

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
FIRE COMMITTEE**

HELD ON 9th FEBRUARY 2018

Present:

Councillor David Acton (Chair)	(Trafford)
Councillors Mohammed Ayub	(Bolton)
Councillor Walter Brett	(Stockport)
Councillor Jillian Collinson	(Salford)
Councillor Joan Grimshaw	(Bury)
Councillor Jane Hamilton	(Salford)
Councillor Derek Heffernan	(Oldham)
Councillor Barrie Holland	(Tameside)
Councillor Tommy Judge	(Manchester)
Councillor Afia Kamal	(Manchester)
Councillor John O'Brien	(Wigan)
Councillor Shaun O'Neill	(Rochdale)
Councillor Michael Whetton	(Trafford)
Councillor Steve Williams	(Oldham)

Beverley Hughes (Deputy Mayor (Policing and Crime))

Officers in Attendance:

Paul Argyle (Strategic Advisor to the Mayor and Deputy Mayor on Fire and Resilience)

Dawn Docx (Interim County Fire Officer)

Andrea Heffernan (Director of Corporate Support)

Clare Monaghan (Assistant Director Police, Crime, Criminal Justice and Fire)

Donna Parker (Governance and Scrutiny)

Richard Paver (Treasurer)

Sarah Scoales (Acting Head of Planning and Performance)

Sarah Keaveny (Communications Manager)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Kathleen Houlton (Wigan).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Shaun O'Neill (Rochdale) declared a Personal Interest in Item 4 – Terms of Reference by virtue of being appointed to sit on the Local Government Association for the 2017/18 municipal year by Rochdale Council (Minute 4 refers).

Councillor Shaun O'Neill (Rochdale) declared a Personal Interest in Item 5 – GMFRS Revenue and Capital Budgets for 2018/19 by virtue of receiving a

Firefighters Pension from Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service (Minute 5 refers).

3. CHAIR AND DEPUTY MAYOR (POLICING AND CRIME) ANNOUNCEMENT

The Chair and the Deputy Mayor (Policing and Crime) welcomed Member's to the first meeting of the Fire Committee.

4. FIRE COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE

Resolved: That the GMCA Fire Committee's Terms of Reference, be noted.

5. GMFRS REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGETS FOR 2018/19

Consideration was given to a report of the GMCA Treasurer which advised that the Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Authority was abolished on 7th May 2017 and its functions were now exercisable by the Mayor. The Fire and Rescue Service budget was now part of the Mayoral General Budget and the report detailed the GMFRS budget for 2018/19.

It was reported that in December 2017 the Mayor announced his intention to postpone some elements of the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) for a period of 12 months, including the proposed reduction in the number of appliances operating out of specific stations across Greater Manchester. In financial terms the current year underspend of £5.5- £6m was being used to fund overtime at time plus half for an initial 6 month period to firefighters to allow crewing levels to be achieved (£2.6m) and to put on hold the withdrawal of pumps for 12 months (£3.24m). In addition, as the Service continued to have a significant number of vacancies, the current attraction and recruitment efforts were to be enhanced to bring numbers closer to establishment.

Pay award for operational staff was included at 2% for 2018/19. The pay award for 2017/18 for operational staff had not yet been finalised, however, 1% was paid in December 2017 at the Employer's request. Pay award for support staff was included at 2%, albeit the pay claim was not yet settled. Fees and charges had been increased in line with inflation, with the pay related charges increased by 2%.

Sharing of overall GMCA costs had delivered savings for GMFRS (£0.5m) who were providing a number of support services across a wider base of users. The previous Medium Term Financial Strategy did not assume an increase in future precept beyond the increase in 2017/18, therefore, in relation to the Mayoral General Budget, specifically Fire, the Mayor proposed that the level of precept relating to the Fire Service, as part of the overall General Precept, remain at its current level (£59.95 at Band D).

A Member requested clarity on the attraction and recruitment efforts to bring numbers closer to establishment and would this reflect the communities within Greater Manchester. In response, Interim County Fire Officer advised

that the last two trainee recruit cohorts represented 50% of the underrepresented groups in Greater Manchester and it was the intention to continue to attract underrepresented groups to join GMFRS. It was essential that recruitment was accelerated due to the significant number of expected retirements.

Members and Officers had a detailed discussion on the underspend and how this was being used to fund the payment of overtime to firefighters for a six month period including the budget forecast for year end.

Resolved: That the proposed GMFRS Revenue and Capital Budgets for 2018/19, be noted.

6. GREATER MANCHESTER FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE PERFORMANCE UPDATE - QUARTER 3, 2017/18

Consideration was given to a report of the Interim County Fire Officer which provided an update on the GMFRS Performance Update for Quarter 3 2017/18. The report provided a view of performance for each of the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) against forecasted target and variances when compared to Quarter 3 of 2016/17.

The Committee were informed of the main headlines which advised that there had been a total of 3214 fire incidents attended during Quarter 3 this year which represented a reduction of 234 (6.7%) when compared to the same period in 2016/17. There had been 55 incidents of hostility towards firefighters reported during Quarter 3, a significant increase when compared to the same period in 2016/17 when 22 incidents were reported. A total of 7838 Safe and Well visits had been made to homes across Greater Manchester this quarter, that was a small reduction of 27 when compared to the 7865 completed during Quarter 3 2016/17. The overall sickness absence level in Quarter 3 was 4.92% that was above the 3% target and a 1.128% increase when compared to the same period last year. An increase had been observed in both uniformed and non-uniformed employees. It was sadly reported that during Quarter 3 six people had died in fires and four of the individuals were involved in the same incident.

Members welcomed the informative report and a number of questions and comments were raised on the increase in false alarms and the work taking place with local hospitals to keep these instances down, the increase in hostilities and the work taking place with other agencies, such as Greater Manchester Police, to reduce these attacks moving forward.

Reference was made to the increasing trend in wheelie bin fires and the work that was taking place with partners and local authorities to tackle issues associated with anti-social behaviour and the environment agencies in relation to refuse collections and fly tipping, such as reporting refuse when it had been discarded prior to a fire occurring. It was noted that there had been an increase in the number of accidental dwelling fires, the majority of these continue to be in the kitchen. There had also been a number of recent

incidents involving white goods. One Member asked if the type and make of white goods was recorded by the crews when these incidents occurred. In response, Sarah Scoales advised that this was not always possible depending on the extent of the fire, however the Service were developing an information sharing agreement with Trading Standards to enable this kind of information to be shared and where appropriate acted upon.

It was reported that the GMFRS carbon footprint was 5% lower over the last Quarter compared to Quarter 3 2016/17, which remained in line with the Sustainability Strategy target to reduce greenhouse emissions by 50% by 2020. Members welcomed this achievement and suggested sharing this good news story with the local authorities to share best practice.

Resolved: That: The Quarter 3 2017/18 Performance Update and comments raised, be noted.

7. FIRE COMMITTEE WORK PLANS

Consideration was given to a report of the Deputy Mayor (Policing and Crime) which supported the development of Work Plans for the Fire Committee. It was reported that in order to provide effective advice to the Mayor, the Fire Committee would develop and implement agreed Work Plans.

The Fire Committee was invited to identify ways in which they wished to develop Work Plans in areas referenced within the report and Appendix 1 of the report detailed a Working Planning table that was partly populated to support the process. The Committee welcomed the Work Plans and made the following suggestions:

- The expectation for Members to meet regularly with their Borough Command Teams should be included within the 'Skills, experience and responsibilities of Members';
- 'Sprinklers' should be considered as a potential work area with specific reference to planning applications for new developments in the local authorities;
- To ensure that the Committee meeting dates synchronise with specific reports relating to the budget and performance.

It was reported that an updated version of the Working Planning table would be submitted to each meeting of the Committee and the Chair and Clare Monaghan would meet prior to the next meeting of the Committee to discuss and populate the table accordingly.

Resolved: That the Work Plans are developed by the Fire Committee in accordance with the report.

8. HIGH RISE SAFETY UPDATE

The Chair advised that since the Mayor established the Greater Manchester High Rise Taskforce, Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service (GMFRS)

had carried out fire safety audits in all of the 480 residential high rise premises within Greater Manchester. 292 buildings had action plans in place and revisits had been taking place to ensure agreed interim measures had been implemented. In addition, GMFRS were also pulling together a risk-based inspection plan for the 200 plus non-residential high rises and the 254 identified hospitals/care homes/schools.

It was reported that clarity was still required around non-ACM cladding which may be non-compliant and Paul Dennett, Chair of the of the Greater Manchester High Rise Task Force and City Mayor of Salford had written to Sajid Javid MP, Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government to prioritise and progress the testing of non-ACM cladding.

The Task Force had also set out plans to develop a new approach to fire safety, including a feasibility study into the retrofitting of sprinklers in residential high rises, a consistent Greater Manchester approach to fire safety, and a call for the fire and rescue service to be consulted at all stages of a building's life cycle. Several Councils including Manchester, Salford, Stockport and Wigan had announced plans for feasibility studies with a view to retro-fitting into blocks where they had responsibility.

Greater Manchester had also submitted evidence to the government's independent review of building regulations and fire safety. The submission called for a ban on flammable cladding and an overhaul of the planning process to put fire safety at the heart of building design and construction.

In December, the Task Force welcomed the interim findings of the Hackitt Review as a positive first step on what was a complex, however, critical journey and had since written to Dame Judith Hackitt outlining how Greater Manchester wish to work with her on the identified working groups to progress this work.

The emerging issues in the media around the cost of interim measures being passed on to private leaseholders was discussed. A tribunal recently found against the residents of the Fresh building in Salford, who were facing a tripling of their service charge to pay for 24 hour fire wardens and other interim measures.

The Committee welcomed the informative update and took the opportunity to thank staff within GMFRS for the excellent work and speed in carrying out fire safety audits in all residential high rise premises within Greater Manchester.

Members requested clarity on if GMFRS were still in the process of purchasing two Aerial Hydraulic Platform Vehicles. In response, Andrea Heffernan advised that this purchase had been included in the budget and from the date ordered it would take approximately 12 month until delivery.

Resolved: That the update and comments raised, be noted.

9. HER MAJESTY'S INSPECTORATE OF CONSTABULARY AND FIRE & RESCUE SERVICES (HMICFRS) TIMETABLE

The Chair reported that in July 2017, the Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) extended its remit to include inspections of England's fire & rescue service to assess and report on the efficiency, effectiveness and leadership of the 45 fire & rescue services in England.

The HMICFRS had confirmed that Suffolk, Staffordshire and West Yorkshire fire and rescue services would be participating in pilot inspections that were due to take place during Spring 2018. A letter had since been sent to all fire and rescue services advising of the services in each tranche. Greater Manchester was scheduled for Tranche 2 – Autumn/Winter 2018.

Dawn Docx reported that work had already commenced to prepare for the inspection and that the Fire Committee would be involved in the preparation.

Resolved: That the update and comments raised, be noted.

10. FIRE PLAN DEVELOPMENT

Consideration was given to a report of the Assistant Director for Police, Crime, Criminal Justice and Fire which advised that it was the intention to produce a 'Fire Plan' on a similar model to the current 'Police and Crime Plan'. This would be a strategic document that would sit above the Corporate Plan and IRMP and would not include the detail of these documents.

Dawn Docx and Clare Monaghan would visit the ten local authorities to deliver the document as part of a consultation and discussion process and the proposed timescale was early summer for consultation.

Members of the Committee asked if they could also attend the visit to the local authorities to support the consultation on the 'Fire Plan' in their local areas.

Resolved: That:

1. The update and comments raised, be noted.
2. The Fire Committee received an update on the proposed 'Fire Plan' in due course.

11. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS 2018

It was agreed that the Chair of the Committee and the Deputy Mayor (Policing and Crime) to plan future meeting dates for the Committee.