

SOUTH WALES FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY

MINUTES OF THE FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 25 SEPTEMBER 2023 AT 1030 HRS IN THE CONFERENCE ROOM AND REMOTELY VIA TEAMS

30. PRESENT:

Councillor	Left	Authority
S Bradwick (Chair)		Rhondda Cynon Taff
P Drake (Deputy Chair)		Vale of Glamorgan
D Ali		Cardiff
A Best		Torfaen
I Buckley		Vale of Glamorgan
K Carr		Cardiff
C Elsbury		Caerphilly
S Evans		Torfaen
P Ford		Bridgend
G Holmes		Rhondda Cynon Taff
M Hughes		Bridgend
A Hussey		Caerphilly
J Morgan		Blaenau Gwent
M Al-Nuaimi		Newport
D Naughton		Cardiff
M Powell		Monmouthshire
B Proctor		Cardiff
A Roberts MBE		Rhondda Cynon-Taff
G Williams		Rhondda Cynon Taff
C Wright		Caerphilly

APOLOGIES:

D Isaac	Merthyr Tydfil
S-E Melbourne	Cardiff

ABSENT:

T Watkins	Newport
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OFFICERS PRESENT:- CFO H Jakeway, T/DCFO D Rose – Director of Service Delivery, ACO A Reed – Director of People Services, ACO G Thomas – Monitoring Officer & Director of Corporate Services, Mr C Barton – Treasurer, Mrs S Watkins – Deputy Monitoring Officer & Head of Corporate Support, Mrs L Mullan – Temp Head of Finance, Procurement and Property, Mr M Fry – Independent Pay Consultant, Watch Manager M Nash – Health & Safety & Wellbeing Officer

31. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Each Member declared a personal non-prejudicial interest in each agenda item which affected their Authority.

Councillor Evans declared a personal interest in any items which related to New Inn Fire Station.

32. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **PASSING OF FIREFIGHTER STUART DAVIES**

The Chairperson was saddened to announce the sudden and sad passing of Firefighter Stuart Davies of Green Watch Maindee. Stuart was a popular and well regarded professional firefighter, friend and colleague.

The Chairperson asked members to take a moments silence to reflect and remember Firefighter Stuart Davies.

- **WDS PASS OUT PARADE – 31 AUGUST 2023**

The Chairperson advised of his attendance with other Members of the Authority the pass out parade of the latest WDS course on 31st August when 22 firefighters passed out in front of their families and loved ones. The Chairperson extended their congratulations to firefighter Jenni Scoble on being awarded the Silver Axe, an accolade awarded to the top recruit.

- **FIREFIGHTERS' MEMORIAL SERVICE - NATIONAL ARBORETUM**

On Monday 4th September the Chairperson and Chief Fire Officer represented the Service and the Authority at the Firefighters Memorial Service at the National Arboretum in Staffordshire. This was the first time this event was held at the National Arboretum and were asked by the Trust to lead the wreath laying on behalf of the UK fire and rescue services. It was also a proud moment for the Chief Fire Officer to lay a wreath on behalf of Welsh Government.

- **999 DAY – CARDIFF BAY**

On Saturday 9th September the Chairperson attended the 999 Day at Cardiff Bay, he described it as a fantastic event that showed to the thousands that attended the broad width of services we provide. The

Chairperson thanked everyone that made this day so special and engaging.

- **MOROCCAN EARTHQUAKE**

On 8th September Morocco was struck by a 6.8 magnitude earthquake, which regrettably killed over 3,000 people and left thousands injured and homeless. In response, the UK Government and the National Fire Chiefs Council have provided search and rescue support through the UK International Search and Rescue capability. The Chairperson thanked Firefighters Bland and Buckley that deployed from the Service with UKISAR. Their deployment was safe and successful and they have recently returned home.

- **FESITVAL OF RESCUE, LINCOLNSHIRE**

This month Lincolnshire fire and rescue service hosted the Festival of Rescue, we were well represented with teams in all rescue challenges. As always our teams represented the Service with professional and pride. Bridgend won best technical team, they were third in the medical discipline and our fire cadets from Tonypandy and Abergavenny came second in their trauma challenge. The Chairperson expressed their thanks for the dedication and commitment to learn and improve your skills and knowledge.

- **REVIEW OF MATERNITY PROVISIONS**

The Chairperson advised he had recently received correspondence from the General Secretary of the Fire Brigades Union asking Fire Authority's to review and consider their existing maternity provisions for staff. The Chairperson has asked officers to review this through our HR& Equalities Committee.

33. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

The following minutes were received and accepted as a true record of proceedings:-

- Fire & Rescue Authority meeting held on Monday, 17 July 2023
- Finance, Audit & Performance Management Committee meeting held on Monday, 13 March, 2023

- Scrutiny Committee meeting held on Monday, 17 April, 2023
- HR & Equalities Committee meeting held on Monday, 10 July, 2023
- Finance, Audit & Performance Management Committee meeting held on 24 July, 2023

34. UPDATE ON ACTIONS

The ACO People Services provided a brief overview and update on the following outstanding actions:- 21/22-17.3.2, 21/22-17.3.3, 23/24-25, 23/24-27.5

The ACO Corporate Services provided a brief overview and update on the following outstanding actions:- 23/24-26.1.2 and 23/24-26.3.

35. REPORTS FOR DECISION

35.1. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY AND REVENUE BUDGET UPDATE REPORT

The Treasurer informed Members that the presented report provided an updated Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2022/23 to 2026/27 for approval. It included budget projections based on the Authority's plans and strategies informed by the general financial and operational environment in which services were provided.

The Strategy indicated that the Authority's cost base would continue to increase over the currently approved budget in response to the general inflationary pressures in the UK economy. These cost pressures were compounded by unforeseen under-provision in the current financial year. This would present a challenge to the Fire Authority and potentially to the Service's funding councils next year.

The Strategy was drawn up in the light of rapidly changing economic projections and few firm resource commitments beyond the current year. This background introduced significant financial risks to the Strategy. Whilst it was tempting to consider the information in the report a worst-case scenario, this was far from reality given the current volatility in the UK economy and public finances.

RESOLVED THAT

Members agreed to note the risks and uncertainties within the projections and approved the Strategy as the basis for financial planning over the Strategy period.

35.2 PRINCIPAL OFFICER VACANCY – APPOINTMENT AUTHORISATION OF ASSISTANT CHIEF FIRE OFFICER – TECHNICAL SERVICES

The Chief Fire Officer informed Members that the Fire Authority Constitution determined that a request to fill a post at Principal Officer level on a permanent basis had to be brought before the Fire & Rescue Authority for approval.

The report sought approval to recruit, on a permanent basis, an Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO) – Technical Services. Subject to Fire Authority approval it was proposed to commence the recruitment process at the earliest opportunity with the aim of making a permanent appointment before the end of December 2023.

Following a lengthy discussion it was suggested awaiting the outcome of the cultural review prior to commencing the appointment process.

Members were then asked to vote on whether they wished for the recruitment process for the appointment of Assistant Chief Fire Officer – Technical Services to commence at the earliest opportunity or to await the outcome of the cultural review in the first instance.

The majority of Members voted for the appointment process to await the outcome of the culture review.

RESOLVED THAT

- 35.2.1 Members agreed to approve the filling of the post of the role of ACFO – Technical Services on a permanent basis.
- 35.2.2 Members agreed to approve postpone the recruitment and selection process until after the outcome of the independent culture review.

35.3 HIS MAJESTY'S INSPECTORATE OF CONSTABULARY AND FIRE & RESCUE SERVICES' REPORT – VALUES AND CULTURE IN FIRE & RESCUE SERVICES (SPOTLIGHT REPORT)

The Chief Fire Officer informed Members that on Thursday, 30 March, 2023, His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFS) for England published Values and Culture in Fire & Rescue Services. The report had nine themes supported by 35 recommendations for all English Fire & Rescue Services, alongside the government and national fire bodies, were urged to implement them as a matter of urgency.

Although the report covers English Fire & Rescue Services, the Welsh Government had communicated its expectation for Fire & Rescue Services in Wales to fully comply with all the recommendations appertaining to the Service and Chief Fire Officers. Welsh Government had requested progress reports back to the Chief Fire & Rescue Advisor.

South Wales Fire & Rescue Authority and South Wales Fire & Rescue Service welcomed the report and the recommendations within it.

RESOLVED THAT

- 35.3.1 Members agreed that the Fire & Rescue Authority should accept the recommendations allocated to the Chief Fire Officer.
- 35.3.2 Members agreed that South Wales Fire & Rescue to fully engage and support the delivery of the remaining recommendations.
- 35.3.3 Members agreed that the actions and progress against the HMICFS recommendations were to be presented to November's Scrutiny Committee.

Each officer left the meeting at 11:21hrs for the following item to be reported by Mr Fry who joined the meeting.

35.4 INDEPENDENT PAY REVIEW – PRINCIPAL OFFICERS' REMUNERATION

The report informed Members that in September 2022 the Fire & Rescue Authority received a report from external consultants 'The Resource Partners Limited' (TRP) on a review of Brigade Manager/Principal Officers' remuneration that had been requested by Fire Authority

Members following the completion of the Job Evaluation exercise for Green Book employees. An uplift of 4.5% was agreed and it was also resolved that a further piece of work would be commissioned immediately on Principal Officer pay, and that a review on Principal Officers' pay would be carried out on a yearly basis by an external consultant for a period of two years, followed by a review thereafter.

It was noted that the South Wales Fire & Rescue Authority (FRA) Pay Policy document stated that Principal Officers' remuneration should be reviewed annually by the local Fire & Rescue Authority and that the HR & Equalities Committee was assigned to consider PO remuneration and report findings to the Fire & Rescue Authority. The National Joint Council for Brigade Managers of Fire & Rescue Services, Constitution and Scheme of Conditions of Service states there is a two-track approach to determining PO remuneration, as outlined above, one of these is a local review undertaken by the Fire & Rescue Authority.

Mr Fry left the meeting at 12:00hrs to allow Members to discuss the report in further detail.

Mr Fry returned to the meeting to answer questions and left at 12:31hrs

Following detailed discussion, Members were asked to vote on whether they agreed to the increase in pay for Senior Officers as outlined within the report. The majority of Members voted in favour of the recommendations set out in the independent pay review report.

RESOLVED THAT

- 35.4.1 Members agreed to Increase pay of the Chief Fire Officer to £169,574 per annum.
- 35.4.2 To adopt the new and simplified pay matrix.
- 35.4.3 To align and link base pay of Corporate Heads of Service to base pay of Area Managers.
- 35.4.4 To increase the pay of the Treasurer to **£79,788** (FTE).

37. REPORTS FOR INFORMATION

37.1 2022/2023 ANNUAL TREASURY MANAGEMENT REVIEW

The temporary Head of Finance & Procurement presented a report for Members to review the treasury management activities for the year ending 31 March 2023, in accordance with the Authority's approved Treasury Management Strategy for 2022/2023.

RESOLVED THAT

Members agreed to note the annual treasury management review data for 2022/2023 and approved the actual prudential and treasury indicators set therein.

37.2 HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELLBEING ANNUAL REPORT 2022/2023

The Health & Safety Officer informed Members that the Health, Safety and Wellbeing report for 2022/2023 provided a summary of the key activities undertaken, and the performance of South Wales Fire & Rescue Service in the areas of Health, Safety and Wellbeing.

RESOLVED THAT

- 37.2.1 Members agreed to accept the report on the performance of South Wales Fire & Rescue Service in the areas of Health, Safety and Wellbeing.
- 37.2.2 Members agreed to note the overall success achieved during 2022/2023 in the delivery of an environment that was supportive of the Health, Safety and Welfare of staff.
- 37.2.3 Members agreed to endorse and support the range of initiatives underway to proactively and reactively support the Health, Safety and Wellbeing of staff employed by South Wales Fire & Rescue Authority.

37.3 CARBON REDUCTION PLAN ANNUAL UPDATE

The T/Head of Finance & Procurement informed Members that the presented report set out the progress made in the third year of the Carbon Reduction Plan (CRP) 2020-2023 and Biodiversity Forward Plan (BFP).

RESOLVED THAT

37.3.1 Members agreed to note the year 3 progress.

37.3.2 The T/Head of Finance & Procurement to provide a further update on progress in 6 months' time.

37.4 CERTIFICATE OF COMPLIANCE FOR THE AUDIT OF SOUTH WALES FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY'S IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2023-2024

The Monitoring Officer reported on the Certificate of Compliance for the audit of South Wales Fire & Rescue Authority's Improvement Plan 2023-2024 for information purposes.

RESOLVED THAT

Members agreed to note the report on the Certificate of Compliance for the Audit of South Wales Fire & Rescue Authority's Improvement Plan 2023-2024.

37.5 EXEMPTIONS FROM CONTRACT PROCEDURE RULES

The Monitoring Officer informed Members that exemptions to contract standing orders may be granted by the Monitoring Officer in exceptional circumstances and where the value exceeds £25,000 a report must be presented to the Fire & Rescue Authority.

The presented report set out exemptions granted during the current financial year to date.

RESOLVED THAT

Members agreed to note the exemption granted by the Monitoring Officer in accordance with the Authority's contract standing orders.

38. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME 2022/2023

The Monitoring Officer provided a brief overview of the Forward Work Programme for 2023/2023 and outlined that an additional meeting would likely be added to the programme in January 2024 to consider the recommendations made by the independent culture review.

RESOLVED THAT

Members agreed to note the Forward Work Programme for 2023/2024.

39. TO CONSIDER ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIR DEEMS URGENT (PART 1 OR 2)

There were no items of business to discuss that the Chair deemed urgent.