



AVON FIRE AUTHORITY AND AGM

22 JUNE 2022

Present: Councillors N Butters, D Davies, B Hopkinson, R Jacobs, Y Mohamud, A Monk, B Nutland, R Payne, R Tucker, S Smith, A Varney and D Wilcox

The meeting began at 2 pm

1. RE-ELECTION OF CHAIR FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR

It was proposed by Cllr Davies and seconded by Cllr Jacobs that Cllr Massey be re-elected Chair of Avon Fire Authority for the 2022-2023 Municipal Year. There was a vote and it was:

RESOLVED – that Cllr Massey be re-elected Chair of Avon Fire Authority for the 2022-2023 Municipal Year.

2. RE-ELECTION OF VICE CHAIR FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR

It was proposed by Cllr Monk and seconded by Cllr Wilcox that Cllr Davies be re-elected Vice Chair of Avon Fire Authority for the 2022-2023 Municipal Year. There was a vote and it was:

RESOLVED – that Cllr Davies be re-elected Vice Chair of Avon Fire Authority for the 2022-2023 municipal year.

The Vice Chair advised that he would Chair the meeting in the absence of Cllr Massey. Best wishes were sent for a speedy recovery.

3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllrs J Ashe, S Bromley, E Brown, R Eddy, P Goggin, B Massey, P May and J Mason (Independent Person). Cllr A Ali did not send apologies or attend the meeting.

4. EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

Members were advised by the Chief Fire Officer (CFO) that in the event of an emergency, to exit the engine bay at the rear of the building and congregate in the car park.

Members were reminded that the meeting was being held in Weston-Super-Mare Fire Station, a working fire station and the crews may be called out at any time. The meeting would be paused in the event of a call out.

5. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

None advised.

6. PUBLIC ACCESS

None received.

7. CHAIR'S BUSINESS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and AGM and drew attention to the following:

1. The Chair confirmed that the meeting would take place as a face-to-face meeting. Due to the continuing need to be sensible due to the continued prevalence of COVID-19 we were continuing to film meetings, and the meeting footage would be recorded and uploaded to the Avon Fire Authority (AFA) website.
2. The Chair offered a warm welcome to the new Members who have joined the Authority - Cllrs Steve Smith and Andrew Varney. The Chair also thanked Cllrs Andrew Brown and Chris Windows for their work on the Fire Authority and wished them luck for the future. Thank you letters had been sent.
3. The Chair thanked Station Manager Paul Incedon and the crews at Weston-Super-Mare Fire Station for their help in arranging the earlier demonstrations and for accommodating the meeting.
4. The Chair reminded Members that they had recently been emailed asking for their views/feedback on the recent White Paper Consultation. Please provide responses no later than 11 July 2022.
5. The Chair reminded Members that they were invited to become a Fire Station Champion. Details of vacant fire stations and positions were advised and Members were asked to contact the Democratic Services Assistant (DSA).
6. Members were also reminded to complete their Register of Interest Forms and return to the DSA.
7. The voting arrangements for the meeting were as follows:
 - The Chair to ask for any votes against.
 - The Chair to ask for any abstentions.
 - The Chair to ask for a show of hands for Members voting "for".

8. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF AVON FIRE AUTHORITY HELD ON 30 MARCH 2022

The minutes were moved by Cllr Davies and seconded by Cllr Nutland.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Avon Fire Authority held on 30 March 2022 be signed by the Chair as an accurate record of the meeting.

9. MINUTES OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS

9.1 Ordinary Meeting of the Performance, Review & Scrutiny Committee held on 21 January 2022

The minutes were moved by Cllr Payne and seconded by Cllr Jacobs.

It was RESOLVED that the minutes of the Performance, Review & Scrutiny Committee held on 21 January 2022 be signed by the Chair as an accurate record of the meeting.

Items for Decision

10. APPOINTMENTS FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR 2022/23

The Clerk introduced the report which sought approval from Members to make appointments for the Municipal Year.

Appointments made by the Fire Authority generally lasted for a Municipal Year which runs from one Annual Meeting until the next. There are a range of appointments that the Fire Authority were required to appoint at the meeting.

The Clerk drew Members attention to the table of 20 elected Members on p30 of the pack along with the Committee structure on p31. The structure had been agreed by the political groups and new Members had moved into the vacant slots.

The recommendations were moved by Cllr Nutland and seconded by Cllr Butters.

It was RESOLVED that the Fire Authority:

- a) Allocated Members to the Fire Authority Committees (with the Committees to appoint their Chairs in accordance with paragraph 2.2 of Standing Orders). (Table at paragraph 3.2).**
- b) Appointed Cllr Brenda Massey as its representative on the Local Government Association.**
- c) Appointed Cllr Donald Davies as its representative on South West Councils.**
- d) Appointed Cllr Donald Davies as its representative on South West Councils' Employers' Panel.**
- e) Appointed Cllrs Steve Smith and Andrew Varney as Employer Representatives for the Local Pension Board.**

11. MEMBER INFORMATION 2021/22

The Clerk presented the report which provided details of Member attendance at meetings during the 2021/22 Municipal Year. It also provided information on the amount of Members' allowances and expenses paid in that Municipal Year.

The Clerk pointed out the table of expenses claimed did include the names of former Cllrs who had received payments during the 2020/2021 Municipal Year.

The recommendations were moved by Cllr Butters and seconded by Cllr Jacobs.

**It was RESOLVED that the Fire Authority:
Noted the report and authorised publication of the statistics at Appendices 1 and 2 on the Fire Authority website.**

12. RESERVE STRATEGY UPDATE

The Treasurer outlined the report to the AFA which provided an updated Reserve Strategy for the period 2022-2026. The updated strategy was based on the previously approved 2021-2025 Reserve Strategy and reflected movements in reserves and provisions which had taken place up to the end of 31 May 2022.

In accordance with the Fire and Rescue National Framework, the AFA were asked to review the updated Reserve Strategy on an annual basis and publish their Reserve Strategy on their website, once approved.

The Treasurer had undertaken a review with the Service Leadership Board (SLB) to ensure value for money and to maximise reserves to fund the 3-year capital programme.

A Member asked a question regarding the reserves forecast - the £16.4m spent on important projects had left a projected reserve balance of £3.3m, what were the Service's plans to replenish the reserves. The Treasurer drew Member's attention to Appendix 2 and the financial summary. SLB and the Treasurer had carried out a review in May, going through every legacy reserve to understand whether they were still required or appropriate. They were able to increase the earmarked capital reserve significantly. External funding for the capital programme will no longer be required in 2023/24, which is positive news. This will be reviewed at the next Capital Prioritisation and Steering Group meeting.

A Member enquired why the Service is carrying a reserve to mitigate the impact of Immediate Detriment (ID) but by 2026 were still expecting to be carrying that same reserve and not to have spent it. The Treasurer stated that she thought this particular item was undertaken on an optimistic view on the basis that this paper was brought to the Fire Authority at the same time as the ID paper and was not intended to make any assumptions in respect of the decision that the AFA would make today on the ID paper. Therefore, the Treasurer and Finance Team will consider the ID provision further outside of this meeting and bring back to the Avon Fire Authority October meeting.

The CFO asked Members to note Appendix 2, in respect of the PFI equalisation fund which equated to £1.2 of the £3.3m, this contract was not due to end until 2028. Therefore, this will remain in the reserve strategy.

The recommendations were moved by Cllr Tucker and seconded by Cllr Jacobs.

It was RESOLVED that Avon Fire Authority

a) Approved the 2022-2026 Reserve Strategy

b) Agreed for the approved 2022-2026 Reserve Strategy to be published on the website.

13. HMICFRS ACTION PLAN

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Service Delivery (ACFO, SD) presented the report to the Fire Authority on behalf of the HMICFRS Liaison Officer.

The four remaining outstanding actions from the Round 1 inspection action plan have been carried forward into the Round 2 action plan (two as standalone actions and two assimilated into new Round 2 actions) to ensure continued corporate focus on all agreed actions.

As the Round 2 inspection report did not include any new formal recommendations (as either a cause of concern or Area For Improvement), Avon Fire & Rescue Service (AF&RS) had not been subject to the formal 56 working day deadline to develop and submit a new action plan to HMICFRS. However, given the benefits of the process developed for monitoring and scrutiny of our HMICFRS inspection action plan during Round 1, these arrangements would be maintained during Round 2.

The Performance, Review & Scrutiny Committee (PRSC) approved the draft plan for publication at their meeting on 21 April 2022. The draft plan will again be on the agenda of the PRSC on 15 July for discussion.

It was noted that the HMICFRS had provided recognition for the progress that the Service had made and for the completion of actions from previous rounds.

A Member referred to p71 and the update on software and systems. He asked that an update on how the Service delivers on software and PORIS be considered by PRSC. Cllr Wilcox confirmed that he is the Member IT champion and is working closely with the IT team.

The recommendations were moved by Cllr Monk and seconded by Cllr Butters.

The Fire Authority:

Noted AF&RS' Round 2 HMICFRS inspection action plan.

14. 2022/25 TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY UPDATE

The Treasurer presented to the Fire Authority, the proposed Treasury Management Strategy for the period 2022/2025 as shown in Appendix 1. The strategy was based on the previously approved 2021/2024 Treasury Management Strategy and provided an updated position for the AFA.

The majority of the Treasury Management functions had been undertaken on behalf of the Fire Authority by Bristol City Council (BCC), working with the Head of Finance and Treasurer, in accordance with the terms of the Financial Services Contract. BCC provided all of the financial indices and financial forecasts which support this Treasury Management Strategy. Whilst BCC provided the Fire

Authority with its Treasury Management services, the Fire Authority has overall responsibility for the implementation and regular monitoring of its Treasury Management policies and practices.

The Treasury Management Strategy is largely driven by the approved 2022/2025 Capital Strategy, where external borrowings were expected to be required to fund the majority of the planned capital programme. The Treasurer will work with SLB to explore all other internal funding sources, including reserves and the updated position will be reported to the AFA during 2022/23.

The Treasurer thanked the Finance team and the BCC Finance lead for their help updating this strategy.

A Member asked for clarification of paragraph 25 of the Strategy, to leave deferred borrowing as late as possible or to use reserves first (unless there is a significant risk in a rise in interest rates). The Treasurer responded by advising that inflation had risen to 9.1%. It is necessary to balance resources where the Service had internal resources (reserves) which have no cost to the AFA and deciding which funds are available to support the 3-year capital strategy. This will be reviewed over the next 6 months, with assistance from SLB and the Finance Team and this will be reported back to Members.

Following a question about current loans and the repayment of loans in 2030 by earmarked reserves, the Treasurer confirmed that the Service does have available resources to repay these loans.

A Member referred to paragraph 34 of the Strategy concerning ethical investments and asked what progress had been made. The Treasurer advised that this was discussed at SLB last year and that it was important to look at the ethical issues which the AFA had signed up to. She has discussed this with BCC and feels in the main they are working ethically. However, she couldn't give a 100% re-assurance of their investments and lenders. The Treasurer asked for Members to email her if they had any specific questions and concerns, and she would contact BCC on their behalf.

The recommendations were moved by Cllr Smith and seconded by Cllr Monk.

**It was RESOLVED that the Avon Fire Authority:
Approved the Treasury Management Strategy for 2022/2025.**

15. FIRE AUTHORITY MEETING DATES AND FORWARD PLAN 2022/23

The Clerk presented the report to the AFA and asked Members to approve the proposed schedule of meetings for the Municipal Year 2022/23. In addition, the Clerk presented a revised Forward Plan of Key Decisions, which set out the anticipated major decisions which will need to be taken by Members in the immediate future.

It was clarified that AFA meetings would begin at 14.00hrs and committee meetings at 10.30hrs. It was also confirmed that meetings would take place

around the four Unitary Authorities, but also at Headquarters and in fire stations. If Members had an idea for a venue, please contact the DSA.

The recommendations were moved by Cllr Monk and seconded by Cllr Payne.

It was RESOLVED that the Avon Fire Authority:

- a) Approved the proposed Schedule of Meetings for the Municipal Year 2022/23.**
- b) Noted the revised Forward Plan 2022/23.**

16. ANNUAL REVIEW OF SERVICE CHARGES 2022/23

The Fire Authority received the report from the Head of Finance who asked for approval of proposed charges for 2022/23 requested in line with Section 18A of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, which allows a Fire and Rescue Authority to charge a person for any action taken by the Authority (with limits on charging set out at section 18B).

The amount of charges is set by AFA for each financial year and must ensure that the Authority's income from charges does not exceed the cost to the Authority of taking the action for which the charges are imposed. The charges have been increased by 3% from 2021/22 to 2022/23 in line with our inflation assumptions within the Medium-Term Financial Plan.

The Head of Finance advised that the rate of charges had stayed the same for the last few years and AF&RS had increased charges due to inflation.

The Clerk drew Members attention to the recommendation in the report and that the changes took effect from 1 April 2022 and not 2021.

In response to Member's questions:

1. The Head of Finance advised that she had compared our charges with neighbouring authorities, which were mainly similar to Avon. There was little movement in charges generally.
2. The CFO advised that cost recovery was down to a Service's operational discretion and vulnerability aspect. A commercial business may be able to access other services but we may charge in certain circumstances.
3. In respect of whether the charges reflect the true cost of calling out an appliance, the CFO advised that the charges are set yearly, and fuel fluctuation and energy costs would be taken into account.
4. It was advised that BCC had recently purchased diesel in advance of the price increase. The CFO advised that fuel stocks around the Service area are mainly for business continuity purposes and that large stocks were not held.
5. The CFO advised that in respect of false alarms and auto dials requests, where there is no risk to life the Service would challenge the call. In the event of repeat calls, this will be referred to the Fire Protection Officer.

The recommendations were moved by Cllr Tucker and seconded by Cllr Mohamud.

**It was RESOLVED that the Avon Fire Authority:
Approved the charging structure set out in Appendices 1 and 2 with effect from 1 April 2022. That the charges be levied in full in all cases but power be delegated to the Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive to remit the whole or part of the charge if, in all the circumstances, he considers it appropriate to do so.**

17. 2021/22 REVENUE FINANCIAL REPORT

The Fire Authority received a report from the Treasurer which provided the final Revenue budget results for 2021/2022.

In line with the 2021/2022 Annual Budget approved by AFA in February 2021, this report outlined the final revenue financial position as at 31 March 2022.

The Finance Department, worked closely with BCC, via the BCC Financial Services Contract, who were in the process of producing the draft Statement of Accounts for 2021/2022. The draft Statement of Accounts will be reviewed by the Treasurer, before sharing with the Audit, Governance and Ethics Committee (AGEC) on the 29 June 2022.

The Fire Authority's External Auditors will review these draft Statement of Accounts in detail from July to October 2022, to enable the audited Statement of Accounts to be presented to AGEC in November 2022, which is in line with the national accounts' deadline.

When the audited Statement of Accounts have been approved by AGEC, the accounts will be shared on the Fire Authority's website.

The Treasurer advised Members that Appendices 1 and 2 reflected a balanced position for the year. She thanked the Finance team for their contribution.

**It was RESOLVED that the Avon Fire Authority:
Noted the final Income and Expenditure position for the Revenue Budget.**

18. IMMEDIATE DETRIMENT UPDATE

This report was taken after Item 11 on the agenda.

The Director of Corporate Services (DoCS) briefly outlined the current position of the AFA on Immediate Detriment (ID).

The AFA had deferred a decision on whether to adopt the Local Government Association (LGA) and Fire Brigades Union (FBU) Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and Framework pending further information and clarification of the financial implications. However, they had decided to continue processing ID for forthcoming retirees under the arrangements agreed by AFA in June 2021 after the Home Office removed support and funding in November 2021. Therefore, Members had agreed, as the scheme manager, to process ID for those coming up to retirement by adjusting their lump sum and annual pension back to legacy scheme levels. The next consideration of the AFA was due to be

Autumn 2022 where the Framework could be further reviewed and considered as some of the tax issues may have then been resolved through secondary legislation.

DoCS advised that she had brought ID back to Members earlier than planned as there had been some key developments since the AFA meeting in March. She added that the paper had also been jointly prepared by the Statutory Officers as the key developments are financial and legal in nature.

The DoCS then updated the AFA on ID developments since their meeting on 30 March 2022. In view of recent developments, the report provided Members with two potential options, a temporary cessation in ID processing, or a continuation of the current provision with a further review in the Autumn. The developments since the March AFA meeting were then outlined.

HM Treasury (HMT) had responded to the Scheme Advisory Board to clarify their concerns about the tax implications of progressing with ID in advance of the legislation, with those financial implications falling to the individuals and local budgets. These implications were set out in the paper. HMT also recognised the difficulty of the situation and that the decision rested with scheme managers. The DoCS advised that some aspects of the HMT note appeared less relevant to the current processing arrangement of AFA because they seemed to relate to those who have already retired, but some are particularly relevant to our current process for forthcoming retirees. There is also the issue of tax relief – HMT had established that they may deem members are not entitled to tax relief on their 2015 contributions scheme and this tax relief would be removed. Individuals would have to pay and the AFA would be required to compensate the difference in tax relief.

In addition, if the HMT considered that the lump sum should not have been paid tax free under the 2015 scheme, it could then become taxable. There could be tax liability on the individual which in turn could mean additional costs for the AFA.

It was also identified that both the LGA and HMT had added a caveat that there are other potential unidentified tax issues which will need to be compensated and paid from local budgets.

In addition, the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) had indicated that the National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) had received legal advice following the HMT update, but which has not been shared. The legal advice had been summarised by NPCC that scheme managers should not implement ID at this time as there is no legal mechanism to pay without undue risks.

As a consequence of these developments:

1. NFCC issued a letter to CFOs warning of significant financial consequences if Members and FAs continued to go ahead and the implications on local budgets. They also recognised that this was a scheme manager decision.

2. A number of services have temporarily suspended ID processing until the legal position and financial liability to local budgets becomes clearer, but some are continuing to process forthcoming retiree cases.
3. FBU have advised that they intend to raise claims if ID is not implemented rather than their members having to wait until October 2023 for this issue to be resolved.

All parties recognise that this is a difficult position for employees and also scheme managers and employers who are left carrying the legal and financial liability for both proceeding with ID, or for not proceeding.

The LGA had issued guidance on 20 June including a 'ready reckoner' which could be used by scheme managers to calculate the potential cost of adopting the LGA/FBU Framework. This guidance had been received after the papers for this AFA had been published. DoCS had briefly reviewed the LGA guidance and advised that this would be a considerable piece of work for the AFA to run and that the assumptions upon which this is based are heavily caveated. The 'ready reckoner' is based on the AFA adopting the LGA and FBU framework, which is not the current position in this Authority, and therefore it may need some adaption and modification. This will take some time to work through and the Head of Finance and Treasurer would also be involved.

The DoCS read out the recommendations for the paper and then outlined the impact on scheme members and numbers:

1. So far, 18 people had been able to retire on ID terms and 13 since the Home Office guidance and funding was withdrawn.
2. There are approximately 10 people who could request ID in the period between July and the end of October 2022, of which 4 had already given their intention to retire, with 2 due to retire in July. As 12 weeks' notice is required for an ID retirement, the majority of those wishing to retire in this period would have already given their notifications. This forecast was based on the pattern so far of ID retirements coming though for those age 50 with 30 years pensionable service. A worst-case scenario would be if those leaving after 25 years pensionable service were intending to retire under ID in this period, which would increase the number potentially impacted by the pause to around 30.
3. Impacted scheme members (retired and not retired) will have their pensions resolved and back dated by October 2023 and in the interim, they are in receipt of their pensions.
4. October 2023 was a long time away and it remained an important matter to staff.
5. Legal costs of any claims made against the Service in respect of ID would also be a financial burden to the Service.

The Clerk added for the benefit of the new Members, when the original AFA decision was taken in June 2021, the Fire Authority received a very detailed advice from a QC, which recommended a cautious approach.

The Clerk has not been able to go back to counsel for further advice as he had sadly passed away. However, there had been significant legal changes since his advice (set out at paragraph 7.3). Further advice had not been obtained as it was hoped that the NPCC would provide sight of their legal advice, but this has not been received.

The Treasurer added that the DoCS had provided a clear summary of the pertinent and financial issues. However, a robust methodology would be needed to be able to make future decision and costings.

Members agreed that it was correct to consider the financial risk to the AFA as the employer, and for the employees who may be liable for tax implications. The DoCS agreed that the situation was not the employees' fault and as such they would expect to be compensated for charges and costs which would have not otherwise occurred and the Home Office position meant those costs would now, very likely, fall to local budgets. She confirmed that the latest information was that secondary tax legislation would be advised in Autumn 2022 which may assist with resolving the tax implications ahead of the October legislation, but this was yet to be confirmed. By October 2023 all legislation was expected to be in place. In addition, there had been lobbying to encourage the Government to bring forward the timetable, but that had not yet resulted in any decision.

The DoCS clarified that, if the AFA took the decision to pause ID processing pending further financial information, the recommendation was to continue to process the 4 employees currently in the pipeline as they were advanced in the process and were taking their decision to retire based on legacy scheme retirement estimates. There could be potentially another 6 who could retire but had not declared their intentions, 12 weeks' notice should be given.

A Member asked for the financial difference for an individual between retiring with ID or not. DoCS explained that this had been set out in a previous paper to the Authority and that a firefighter retiring at aged 50 and after 30 years pensionable service without ID applied would receive their 1992 annual pension of £17,991 and a gross retirement lump sum of £143,932. In addition, in respect of the 2015 scheme, a deferred annual pension of £1,553 and a gross retirement lump sum of £6,215. If ID is applied, the pension would be paid fully under the 1992 scheme, and the increase would be a pension of £19,748 plus a gross retirement lump sum of £157,987. It was noted that this was an example for a firefighter and that each person's circumstances was individual.

The Clerk confirmed that the legislation due in October 2023 would fix the situation and everyone would receive what they were entitled to.

The CFO added that this was a complex, sensitive and emotive subject from an employee and industrial relations perspective. The AFA were in a difficult position and had a choice to make which complied with the determination of the tribunal and also the lack of legislative guidance. He would prefer to maintain our current procedures but there is a lack of clarity and a risk to the AFA. He would prefer that the AFA continues processing under ID for the four individuals mentioned. He suggested that a pause be put in place to allow for a review of the ready

reckoner to see if this would help but also allow us to review any tax changes or receive clarity around tax which is expected in the Autumn and would provide information to determine our next steps.

A Member asked for clarification that the legislation due in October 23 would not be delayed. It was explained that this remained the communicated intention of the Government at this time.

It was agreed that it was reasonable to continue to process the 4 individuals on ID as they had based their decision to retire on this.

The Clerk advised that she had not yet had an opportunity to read the documentation received, but it was very clear that the issues would be resolved by October 2023 at the latest.

A Member asked how many employees took their pension at full level in the last year. The DoCS advised that 18 forthcoming retirees in the ID group had been able to retire on legacy scheme annual and lump sum benefits due to the AFA decision to enable this, and of those 18, 13 were processed after the guidance and funding was withdrawn by the Home Office on the 29 November. In addition, there would have been routine retirements for those unaffected by previous transition to the 2015 scheme who would also have retired on full legacy scheme terms.

A Member enquired about neighbouring authorities. The Clerk advised that she had reached out to the Fire Lawyers Network. 5 responses had been received, 3 decided to pause all processing and 2 had decided to continue processing category 1 cases but not those who had already retired. The Treasurer had reached out to the Fire Treasurer Network. 4 responses were received, 3 had decided to defer and one Service had continued with category 1 cases.

A Member enquired how employees felt about the situation. The CFO advised that this was a sensitive topic, the Service is talking to staff and trying to resolve issues but there is a lack of clarity and information about the financial risks for the AFA. The Service was also trying to maintain positive industrial relations, but it is difficult to navigate through and determine the course of action.

A Member pointed out that the guidance received is changing frequently. If the Service can gain clarity on the financial implications for continuing ID processing prior to 5 October, then an extraordinary meeting should take place to move matters on.

The recommendations were moved by Cllr Nutland and seconded by Cllr Smith.

It was RESOLVED that the Avon Fire Authority:

- a. Noted the developments since the Fire Authority meeting on 30 March 2022. Those developments include (i) HM Treasury letter to Firefighters' Pensions (England) Scheme Advisory Board, dated 23 March 2022, and (ii) National Fire Chiefs Council letter to Chief Fire Officers dated 25 March 2022.**

- b. Decided to temporarily ‘pause’ the current arrangements for processing of Immediate Detriment cases until the Authority are better able to calculate the financial liability on local budgets, informed by the Local Government Association ready reckoner and guidance. The pause is with immediate effect, but the Fire Authority confirms that firefighters already in the pipeline to retire under Immediate Detriment between July and September 2022 are still able to do so. The number in the pipeline (and therefore having given notice to retire under ID) was advised to be four.**
- c. Once the cost liability has been estimated (and/or if there are further developments or clarity regarding the processing of Immediate Detriment cases which requires a reconsideration of this issue), Officers should arrange an Extraordinary Meeting of Avon Fire Authority, rather than wait for the next scheduled meeting in October 2022.**

19. 2021/22 CAPITAL PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Fire Authority received a report of the Treasurer which provided the final Income and Expenditure position on the 2021/22 Capital Programme to 31 March 2022.

The summary showed capital expenditure of £3.994m and a year-end underspend of £4.714m (54% of the total approved budget).

The majority of the underspend against the approved budget related to the Fleet Capital Budget (£2.879m – 61%). This underspend mainly related to delays in the build of Type B appliances (£2.465m) following global supply issues arising, in part due to, the COVID-19 pandemic. The spend for these fire appliances will now be incurred in later years as per the agreed 3-year Capital Programme.

The Premises budget showed a final underspend of £1.077m against a projected underspend of £634k. This was due to the ongoing work on the Bath and Weston developments in relation to further exploration of potential site relocation (Weston) and achieving a tri-service facility (Bath) with ambulance and the police. There was also a need to ensure the design of new stations would take future needs into account.

In response to a Member’s question, the temporary Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Service Delivery Support (t/ACFO SDS) confirmed that there were a number of reasons for the underspend in fleet. The appliance replacement programme showed that our average appliance was now 7.1 years old and we needed to replenish our type B appliances. There was a delay on all appliances due to issues manufacturing the vehicle chassis and then for completion of the remainder of the bodywork. A commitment of £410,000 had been made to our ancillary replacement programme. There had been a global shortage of semi-conductors which had impacted the delivery, but we had received 6 transit vans which are currently in our workshop. The Fleet manager had reported that there were significant delays experienced across fleet in all businesses.

The ACFO Service Delivery (ACFO SD) drew Members attention to Appendix 3 and advised as recently discussed in the recent Member Strategic Engagement Forum (MSEF), the reasons behind the premises underspend had been communicated by the Property manager. He reassured Members that it was anticipated that these projects would be back on track within this financial year.

He reported that Avonmouth fire station was due to be completed within this financial year. With regards to Weston-Super-Mare fire station, land searches were being made to source potential sites and analysis was expected to be brought back to the AFA later this year. Discussions were ongoing concerning a multi service venue at Bath fire station and the current design phase underspend will be used in this forthcoming year.

A Member asked about the involvement of the South West Ambulance Service (SWASFT) at Bath fire station. The CFO advised that the Service had been wanting to speak to SWASFT for some while. It appeared that their estate management timing does not meet ours.

A Member asked for an update on Bath and North East Somerset Council (B&NES) and the potential movement of their emergency planning capability. The CFO advised that the estates team were constantly in touch seeking collaboration and discussions are ongoing in respect of space requirements and whether space would be rented or part of the ongoing building discussions.

A Member commented that the Transformation team did not appear to be spending their budget. The t/ACFO SDS advised that the budget set aside in February 2021 by the AFA was to cover 3 years of spending from 2021-24. There would be a significant spend for the FireWatch programme coming up.

A Member asked whether Officers had been reassured by the Fleet Manager that the agreed price for appliance had been 'set in stone' and that there would be no variance in cost. The t/ACFO SDS advised that the vehicles are ordered at a set price up until the vehicles arrive.

A question was asked whether the delays could result in additional expenditure in the event of our current aging fleet, requiring repair work. The CFO re-confirmed that the average age of our fleet was 7.1 years and we could slightly extend this if required. The average age of appliances would be 7.5 years once the replacements arrive but we also have a reserve fleet if required.

A Member asked about the implications of cancelling our orders with the chassis and bodywork companies. It was also asked how reliable the companies used would be to deliver and if AFA were to go elsewhere would there be a cost implication. The CFO advised that this was a supply and demand concern and he had been assured by the Fleet Manager and the industry that this was a short-term issue. The chosen chassis was manufactured by Volvo who had not indicated that they would pause manufacturing. The body work had been ordered from Emergency One, who are used by many FRS. They are well-established coach builders with multiple orders on their books – the Service had not received any indication that there was a risk.

It was agreed that a report would be submitted by the Heads of Fleet and Procurement to the PRSC in Autumn/Winter 2022 to address the implications of fleet and equipment delays and costs along with any potential risks. Procurement and the Head of Fleet would provide this report.

The Fire Authority:

Noted the final income and expenditure position on the 2021/22 Capital Programme and reviewed key issues to provide the required assurance on the approved Capital Programme.

20. SERVICE ROUND UP

The Fire Authority received an information report from the ACFO, SD which highlighted areas of good work across Avon Fire & Rescue Service (AF&RS), which had taken place between March and May 2022 including:

1. In April, AF&RS took on a 48-hour challenge to run and cycle 1823km, which is the distance between the UK and Ukraine, to raise funds. £7,100 was raised towards the Red Cross Ukraine Appeal.
2. In May, the Vulnerable Adults team in conjunction with South Gloucestershire Council hosted a welcome event at Yate for refugees from Ukraine. This was a great success and headlined our services available to access.

Members thanked AF&RS staff for everything they do for their communities.

It was RESOLVED that the Avon Fire Authority note the report.

21. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was RESOLVED that Avon Fire Authority noted the date of the next meeting as being 5 October 2022 at 14.00hrs.

22. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

The recommendation was moved by Cllr Davies and seconded by Cllr Nutland.

It was RESOLVED that the public be excluded from the meeting during the following items of business on the grounds that they contained exempt information pursuant to Schedule 12A, Part 1 of the Local Government Act 1972 and that in accordance with Schedule 12A, Part 2, paragraph 10 of the Local Government Act 1972 the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

23.1 CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF THE FIRE AUTHORITY MEETING HELD ON 30 MARCH 2022

23.1 - Confidential Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Avon Fire Authority held on 30 March 2022.

The minutes were moved by Cllr Payne and seconded by Cllr Wilcox.

It was RESOLVED that the confidential minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of Avon Fire Authority held on 30 March 2022 be signed by the Chair as an accurate record of the meeting.

24 CONTRACT AWARD - SOFTWARE RESELLER FOR THE PROVISION OF MICROSOFT LICENCES

The Fire Authority received a report from the Head of Procurement which outlined that the Fire Authority's contract for the provision of Microsoft Licencing was due for renewal in April 2022.

The meeting closed at 16.40hrs

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Chair