



Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BUCKINGHAMSHIRE AND MILTON KEYNES FIRE AUTHORITY HELD AT THE OCULUS, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNCIL, ON WEDNESDAY 16 FEBRUARY 2021 AT 11 AM.

Present: Councillors Bagge, Carroll, Chapple OBE, Clarke OBE, Darlington (part), Exon, Hall, Hopkins, Lambert (part), Marland, McLean (part), Rankine, Stuchbury, Waite and Walsh

Officers: M Osborne (Deputy Chief Fire Officer), G Britten (Director of Legal and Governance), M Hemming (Director of Finance and Assets), S Wells (Head of Prevention, Response and Resilience), S Tuffley (Head of Covid 19 Preparedness and Response), A Carter (Head of Technology, Transformation and PMO), F Mansfield (HR and Advisory Manager), K Nellist (Democratic Services Officer)

M Parr (Her Majesty's Inspector of Fire and Rescue Services) and K Richardson (HMICFRS, Service Liaison Lead)

Remotely: J Thelwell (Chief Fire Officer), M Hussey (Principal Accountant), Sean Cunningham (Group Commander Head of Operational Training & Assurance) C Bell (Head of Protection, Assurance and Development) and S Gowanlock (Corporate Planning Manager) and D Henderson (HMICFS)

Apologies: Councillors Christensen and Hussain

Recorded Broadcast:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCWmIXPWAscxpL3vliv7bh1Q>

The Chairman welcomed Matt Parr, Her Majesty's Inspector of Fire and Rescue Services and Kathryn Richardson HMICFRS, Service Liaison Lead, who were joining the meeting for Item 10, together with Damian Henderson who was joining the meeting remotely.

The Chairman mentioned Area Commander Steve Wells who was retiring, and this would be his last full Authority meeting. The Chairman thanked him for his service on behalf of all Members.

To comply with social distancing guidelines, some officers would be contributing to the meeting remotely. Chief Fire Officer Jason Thelwell was also joining the meeting remotely.

The Chairman advised that although members of the public were now allowed to attend and observe in limited numbers, following the meeting a video recording would be uploaded to the Authority's YouTube Channel.

FA34 MINUTES

RESOLVED –

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Fire Authority held on 8 December 2021, be approved, and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

FA35 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

None.

FA36 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman announced that after 30 years of public service, Area Commander Steve Wells will be retiring at the end of March. Steve Joined Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service in 1994 after starting his career with Surrey Fire & Rescue Service. Steve has led the response function of the Service through some of the most challenging periods we have faced in recent times and has been at the heart of our response to the global pandemic. I would like to wish Steve a very long, health and happy retirement and thank him for his outstanding service to our communities over the years.

To mark Her Majesty The Queen's Platinum Jubilee, The Queen's Platinum Jubilee Medal will be awarded to serving frontline members of the police, fire, emergency services, prison services and Armed Forces with five years' service as part of the commemorations taking place in 2022. The medal, which is made of nickel silver, features an image of The Queen with the Latin inscription 'Elizabeth II Dei Gratia Regina Fid Def' which stands for 'Elizabeth II, By the Grace of God, Queen, Defender of the Faith'. I am pleased to announce that 251 serving members of Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service have been awarded this medal and these can be worn from 6 February 2022.

Human Resources together with the help of Training School, Communications Team, and the Organisational Development Team launched a Wholetime Recruitment campaign in September 2021. The campaign attracted more than 250 applicants including existing on-call firefighters from five fire services, as well as Royal Air Force firefighters. Over a period of four months applicants underwent tests to verify their technical and practical competence. Those who were successful progressed to a final interview and medical, which resulted in 18 candidates. The candidates will be joining on 1 March 2022. The lessons

learnt from this campaign will help us attract a wider range of diverse applicants for future recruitment campaigns. For example, we held a 'have a go' day during the application stage which proved successful in drawing in more candidates to apply, as it helped them see the processes involved, and gave them a chance to work on their developmental areas. They also had the opportunity to talk to existing firefighters on how best they could be successful.

Members joined the Chairman and Vice Chairman in applauding Steve Wells for his 30 years of service.

FA37

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Vice Chairman asked for an update in respect of Minute FA27 of the Authority Meeting on 8 December 2021.

The Director of Legal and Governance advised that the three Group Leaders were co-signatories to a letter sent on 14 December 2021 to Lord Greenhalgh, Minister of State for Fire, and to the Chairman of the National Fire Chiefs Council endorsing the current practice of Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service in obtaining Enhanced DBS checking for all of its firefighters on recruitment and on a regular basis during their employment.

The letter sought the Ministers and the NFCC's endorsement of Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Services' position and their support for making the necessary amendments to the legislation in order that a 'firefighter' becomes a 'excepted occupation' so that this type of enhanced vetting should become the norm across all fire and rescue services nationally.

Letters of support had been received from the NFCC Chairman and the Minister of State. These have been circulated to all Members.

As mentioned in the minutes, the Chief Fire Officer had been instrumental in the submission of a business case to the Ministry of Justice making the case for law reform; and on 28 January this year, the Ministry of Justice had sent out questionnaires to all Chief Fire Officers canvassing their opinions. This Service's return had been completed in readiness for submission before the deadline of 18 February 2022.

FA38

COMMITTEE MATTERS

The Director of Legal and Governance advised Members that this was a further amendment to the Authority's procedural Standing Orders to that agreed at the June Annual Meeting. The alterations were set out on Page 5 of the agenda.

RESOLVED –

That the suggested amendments be made to the Standing Orders for the Authority and its Committees.

(Councillor Darlington joined the meeting)

FA39

HER MAJESTY'S INSPECTORATE OF CONSTABULARY AND FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES (HMICFRS) – BUCKINGHAMSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE (BFRS) INSPECTION REPORT 2021

The Head of Covid 19 Preparedness and Response advised Members that this paper introduced the latest HMICFRS report to the Authority. The inspectorate published the Authority's latest report on 15 December 2021, as part of the first tranche of reports, following its inspection during the spring/summer of 2021. The report judged the Service to require improvement across the three pillars and identified 22 areas for improvement, and two causes of concern, accompanied by eight recommendations. Additionally, the previous cause of concern arising from the first round of inspections had been closed, and the Inspectorate recognised the work undertaken to address key areas from the last report against the difficult landscape of a global pandemic and over a short timeframe.

Although the closure of this efficiency Cause of Concern could be seen as progress, this inspection had revealed an improvement to the resourcing performance during a time of various lockdown periods during the global pandemic. Over this period, many staff were either furloughed from their primary employment or not necessarily taking their leave until later in the year, which had a positive impact on crewing levels across the immediate response and resilience capabilities. The improvement had not been fully maintained in the longer term and resilience of frontline services remained a key area of focus and priority for the Service.

The Head of Covid 19 Preparedness and Response advised Members that the first cause of concern from round two was issued to the Service by letter on 6 August 2021 and related to Prevention activity, under the effectiveness pillar. The Service provided an improvement plan to Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI) Matt Parr before the September deadline, setting out how the issues identified would be addressed. Officers had since met HMICFRS, who were planning to revisit the Service in 2022, with an opportunity to close-off this cause of concern if sufficient progress was demonstrated. This was confirmed in a follow up letter to the Chairman and Chief Fire Officer on 12 January 2022.

The Head of Covid 19 Preparedness and Response advised Members that the second cause of concern from round two was issued under the people pillar on 15 December 2021. Much of the work required to meet the recommendations was included within the Authority's EDI objectives for 2020-2025; including the year-one update presented to the Fire Authority on 16 June 2021. Owing to the deadline of addressing these recommendations by the 31 January 2022, a progress

meeting was held on 7 January 2022, where HMICFRS were assured that there had been continued and significant progress in this area.

The Head of Covid 19 Preparedness and Response advised Members that Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Fire and Rescue Services, Sir Tom Winsor had published his annual assessment of fire and rescue services in England. Notably within his annual assessment, Sir Tom Winsor recognised this Service to have made significant progress in increasing the numbers of fire safety inspectors, developing risk-based inspection programmes and ensuring that protection activity was a main strategic priority. The report also recognised that this Service had been 'creative and flexible' in its approach to using on-call firefighters and by introducing a flexi-firefighter contract which enabled staff to work more flexible shift patterns.

An updated HMICFRS improvement plan had been prepared and would be presented to the 16 March 2022, Overview and Audit Committee meeting, and thereafter to all Overview and Audit Committee meetings. Furthermore, as per requirements set out in the report covering letter to the Chairman and Chief Fire Officer on 14 December 2021, a copy of the action plan would be sent to HMI Matt Parr within 56 working days of the report publication; no later than 7 March 2022.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Her Majesty's Inspector of Fire and Rescue Services advised Members that he understood the Chief Fire Officer and his team were disappointed with the report, but Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service was not one of the fire services that he was concerned about. There were things that needed improving, but the way the Service was run was not of concern. The cause of concern was particularly specific.

HM Inspector of Fire and Rescue Services advised Members that the inspection was carried out in July 2021, nearly seven months ago, and he recognised that a lot of work had been undertaken since then, although the report was just a snapshot of what was seen in July. He also recognised that things would have changed since then and recognised the impact of Covid-19, which had impacted all inspections and also this Service had less time to recover back to something approaching normality after the pandemic.

HM Inspector of Fire and Rescue Services advised Members that second time around, the inspectorate knew more about fire and rescue services and the standards were much higher. With regard to the two causes of concern and the general grading report, he wanted to reassure Members that the inspectorate had a very rigorous way of determining whether the grades were fair, and they were also moderated against a range of other inspected fire and rescue services.

The Inspectorate also had lawyers check the report to confirm that what was said was fair and justified, and backed up by evidence.

HM Inspector of Fire and Rescue Services advised Members that the model of response in Buckinghamshire was unusual, verging on unique. It was very impressive, but what their report reflected was a doubt whether it was sustainable in the long term. The fundamental question facing the Authority was is the model of response the right one and was it sustainable in the long term.

Members discussed the HMICFRS Inspection Report with the HM Inspector of Fire and Rescue Services. Members put questions and received responses. This can be viewed here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e7leYPXI9y0&t=163s> (18.10 minutes approximately)

RESOLVED –

That the BFRS HMICFRS round 2 inspection report be noted.

FA40

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM COMMITTEES:

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE – 9 FEBRUARY 2022

(A) THE PRUDENTIAL CODE, PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS AND MINIMUM REVENUE PROVISION

The Principal Accountant presented the Prudential Code, Prudential Indicators and Minimum Revenue Provision for 2022/23. The report supported the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) which was also being presented at the meeting. The Prudential Code was established to ensure the capital investment plans were affordable, prudent and sustainable, and that treasury management decisions were taken in accordance with good professional practice.

The Prudential Indicators presented here demonstrate that the current plans for capital investment meet these criteria and present an acceptable level of risk to the Authority. The Minimum Revenue Provision was a statutory charge to the General Fund (revenue budget), which ensured that the Authority had sufficient cash balances to repay borrowing upon maturity, reducing the refinancing risk. Since 2015/16, there had been sufficient funds set aside to cover the repayment of the long-term borrowing. However, early repayment of these loans was currently not an option due to the prohibitive penalties on early repayment. There were also no plans for additional borrowing according to the MTFP.

RESOLVED –

1. That the Prudential Indicators for 2022/23 be approved.

2. That the Minimum Revenue Provision policy statement be approved.

(B) MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN (MTFP) 2022/23 – 2026/27

The Lead Member for Finance and Assets, Information Security, IT and Climate Change advised Members that there was a line of text missing that should have preceded the recommendations that was erroneously omitted from the paper, which should have read “It is recommended that the Authority be recommended to:” Also, Appendices 1 and 2 had been updated following more accurate council tax and rates collection figures provided by the respective billing authorities.

The Deputy Director of Finance and Assets advised Members that the report presented the proposed revenue and capital Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for the financial years 2022/23 to 2026/27. The final settlement was published on 7 February 2022 and showed there was one key change this year from previous settlements, which was that the government provided the lowest charging quartile of fire and rescue authorities (FRAs) with the flexibility to increase their band D precepts by £5 in 2022/23 only, without the need to hold a referendum. This was to assist these FRAs in addressing immediate pressures and to maintain a sustainable income baseline for future years. The Authority was included within these eight FRA’s and had the option to increase the council tax precept by £5.

The Service’s most recent report (December 2021) by HMICFRS noted in its summary, “that they were encouraged by the service’s work to improve value for money, but still have concerns about the service’s funding model as its limited reserves are being used to supplement funding of its response functions.” If the Authority were to approve a £5 increase in precept, this would result in approximately £1.1m additional funding compared to a standard precept increase of 2%. The additional funding would predominantly be utilised to recruit additional firefighters to build its response functions. Furthermore, the Authority would be able to increase the revenue contributions to capital which would build the reserves that were used for funding the capital programme, in the process, addressing another concern raised within the HMICFRS report.

Furthermore, an additional £822m unringfenced Services grant would be distributed to all tiers of government. This grant was for 2022/23 only and the government would work with the sector on how they distribute this funding from 2023/24 onwards. The funding was in recognition of the range of vital services delivered by all tiers of government across the country. Published figures showed that the Authority would receive £0.355m, which had been reflected in the projections under the heading Services Grant. Council tax collection

funds were adversely impacted since the start of the Pandemic, whereby the tax base reduce by 0.65% in 2021/22. However, the latest projections show a recovery in the collection fund with a projected growth of 2.19% in the tax base.

The Deputy Director of Finance and Assets advised Members that uncertainty persisted regarding pensions following the ruling in December 2018 that the transitional arrangements introduced for the firefighters' pension schemes in 2015 were discriminatory. The Executive Committee had adopted the immediate detriment framework in November 2021, and officers were currently processing claims from members who want to be treated as if they remained on their original pension scheme. It was expected that this would increase the longer-term costs of the firefighters' pension schemes, although it was not yet possible to quantify the impact.

The Revenue Support Grant/Business Rates for 2022/23 had been revised downwards from £8.000m to £7.826m (a decrease of £174k). Future years forecasts had been updated to reflect this movement. Previous figures used were taken from the provisional funding settlement which was an estimate, more accurate figures were provided when billing authorities confirmed them.

The Council Tax surplus figure for 2022/23 had been revised downwards from £257k to £222k (a decrease of £35k) as one of the billing authorities had recently confirmed their deficit which was not available at the time of producing the papers. Due to these changes, the Revenue Contribution to Capital budget had been revised downwards from £1.825m to £1.616m (a net decrease of £209k). The Net Budget requirement had therefore also decreased by £209k (from £33.689m to £33.480m).

The Chairman asked if the recent increase in inflation, would have an adverse outcome on the Authority.

The Deputy Director of Finance and Assets advised that where officers were aware of increases, for example, utilities, it had been factored into the budget, but it would have an impact in terms of services and contracts that were being renegotiated. The Procurement team were trying to ensure that the risk was mitigated as best it could be.

The Chief Fire Officer advised Members that as they were aware, there were a lot of areas of deprivation in Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes and the £5 would have quite a significant effect on some people's budgets. Any further increases in funding should be spent appropriately and properly. There was a Members Workshop scheduled in March, and the discussion with Members would include taking a longer-term view of the increase in the precept, and the recommendations in the HMICFRS report to try to answer the question

about the resilience of the model that was currently employed, but also the resilience and the longer-term view in terms of some of the property assets the Authority currently had.

Members discussed the Medium Term Financial Plan, as lobbying for an increase in the precept had been supported by all political parties and Members were in agreement that additional funding was necessary. The additional funding needed to be spent wisely, looking at resourcing, investing in front line firefighters and addressing the HMICFRS cause for concern, including allowing the Service to focus on Prevention activities. Members were keen to discuss this further at the meeting on 23 March 2022.

The debate can viewed here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e7leYPXI9y0&t=163s> (1.10.45 minutes approximately)

RESOLVED –

1(a) that the report and Statement of the Chief Finance Officer (see section 8 of Annex A) be noted.

1(b) that a Council Tax precept of £72.16 for a band D equivalent property (equal to an increase of 9.6p per week) and the revenue budget as set out in Appendix 1 be approved.

1(c) that the capital programme as set out in Appendix 2 be approved.

1(d) that £600k be transferred from the referendum reserve to the revenue contribution to capital reserve.

Details of the recorded vote for resolutions 1(a) to 1(d) are set out below:

	For	Against	Abstained
Bagge	✓		
Carroll	✓		
Chapple	✓		
Clarke OBE	✓		
Darlington	✓		
Exon	✓		
Hall	✓		
Hopkins	✓		

Lambert	✓		
Marland	✓		
McLean	✓		
Rankine	✓		
Stuchbury	✓		
Waite	✓		
Walsh	✓		

(C) MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES

The Director of Legal and Governance advised Members that as a standalone fire and rescue authority, the Authority had a wide discretion in adopting an Annual Scheme of Allowances. The main proviso was that the Authority must have regard to the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panels of its two constituent councils.

The Director of Legal and Governance advised that as set out in the executive summary of the cover report, the scheme of allowances had been linked to the NJC 'Grey Book' annual pay award for firefighters since 2012/13. The application of this index linking had been endorsed annually by the Authority until 2021/22. Although there had been a Grey Book 2% pay award effective from 1 July 2020, the Authority agreed in February 2021 to suspend the indexation for the year 2021/22, resulting in a 0% increase in Members' allowances. If the link to the Grey Book were to be reinstated for 2022/23 this would result in an increase of 1.5%. A draft proposed Scheme of Allowances for the year 2022/23 was appended as Appendix C and showed in the alternative the effect of a 1.5% increase from the current financial year.

Regulations required that the Authority makes a scheme providing for the payment of a basic allowance to each member of the Authority, which must be the same for every member of the Authority, irrespective of political party. The Scheme of Allowances reflects the requirements in the Regulations that allow Members to individually elect to forgo entitlements or any part of their entitlement to allowances by giving notice to a specified Officer. If the Authority approved an increase, individual Members retain a personal choice to decline to receive an increase in any allowance. The Executive Committee had put forward alternative options for the Authority to

agree, either a 0% increase or a 1.5% increase, the latter being based on index linking to last year's Grey Book pay award.

The options having been considered, and it having been moved and seconded it was:

RESOLVED –

That the Authority adopt a Scheme for Members' Allowances for 2022/23 with a 1.5% increase in allowances.

The Chairman advised that Members in the Conservative Group would be choosing to forego the 1.5% increase.

FA41

PAY POLICY PRINCIPLES AND STATEMENT 2022/23

The HR and Advisory Manager advised Members that the pay policy was required to be updated each financial year and was being presented for approval as the 2022/23 pay policy for the Authority, effective 1 April 2022. This pay policy was based on the current 2021/22 pay policy and had been updated with minor amendments made where appropriate, as detailed with red and unlined or struck through.

Looking at specific sections of the pay policy and the pay multiples and ratio of highest to lowest pay, it continued to fall for the tenth year, which was positive, seeing this tenth year ratio improving again by 2% from the previous year and by 30% since first reporting in 2012.

The HR and Advisory Manager advised Members that apart from the yearly update to figures, the only other change within the 2022/23 pay policy was the removal of reference to the exit payment cap. In November 2020 the Restriction of Public Sector Exit Payment Regulations came into force and was detailed within the Pay Policy for 2021/22. However, in February 2021, HM Treasury published a Treasury Direction dis-applying the parts of the Regulations which implemented a £95,000 cap on public sector exit payments and the Restriction of Public Sector Exit Payment (Revocation) Regulations 2021 (the Revocation Regulations), was placed before Parliament, and came into force formally revoking the 2020 Regulations on 19 March 2021. The Revocation Regulations contained a legal obligation for employers to make termination payments to employees with an exit date in the period the Regulations applied (4 November 2020 to 11 February 2021). For the Authority there were no employees impacted by the exit payment cap.

Since the Revocation Regulations, the Government continued to discuss exit payments and the importance of delivering value for the taxpayer. It was anticipated an exit payment cap or similar would be reintroduced in some form, and the Authority would contribute to any

Government consultation process as appropriate, and thereafter, await details of any Regulation changes and implementation dates.

The Chairman asked that as London Fire Brigade were currently recruiting for firefighters, if this would have an impact on the Service.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer advised that London Fire Brigade were recruiting and advertising widely, he also advised that London Fire Brigade pay London weighting which was 20% more than the Authority currently paid its firefighters. There was a risk to the Authority, it had been included on the risk register, and he was aware of a number of staff considering or may even have applied in that respect. It was a risk to the Authority because of the proximity to London.

RESOLVED –

1. That the Pay Policy Principles and Statement as set out in Appendix one as the statutory Pay Policy Statement for 2022/23 is approved for publication.
2. That the Authority notes the Pay Multiple ratio continues to fall for the tenth year running, with the tenth-year period seeing the ratio improved by 30 per cent since 2012.

(Councillor McLean left the meeting)

FA42

TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2022/23

The Principal Accountant presented the Treasury Management Strategy for the financial year 2022/23, which included statements in relation to the Treasury Management Policy, Treasury Management Strategy and Annual Investment Strategy. There were no significant changes from the previous strategy and the Authority was still operating with a higher liquidity than it would have done previously. However, in May 2022, the Authority has a long-term loan due for repayment. This repayment does not directly impact the revenue budget and funds had been set aside to ensure the Authority could repay this loan when due.

The Principal Accountant advised Members that on 2 February 2022, the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) voted 5-4 to increase the base rate by 0.25 percentage points to 0.50%, with the minority 4 preferring to increase the base rate by 0.50 percentage points to 0.75%. The proposed investment income budget for 2022/23 remained at £30k. The reason for this was because the Authority had a number of investments that were made prior to the last two base rate increases and were maturing during 2022/23. Any additional income above the set budget would be welcome and if the investment income was sustainable for future years, this would be reflected as part of the next MTFP. During 2022/23 officers would continue to monitor the Treasury Management Performance and this would be reported to the Overview and Audit Committee.

A Member asked about the strategy in terms of investing in climate change and the impact of investments on climate change. The Member hoped that in future, the Authority would look at its investment portfolio and decide not to invest in fossil fuel companies or those that promote or impact on the climate.

The Director of Finance and Assets advised that the Environment and Climate Action Plan was approved by the Authority at its last meeting in December 2021, and one of the outcomes would be to look at sustainable investments. It had been raised previously when looking at the Treasury Management Strategy and historically they hadn't had the same kind of security that more traditional investments had. However, that was starting to change and there were some investment products that had the same kind of security, liquidity and similar yield as more traditional investment products. This was something that would be investigated during the current year, and a proposal would be brought back for next year's Treasury Management Strategy for Members to consider.

RESOLVED –

That the Authority approve the Treasury Management Policy Statement, Treasury Management Strategy Statement and the Annual Investment Strategy for 2022/23.

FA43

ARMED FORCES COVENANT

The Head of Operational Training and Assurance updated Members on the work being undertaken to support the Armed Forces Community. The two main areas of focus were veteran walk-in centres and armed forces cadet association engagement. The Service was currently running two walk-in centres, one in Marlow which was in partnership with NHS Op Courage and also involved the Buckinghamshire Council Civilian Military Partnership Group, and one at the Blue Light Hub, West Ashlands, in partnership with the Veterans Community Network.

The Head of Operational Training and Assurance read out a testimony from a member of the Veterans Community Network "Asking for help can be tough, especially for those who have served their country and are more comfortable protecting and supporting others, rather than asking for it themselves. The Fire Station walk-ins provide a uniformed, familiar environment for veterans who either don't know how to ask for help, don't know what help is available or are not sure they 'deserve' it. Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service have worked hard to make these sessions completely accessible and welcoming and provide a safe space to provide the right support to those who have served." Both events were aimed at those veterans with complex needs and had deliberately been kept low key.

The Head of Operational Training and Assurance advised Members that crews had developed a program of monthly events, inviting Armed Forces Cadet Associations to Aylesbury Fire Station to undertake tasks, such as searching in a dark environment and firefighting. Instructors from the relevant forces would also be in attendance throughout as 64 cadets gain an understanding of what being a firefighter was all about. This would help some of the young adults obtain their Duke of Edinburgh Award and help the Service to build relationships across other public sector organisations.

The Head of Operational Training and Assurance advised Members that the Authority also supported the armed forces in other ways, by joining in and holding Remembrance Day Parades, by providing a safe place for one-to-one clinical meetings and by advertising vacancies, not just operational but support staff vacancies in forces magazines, aimed at people leaving the services.

The Leader of Milton Keynes Council advised that Milton Keynes Council share a specific officer for the Armed Forces Covenant with Bedfordshire and Central Bedfordshire and suggested that it might be something that officers from Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Services might want to join in with.

RESOLVED –

That the report be noted.

(Councillor Lambert left the meeting)

FA44

COMPOSITION OF THE AUTHORITY FOR 2022/23

The Director of Legal and Governance advised Members that the constituent councils appoint Members on to the Authority annually at their respective meetings in May each year. The Statutory Instrument required this to be done proportionately, based on the relative numbers of local government electors in each council's area. The data point used for this was always the register of local government electors published on 1 December in the preceding year separately by the councils.

However, following a recommendation of the Authority, Officers started in 2015 to use the Office for National Statistics (ONS) datasets. Although based on the same 1 December data points, the ONS was publishing the information later each year, with the effect being that last year, the 1 December 2020 figures were not published by the ONS until after the 2021 Annual Meeting of Milton Keynes Council. The only ONS figures available in time last year were interim figures based on 2 March 2020 local government registers which resulted in a 11:6 ratio, rather than a 12:5 ratio if the December 2020 figures had been used.

To remove the uncertainty this year, officers had reverted to using the source information and it was proposed to continue to do this in future years.

A Member asked why the Authority needed to change the composition, if it was such a small percentage and would probably need to be reversed next year.

The Director of Legal and Governance advised that the Electoral Registration Officers from both councils had confidence in the figures. If the Authority had been able to use the 1 December 2020 figures from the ONS last year, the switch from 11:6 to 12:5 would have been made last year. The Statutory Instrument for the Authority was clear, and both councils were required to appoint members proportionate to the local government electorate figures.

RESOLVED –

That it be noted that the Councils of Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes will be requested to appoint 12 Councillors and 5 Councillors respectively as representatives to be Members of the Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes fire Authority for the municipal year 2022/23.

FA45

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

To note that the next meeting of the Fire Authority will be held on Wednesday 15 June 2022 at 11am.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 12.55 PM