

## KENT AND MEDWAY FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

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MINUTES of a Meeting of the Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority held on Tuesday, 21 February 2023 at Kent Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters.

PRESENT: - Mr A Booth, Mr N Chard (Chair), Mr P Cole, Mr N Collor, Mr D Crow-Brown, Ms M Dawkins, Mr M Dendor, Mr P Harman, Ms S Hohler, Ms S Hudson, Mr S Manion, Mr V Maple, Mr J McInroy, Ms L Parfitt-Reid, Mr C Simkins, Mr M Sole, and Mr S Tranter.

APOLOGIES: - Mr P Barrington-King, Mr D Beaney, Ms K Constantine, Mr D Jeffrey, Mr B Kemp, Mr A Ridgers, Mr R Thorne and Mr B Sweetland.

OFFICERS:- The Chief Executive, Miss A Millington OBE, QFSM; the Director, Finance and Corporate Services, Ms A Kilpatrick; the Director, Response and Resilience, Mr M Rist; Director Prevention, Protection, Customer Engagement and Safety, Mr J Quinn; 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 Pensions, Mr B Fullbrook and the Clerk to the Authority, Mrs M Curry.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: - Mr M Scott, Kent Police and Crime Commissioner, Mr B Gill, Monitoring Officer and Mrs J Waterman, Independent Person.

### UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

#### 28. Chairman's Announcements

*(Item A1)*

- (1) Members and Officers held a minute's silence as a mark of respect following the death of Firefighter Barry Martin from Scottish Fire and Rescue Service.
- (2) The Chair, on behalf of Members, gave thanks to Mr Rory Love OBE for his contribution to the Authority following the announcement of his standing down and in turn welcomed Mr Bryan Sweetland back on to the Authority.
- (3) Following the Service's recent HMICFRS Inspection results, Kent has emerged as one of the top performing fire services in the Country. Members recorded their thanks to all colleagues at Kent Fire and Rescue Service for their hard work and dedication.
- (4) Members placed on record their thanks to Jim Chaston, Martin Stanley, Bradley Rebbeck from Kent Fire and Rescue Service Technical Rescue Team who were deploy as part of the UK International Search and Rescue Team to the earthquake in Turkey.
- (5) Members placed on record their congratulations to the Service for being ranked one of the top emergency services and among the best organisations in the Country for LGBTQ+ inclusion by Stonewall.
- (6) The Chair reminded Members of the date of this year's Kent Fire and Rescue Service Awards Ceremony.
- (7) Members placed on record their thanks to James Finch, Assistant Director, Corporate Services for his hard work and dedication to the Service for the past 19 years.
- (8) Members gave their sincere congratulations to Chief Executive, Ann Millington, for being awarded an OBE in the King's New Year's Honours.

#### 29. Minutes of the Audit and Governance Committee – 22 September 2022

*(Item A4)*

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Audit and Governance Committee held on 22 September 2022, be noted.

**30. Minutes – 13 October 2022**

*(Item A5)*

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Authority meeting held on 13 October 2022 be approved and signed by the Chair as a true record.

**31. Financial Update for 2022/23**

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

- (1) The Authority considered a report which set out the latest forecast outturn position for the Revenue and Capital Budgets, the forecast on year-end reserve balances and latest treasury position. The report also included a progress update on the redevelopment at Ashford Fire Station and Live Fire Training facility, as well as a proposal for an additional lease of a building for the vehicle servicing and maintenance function.
- (2) Mr Booth thanked the Director Finance and Corporate Services and her team for the excellent way in which the Authority's finances are handled.
- (3) Mr Maple raised his concerns around the time being taken by the External Auditors to complete not only this Authority's financial audits but other public sector authorities too due to their backlog of assessments. Mr Maple asked that, through the Chair of this Authority, the fire sector could collectively go through the LGA to write to the Public Sector Auditor Appointments Body to express their concerns not only around the timeframe but also the increase in auditing fees.
- (4) RESOLVED that: -
  - (a) the proposal to enter into an additional lease arrangement, as part of the in-house arrangements for the vehicle servicing and maintenance function, be approved in principle.
  - (b) the contents of the report be noted.

**32. Draft Revenue and Capital Budgets 2023/24 and Draft Medium Term Financial Plan 2023-27**

*(Item B2 - Report by Chief Executive)*

- (1) The Authority considered a report setting out proposals for its Revenue and Capital Budgets and Council Tax levels for 2023/24; the assumptions used in developing the Medium-Term Financial Plan for 2023-27; the Annual Treasury Management and Investment Strategy and related Prudential Indicators; the Reserves Strategy and Capital Strategy.
- (2) The Authority was also requested to note the response to the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement 2023/24 consultation, as attached at Appendix 1.
- (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) In response to a question raised by Mr Maple about Members being kept updated on the discussions around potential savings, the Chief Executive provided reassurance that this would be the case.
- (5) RESOLVED that: -
  - (a) the revenue budget proposals and the resulting net budget requirement for 2023/24 of £85,292m, as set out in Appendix 2, be approved.

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- (b) a total requirement from Council Tax of £57,689m to be raised through the precept to meet the 2023/24 revenue budget requirements, which requires an increase in Council Tax of 6.01%, resulting in the following annual charges for each Council Tax Band be approved.

<b>Council Tax Band</b>	<b>Annual Charge</b>
A	£58.20
B	£67.90
C	£77.60
<b>D</b>	<b>£87.30</b>
E	£106.70
F	£126.10
G	£145.50
H	£174.60

- (c) the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chair of the Authority, to 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.
- (d) the Capital Budget of £16.492m for 2023/24 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.
- (e) the Capital Strategy, as attached at Appendix 3 to the report, be approved.
- (f) the Annual Treasury Management and Investment Strategy, including the appropriate Prudential Indicators as set out in Appendix 4 to the report, be approved.
- (g) the Reserves Strategy as set out in Appendix 5 to the report, be approved.
- (h) the assumptions being used to develop the Medium-Term Financial Plan for 2023-27 as set out in Appendix 2 to the report, be approved.

### **33. Efficiency and Productivity Statement 2023/24**

*(Item B3 – Report by Chief Executive)*

- (1) The Authority considered the Efficiency and Productivity Statement 2023/24. Previously the Authority's Efficiency Statement has been incorporated within the Customer Safety Plan, but it is standalone to give a broader focus on efficiency and productivity, not just value for money.
- (2) In response to a question raised by Mr Maple about the publication of the efficiency document, the Director of Prevention, Protect and Customer Safety explained that the document will be publicly available on the Service's website and that his team will also go through the document to highlight the key areas to communicate through social media networks.
- (3) RESOLVED that: -
- (a) The Efficiency and Productivity Statement for 2023/24, as attached at Appendix 1, be approved.

**34. Pay Policy Statement 2023/24**

*(Item B4 – Report by Chief Executive)*

- (1) The Authority considered the draft Pay Policy Statement for 2023/24, which the Authority is required by the Localism Act 2011 to publish before the start of the new financial year.
- (2) Members also considered an addendum to the Pay Policy Statement for 2022/23 in relation to Special Severance Payments.
- (3) RESOLVED that: -
  - (a) The addendum to the Pay Policy Statement for 2022/23 in relation to Special Severance Payments, as set out in Part 3 of Appendix 1, be approved.
  - (b) the Authority's draft Pay Policy Statement for 2023/24, as attached at Appendix 1 to the report, be approved.

**35. Members' Allowances Scheme 2023/24**

*(Item B5 - 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 2023/24.
- (2) RESOLVED that: -
  - (a) the existing Members' Allowances Scheme, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, be formally re-adopted for 2023/24.

**36. Appointment of an Independent Member for the Audit and Governance Committee**

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

- (1) The Authority considered a report which sought approval to the recruitment of an Independent Member to sit on the Audit and Governance Committee in line with The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's recommended good practice guidance and in line with relevant legislation.
- (2) Mr Maple and Mr Tranter both outlined their support for the recruitment of an Independent Member and the external challenge and scrutiny that it will bring will be a positive approach for the Authority.
- (3) RESOLVED that: -
  - (a) the recruitment of an Independent Member to sit on the Audit and Governance Committee, be approved.
  - (b) the advertisement, job description and person specification for the role of Independent Member can be determined by the Audit and Governance Committee, in conjunction with its Terms of Reference, be approved.
  - (c) any recommendation on an appointment of an Independent Member for the Audit and Governance Committee will be brought back to the next Authority meeting for agreement.

**37. Save Safely Campaign – Cost of Living Presentation**

*(Item C1 – Presentation by Area Manager, Customer and Building Safety)*

- (1) A presentation was given to the Authority on the work the Service is doing around the Save Safely Campaign.
- (2) Members thanked Area Manager, Customer and Building Safety for her presentation which was very informative.

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- (3) Members requested a copy of the presentation to be sent to them as well as any relevant leaflets or briefing notes on the work of the campaign in order that Members can promote this within their communities. In response to this the Chief Executive welcomed Members' advocacy of this campaign on the various boards they sit on.
- (4) RESOLVED that the presentation be noted.

### **38. Information Update**

*(Item C2 - Report by Chief Executive)*

- (1) The Authority considered information updates on: -
  - A. Inspection Update and National Issues.
  - B. Outcomes of Safety and Wellbeing Plan.
  - C. Performance Update.
  - D. Response and Resilience Update.
  - E. Prevention, Protection, Customer Engagement and Safety Update.
  - F. Climate Action Plan.
  - G. Freedom of Information Update.
  - H. Insurance Update.
  - I. Pensions Board Update.
- (2) On Item C above and response to a query raised by Mr Harman around the clarity of the wording to describe fire appliance availability during the day, the Chief Executive agreed that this wording will be reviewed in time for the next report.
- (3) On Item D above and in response to a query raised by Mr Maple about planning assumptions for this year based on the Summer of last year, the Director Response and Resilience provided assurances that planning arrangements are in hand so that the Service can respond appropriately and effectively.
- (4) RESOLVED that the contents of the report, and subsequent discussions, be noted.

### **EXEMPT ITEMS (Open Access to Minutes)**

### **39. Abatement**

*(Item E2 – Report by Chief Executive)*

- (1) Members received a report which presented an abatement related issue.
- (2) RESOLVED that: -
  - (a) the recommendations contained within the report, be approved.