented to the Authority at its meeting on 14 October 2021.
- (2) In addition, the Authority was presented with an Addendum which proposed an amendment to recommendation one within the report as a result of the final Business Rates figures being received from Medway Council.
- (3) Mr Chard, on behalf of the Authority, placed on record its thanks to the Director, Finance and Corporate Services and her team on the excellent management of the Authority's finances.
- (4) RESOLVED that: -
  - (a) the revenue budget proposals and the resulting net revenue budget requirement of £77.429m for 2022/23, as detailed in the Addendum to the report, be approved;
  - (b) a total requirement from Council Tax of £53.637m to be raised through the precept to meet the 2022/23 revenue budget requirement, which requires a Council Tax increase of 1.89%, resulting in the following annual charges for each Council Tax band as detailed below, be approved;

Council Tax Band	Annual Charge
A	£54.90
B	£64.05
C	£73.20
<b>D</b>	<b>£82.35</b>
E	£100.65
F	£118.95
G	£137.25
H	£164.70

- (c) the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chair of the Authority, to make any adjustments which may be required to the net revenue budget, arising as a result of any late changes to the Council Tax, Business Rates or Government Funding, be approved;
- (d) the Capital Budget of £13.191m for 2022/23 and related expenditure commitments following on in later years, together with the sources of funding identified to fund the expenditure, detailed in **Appendix 1**, be approved;
- (e) the Capital Strategy, attached as **Appendix 2**, be approved;
- (f) the Annual Treasury Management and Investment Strategy, including the appropriate Prudential Indicators, attached at **Appendix 3**, be approved;
- (g) the Reserves Strategy, as attached at **Appendix 4**, be approved;
- (h) the assumptions used to develop the Medium-Term Financial Plan for 2022-26, be approved.

### 39. Outcome of Safety and Wellbeing Plan 2022

*(Item B4 – Report by Chief Executive)*

- (1) The Authority considered a report detailing the outcomes of the Safety and Wellbeing Plan which ran for public consultation from 22 October 2021 to 14 January 2022.
- (2) RESOLVED that: -
  - (a) the Authority's base requirement for fire engines on a day to day basis be reset at between 32 and 44, as set out in the Plan, be approved;
  - (b) the concept of flexible resourcing, giving a resilience pool to call up when required, of between five to 10 additional fire engines per weekday, as set out in the plan, be adopted;
  - (c) the outcomes of the consultation process, be noted.

**40. Pay Policy Statement 2022/23 and Governance Issues**

*(Item B5 – Report by Chief Executive)*

- (1) The Authority considered the draft Pay Policy Statement for 2022/23, which the Authority is required by the Localism Act 2011 to publish before the start of the new financial year.
- (2) Mr Chard, on behalf of the Authority, acknowledged the complexities surrounding the ongoing pension issues and thanked officers for their hard work behind the scenes in trying to seek a resolution.
- (3) In response to a request made by Mr Simkins with regards to Members being kept up to date with any pension changes, Director Finance and Corporate Services responded by saying that she will provide an update on any changes to the situation either at the next meeting of the Authority or before if this is possible. The Chief Executive added that should Members receive any pension queries direct then these should be forwarded to the officers already involved in the pension discussions who will be able to assist in providing answers.
- (4) In response to a query raised by Mr Manion around safeguarding training for Members, the Director for Prevention, Protection, Customer Engagement and Safety confirmed that Members will be provided with this training in the near future.
- (5) RESOLVED that: -
  - (a) the Pay Policy Statement for 2022/23, attached at **Appendix 1**, be approved;
  - (b) the Integrated Learning and Assurance Model (ILAM), attached at **Appendix 2**, be approved;
  - (c) the Equality Inclusion and Diversity Policy, attached at **Appendix 3**, be approved;
  - (d) the Closed Circuit Television Policy, attached at **Appendix 4**, be approved;
  - (e) the Safeguarding Policy, attached at **Appendix 5**, be approved;
  - (f) the Social Value Policy, attached at **Appendix 6**, be approved;
  - (g) the Social Media Policy, attached at **Appendix 7**, be approved;
  - (h) the Customer Feedback Policy, attached at **Appendix 8**, be approved;
  - (i) the Emergency Planning and Contingencies Policy, attached at **Appendix 9**, be approved;
  - (j) the amendment to the Automatic Fire Alarms Policy, attached at **Appendix 10**, be approved;
  - (k) the updated Publication Scheme, be approved;
  - (l) the Pensions Update, be noted.

**41. Appointment of External Auditors**

*(Item B6 – Report by Director Finance and Corporate Services)*

- (1) The Authority considered a report which set out options for the appointment of its external auditors for a five year period from 2023/24 and when the current contract expires.
- (2) RESOLVED that:-
  - (a) the Public Sector Audit Appointments invitation to opt into the sector-led option for the appointment of external auditors for five financial years with effect from the 1 April 2023, be approved.

**42. Review of Member Allowances and Adoption of the Allowances Scheme for Members'**

*(Item B7 - Report by Clerk to the Authority)*

21 February 2022

- (1) Members considered the report by the Authority's Independent Person on the review of its Member allowances and recommendations contained within it. The Authority is legally required by the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 to review its Scheme at least once every four years. The Independent Person, as part of the review, took into consideration the recommendations made to Kent County Council and Medway Council by their Independent Remuneration Panels following recent reviews of both their Schemes.
- (2) The Authority also considered the change in the membership of its Audit and Governance Committee.
- (3) RESOLVED that:-
  - (a) the recommendations of the review as detailed in **Appendix 1** to the report, be approved;
  - (b) the Member Allowances Scheme as set out in **Appendix 2**, to the report, be approved;
  - (c) the proposals for a more comprehensive review of Members Allowances once further detail is known around the implications of the White Paper, be approved;
  - (d) the membership of the Authority's Audit and Governance Committee, be noted.

#### **43. The Changing Landscape of Fire Safety Legislation**

*(Item C1 – Presentation by the Building Safety Team Lead)*

- (1) The Authority received a presentation on the key changes within Fire Safety legislation and the work that is being undertaken by the Building Safety Team to incorporate these.
- (2) Following a discussion on Lithium-ion batteries, Mr Scott offered to share with the Authority research he has undertaken on incidents involving e-scooters.
- (3) RESOLVED that:-
  - (a) Members gave thanks to the Building Safety Team Lead for the presentation;
  - (b) the presentation on the changing landscape of fire safety legislation, be noted.

#### **44. Information Update**

*(Item C2 - Report by Chief Executive)*

- (1) The Authority considered information updates on:-
  - A. Pandemic Update;
  - B. Inspection and National Issues Update;
  - C. Performance Update;
  - D. Operational Update;
  - E. Prevention, Protection, Customer Engagement and Safety Update;
  - F. Freedom of Information and Publication Scheme Update;
  - G. Traffic Calming Zone Update;
  - H. Insurance Update;
  - I. Significant Safety Event Protocol;

21 February 2022

J. Pensions Board Update.

(2) RESOLVED that:

(a) the contents of the report, and subsequent discussions, be noted.

At the close of the meeting, Mr Chard, on behalf of the Authority, recorded thanks to the Senior Team and all staff within KFRS for their continued hard work and support.

Signed:

Date: