

SOUTH YORKSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

9 JANUARY 2023

PRESENT: Councillor C Hogarth (Chair)

Councillors: S Sansome, T Smith, B Johnson, S Ball,
D Hutchinson, A Khayum, P Turpin, A Cherryholme, S Alston
and Dr A Billings

CFO C Kirby, DCFO T Carlin, S Kelsey, S Slater, P Heffernan
and AM M Gillatt (South Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service)

J Field, D Nuttall, S Loach, M Potter, D Thorpe and L Belli
(Barnsley MBC)

M Buttery (Office of the South Yorkshire Police and Crime
Commissioner)

IN ATTENDANCE

REMOTELY: C Winter
(South Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service)

Apologies for absence were received from: Councillor
T Damms, Councillor S Ayris, N Copley, S Ghuman and
S Norman

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were noted as above.

2 ANNOUNCEMENTS

Councillor Hogarth informed members that this would be J Field's last meeting and on behalf of the Authority and SYFR gave thanks and wished him well in the future.

3 URGENT ITEMS

Item 19 – People Director Post to be discussed in the absence of the public and press.

4 ITEMS TO BE CONSIDERED IN THE ABSENCE OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED – That agenda item 18 entitled 'Systel Current Financial Position Update' and item 19 entitled 'People Director Post' be considered in the absence of the public and press.

5 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS IN RELATION TO ANY ITEM OF BUSINESS ON THE AGENDA

None.

6 REPORTS BY MEMBERS

Councillor Ball informed members that he had visited Kiverton Park Fire with AM Gillatt and was pleased to inform that the fire was now extinguished. A question was raised as to what the Fire Service could do going forward to prevent further fires. In response to Cllr Ball, it was reported that meetings were to take place with the Fire Service, Local Authority and Environment Agency on how to leave the site as there was a substantial amount of waste remaining. Work was being undertaken with the site owner to advise on maintenance, responsibility and processes around the Environment Agency. An update meeting with residents had also been organised.

Councillor Sansome raised a query as to whether anything could be done to prevent or give greater control to the Environment Agency, Fire Service or Local Authority to prevent these fires from happening and to provide residents with some assurance that where they are living can be kept safe if near one of these facilities.

In response, members were informed that the current legislation does not allow the fire service to enforce the regulations around sites. However, they could take an action for discussion to the local Resilience Forum with a view to a joint letter across partner agencies, local politicians and MPs to lobby for a change in legislation. Members acknowledged that this situation was not unique to South Yorkshire and lessons learned from these incidents would be shared at a national level.

7 RECEIPT OF PETITIONS

None.

8 TO RECEIVE ANY QUESTIONS OR COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE PUBLIC, OR COMMUNICATIONS SUBMITTED BY THE CHAIR OR THE CLERK AND TO PASS SUCH RESOLUTIONS THEREON AS THE STANDING ORDERS PERMIT AND AS MAY BE DEEMED EXPEDIENT

None.

9 MINUTES OF THE AUTHORITY MEETING HELD ON 21 NOVEMBER 2022

CFO Kirby informed members that briefing sessions had been held, and continued to be held, with the 4 South Yorkshire Local Authority Chief Executives updating them of the situation around planned industrial strike action and where they were in the timeline and what the planned response would be to ensure continued service.

In response to the concerns Councillor Sansome raised regarding the financial settlement, S Slater responded by informing members that the settlement predicted was showing as a slightly better financial situation than had been forecast. S Loach informed members that due to the national re-evaluation of all business rates the Local Authority was unaware, at the time of the meeting, of the impact this would

have locally and on the fire authority funding. Once further details were known of more precise figures a briefing would be arranged to inform members.

CFO Kirby informed members that a Corporate Advisory Group Meeting was being held on 7th February 2023 to brief members on finance prior to a budget setting meeting to be held in at the full FRA meeting February 2023.

Councillor Hogarth queried how the settlement to the Fire Authority would be worked out given that each Authority would be eligible for different amounts from their business rates. In response, S Loach informed members that by law 1% is given to Fire Authorities from Local Authorities but that this figure was to be determined.

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Authority meeting held on 21st November 2022 be signed by the Chair as a correct record

10 COMMUNITY RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN 2021-2024

A report of the Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive was submitted which presented the annual review of the Community Risk Management Plan, 2021 to 2024.

An outline of the summary of updates were provided.

Councillor Sansome queried whether the evidence of findings from the period of intense weather that had been experienced in July 2022 would be integrated within the plan, and whether the findings would provide a clear picture of how to improve from the lessons learned.

With regards to the findings of the incidents faced on the 19th July 2022 and the prolonged heatwave, it had been agreed to take forward areas identified as part of the debrief process. The refresh captured updates on the wildfire programme and the successes. However, the 2024/2027 CRMP will cover in detail the Service response to likely prolonged incidents involving climate change. The Service were aware that resilience arrangements were being reviewed as part of this work.

In response Cllr Sansome asked whether all the information gathered would be integrated within the plan with a clear picture as to the findings and how improvements could be made from the lessons learnt.

In response, ACO Strelczenie commented that the next CRMP to be published for consultation in February 2024 for approval in April 2024 and would detail proposals around responses to climate change events which would include hot weather events.

Dr A Billings queried the lengthy timescale around acquiring electric vehicles and whether the strategy to install charging points would involve other bodies such as South Yorkshire Police.

ACO Strelczenie commented that 2 electric appliances were being trialled in London and Scotland and that legislation for larger vehicles would come into force in 2040. A further update would be provided in item 11 – Green Plan.

Members were provided with an update to home safety checks. They were informed that during the pandemic numbers had declined due to restrictions but that the visits were increasing and were at a similar number to pre-covid.

Dr A Billings enquired whether response times had been reviewed to attend freak fires caused by the extreme heat experienced in July 2022 and whether these fires had created a map of where fires generally happen.

In response ACO Strelczenie informed members that the weather experienced in July 2022 was unprecedented and whilst there was no freak events response times, there were stretch targets for the highest types of incidents which were monitored closely. Climate change event plans were in place and discussions were taking place for the forthcoming year should a heatwave occur. DCFO Carlin added that whilst a map of where fires had occurred had not been created, the Service did have this data and it can be turned into an incident map. In addition, data was being analysed in terms of any outliers such as a house fire in the hills. Members were informed that a community safety route would initially be taken followed by an emergency response if that proved not to be working. It was acknowledged that these events could become more frequent and the significant effects that the weather created in July 2022 highlighted that the Service did not have the level of resources on duty in normal circumstances to deal with the number of incidents. Work with the Fire Brigade Union was taking place to look at ways to stand up extra resources at short notice if required in the future. The SYFRA's ability to do this will support how the Service would deal with a high volume of calls associated with the significant weather events in July 2022.

It was highlighted by Dr Billings that efficiency savings had been omitted from the plan and concerns were raised as to whether it was intended to take future areas of growth out of the reserves.

Dr Billings was thanked for highlighting this issue and informed that the efficiencies plan would be taken away and further defined.

In response to a question received by Councillor Khayum around what the criteria is for home safety checks and how residents are chosen, AM Gillatt informed members of the various criteria. This included targeting those most vulnerable including age, number of people in the property, habits in the property such as drinking, smoking drug use, people who require oxygen tanks and with mobility issues. Work was undertaken with the Local Authority who provided data on people who have assisted bin collections or access Health and Social Care Services. Those residents visited who are deemed at very high risk can then be signposted to other agencies such as Smoking Cessation.

RESOLVED – That the contents be noted and the revised Community Risk Management Plan 2021 to 2024 (2023 refresh), be approved

11 GREEN PLAN

The Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive submitted a report presenting members with the Green Plan, the aim of which is to address the South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority's impact on the environment and climate change and committing the Authority to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to net zero carbon by 2040.

Members raised concerns as to the possible detrimental environmental impact of electric vehicles and whether hydrogen propulsion vehicles had been considered as an alternative.

Members were provided with a brief overview of the plan outlining what risks and challenges would be faced in reducing greenhouse gases. In response to councillors concerns, K Rocket informed members that for its reputation as a public sector organisation it would be expected to comply with the legislation mandated by Government. There would be a move to electric fleet vehicles by 2030 and larger vehicles by 2040. In addition to the measures outlined in the report, there would be encouragement to car share and cycle to work, manage water usage and biodiversity would be encouraged to reduce waste and recycling. It was acknowledged that there would be a need for people to understand what they are doing and why for it to work.

ACO Strelczenie informed members that 8 new diesel appliances had been ordered which were due to arrive shortly and a further 20 appliances over 4 years had been ordered all of which complied with euro compliance arrangements. It was noted that whilst London and Scotland had an electric appliance on trial with a run time of around 8 hours, their trial results would differ significantly to use in South Yorkshire as there are more rural areas. Conversations were ongoing with Fleet Managers, but electric vehicles would not be ruled out as technology would advance within the next 17 years.

Questions were raised as to what help was being given to land owners to deal with grass fires following the extreme heat in July 2022. They were informed that in collaboration with land owners, surveys were being undertaken which had shown that most fires had been caused by natural ignition. Regular patrols with landowners would be undertaken, met office monitoring and attending sites early to prevent spread. Campaigns would focus on communication and education within communities to aid prevention.

In response to a member question regarding insulation in Fire Authority buildings and whether it was up to standard, P. Fieldhouse informed members that investigations were ongoing and a report outlining the findings and solutions would be available by the end of March 2023.

Dr Billings raised concerns around the timescales of 2040 and enquired as to whether dates could be brought forward to raise ambitions. In response, ACO Strelczenie informed members that the Sustainability Committee produced and monitored the plan and that this would be raised in order to investigate reducing targets and timescales, but it was noted that a lot of dates were provided by the Government.

Councillor Ball raised the issue of the possibility of saving money and raising funds through electric vehicles' surplus electricity balance when not in use. P Fieldhouse informed members that investigations into the wiring infrastructure within SY Fire Authority buildings had been undertaken as it had been found to be deteriorating and insufficient to withstand the installation of charging points. They would be going out to tender in the near future for initial installation at South Yorkshire Fire HQ.

RESOLVED – That Members:-

- i) approve the Green Plan and associated documents;
- ii) confirm that the progress towards the Green Plan be presented at the Stakeholder Planning Board.

12 LFB INDEPENDENT CULTURE REVIEW

CFO C Kirby presented members with an Independent Culture Review commissioned by the London Fire Brigade (LFB). Members were informed that within the report were a number of proposed actions that the South Yorkshire Fire Authority Service intended to take following the review.

The review was established following the tragic death of a firefighter that had not long since passed their training who had taken their own life. The review was difficult to read and made clear that the conduct of some staff was not what was expected of a modern fire and rescue service. It was acknowledged that this would not be an isolated issue unique to London.

Members were asked to consider the report and recommendations in detail so they could be incorporated into the Service Improvement Plan which would be included in future plans in South Yorkshire. SYFRA have been asking all new starters and Senior Leadership Team to sign up to pledge to support the 3 behaviours of Honesty, Integrity and Respect. Plans to roll this out across all staff groups were in place for 2023.

Specific actions were set out within the report and included a gap analysis against 23 recommendations in the London Fire Brigade report, a staff survey to better understand employee experiences working with SYFR and the delivery of a staff communication campaign amongst other actions. A review of the current process for discipline and grievances in work would be conducted with a view to exploring work with an interdependent third party as an additional route for staff members to raise concerns about behaviours.

CFO Kirby expressed his commitment to ensure the matter would continue to receive the level of clarity it needed and was taken seriously. The members of staff who intend to go to work and harass and bully others would be dealt with consistently and are being given a simple message that this behaviour is unwelcome in the Service. The aim was to raise confidence within staff to report such behaviours and support would be sought from colleagues and Trade Unions for a unified response to this matter.

Members welcomed the report and recommended actions contained within the report. A query was raised as to what proactive measures were in place such as being able to raise issues of concern during an annual work review. They were informed that there was no specific item currently in the review but this would be looked into. Work was being undertaken around an anonymous complaints procedure to make it more accessible for staff uncomfortable raising issues direct and analysis of trends of staff movements within the service and whether there is a pattern in certain areas and finding out why.

Members raised a query as to how vexatious complaints would be dealt with and how people would be protected against a personal vendetta. They were informed that this would be a case of having a fair and robust process for dealing with both informally and formally.

In response to Dr Billings question as to whether an independent review had been considered for the South Yorkshire Fire Service, CFO C Kirby informed the Committee that within South Yorkshire they had looked internally with openness and honesty. It was acknowledged that there was still the need to look carefully at themselves as an employer and the anonymous staff survey would aid this review and that the experience of the people was more important than the reputation of the Service. If the survey reveals significant concerns a more detailed cultural review could follow.

RESOLVED – that Members approve the Services proposed actions in response to the review.

13 ANNUAL PLAN 2022/23 UPDATE

The Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive provided members with an update of the Annual Plan 2022/23. An overview of each priority was provided and it was felt that having 8 priorities in place helped to stay on track and it was believed that positive progress was being made in all the 8 priority areas.

RESOLVED – That Members noted the progress against the Annual Plan 2022/23.

14 INDUSTRIAL ACTION UPDATE

AM Heffernan provided members with update to the possible industrial action. A ballot had opened on 5th December, 2022 which was due to close on the 30th January, 2023. Following 2 weeks' notice the first possible date for industrial action to take place would be the week commencing 13th February, 2023. If the ballot was passed then it was unknown what the strike action would look like, previously strike action had varied including 2 hour ad hoc strikes or 8 days continuous action.

The South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority Industrial Action Business Continuity Plan (IABCP), which included a series of Acts and Regulations, had been reviewed and updated in August 2022 and was in place to enable the Service to deliver their statutory duties. Planning assumptions contained within the IABCP were based on Home Office expectations of for minimum service delivery. Priority

would be to maintain emergency response critical activities with impact in line with critical functions.

Contingency planning included:

- maintaining a pool of crew operatives, numbers had been bolstered in 2020 and 2022 with potential further recruitment in 2023.
- a pool of contingency crew drivers which was bolstered in 2022 with potential for recruitment in 2023
- a contract was in place with Securitas for Operational Incident Commanders for greater control
- continuous maintenance of skills training for contingency crews based on core requirements within legislation; and
- a range of deployment exercises had taken place at the training site in Handsworth with SY Fire and Rescue and contingency crews and drivers

Members heard how continued dialogue had taken place with National Resilience and the Home Office regarding industrial action preparedness from August 2022 to January 2023. Dialogue had also taken place with the military and how they could supplement what was already in place. The considered decision was that the benefits of working with the military would be minimal versus the arrangements that were already in place.

In the context of what was happening elsewhere in the Region, talks with partner Services in Yorkshire, Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire had shown a commonality approach of a robust reason for providing statutory provision with the work being undertaken already and not with military involvement. However, regular dialogue with Joint Regional Liaison Officer as to what intentions are for example if it rolls into summer, was to keep dialogue going should they be able to offer additional provision if required.

Things that had been undertaken in this period:

- Built on Industrial Action Plan Business Continuity Plan
- Intensive periods of consolidation training for contingency crew operatives and drivers
- Introduced a Governance and Support Structure
- Enacted the Business Continuity Crisis Team
- Industrial Action Planning Group
- Significant Task and Finish Groups which have tackled complex areas such as Risk Management and Insurance implications
- Recovery Group in place.

Further contingency group joint training exercise was planned for the end of January, 2023 with Fire Officers and Securitas incident commanders to explore deployment type exercises. Exercises were taking place weekly across all levels of the organisation as it had been found previously that the Corporate side steps up to deliver for a blended team approach.

Members asked in the event of a cross border incident, would these contingency plans continue and provide services across the border. In response, members were informed that Officers and Area managers would have dialogue across the region to make these decisions. Contingency crews had been trained on a number of scenarios including water rescue response.

Members queried whether the insurance paid for contingencies would cover a cross border incident. Members were informed that the insurance would be valid and that it was hoped that if a major incident occurred striking firefighters would return to work, but that this detail was still to be agreed in talks with Unions.

CFO C Kirby placed his thanks on record for the work being undertaken by the planning teams and the officers in the challenging tasks involved. It was also added that dialogue and correspondence from the Trade Unions had been excellent.

CFO C Kirby reiterated to members to members that there would be 3 key things to focus on:

- To continue to protect the South Yorkshire Community through the industrial action
- To respect the decision of members of staff no matter what they decide to do
- The recovery of relationships following periods of industrial action.

RESOLVED – That Members note the update.

15 DRAFT MINUTES OF THE AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE HELD ON 21 NOVEMBER 2022

RESOLVED – That Members noted the draft minutes of the Audit and Governance Committee held on 21 November, 2022.

16 KEY ISSUES ARISING FROM THE PERFORMANCE AND SCRUTINY BOARD HELD ON 17 NOVEMBER 2022

RESOLVED – That Members noted the key issues arising from the Performance and Scrutiny Board Meeting held on 17 November, 2022.

17 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED – That under Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act and the public interest not to disclose information outweighs the public interest in disclosing it.

18 SYSTEL CURRENT FINANCIAL POSITION UPDATE

A report of the Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive was submitted which provided Members with an overview of Systels current financial situation.

RESOLVED – That Members note the content of the report.

19 URGENT ITEM - PEOPLE DIRECTOR POST

A report of the Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive was submitted which provided Members with an overview of the policies and processes for recruiting to the People Director post.

RESOLVED – That Members approve the recommendation to ring-fence the recruitment and selection process for the post of People Director to the current Head of People and OD post holder.

No.	Action	Timescale	Officer(s)	Status/Update
1	To provide Members with a copy of the briefing for the active pension members regarding their pensions benefits.	In due course	S Kelsey	
2	To request that members of the Local Resilience Forum put together a joint letter across partner agencies and local politicians and MP's to lobby government to change legislation surrounding recycling plants	In due course	C Kirby	
3	To brief members prior to budget approval	In due course	S Loach	

	of the fire precepts expected for each South Yorkshire Area			
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CHAIR