

SOUTH YORKSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

20 NOVEMBER 2023

PRESENT: Councillor C Hogarth (Chair)
Councillor A Cherryholme (Vice-Chair)
Councillors: M Elliot, Chaplin, J Ridler, T Smith, S Ball,
K Wyatt, D Hutchinson, S Ayriss and S Alston

CFO Kirby, T Carlin, A Strelczenie, M Gillatt, S Locking, L
Haigh and S Kelsey (South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue)

M Potter, S Ghuman, D Nuttall, C Smallman and D Thorpe
(Barnsley MBC)

In attendance remotely: Dr A Billings

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence we noted as above.

2 ANNOUNCEMENTS

None.

3 URGENT ITEMS

None.

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 'Re-Tender for Provision of Contingency Officers' 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 updated Members on the leadership event he attended in Warwick stating it was a good event for networking for the Fire Authority.

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 9 OCTOBER 2023

Councillor Hutchinson commented that her apologies had not been noted in the minutes.

RESOLVED - That the minutes of the Authority meeting held on 9 October 2023 be signed by the Chair as a correct record.

10 UPDATED MEMBERSHIP OF THE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY 2023-24 AND APPOINTMENTS TO BOARDS AND COMMITTEES

D Thorpe presented the Updated Membership of the Fire Authority 2023-24 to the board, explaining that there were several vacancies to be filled.

Councillor Smith was voted as the new Chair of the Audit and Governance Committee.

Councillor Hutchinson was chosen as the new Chair of the Stakeholder Planning Board.

RESOLVED - That Members:-

- i) Noted that updated membership of the Authority for the municipal year 2023-24.
- ii) Appointed Members to Committee and Boards where vacancies exist.
- iii) Made any changes to the membership of Committees and Boards as required.

- iv) Appointed the Chair and Vice-Chair of each Committee and Board.

11 FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE REPORT QUARTER 2 2023/24

L Haigh presented the Financial Performance Report for Quarter 2 2023/24. L Haigh explained that in September 2023, the forecast outturn for 2023/24 financial year was a surplus of £0.0919m which was a favourable movement compared to the approved budget deficit for the year of £1.420m.

The budget deficit was approved to be funded from the Emerging Risk reserve; the forecast surplus would be a contribution to the reserve. The main reason for the reduced deficit was the £1.206m higher Section 31 grant funding for business rates relief and inflation and more from the collection fund than budgeted and a reduced wholtime pay forecast £1.253m.

The approved capital bid for 2023/24 was £9.651, increased in Quarter 1 for underspends in 2022/23 to £12.964m. In Quarter 2, capital plans were re-profiled for the medium-term financial plan and the 2023/24 budget forecast was revised to £8.931m.

The reserves were forecast to decrease to £18.551 by March 2024 which was less of a reduction than budgeted.

RESOLVED - That Members:-

- i) Approved the forecast outturn surplus of £0.0919m which was a reduction of £2.257m compared to the revised budget.
- ii) Noted that the underlying and significant financial risks and uncertainties facing the Service and Sector during the remainder of the financial year and into 2024/25 and beyond.
- iii) Noted the latest estimated change in General and Earmarked Reserves.
- iv) Noted the current position of the capital programme for the financial year ending 2023/24.

12 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2024 - 2027

L Haigh presented Members with the Medium-Term Financial Plan 2024 - 2027. The following key points were noted:

- Pay costs were assumed to inflate by 5%, 2% and 2% in 2024/25 and 2026/27 respectively. These would be subject to annual pay negotiations for both operational and non-operational colleagues.

- The current pay award for corporate staff for April 2023 was still pending.
- Non-Pay costs were assumed to inflate by 6%, 3% and 3% in 2024/25 and 2026/27 respectively, unless signed contracts with alternative mechanisms were held.
- Gross efficiencies were shown in the 2024/25 plan and did not reduce inflation or investments. If delivered, they would represent a 16% reduction when compared to the non-pay budget.
- The efficiencies for the final two years of that had been included at 2% of non-pay, the budgets had been reduced but the specific efficiencies were not yet identified.
- Revenue investments totalled £2.161m in 2024/25 and were included in the Medium-Term Financial Plan.
- The capital plan was refreshed when planning for the Medium-Term Financial Plan.
- It was assumed that loans would be taken out to fund the capital programme at £8-£9m per annum, totalling £26.078m for the total 3 years.
- Total reserves were expected to reduce from £18.551m produced in March 2024 to £15.187m by March 2017.
- The most significant risk to the Medium-Term Financial Plan forecast was uncertainty over government funding, firefighter pension valuation and non-pay inflation, further risks were outlined in the report.

Councillor Chaplin queried the vacancy factor of 4% asking if it was where the service would like to be. L Haigh explained that in year 1 there was no recruitment and the figures had been anticipated.

CFO Kirby added that in terms of the overall strategy the aims are to increase the strength of the people we employ with training and development, currently there are maximum of 18 people for each intake.

RESOLVED - That Members:-

- i) Approved the updated MTFP for the financial years 2024/25 to 2025/26 noting the assumptions on which it is made and the potential implications of the different funding scenarios for the operation service and future financial position.
- ii) Endorsed the proposed approach for managing reserves as set out in Section J to the report and the resulting reserves forecast.
- iii) Noted the revised profile of approved capital investments 2024/25 to 2026.27 and the approximate additional capital investment proposed in 2024/25 for which approval would be sought in the 2024/25 Budget and Council Tax Setting Report in February 2024.
- iv) Noted the known risks to the MTFP forecast and that other risks may emerge.

13 THE PROCUREMENT SERVICE - AN ANNUAL UPDATE OCTOBER 2022 TO SEPTEMBER 2023

L Haigh introduced the Procurement Service Annual Update which highlighted its activities and how it effectively supported the various aspects of South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue business.

Councillor Alston queried the information on page 59 around the number of waivers under Section 33, there were 12 during the timescales noted in the report she asked if the number was higher than average.

Officers explained that the figures were significantly lower than those in previous years as they were between 20 and 30. The figures were reviewed quarterly by the executive team.

L Haigh stated that she was happy to provide the Committee with a summary report to show members feedback on the waivers that go through the approval process. Dr Billings asked if the transparency code was up on the website. L Haigh stated that it was on the services website transparency page.

Members queried the use of YPO services and if it was used to its full amount. Officers stated that YPO was used as much as possible due to the ease of use, a review could be undertaken to ensure that it was used to the fullest extent.

RESOLVED - That Members:-

- i) Noted the contents of the report and endorsed the ongoing positive work of the Procurement Services team.
- ii) Approved amendments to Contract Standing Orders Part 5e (CSO) regarding the proposal to increase the tender threshold.

14 LOCAL PENSION BOARD ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23

D Thorpe presented the Local Pension Board Annual Report 2022/23 to Members. The Board contributed the three surveys in this municipal year:

- FPS Self-Assessment Survey
- The Pensions Regulator (TPR) Governance and Administration Survey
- Pensions Ombudsman Survey

The Board also provided its views to inform the Fire and Rescue Service's response to the McCloud/Sergeant Pensions Remedy: Phase Two Consultation.

Results from the survey were reported to the Board and Members of the FRA were assured that any issues pertinent to South Yorkshire's Local Pension Board were picked up and discussed further with a view to improving the way the Board operates.

RESOLVED - That Members noted the eight Annual Report of the Local Pension Board for 2022/23.

15 PEOPLE AND CULTURE BOARD UPDATE QUARTER 2

S Kelsey presented the People and Culture Update for Quarter 2. There were no new risks identified in the quarter and a strong emphasis on projects and programmes in the Authority. The Board would receive a full culture update in January 2024.

Dr Billings queried the information on page 92 of the report relating to occupational health and wellbeing. He asked if the medium number shown was a high figure or if any trends were apparent in the data.

S Kelsey explained that previously referral data had not been shared so the figures shown in the report had been noted to spot any emerging trends.

RESOLVED - That Members noted the contents of the report and provided further scrutiny and support to enable continuing effective management of people issues.

16 SERVICE IMPROVEMENT BOARD UPDATE

M Gillatt provided the Committee with the Service Improvement Board Update for Quarter 2.

Members queried if the corporate management board had the capacity to escalate risks if needed. CFO Kirby explained that risks would be escalated if needed.

Dr Billings queried the partially completed risks and asked if members should be concerned. M Gillatt stated that the completion estimates attached to some risks were on the cautious side, the risks were brought to the board and scrutinised to provide assurance and confidence that they will be completed within the correct timescales. ACFO A Strelczenie added that the team had worked extensively to ensure the completion dates were adhered to, any incomplete risks would require a report to highlight the reasons behind the non-completion which would be reviewed.

CFO Kirby stated that in terms of transparency and honesty, there was need to recognise the position South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue were in. Lots of work would need to be undertaken to make progress and improvements. The people needed to make the changes were also required to undertake other work which in turn reduced their capacity which was recognised internally. The need was for continuous progression but also patience. The deadlines shown were tight, but the service improvement board would in turn be flexible.

Councillor Alston asked if the due dates were realistic when set and if they could reflect badly on the service in the future. M Gillatt stated that the dates set always come to the board first for assessment, the aim was to set tight but achievable deadlines. All actions and progress were recorded electronically which would be shown during inspections.

RESOLVED - That Members noted the contents of the report and provided further scrutiny and support to enable continuous service improvement.

17 ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION IN THE ABSENCE 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

Members were invited to note the contents of the report outlining Systel's current position relating to their financial situation.

RESOLVED - That Members noted the content of the report.

19 RE-TENDER FOR PROVISION OF CONTINGENCY OFFICERS

The Committee were provided with an update on the re-tender position following the expiry of the current contract for contingency officers.

RESOLVED - That Members:-

- i) Noted the contents of this report for information.
- ii) Approved the award of contract to complete the tender process.

CHAIR