

Lancashire Combined Fire Authority

Monday, 18 December 2023 at 10.30 am in Washington Hall, Service Training Centre, Euxton

Minutes

Present:

D O'Toole (Chair)

Councillors

J Shedwick (Vice-Chair)

G Baker

P Britcliffe

S Clarke

M Dad BEM

N Hennessy

J Hugo

T Hurn

F Jackson

H Khan

Z Khan MBE

S Morris

M Pattison

P Rigby

M Salter

S Serridge

J Singleton

D Smith

R Woollam

B Yates

39/23

Chairman's Welcome and Introduction

The Chair welcomed Members to the meeting and invited the Chief Fire Officer to give an update on the current commercial building fire in Lancaster.

Major Fire Incident in Lancaster

The Chief Fire Officer advised that two weeks ago (Sunday 3 December 2023) ten fire engines from Lancashire and Cumbria were called to a derelict commercial building fire at the former SupaSkips site on Port Royal Avenue, Lancaster. The fire was deep-seated in 13,000 tonnes of compacted waste and was taking time and resources to extinguish. The Service had been on the site every day working with national and local partners. Lancaster City Council had provided funding to clear the site which was now expected to be before Christmas.

Gas Explosion in Blackburn

The Chief Fire Officer advised that LFRS had attended a gas explosion on London Road, Blackburn the previous evening. The drone and Service dog were used to assist in the rescue of a casualty from the collapsed building.

Demonstration of Hagglund Vehicle

The Chair invited Members to a demonstration of the Hagglund Vehicle on the rise of the meeting. He advised that the all-terrain Hagglund vehicle made it easier to access rural areas during extreme weather events. The Hagglund had now been converted for flood response and would be better able to support the communities in Lancashire.

	<p>Staff News</p> <p>The Chief Fire Officer advised that the Service had recently celebrated the dedication and talent of over fifty staff who were honoured with long service, good conduct awards, commendations, Star Awards and for academic accomplishments. He also congratulated winners and those shortlisted in the Asian Fire Service Association and the Excellence in Fire and Emergency Awards.</p> <p>The Clerk to the Authority and Monitoring Officer advised the Authority that this would be the last meeting for the Principal Member Services Officer who would be leaving the Service early in the New Year. The Chairman and Leader of the opposition thanked Mrs Brooks for her dedication and reliability over the many years she had been in the role.</p> <p>Presentation by Fire Cadets, Isaac Kelly and Kit Nicholls</p> <p>The Assistant Chief Fire Officer was pleased to introduce Fire Cadets Isaac Kelly and Kit Nicholls who had attended the meeting to present to Members their experiences and inform of the benefits of the Fire Cadets programme from their personal perspective and for the Service.</p> <p>Members applauded the presentations given. County Councillor Shedwick was pleased there was progression from the Skills for Justice in Fire and Rescue Service Qualification onto a college public sector course.</p> <p>Following a question from County Councillor Hennessy, both cadets confirmed that they had appreciated the opportunity to talk to Members. County Councillor Hennessy added that Isaac and Kit were a credit to themselves, their families, the Service and the Authority and she was pleased that they felt trusted representatives of the Service in the community.</p> <p>In response to a further question from County Councillor Hennessy the Assistant Chief Fire Officer confirmed that recommendations from the cadets had been discussed with cadet leaders and the management team and would be taken forward as appropriate.</p> <p>On behalf of the Authority the Chair wished Isaac and Kit every success in their future careers.</p>
40/23	<p>Apologies for Absence</p>
	<p>Apologies were received from County Councillors Lorraine Beavers, David Howarth and Jennifer Mein and Councillor Jean Rigby.</p>
41/23	<p>Disclosure of Pecuniary and non-Pecuniary Interests</p>
	<p>The Chair and Vice-Chair, as Directors of North West Fire Control declared a personal interest in the matter to be considered on the agenda under item 11, North West Fire Control, Continuing the Collaboration. The Clerk confirmed this was a non-pecuniary interest based only on their status as directors and no personal gain or pecuniary interest would result and therefore, whilst it was appreciated the interests had been declared, there was no perceptible conflict of personal interests.</p>

42/23	Minutes of Previous Meeting
	Resolved: - That the Minutes of the CFA held on 18 September 2023 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.
43/23	Minutes of meeting Wednesday, 13 September 2023 of Performance Committee
	Resolved: That the proceedings of the Performance Committee held on 13 September 2023 be noted.
44/23	Minutes of meeting Wednesday, 27 September 2023 of Resources Committee
	Resolved: That the proceedings of the Resources Committee held on 27 September 2023 be noted.
45/23	Minutes of meeting Thursday, 2 November 2023 of Member Training & Development Working Group
	Resolved: That the proceedings of the Member Training and Development Working Group held on 2 November 2023 be noted.
46/23	Minutes of meeting Monday, 20 November 2023 of Planning Committee
	Resolved: That the proceedings of the Planning Committee held on 20 November 2023 be noted.
47/23	Minutes of meeting Tuesday, 28 November 2023 of Audit Committee
	Resolved: That the proceedings of the Audit Committee held on 28 November 2023 be noted.
48/23	Minutes of meeting Wednesday, 29 November 2023 of Resources Committee
	Resolved: That i) the proceedings of the Resources Committee held on 29 November 2023 be noted; ii) the Fleet Asset Management Plan 2023 – 2027 be endorsed and approved (subject to budget considerations) as part of the budget approval process in February 2024; and iii) the Property and Estate Assets Management Strategy 2023 – 2034 also be endorsed and approved (subject to budget considerations) as part of the budget approval process in February 2024.
49/23	North West Fire Control - Continuing the Collaboration
	The Chief Fire Officer presented the report. The report set out the background to North West Fire Control centre (NWFC) which

was created after the collapse of a national project. NWFC served the areas of Cheshire, Cumbria, Greater Manchester and Lancashire. From May 2014 staff started answering Lancashire's 999 calls, mobilising resources to incidents and assisting operational staff with the management of incidents.

NW Fire Control Limited (the Company) as the legal entity that provided the services to the partner fire and rescue services was jointly owned by the fire and rescue authorities and liability was limited by guarantee. Each fire and rescue authority appointed two Directors to sit on the Board (and from the CFA, this was the Chair and Vice Chair). Chief Fire Officers and some advisers also attended the Board, together with staff from NWFC.

It was noted that creating NWFC was a difficult and costly exercise with parties to the collaboration advised that it should be seen as a long-term and 'almost permanent' arrangement, due to the complexity and cost of ending it. Creating a separate fire control solely for one of the partners to NWFC would take at least two years (probably nearer to three) and involve: i) investment in a new mobilising system which would be likely to cost almost as much as the system utilised by NWFC; ii) creation of a resilient control room; and iii) recruitment of staff to be suitably trained in readiness for go-live. The CFA was committed to NWFC until at least July 2033 (the date that the lease of the fire control building came to an end). A new mobilising system was required to be procured by NW Fire Control Limited and there were a number of other pressures exist that had impacted on NWFC.

When NWFC was created there was a significant investment by the Government (which continued in the form of circa £1m per annum towards the lease of the NWFC building). Almost all up-front costs to create NWFC were paid for by the Government. NWFC was now paid for by the partners in proportions that were agreed before the original project was fully committed to. The proportions were intended to reflect the relative demand placed upon NWFC by the respective partners, i.e. call volumes were seen as a meaningful driver for establishing the respective shares of the costs. The proportions were recorded in various governance documents, with the Co-Operation Agreement between the fire and rescue authorities stating that the '*... proportions will be reviewed from time to time. Such reviews will take into account the relative benefits to the respective Authorities derived from the Services provided by the Company.*' The percentage call volumes per partner had generally been extremely close to the proportions and therefore the partners had not sought to review them. These were:

- Cheshire Fire Authority, 18%
- Cumbria Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner, 8%
- Greater Manchester Combined Authority, 48.5% and
- Lancashire Combined Fire Authority, 25.5%.

More recently, however, the call volumes had changed to such an extent that at least for the time being they no longer aligned with the proportions. The need to fund a new mobilising system and the requirement for additional funding for NWFC, as well as the fact that the call volumes no longer aligned with the original proportions, had led to a debate about the proportions which should be paid by the partners going forward.

Chief Fire Officers reached a position which they felt able to justify to their respective fire authorities and for Lancashire this would see an increase from 25.5% to 28.05%. The impact of increasing the CFA's share of the cost would increase it from £0.161m to £1.770m as set out in the Financial Implications section of the report, now considered by Members, and this was expected to take effect from 1st April 2024.

NWFC used a computerised mobilising system which assisted the control room operators when answering and handling emergency calls. The current system was now nearing 'end of life' and needed to be replaced. The replacement project required a significant investment by the partners (both time input and money) as well as from the team at NWFC. An important first step would be the agreement of an extension to the contract for the current mobilising system, which would be needed until the new mobilising system was in place. Partner fire and rescue services were fully engaged in the project with tender documentation currently being prepared. During the project decisions needed to be taken by the partner fire authorities and NW Fire Control Limited to ensure: i) satisfaction with the procurement arrangements / tender documentation before the tender process could commence; and ii) be in agreement over the appointment of a supplier once the tender process had run its course. In addition, Chief Fire Officers for each partner fire and rescue service would make the decision about 'going-live' onto the new mobilising system once they were satisfied with the implementation work and readiness of the new mobilising system.

It was noted that there were two aspects to the funding for the new mobilising system: i) procurement and implementation of the new mobilising system. This was a large undertaking which would span three financial years (at least). Based on the latest estimates and assumptions this would require a one-off investment of around £6m. (Shared by the partner fire authorities.) and ii) once the system was live there would be recurring annual costs for licensing, maintenance, development etc. Currently, the cost was circa £0.800m. It was hoped that the recurring cost would not increase substantially but given the recent impact of inflation on wage increases, there would undoubtedly be some uplift, therefore it was prudent to budget for up to £1m per annum. Again, this cost would be shared by the partner fire authorities.

Since NWFC started handling emergency calls back in 2014, the expectations of the partner fire and rescue services had risen, requirements placed upon the fire control had grown and quite recently, a new Fire Standard aimed at fire control rooms had been published. A form of business plan (with annual delivery plans) had been created which the Chief Fire Officers believed needed to be supported for the next twelve months (2024-25) as well as some additional resource costs which should be built into NWFC's base budget. The further resourcing requirements support challenging elements of the delivery plan that NWFC could not deliver from its existing establishment. In 2024-25 the following matters were due to be progressed: i) a new training regime and system for capturing that training; ii) appraisal of the action plan associated with the fire control Fire Standard; and iii) capacity review and work on a future operating model.

Resolved: that the Authority

i) noted the commitment to the NWFC collaboration;

	<p>ii) agreed the Authority's contribution of 28.05% to the collaboration as detailed in the report;</p> <p>iii) noted that the Chief Fire Officer would make all necessary decisions associated with the new mobilising system on behalf of the Authority within his delegated powers; and</p> <p>iv) approved the Authority's share of the new mobilising system and additional resourcing costs and proposed funding as detailed in the report.</p>
50/23	<p>Updated Whistleblowing Policy</p>
	<p>The Assistant Director of Human Resources presented the report.</p> <p>His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services had published a report on values and culture in Fire and Rescue Services in March 2023. The report recommended that Chief Fire Officers should make sure that their Service provided a confidential way for staff to raise concerns via their Whistleblowing processes by 1 October 2023. This recommendation was supplemented by the National Fire Chief Council's recommendations on values and culture.</p> <p>In response, the Service had established Safecall, with effect from August 2023. Safecall was an anonymous independent external reporting line where calls could be made or emails sent. All communications were treated confidentially by independent trained staff and the individual's anonymity would be preserved if they so wished. If Safecall received a report out of hours and they felt it indicated a risk to life or other emergency they would contact the relevant Duty Group Manager. The establishment and process of Safecall had resulted in a need to update the Whistleblowing Policy to reflect the new arrangements (attached at Appendix 1 as now considered by Members).</p> <p>Resolved: that the Whistleblowing Policy be agreed.</p>
51/23	<p>Member Champion Activity Report</p>
	<p>The concept of Member Champions was introduced in December 2007. A review of the areas of focus for Member Champions was considered at the Authority meeting held in June 2017 where new areas of responsibility were agreed. The current Member Champions and their areas of responsibility were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Safety – Councillor Jean Rigby; • Equality, Diversity and Inclusion – Councillor Zamir Khan; • Health and Wellbeing – County Councillor John Singleton; • Road Safety – County Councillor Ron Woollam. <p>Reports relating to the activity of the Member Champions were provided on a regular basis to the Authority. This report related to activity for the period up to 17 December 2023. During this period all had undertaken their respective role in accordance with the defined terms of reference.</p> <p>Member Champions went through the detail of their reports and expressed thanks to the officers who supported them in their roles.</p>

County Councillor John Singleton highlighted the Peer Support Ambassador workshops for 28 members of staff (as detailed on page 130 of the agenda pack). He added that he had attended a meeting at Blackpool Fire Station where it was interesting to witness the emergency call out procedures and had recently joined the Christmas quiz at headquarters which was really well attended.

County Councillor Ron Woollam highlighted the continuing success of the team in delivering road safety events. Biker Down continued to be popular and the relationship with Bowker continued to grow with positive feedback received from sessions held (as detailed on page 131 of the agenda pack). CC Woollam added that results from a recent national study showed that 64% of all the treads checked put Lancashire in the top two areas where they were borderline or illegal. He also added that good feedback had been received for the Wasted Lives programme undertaken in support of International Men's Day.

Resolved - that the Authority noted the report and acknowledged the work of the respective Champions.

52/23

Fire Protection Report

The report summarised Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service prosecutions pertaining to fire safety offences under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety Order) 2005. There were currently three cases in the judicial system for offences with one set for trial in July 2024, one set for sentencing at Preston Crown Court in December 2023 and one plea hearing had recently been adjourned until January 2024.

Protection teams continued to investigate and build files in relation to further cases where offences were believed to have been committed, which involved a number of types of premises as outlined in the report.

Given the rapidly evolving regulatory change in building fire safety, an update on Fire Protection and Business Support was also provided, detailing how the Service was adapting delivery whilst developing its workforce, to ensure that it kept pace with the changes and improved public and firefighter safety within the built environment.

Members noted that since April 2023 there had been 1,977 business fire safety checks delivered, of which 1,702 (86%) had resulted in a satisfactory outcome, with 275 being deemed unsatisfactory resulting in follow up business safety advice. The protection department followed up activities which had resulted in three legal notices being issued, including the prohibition of two premises and around 100 informal letters issued to indicate fire safety improvements.

The new Building Safety Act came into force on 1 October 2023, requiring Responsible Persons of High-Rise buildings to register their building with the Building Safety Regulator (BSR). To date LFRS had been notified that only 30% of the county's relevant buildings had been registered. LFRS operated as part of the Northwest Region to support the Building Safety Regulator (the Health and Safety Executive) and had implemented a dedicated role within our Protection team.

	<p>Members also noted arson risk reduction included five cases of which three incidents involved youths, one defendant following a guilty plea to ‘arson being reckless as to whether life is endangered’ was sentenced to serve 2 years and 10 months in prison and one defendant who also pleaded guilty received five years imprisonment.</p> <p>Resolved - that the Authority noted the report.</p>
53/23	<p>Operational Incidents of Interest</p>
	<p>The Authority received a report that provided information relating to operational incidents of note since the last meeting. As this had been a very busy operational period, the report detailed only the larger deployments or more complex incidents. Full details of the following incidents were provided in the report:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Six fire engines attend a commercial building fire in Bamber Bridge; • Three fire engines attend a car on fire with persons trapped; • Ten fire engines attend a commercial building fire in Blackburn; • Four fire engines attend disused waste storage building in Lancaster; • Fire crews attend a fatal boat fire in Nateby; • Six fire engines attend a commercial building fire in Blackburn; • Four fire engines attend a fatal incident on the river Lune; • Fire crews attend a fatal house fire near Ribchester; • Ten fire engines attend a commercial building fire in Longridge; • LFRS attend a suspected explosive device in Burnley. <p>Resolved: that the Authority noted the report.</p>
54/23	<p>Member Complaints</p>
	<p>The Monitoring Officer confirmed that there had been no complaints since the last meeting.</p> <p>Resolved: - That the current position be noted.</p>
55/23	<p>Date of Next Meeting</p>
	<p>The next meeting of the Authority would be held on Monday 19 February 2024 at 10:30am at the Training Centre, Euxton.</p>
56/23	<p>Exclusion of Press and Public</p>
	<p>Resolved: That the press and members of the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business on the grounds that there would be a likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the appropriate paragraph of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, indicated under the heading to the item.</p>

57/23	Proceedings of Capital Building Projects Working Group
	(Paragraph 3) Resolved: that the proceedings of the Capital Projects Working Group be noted and its Terms of Reference be approved as set out in the report.
58/23	Urgent Business (Part 2)
	(Paragraph 3) Members discussed the process for claiming Member travel and subsistence claims and were reassured that a democratic services officer would be available to provide support as required.

**LFRS HQ
Fulwood**

**M Nolan
Clerk to CFA**