

## **MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE POLICY, RESOURCES AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE**

**HELD ON 24th JULY 2014**

### **Present:**

Councillor David Acton (Chairman), Councillor Tommy Judge (Vice-Chairman), Councillors John Bell, Lynda Byrne, Basil Curley, Derek Heffernan, June Hitchen, Barrie Holland, John O'Brien, Stella Smith, Michael Whetton, Paul Wild and George Wilson

Also in Attendance: Steve McGuirk (County Fire Officer & Chief Executive), Tony Clarke (Strategic Finance Manager, Wigan Council), Paul Argyle (Director of Emergency Response), Ged Murphy (Director of Finance and Technical Services), Peter O'Reilly (Director of Prevention and Protection), Donna Parker (Democratic Services Manager), Gwynne Williams (Deputy Clerk and Authority Solicitor) and Shelley Wright (Director of Corporate Communications)

### **7. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Walter Brett and Fred Walker.

### **8. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> June 2014 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

### **9. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor David Acton had been granted a dispensation by the Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Independent Person to participate and vote at meetings of GMFRA and any committees in matters relating to North West Fire Control Limited. This was granted on the grounds that Councillor David Acton had been appointed a Director of the company to represent GMFRA. Without the dispensation the Member with the most knowledge would be unable to contribute to the consideration of contracts relating to the company. This relates to 'Minute 16 – GMFRS North West Fire Control (NWFC) Transition Project'.

### **10. URGENT BUSINESS - GORTON MONASTERY PROJECT**

Consideration was given to an urgent report of the County Fire Officer and Chief Executive which sought approval to support in principle the proposal for GMFRS to contribute up to £250,000 to the Gorton Monastery 'Sharing the Story' project and associated Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) bid. The investment would provide a unique, dedicated community space in Gorton

Monastery and would extend interactive learning the 'hub and spoke' type approach in the Gorton and North East Manchester area.

A letter of support had been drafted and subject to approval would be forwarded onto Gorton Monastery to accompany the HLF Stage 2 Bid Application. HLF funding was expected by the end of 2014 with site work commencing by late summer 2015 and anticipated opening time of autumn 2016.

Recommended: That:

1. The content of the report and comments raised, be noted.
2. The letter of support from the County Fire Officer and Chief Executive for the Gorton Monastery HLF Bid, as detailed at Appendix 1 of the report, be approved.

#### **11. MINUTES OF MEETING FRIDAY, 4 JULY 2014 OF POLICY STANDING SUB-COMMITTEE**

The Committee received the Minutes of the Policy Standing Sub-Committee held on 4<sup>th</sup> July 2014.

Resolved: That the proceedings of the Policy Standing Sub-Committee held on 4<sup>th</sup> July 2014, be approved.

#### **12. BUDGET MONITORING QUARTER 1: REVENUE AND CAPITAL**

Consideration was given to a report of the Treasurer which set out the position of expenditure against the Revenue and Capital Budgets at the end of the first quarter for 2014/15 (Appendix 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 of the report refers). In addition, the report provided a projection of the anticipated outturn for the year. At the end of Quarter 1, a revenue underspend of £1.219m was reported with a projected outturn underspend of £1.553m. The position on the Pension Top Up Account maintained by the Authority showed a projected underspend of £0.271m. Any under or overspend would be dealt with by adjusting the level of government grant that was received in future years so there was no impact on the balances.

The report explained that Manchester City Council had been providing professional support to the project during the pre-construction phase of the Bury Operational Training Site project. As the scheme moved to the construction phase, it was proposed to retain the services of Manchester City Council, with budgeted costs of £0.100m (included with the scheme budget). Therefore, approval was sought to suspend Contract Standing Orders in respect of the appointment of Manchester City Council to provide professional support to the construction phase of the Bury Operational Training Site (paragraph 29 of the report refers).

In conclusion, the projection of revenue spend was based upon the 3 months activity for the financial year. The predicted position reported as part of this first quarter monitoring should provide assurances that the necessary processes were in place to ensure that the efficiencies that have been scheduled would be delivered. The continued delivery of the efficiencies helped underpin the financial future of the Authority and evidenced that the Authority's financial management systems remained sound. It was important that any potential impact upon the medium term financial plan (MTFP) and balances was recognised at this early stage. Balances at 31 March 2014 were £19.158m and underpinned the medium term financial strategy.

Members welcomed the informative report and a series of questions were raised with regards to the cost associated with the current Industrial Action being taken and the impact this would have on the Service, the underspend for revenue pension costs, the budget strategy for 2015/16 and sustainability targets going forward. These questions were answered accordingly by Officers.

Recommended: That:

1. The content of the report, comments raised and the projected year end variations, be noted.
2. The current position on the capital programme, be noted.
3. The suspension of Contract Standing Orders in respect of the appointment of Manchester City Council to provide professional support to the construction phase of the Bury Operational Training Site, be approved.

### **13. TREASURY MANAGEMENT: 1ST INTERIM REPORT**

Consideration was given to a report of the Treasurer which presented the Treasury Management: 1st Interim Report. The purpose of the report was to review the operation and exercise of delegated Treasury Management powers during the first three months of 2014/15 and considered the prospects for the remainder of the financial year. The report also reviewed the credit ratings of the organisations with which the Authority could place its surplus funds and explained how the lending list was drawn up.

Capita Asset Services, the Authority's Treasury Consultants had undertaken a review of the interest rate forecasts from September 2014 to June 2017 which included a first increase in Bank Rates in Quarter 1 of 2015, a copy of the 2014/15 Cashflow Forecast as at 30<sup>th</sup> June 2014, was detailed at Appendix 2 of the report, for Members' reference.

Recommended: That the Treasury Management: 1<sup>st</sup> Interim Report for 2014/15, be accepted.

#### **14. GREATER MANCHESTER FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE EMPLOYER DISCRETIONS - STATEMENT OF POLICY LOCAL GOVERNMENT PENSION SCHEME**

Consideration was given to a report of the County Fire Officer and Chief Executive which detailed the Authority's policy on the exercise of additional discretions under the Local Government Pension Scheme (Transitional Provisions, Savings and Amendment) Regulations 2014, following changes to the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) which came into force on 1st April 2014.

In addition, in accordance with the governance arrangements previously approved, it was recommended that the delegated authority of the County Fire Officer and Chief Executive was extended to include the exercise the discretions as detailed in the report in accordance with the Policy. Under the arrangements decisions made to exercise discretions 'in exceptional circumstances' were to be reported back to Policy Resources and Performance Committee on a six monthly basis.

Recommended: That:

1. The content of the report and comments raised, be noted.
2. The policy recommendations on the exercise of each of the discretions, as detailed in the report, be approved.
3. The delegated authority of the County Fire Officer and Chief Executive be extended to include the exercise the additional discretions in accordance with the Policy and the arrangements to report back the exercise of discretions 'in exceptional circumstances' to the Policy Resources and Performance Committee on a six monthly basis.

#### **15. DCLG CONSULTATION ON THE REGULATIONS TO INTRODUCE A NEW FIREFIGHTERS' PENSION SCHEME FROM APRIL 2015**

Consideration was given to a report of the County Fire Officer and Chief Executive which advised of the Department for Communities and Local Government's (DCLG) Consultation on the regulations to introduce a new Firefighters' Pension Scheme from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015.

The consultation ran for six weeks from 23<sup>rd</sup> May to 4<sup>th</sup> July 2014. GMFRS submitted a response to all aspects of the statutory consultation by this date. A copy of the full consultation was reproduced at Appendix 1 and a copy of GMFRS response at Appendix 2 of the report.

Recommended: That the GMFRS response to DCLG's Consultation on the regulations to introduce a new Firefighter's Pension Scheme from April 2015, be noted.

#### **16. GMFRS NORTH WEST FIRE CONTROL TRANSITION PROJECT**

Consideration was given to a report of the County Fire Officer and Chief Executive which provided an update on the recent transition of GMFRS Control function to the North West Fire Control.

It was reported that the new Control facilities went live for GMFRS on the 28<sup>th</sup> May 2014 and GMFRS Control Room had been closed down which had resulted in 25 staff transferring to the new NWFC under TUPE arrangements and a further 21 staff leaving the organisation with a settlement agreement. NWFC was now using a state of the art mobilising system which incorporated best of breed technology and used automatic vehicle location to ensure that appliances were mobilised with greater accuracy. All systems were resilient and dovetailed with Fire and Rescue Services (FRS') own systems to ensure that appliance and officer availability was accurately reflected and incident information was accessible within individual FRS' to assist with incident management on scene, within the Command Support Room and also other key locations as required. Work to further enhance systems and functionality was on-going and working groups to carry out this further development work were being put in place.

The Chairman reported that a Member visit had taken place in conjunction with Cheshire Fire and Rescue Authority to provide an opportunity for GMFRS Members to meet with Members from Cheshire Fire & Rescue Authority to view the new facilities at NWFC, now it had gone live. The visit took place on Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2014 and was hosted by Steve McGuirk, County Fire Officer and Chief Executive at GMFRS and Paul Hancock Chief Fire Officer at Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service.

Following the visit Members requested further details on the roster patterns that were currently being worked at NWFC with particular regard to the 12 hour shift. In response, the Director of Emergency Response advised that the current roster was demand led, therefore, ensuring that the correct number of staff were in place at the busier times of the day, moving away from the 15 hour night-shift which Control staff used to work at GMFRS Control. A meeting was taking place with Control staff in August 2014 regarding this issue with an open mind to adjusting the current work patterns, if required. Members would be advised of the outcomes of this meeting accordingly.

Recommended: That the content of the report and comments raised, be noted.

## **17. COUNTY GUARD UPDATE**

Consideration was given to a report of the County Fire Officer and Chief Executive which detailed how GMFRS had and were responding to industrial action called by the Fire Brigades Union (FBU); in order for the Fire and Rescue Authority to meet its statutory obligations to date.

Members were advised of the strike action including Action Short of Strike to date. On all strike dates a minimum of 22 fire appliances were deployed

across the strike periods and a whole range of incidents were successfully dealt with. The timings of the strike action were intentionally designed to disrupt contingency arrangements and maximise inconvenience so this change of tactic was disappointing. However, the commitment of the Emergency Fire Crews (EFCs) and Emergency Fire Crew Drivers (EFCDs), as well as the non-striking personnel, had been outstanding and ensured that resilience had been maintained within Greater Manchester. No further strike dates had been call to date. However, on 21st July 2014 from 1900 until further notice industrial action short of strike, namely a refusal to undertake voluntary overtime, non-contractual overtime or additional hours would be taking place and a refusal to 'act up'. This would mean that appliances would be unavailable due to a lack of available staff.

The Chairman on behalf of the Committee took the opportunity to thank all Officers involved in the implementation of County Guard for all their hard work and commitment during this difficult time. The Committee requested that this message was passed directly to all staff involved.

Recommended: That:

1. The content of the report and comments raised, be noted.
2. The policy decisions previously adopted and detailed in paragraph 4 of the report, be noted.
3. The activities undertaken in order to mitigate the risks associated with Industrial Action, be noted and commended.

CHAIRMAN