

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, The Godlands, Tovil, Maidstone, ME15 6XB on Thursday 17th October 2024.

PRESENT: - Mr P Barrington-King, Mr A Brady, Mr N Chard (Chair), Mr D Crow-Brown, Mr M Dendor, Ms S Hohler, Mr D Jeffrey, Mr B Kemp (Vice-Chair), Mr V Maple, Ms J Meade, Mr A Ridgers, Mr M Sole, Mr B Sweetland, Ms Z Van-Dyke and Kent Police and Crime Commissioner, Matthew Scott.

APOLOGIES: - Mr D Beaney, Mr A Booth, Mr P Cole, Mr N Collor, Mr M Hood, Ms C Parfitt-Reid, Mr M Prenter, Mr S Manion, Mr J McInroy and Mr C Simkins.

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

IN ATTENDANCE: - The Authority's Deputy Monitoring Officer, Mrs H Ward and the Authority's Independent Person, Mrs J Waterman.

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

19. Chairman's Announcements

(Item A1)

- (1) Members and Officers stood in silence as a mark of respect for Peter Harman, an Authority Member, who sadly passed away in August and Principal Fire Engineer, Dr Paul Grimwood MBE, who passed away on 25th September following a short illness.
- (2) The Chair welcomed Neil Griffiths to the Authority in his new role as Assistant Director Response.
- (3) The Chair reminded Members of the date, time and venue for this year's KFRS Annual Award Ceremony.

20. Minutes of the Authority held on 5 July 2024

(Item A4)

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Authority meeting held on 5 July 2024 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

21. Community Risk Management Plan – Response Time Standards

(Item B1 – Report by Chief Executive)

- (1) The Authority considered a report which proposed changes to the way in which the Service targets its response time standards. These proposals form part of our CRMP programme of work and is the first phase of a wider review of performance standards. The report also set out options for setting the Council Tax. All proposals will require public consultation.
- (2) Mr Brady asked whether some examples could be listed within the questionnaire to make it clearer on the definition of 'emergency' and 'non-emergency' as this can be subject to interpretation. This was agreed by Members.
- (3) Mr Maple asked whether there was any other fire and rescue services that have classifications for rural and urban areas in line with National standards and if so, could

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those be named in the questionnaire as a reference. The Director Response and Resilience said he will look into this.

- (4) Ms Meade offered support as a direct link for the Service into her local community groups to consult with to which the Director Protection, Prevention, Customer Safety and Engagement welcomed and would discuss this with her outside the meeting.
- (5) RESOLVED that: -
 - (a) the public are consulted on the changes to the Service's response time definitions, be approved.
 - (b) the public are consulted on changes to the Service's response time targets, be approved.
 - (c) the public consultation questions, as attached at Appendix 1 to the report, be approved.

22. Financial Update for 2024/25

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

- (1) The Authority was provided with a mid-year financial update which includes an update on the latest forecast outturn position on the Authority's revenue and capital budgets for 2024/25.
- (2) The report also highlighted the forecast underspend of £1.602m as well as a number of key risks and assumption that may impact on the final outturn for 2024/25.
- (3) Members congratulated all those involved in the Dynamics project, where internal resources were utilised to complete the project as opposed to being outsourced, resulting in a large financial saving.
- (4) Members asked that their thanks and appreciation be conveyed to the members of the Finance team who oversee the Treasury Management function, especially having achieved beneficial interest returns on deposits this year.
- (5) RESOLVED that: -
 - (a) the transfer of 1.3m of the current forecast underspend be moved to the Insurance and Resource Reserve, be approved.
 - (b) the allocation of an additional £3m from the Infrastructure Reserve, to meet the increased cost pressures of delivering the Live Fire Training Facility at Ashford, be approved.
 - (c) the remaining contents of the report be noted.

23. Development of Medium-Term Financial Plan

(Item B3 - Presentation by Head of Finance, Pensions and Treasury, Barrie Fullbrook)

- (1) The Authority received a presentation from the Head of Finance, Pensions and Treasury on the development of the 2025-2029 Budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan.
- (2) Members thanked the Head of Finance for the presentation and requested their thanks be passed on to the Finance team for looking after the Authority's budget so well.

(3) RESOLVED that:

- (a) the assumptions being adopted to develop the Authority's 2025 - 2029 Budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan, as described in the presentation, be approved.

24. Governance and Policy Updates

(Item B4 – Report by Chief Executive)

(1) The Authority considered a report which covered the following governance topics:

- A. Statement of Assurance 2023/24 (Fire and Rescue Framework)
- B. Annual review of Compliance with the Local Government Transparency Code 2015 and the Trade Union (Facility Time Publications Requirements) Regulations 2017
- C. Policy Update

(2) Members felt that due to the fast-paced development of Artificial Intelligence (AI), the new AI Policy should be reviewed on an annual basis rather than the standard 3 years to ensure that it remains current. Members also felt that given the purpose of AI is to mimic human thought processes, the wording in the Policy needed to make very clear that it's a tool to assist decision-making rather than be relied upon.

(3) RESOLVED that: -

- (a) the Statement of Assurance 2023/24, as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report, be approved.
- (b) the Annual Review of Compliance with the Local Government Transparency Code 2015 and the Trade Union (Facility Time Publications Requirements) Regulations 2017, as detailed in Appendix 2 to the report, be approved.
- (c) the Artificial Intelligence Policy, as detailed in Appendix 3 to the report, be approved.
- (d) the remaining contents of the report be noted.

25. Calendar of Meetings 2025/26

(Item B5 – Report by Clerk of the Authority)

(1) The Authority considered the proposed calendar of Member meetings and events for the 2025/26 municipal year.

(2) RESOLVED that: -

- (a) The calendar of Member meetings and other events for 2025/26 be approved.

26. Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 2 Report

(Item C1 – Report by Chief Executive)

(1) Following the publication of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 2 Report, Members received an update on the arrangements the Service will put in place to learn from the findings of the inquiry.

(2) RESOLVED that: -

- (a) The contents of the report be noted.

27. Activity Update

(Item C2 – Presentation by Director, Response and Resilience and Director Prevention Protection, Customer Safety and Engagement)

- (1) The Authority received a presentation from the Director of Response and Resilience on two noteworthy incidents which covered the firefighting and rescue techniques that were employed, the equipment and resources used and what was learnt as a result of the incidents.
- (2) A presentation was then given by Director of Prevention, Protection, Customer Safety and Engagement on how the Service is supporting the Building Safety Regulator to create a safer built environment.
- (3) In relation to the presentation on Building Safety, Ms Meade offered her assistance in supporting the Service to continue the dialogue with planning authorities which the Director Prevention, Protection, Customer Safety and Engagement welcomed and would discuss with her outside the meeting.
- (4) RESOLVED that: -
 - (a) the contents of the presentations be noted.

28. Information Update

(Item C3 – Report by Chief Executive)

- (1) Members received their regular information updates in an electronic presentation format as part of the weblink sent prior to the meeting.
- (2) The updates included:-
 - A. Inspection Update
 - B. Performance Update
 - C. Response and Resilience Update
 - D. Prevention, Protection, Customer Engagement and Safety Update
 - E. Freedom of Information Update
 - F. Annual Update on Members' Standards and Allowances
 - G. Pensions and Pension Board Update
- (3) On B above, Mr Brady submitted some questions to the Clerk ahead of the meeting which included how can we try and reduce the current figure of false alarm calls and what are the reasons for the lack of availability of fire engines between 7am-8am. Both questions were answered in detail at the meeting.
- (4) On B above, a discussion took place on emergency service workers and the impacts on wellbeing due to their shift patterns, Mr Scott spoke about an initiative that Kent Police took around the changing of officer shift patterns to support welfare. The Chief Executive was keen to understand more about this work.

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EXEMPT ITEMS
(Open Access to Minutes)

29. Channel Tunnel

(Item E2 – Report by Chief Executive)

- (1) Members received a report which provided the latest position on the Channel Tunnel.
- (2) Members put on record their thanks to officers for the empathy shown in dealing with such a difficult and sensitive issue.
- (3) RESOLVED that: -
 - (a) the recommendations contained within the report, be approved.