

Lancashire Combined Fire Authority

Lancashire Combined Fire Authority

Monday, 22 April 2024, at 10.30 am in the Washington Hall, Service Training Centre, Euxton.

Minutes

Present:	
Councillors	
D O'Toole (Chair)	
J Shedwick (Vice-Chair)	
L Beavers	
P Britcliffe	
S Clarke	
M Dad BEM	
N Hennessy	
D Howarth	
J Hugo	
T Hurn	
F Jackson	
H Khan	
Z Khan MBE	
J Mein	
S Morris	
M Pattison	
J Rigby	
P Rigby	
M Salter	
J Singleton	
D Smith	
R Woollam	
B Yates	

Officers
J Johnston, Chief Fire Officer (LFRS) S Healey, Deputy Chief Fire Officer (LFRS) S Brown, Director of Corporate Services (LFRS) B Warren, Director of People and Development (LFRS) E Sandiford, Head of Human Resources (LFRS) S Collinson, Head of Corporate Communications (LFRS) M Nolan, Clerk and Monitoring Officer to the Authority M Hamer, Area Manager, Prevention, Protection and Road Safety (LFRS) N Taylor, Area Manager, Head of Service Delivery T Powell, Area Manager, Head of Service Improvement (LFRS) K McCreesh, Group Manager - Community Protection Manager (LFRS)

L Barr, Member Services Officer	
In attendance	
K Wilkie, Fire Brigades Union	
71/23	Chairman's Welcome and Introduction
	<p>The Chair welcomed Members to the meeting.</p> <p>The Clerk undertook a roll call and reminded Members that the Authority was in the pre-election period (purdah).</p>
72/23	Apologies for Absence
	Apologies were received from County Councillors Graham Baker and Sean Serridge.
73/23	Disclosure of Pecuniary and non-Pecuniary Interests
	None received.
74/23	Minutes of Previous Meeting
	Resolved: - That the Minutes of the CFA held on 19 February 2024 be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.
75/23	Supa Skips Presentation
	<p>The Deputy Chief Fire Officer introduced Group Manager Kirsty McCreesh who had been invited to provide a presentation to Members on the incident at the former Supa Skips site in Lancaster.</p> <p>GM McCreesh advised that the location of the Supa Skips site was close to Lancaster City Centre, situated on an industrial site with residential properties nearby which had presented challenges during the incident. The building had formerly been a power station with additional buildings subsequently erected on the land surrounding the main building.</p> <p>The Environmental Agency (EA) had brought the building to the attention of Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service (LFRS) in February 2022 and shared information about the amount of waste being stored. A licence had been granted to store 500 tonnes of waste on the site, however, it was estimated that there were thousands of tonnes. Waste continued to be stored at the site even after EA prohibition and eventually, the site went into Liquidation. The Service was concerned over the impact a fire would have on the community and critical infrastructure, which was raised with partner agencies so that a multi-agency plan could be formulated.</p>

Partner agencies involved in pre-planning for a potential incident were Lancashire Constabulary, EA, United Utilities (UU), Lancaster City Council, and Lancashire County Council. LFRS led on the formulation of a tactical plan with input from all agencies and hosted a table-top exercise in October 2022. The table-top exercise facilitated discussion and planning around: The proposed hose route cutting off access to the city; Large volumes of run-off water that could enter combined drains which could overwhelm the pumping station and / or flood the water treatment works; The run-off water that entered the surface water drain could pollute the River Lune; the potential smoke plume could carry asbestos over the city and deposit on the Royal Lancaster Infirmary and the Lancaster Railway Station; Local residents, businesses, care home and schools could be impacted for several days.

Planning documents were shared on Resilience Direct so there was immediate access to partners and an Impact Statement was completed by LFRS. The Impact Statement included environmental impacts, impacts to the community, impacts on businesses, difficulties to fight a fire, and the cost to LFRS.

LFRS Actions included: -

- Agreed multi-agency plans for the occurrence of an incident.
- Increased pre-determined attendance.
- Sharing plans internally.
- Further planning which took place with UU and the EA in how best to deal with fire water run-off.
- LFRS being part of regular multi-agency meetings to monitor the risk.
- A letter of concern which had been sent to the Environment Agency and the Chief Executive of Lancaster City Council.

In September and October 2023, a number of fires occurred at the abandoned A1 Supa Skips site and a Major Incident was declared due to the risk. A Tactical Coordinating Group and Strategic Coordinating Group was assembled with multi agency representation.

On Sunday 3 December 2023, a fire started at the site and the first call to report the incident was received at 5.30am. Consequently, there was a quick 'Make Up' of Resources which comprised of 10 fire engines, 2 Aerial Ladder Platforms (ALPs), a High Volume Pump (HVP), the Hazardous Materials and Environmental Protection Unit (HMU), the Command Unit, and a Stinger. The drone unit also attended as part of the initial response to assist with situational awareness and was used on numerous occasions throughout the incident. Partner agencies were also in attendance at the incident. North West Fire Control (NWFC) ensured cover across the county by strategically moving fire engines and replacing resources.

The Service faced challenges with the significant quantity of compacted commercial waste and the small footprint of the site which made the standard firefighting tactics virtually impossible. The building had also been neglected for a number of years and the fire compromised the structure further which made accessing the fire very challenging. Additional challenges included waters supplies for the large quantity of water requires, disposal of the polluted water run off, and the smoke plume.

Solutions to the challenges included:

- The employment of demolition contractors to enable access by removing ancillary buildings, trees, and a sheet asbestos concrete wall. They also removed waste from the site for which Lancaster City Council paid nearly £1.5m (central government had reimbursed a significant six figure sum), and the EA contributed £65k.
- Regular assessment by a structural engineer aided the LFRS drone.
- The Long deployment of the High Volume Pump to supply water to the incident ground from the River Lune.
- A Waste Fire Tactical Advisor was requested through National Resilience.
- The application of a weak foam solution as a surfactant.
- Close working with the EA and UU to minimise pollution.
- The deployment of additional air monitoring equipment by Lancaster City Council in the vicinity around the site.

Drone footage at the site was useful for firefighting tactics as hotspots could be detected and the ALP directed to where water was needed. Another objective was to stop the fire spreading to other buildings.

Members were informed that large quantities of waste was removed from inside the building to allow firefighters to target pockets of fire. In March 2024, residual heat was still present within the building.

Over 50 calls to 999 were taken on the morning of 3 December 2023 and in the response phase, LFRS had a 24/7 attendance at the site until 22 December 2023 (20 days). The incident remained in the response phase, including regular inspection, until 5 April 2024 (125 days), and flare ups were dealt with throughout that time. All Wholtime fire engines in Lancashire attended the incident at some point with 52 out of Lancashire's 58 fire engines having attended.

Approximately 10,000 tonnes of waste was removed during the incident leaving approximately 1,700 tonnes on site. The remainder of the waste had been redistributed with fire breaks and the site had been secured by palisade fencing. The EA were preparing a prosecution case.

The Corporate Communications Team led on the communication throughout the incident and were praised for the regular updates. The structures for partnership working had already been in place and were positive, and the incident pre-planning had proved to be very beneficial.

Councillor Hugo noted there was one learning point and three positive points and asked GM McCreesh if there was anything that could have been done differently, to which GM McCreesh responded by saying it would have been better to have had improved conditions on site and with there being such a big risk it was frustrating, but this was reliant on other agencies. GM McCreesh added that she felt happy that the Service did a good job given the scale of what was involved.

County Councillor Mein offered congratulations and added that she understood frustrations were high given the premises had a licence for 500 tonnes of commercial waste and there was a considerably larger amount of waste on site and enquired if pressure could be placed on other agencies for regular checks to be undertaken. County Councillor Clarke added that he felt the Environment Agency

	<p>should be monitoring situations such as these more closely.</p> <p>County Councillor Singleton added that those responsible for enforcing stop orders should increase activity in the area.</p> <p>County Councillor Hennessy echoed Councillor Singleton's views and suggested that cross party support for a motion should be considered for the future. County Councillor Hennessy then asked if anybody had been injured on site, whether by smoke inhalation or by other means, to which GM McCreesh confirmed there were occupational health assessments but that there were no injuries.</p> <p>The Chief Fire Officer responded by stating that in the broader context, environmental crime caused challenges for all FRSs nationally, such as those seen with the recent example in Hyndburn and he and other leaders applied pressure nationally for other agencies to improve policing of the issue and protections.</p> <p>The Chair thanked GM Kirsty McCreesh for her presentation and also praised the excellent work and dedication of the firefighters involved in the incident. Members also expressed their gratitude.</p>
76/23	<p>Annual Statement of Assurance</p>
	<p>The Chief Fire Officer presented the report. The Fire and Rescue National Framework for England (2018) set out the Government's high-level expectations, priorities and objectives for Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs) in England. Included within the framework was the requirement that all FRAs must provide assurance on financial, governance and operational matters.</p> <p>The Statement of Assurance was considered by Members. It aimed to provide the required accountability and transparency to Lancashire communities and the Government that Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service (LFRS) continued to deliver efficient, effective value for money services.</p> <p>This statement sat alongside the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP), Statement of Accounts, the Annual Governance Statement, the Annual Service Plan and Annual Progress Report. It detailed what measures were in place to assure that the Combined Fire Authority's performance was efficient, economic, and effective and provided further evidence that LFRS continued to deliver under the expectations detailed within both the National Framework and its own Risk Management Plan.</p> <p>Resolved: - That the Authority approved the Annual Statement of Assurance 2022-23 as presented and approved the signing of this by the Chairman of the Authority and the Chief Fire Officer.</p>
77/23	<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>

- 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.

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 21 April 2024. During this period all had undertaken their respective role in accordance with the defined terms of reference.

County Councillor Singleton provided those present at the meeting with a copy of the Environment and Sustainability Promotional Calendar 2024/25, and he advised that a further calendar would be created for wellbeing following a meeting later in the week.

County Councillor Woollam thanked the team at LFRS for their success with the Road Safety Education Package, the Biker Down Course, and the Wasted Lives Education Package. He highlighted pertinent points in the report.

Councillors thanked staff within the Service for their work to help them within their respective roles.

County Councillor O’Toole echoed those thanks on behalf of members, adding that it was not always appreciated just how much work went on behind the scenes that Member Champions were involved in.

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

78/23

Fire Protection Report

The report summarised Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service (LFRS) prosecutions pertaining to fire safety offences under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety Order) 2005. There were currently three cases in the court system for offences with one set for trial in April 2024, one was set for trial starting in July 2024, and the third was set for trial starting in June 2025.

One case had now concluded and the landlord had pleaded guilty to six breaches of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. On 19 March 2024, sentencing took place where the landlord was sentenced to three months imprisonment for failure to comply with six articles of the Fire Safety Order and ordered to pay £10,414.51 in costs to Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service.

Protection teams continued to investigate and build files in relation to eleven further cases where offences were believed to have been committed, which involved a number of types of premises as outlined in the report. It was highlighted that LFRS Protection Department was also supporting a joint enforcement case with a local authority, Health & Safety Executive and Lancashire Constabulary regarding a complex mill converted to residential accommodation.

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 during the 23/24 performance year to end February 2024, there had been 3,112 business fire safety checks delivered. Around 428 had led to unsatisfactory outcomes and were triaged by Fire Protection teams during the period with both informal and formal enforcement taken.

LFRS continued to embed legislative changes which came into force from 1 October 2023 amendments of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, which had been introduced under Section 156 of the Building Safety Act 2022. These amendments required that all responsible persons must record the fire risk assessment in full (including the findings) along with the fire safety arrangements for premises in all circumstances.

The new Building Safety Act and Building Safety Regulator (BSR) continued to be developed. Following a competitive interview process, a new Northwest Regional Building Safety Manager had been appointed who would be hosted by Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service (GMFRS,) and would work directly with the LFRS newly appointed BSR lead.

LFRS built environment officers continued to pursue the principle accountable persons for tall buildings that had failed to meet their new legislative requirements by 28 February 2024.

To date, only 25% of Lancashire's 48 residential tall buildings had submitted all of the mandatory building information they were now legally required to provide both to the BSR and the local Fire and Rescue Service. Of the 75% that remained, a vast majority had submitted parts of the information but had failed to provide it all despite several requests. Following several engagements with responsible persons, LFRS would seek to formally request the provision of that information through proportionate use of the Fire Safety Order.

Members also noted arson risk reduction included: one case with one defendant who, following a guilty plea to 'arson with reckless' was sentenced to 18 months imprisonment; one case with one defendant who pleaded guilty to Arson with intent to endanger life and was sentenced at Preston Crown Court to 12 years imprisonment, and; two defendants that received youth cautions for an incident that involved fire in an outdoor timber play area at a Pre-School Nursery.

Resolved - That the Authority noted the report.

79/23

Operational Incidents of Interest

The Authority received a report that provided information relating to operational incidents of note since the last meeting. As the operational period had been very busy, the report detailed only the larger deployments or more complex incidents. As a result, some incidents that Members had been made aware of locally, may not

	<p>have formed part of the report. Full details of the following incidents were provided in the report:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Firefighters attended a Road Traffic Collision (RTC) in Tarleton, in which 2 people lost their lives. • 6 fire engines attended a commercial building fire in Lytham St Annes. • Fire crews attended a suspected chemical leak with multiple casualties in Clitheroe. • 8 fire engines attended a commercial building fire in Blackburn. • 8 fire engines attended a large fire in Clayton Le Dale, Ribble Valley. • 8 fire engines attended a commercial building fire in Blackpool. • 8 fire engines attended a derelict building fire in Chorley. • 6 fire engines attended a church on fire in Padiham. <p>Resolved: That the Authority noted the report.</p>
80/23	Date of Next Meeting
	The next meeting of the Authority would be held on Monday 24 June 2024 at 10:30am at the Training Centre, Euxton.
81/23	Exclusion of Press and Public
	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.
82/23	Extension of Appointment of Independent Person
	<p>(Paragraphs 1, 2 and 3)</p> <p>Members considered a report prepared by the Clerk and Monitoring Officer to the Authority concerning the appointment of Independent Person(s) in line with the Localism Act 2011.</p> <p>Resolved: - That the Authority noted and endorsed the extension of the appointment of one Independent Person for four years, following County Councillor Howarth's suggestion of a vote, which was taken by hands, which was a unanimous endorsement of the proposal.</p>

M Nolan
Clerk to CFA

LFRS HQ
Fulwood