



Tuesday, 12 March 2024

(1) MEMBERS OF THE AVON FIRE AUTHORITY

Councillors B Massey, B Nutland, L Brennan, R Eddy, P Goggin, R Hardie, P Hulme, P May, Y Mohamud, R Moss, R Payne, M Riddle, O Saini, S Smith, J Stansfield, D Thomas, R Tucker, A Varney, D Wilcox and M Williams
Police and Crime Commissioner: CoopteeExpectedShortList
Independent Person: J Mason

(2) APPROPRIATE OFFICERS

(3) PRESS AND PUBLIC

Dear Member

You are invited to attend a meeting of the **Avon Fire Authority** to be held on **Wednesday, 20 March 2024** commencing at **14:00 hrs.**

The meeting will be held at **Main Conference Room (above Reception), Admin Building, Police and Fire Headquarters, Valley Road, Portishead, BS20 8JJ.** Parking is available on site.

In order to ensure COVID-19 guidance is adhered to risk assessments have been undertaken for live meetings to identify and put in place, the measures required ensuring that meetings take place safely. Further information is available on our website [Avon Fire Authority](http://www.avonfire.gov.uk).

Please note that this meeting will be video recorded and published on our YouTube channel (see the Notes on the next page).

Yours sincerely

Amanda Brown
Clerk to the Fire Authority

PROVIDING AVON FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE



Clerk to Avon Fire Authority
PO Box 37, Police and Fire HQ, Valley Road, Portishead, Bristol BS20 8JJ
Telephone 0117 926 2061 Extension 231 the.clerk@avonfire.gov.uk



Notes

Attendance Register – Attendance will be recorded by the Democratic Services Assistant and recorded within the Minutes of the Meeting.

Code of Conduct – Declaration of Interests: any Member in attendance who has a personal interest in any matter to be considered at this meeting must disclose the existence and nature of that interest at the commencement of that consideration, or when the interest becomes apparent. A Member having a prejudicial interest must withdraw from the meeting room or meeting whilst the matter is considered.

Contact: for any queries about the Meeting please contact Democratic Services on 0117 926 2061 ext. 231; or by e mail at the.clerk@avonfire.gov.uk; or in person at Police and Fire HQ, Valley Road, Portishead, Bristol, BS20 8JJ (by appointment during normal office hours only).

Emergency Evacuation Procedures: these will be advised at the start of the Meeting if appropriate.

Exempt Items: Members are reminded that any Exempt Reports as circulated with this Agenda contain exempt information and should therefore be treated accordingly. They should not be disclosed or passed on to any other person(s). Members are also reminded of the need to dispose of such reports carefully and are therefore invited to return them to the Clerk at the conclusion of the Meeting for disposal.

Inspection of Papers: any person wishing to inspect Minutes, Reports, or a list of the background papers relating to any item on this Agenda should contact Democratic Services as above.

Public Access: under Standing Order 21 and providing 2 clear working days' notice has been given to the Clerk (the.clerk@avonfire.gov.uk) any resident or representative of a business or voluntary organisation operating in Bristol, South Gloucestershire, Bath and North East Somerset or North Somerset Council may address the Fire Authority or one of its Committees (for no more than 5 minutes) by submitting a written petition or statement. If preferred, the Chair or Clerk can read out a written statement on the individual's behalf. There is a time limit of 30 minutes for all Public Access statements.

Reports: reports are identified by the relevant agenda item number.

Substitutes (for Committees only): notification of substitutes should have been received from Group Leaders by the Clerk prior to the meeting.

A G E N D A - Avon Fire Authority Wednesday, 20 March 2024
14:00

Pages

PUBLIC ACCESS STATEMENT - AVON FIRE AUTHORITY - 20 MARCH
2024

5 - 6

This page is intentionally left blank

Public Access Statement to the Avon Fire Authority meeting of 20 March '24

by Jenni Gwynne

Regarding the failed floor in the then relatively new Bedminster extension, the Finance Officer has stated that £222k of the £425k (revenue as opposed to capital) provision, created in 2017/18 for floor repairs, had been utilised up to the end of March 2023.

Avon Fire have still failed to answer, as AFA members requested in response to a previous Public Access Statement, how £222k (about £2k per square metre) could have been spent on these “various interim repairs” to the failed Bedminster extension floor when planning documents reveal the floor remained unrepaired, when the Bedminster Capital works to demolish and rebuild the extension commenced?

The Finance Officer also stated that they would reverse the remaining £203k provision if necessary, but has failed to do this in the accounts. So the accounts state that Avon intend to spend this further £203k on a repair to a failed floor that has already been rebuilt as part of the Bedminster multi-million pound capital works?

.....

In recent years, over £900k at least of Capital Expenditure has already been approved (with a large proportion already spent) for Weston Fire Station rebuild/refurbishment pre-construction costs including detailed planning before a site had even been identified and £500k, apparently to buy land.

And several hundreds of thousands of pounds has similarly in recent years been approved (with a large proportion already spent) for Bath Fire Station pre-construction costs.

Please could the AFA and the public be informed of the total of this authorised expenditure that has been spent and how much is carried forward and therefore the total of both which are in addition to the £7.5 million Avon are seeking approval of for the refurbishment of Weston Fire Station and £14.5 million for the rebuild of Bath Fire Station.

And please could the Property Department explain how a refurbishment can cost over £7.5 million (with an expected life of 25 years) when previously a total rebuild was estimated at about £4 million cost?

Can Avon Fire confirm how much of this £7.5m and £14m is for further pre-construction and non-construction costs such as project management during the works, payable to McBains and those other than the main construction company please?

Could Avon Fire also inform the AFA and the public how much more they plan to spend (whether brought forward or currently being sought approval for) on pre-construction or other elements of the major refurbishments or rebuilds of Weston and Bath Stations before Business Plans are presented to the AFA for approval to go ahead with these projects?

Presumably and understandably there are no AFA members with the knowledge necessary to assess whether the costs of the major refurbishment and rebuilding of stations are reasonable, but there is recently published guidance available on the approximate cost per square metre of Fire Station rebuilds: £2.2k to £2.9k per square metre of indoor space. It would be good for Avon Fire to provide the cost per indoor square metre of their rebuild costs for Bath Station, the refurbishment of Weston Station, which presumably should be significantly cheaper, and the part rebuild, part refurbishment of Bedminster Station.

And yes I have mentioned the following before, but these questions are presented in the additional context, that a tribunal found that Avon Fire had not shown that they answered the question of what £765k was actually for, that was apparently spent on land at Temple Back when no land was purchased around the time Temple Back Station was rebuilt. And both AFRS & the AFA did tell the tribunal that they would answer questions that had not previously been answered, which applies to this matter, and presumably is in line with their stated values of Transparency etc, so I hope AFA members will request this to finally happen, or state why this must remain a secret.

Preconstruction costs appear to have rocketed with just one of several purchase orders for McBains issued in October 2021 authorising expenditure of £1.5 million (Bedminster £215k, Bath £651k, WSM £634k), in addition to £370k already spent against an earlier Purchase Order re these 3 stations, and other purchase orders for McBains issued so over £2 million in total. With over £900k of this sum already paid to McBains to December '23.

.....

And regarding the Chief Fire Officers pay award, the CFO is already receiving £159,562, which is more than the 2024 minimum figures provided by the NJC Gold Book for CFO's of regions with much higher populations than Avon, and higher even than the minimum recommended for the CFO for London.

Assuming that the majority of the AFA don't reject the findings of the independent inspections of HMICFRS and other reports, that Avon is one of the lowest ranked Fire Services in regard to Culture and Delivery, shouldn't the AFA use its option to not reward failure, and use the above mentioned, pretty generous looking, NJC minimum salary, rather than accepting senior management's argument for using the average of what many regard as over inflated pay received by CFO's around the country?