

HUMBERSIDE FIRE AUTHORITY

FRIDAY, 10 FEBRUARY 2023

PRESENT:

Members

Representing East Riding of Yorkshire Council:

Councillors Abraham, Davison, Dennis, Fox, Green, Jefferson, Smith and West

Representing Hull City Council:

Councillors Neal and Nicola

Representing North East Lincolnshire Council:

Councillors Lindley, Shepherd and Swinburn

Representing North Lincolnshire Council:

Councillors Briggs (*Chairperson*), Grant, Sherwood and Waltham MBE

Officers of Humberside Fire & Rescue Service

Phil Shillito - Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive, Niall McKiniry - Deputy Chief Fire Officer & Executive Director of Service Delivery, Christine Cooper - Executive Director of People and Development, Kevin Wilson - Executive Director of Finance/Section 151 Officer, Jon Henderson - Area Manager Prevention and Protection, Jason Kirby - Area Manager of Emergency Response, Lisa Nicholson - Monitoring Officer/Secretary and Alison Finn - Committee Manager.

Also in attendance:

External Auditor

Gavin Barker - Director - Public Services (Mazars) (presented Minute 7/23)

The meeting was held at Service Headquarters, Hessle.

1/23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE - Apologies for absence were submitted from Jonathan Evison (Police and Crime Commissioner) and Councillors Belcher, Chambers, Dad, McMurray and Patrick.

2/23 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST - There were no declarations of interest.

3/23 MINUTES - Resolved - That the minutes of the meeting of the Authority held on 2 December 2022 be received as a correct record (subject to Councillor Sherwood being moved to the correct Local Authority).

4/23 MINUTES OF THE GOVERNANCE, AUDIT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - Resolved - That the minutes of the Governance, Audit and Scrutiny Committee meetings held on 1 December 2022 and 23 January 2023 be received.

5/23 QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS - there were no questions by Members.

6/23 COMMUNICATIONS - The following communications were reported:

- (i) The draft timetable of meetings for 2023/24 had been circulated for comment prior to the meeting, no comments had been received therefore the timetable would be finalised and added to the website.

7/23 EXTERNAL AUDIT ANNUAL REPORT 2021/22 - Gavin Barker (Mazars) presented the External Audit Annual Report 2021/22 and the follow up letter to the Audit Completion Report from 2021/22.

The Auditor's Annual Report summarised the work undertaken by external auditors for the year ended 31 March 2022. Responsibilities of auditors were defined by the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and the Code of Audit Practice ('the Code') issued by the National Audit Office ('the NAO'). The remaining sections of the AAR outlined how auditors had discharged those responsibilities and the findings from its work, a summary of which could be seen below:

- Opinion on the financial statements - the audit report was issued on 29 November 2022. Audit issued an unqualified opinion on the financial statements.
- Value for Money arrangements - Section 3 confirmed that auditors have now completed the work on the Authority's arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources and provided commentary on the Authority's arrangements. No significant weaknesses in arrangements were identified and there were no recommendations arising.
- Wider reporting responsibilities - auditors were yet to receive group instructions from the National Audit Office and therefore were unable to issue the audit certificate until this was formally confirmed. The 2014 Act required auditors to give an elector, or any representative of the elector, the opportunity to question them about the accounting records of the Authority and to consider any objection made to the accounts. Auditors did not receive any questions or objections in respect of the Authority's financial statements.

Due to not yet having received group instructions from the National Audit Office, external audit was unable to issue its audit certificate for 2021/22 until this was formally confirmed.

Resolved - That the External Audit Annual Report be received.

8/23 MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS - PERIOD ENDING 31 DECEMBER 2022 - The Executive Director of Finance/S.151 Officer submitted a report that described the financial direction of the Service and outlined its financial pressures.

The summary estimated outturn position for the current financial year based on information to 31 December 2022 is as follows:

CATEGORY	2022/23 OUTTURN PROJECTION
HFA	
Revenue Budget	£0.004m overspend
Capital Programme	£3.348m spend against £7.292m allocation
Pensions Account	£12.750m deficit

This was the second set of Management Accounts for the 2022/23 financial year and further updates will be brought to the Authority based on the period ending 28/2/23.

Further details on all areas were available electronically alongside the agenda papers on the Fire Authority's website at <https://humbersidefire.gov.uk/about-us/fire-authority/meeting-documents>.

Resolved - That the report be received.

9/23 APPROVAL OF PRECEPT 2023/24 AND MEDIUM-TERM RESOURCE STRATEGY 2023/24 TO 2026/27- The Executive Director of Finance/S.151 Officer submitted a report that proposed the setting of the 2023/24 Precept and Medium-Term Resource Strategy (MTRS) 2023/24 - 2026/27.

The decision on the 2023/24 precept for the Authority had to be taken in the light of a number of significant factors:

- The Government had set a referendum threshold for 2023/24 of £5 or above on a Band D property for Humberside Fire Authority. Therefore, any increase at or above this level would require a Humberside area-wide referendum in support. Clearly, there would be a significant cost attached to any such referendum.
- Secondly, although the Authority had provided for five per cent pay awards in 2023/24 there remained a significant risk that they could be in excess of this.
- Thirdly, the Authority had suffered a historic reduction in Government support over 2011/12 to 2021/22. Much had been done to respond to this, but the fact remained that the Authority has lost circa £11m of its funding from Government over this period. Future funding settlements beyond 2023/24 were likely to be very constrained for unprotected services such as Fire and Rescue.

In broad terms the budget for 2023/24 to 2026/27 was balanced subject to the following:-

- Council tax increases of £4.99 on a Band D property in 2023/24 and 2024/25 and 2.99% in 2025/26 and 2026/27;
- Pay awards of 5 per cent in 2023/24 and 2 per cent in each year from 2024/25 onwards;
- The use of £1.2m funding from reserves during 2023/24 and 2024/25.

The Authority's reserves consisted of the General Reserve (£5.908m at 1 April 2022) and a number of Earmarked Reserves created to meet specific areas of future expenditure (£8.686m at 1 April 2022). Again, as a result of good forward planning by the Authority, the reserves were in a sound position, but they needed to be seen in the context of the current and future significant reductions in Government funding and the major financial uncertainties that still lay ahead.

Proposed by Councillor Smith and seconded by Councillor Lindley; and

Resolved - (a) That the 2023/24 precept (as set out at Appendix 1 of these minutes) be approved at a level of £4.99 higher on a Band D property than the 2022/23 level, and

(b) that the Medium-Term Resource Strategy (2023/24 - 2026/27) be approved.

As required under paragraphs 11 and 12 of Schedule 2 Part 11 of the Local Authorities Standing Orders England Regulations 2001, voting was by way of recorded vote

For: Councillors Abraham, Briggs, Davison, Dennis, Fox, Grant, Green, Jefferson, Lindley, Neal, Nicola, Shepherd, Sherwood, Smith, Swinburn, Waltham and West.

Against: None

Abstain: None

For: 17

Against: 0

Abstain: 0

10/23 FEES AND CHARGES 2023/24 - The Executive Director of Finance/S.151 Officer submitted a report that set out the proposed revised charges for 2023/24.

In accordance with relevant Fire Service Acts, Fire Authorities had the discretion to charge for special services performed (where there was no immediate threat of fire) and for services relating to training, fire safety and administration. The total income for the Fire Authority generated through these sources was circa £1k in 2021/22.

The revised charges proposed at Appendix A reflected the following:-

- Staff related costs – charges were normally uplifted in line with firefighter's pay award. The firefighters pay award for 2022 was yet to be settled but it was proposed that the charge was increased by 6% and adjusted in 2024 to reflect the actual pay award.
- Non staff related costs – charges were uplifted in line with Consumer Price Index (CPI) at September 2022 which was 10.1 per cent.

Fire Service Circular 17/2001 advised Fire Authorities on the charges they could levy when dealing with cases of pension sharing involving serving members of the Firefighter's Pension Scheme or pensioners. The charges for 2023/24 had been uplifted by 7.75 per cent which was a combination of the average green book pay award increase for 2022/23 plus the 2021/22 pay award which had not been settled by the time the 2022/23 charges had been set.

Proposed by Councillor Briggs and seconded by Councillor Abraham, and

Resolved - That the revised charges as attached at Appendices A and B of the report be approved with effect from 1 April 2023.

11/23 MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES 2023/24 - The Deputy Monitoring Officer/Secretary submitted a report outlining a proposed scheme of allowances to be paid to its Members.

The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 made provision for Combined Fire Authorities to establish Member Allowances Schemes from May 2003. The Fire Authority had frozen its basic and special responsibility allowances since 2008/09.

Recognising that Members of the Joint Independent Audit Committee (JIAC) for Humberside Police and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Humberside were paid an attendance allowance based on the rates set by the Home Office for attendance at Appeals Tribunals, the Authority has agreed that the Independent Co-opted Members of the GAS Committee were paid on a similar basis and that they receive an annual allowance (paid monthly rather than an as attendance allowance) calculated on the same basis as that adopted for the JIAC.

Appendix 1 to the report set out the current Members' Allowances Scheme, as of 1 April 2022. The Authority is asked to consider and approve a Members' Allowances Scheme for 2023/24, a proposal of which was set out at Appendix 2.

The Authority was required to have regard to the recommendations made by any Independent Remuneration Panels in relation to any Authority that had an Independent Remuneration Panel that nominated Members to the Fire Authority. The Members' Allowances Schedule for the four Unitary Authorities in Humberside were available for viewing on the respective Unitary Authorities' websites.

Proposed by Councillor Waltham and seconded by Councillor Sherwood, and

Resolved - (a) That the basic and special responsibility allowances 2023/24 for Members continues to be frozen, and

(b) that the Members' Allowances Scheme for 2023/24, as set out at Appendix 2 of these Minutes, be approved.

12/23 CHIEF FIRE OFFICER UPDATE - The Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive provided a verbal update.

- i. The Authority had received a letter from the Fire Brigades Union regarding the safety of fire fighters in respect of contaminants. The Chief Fire Officer had responded thanking the Union for their positive work on fire fighter safety and advising them of the changes made by the Authority to ensure that safety came first.
- ii. The Authority had received a letter from the Minister of State for Crime, Policing and Fire requesting details of the Authority's contingency plans in case of a fire fighter strike. The Chief Fire Officer had responded with the required details.
- iii. The Authority had received a letter from Andy Cook (HMICFRS) requesting details of any cases of misogyny or grievances regarding conduct in the Authority. The Chief Fire Officer would be responding that there were no cases to feedback on over the last 12 months but that staff had been reminded of behaviour standards. A freedom to speak up guardian role had also been created within the Authority.
- iv. The employers had met with the Fire Brigades Union and made a 7 per cent pay increase offer back dated to July 2022 and a 5 per cent pay increase for 2023/24. The Union would ballot their members on this improved offer and had agreed to delay any strike action until a decision was made on 6 March 2023.
- v. The Authority had received five new fire engines which were stationed across the Humber area.
- vi. The Hull Falls, Intervention Response, Safety Team (F.I.R.S.T) had been recognised by the Department for Health and Social Care and designated as best practice that should be adopted across the Fire Service nationally. The Chief Officer offered his congratulations to the team for their hard work.

Resolved - That the update be noted.

Calculation of Precept £4.99 Increase on a Band D Property

<u>2022/23</u>		<u>2023/24</u>
£		£
47,623,935	Net Revenue Budget	52,693,448
(9,818)	Add : Contribution to/(from) General Reserve	(566,953)
-	Contribution to/(from) Earmarked Reserves	-
<u>47,614,117</u>	Net Budget Requirement	<u>52,126,495</u>
(17,369,534)	Less : Exchequer Assistance Formula Grant	(18,513,927)
(4,748,669)	Less : Business Rates received from Local Authority	(6,021,273)
(649,858)	Less : Council tax net collection fund (surplus)/deficit	(370,417)
465,501	Less : NNDR net collection fund (surplus)/deficit	(165,720)
<u>25,311,557</u>	Amount to be raised from Tax	<u>27,055,157</u>
280896.20	Divided by Tax Base	284491.67
£90.11	Band D Council Tax	£95.10
1.99%	Precept Increase over Previous Year	5.54%

<u>2022/23</u>	<u>Tax Band</u>	<u>2023/24</u>	<u>2023/24 Increase over -</u>	
			<u>Year</u>	<u>Month</u>
			£p	£p
60.07	A	63.40	3.33	0.28
70.09	B	73.97	3.88	0.32
80.10	C	84.53	4.43	0.37
90.11	D	95.10	4.99	0.42
110.13	E	116.23	6.10	0.51
130.16	F	137.37	7.21	0.60
150.18	G	158.50	8.32	0.69
180.22	H	190.20	9.98	0.83

<u>2022/23</u>			<u>2023/24</u>	
<u>Collection</u>			<u>Collection</u>	
<u>Fund</u>		Precept	<u>Fund</u>	<u>Total</u>
<u>Balances</u>			<u>Balances</u>	
£		£	£	£
340,293	East Riding of Yorkshire	11,652,394	266,720	11,919,114
175,936	Kingston upon Hull	6,179,883	77,305	6,257,188
54,342	North East Lincolnshire	4,347,056	27,238	4,374,294
79,287	North Lincolnshire	4,875,825	(846)	4,874,979
<hr/> 649,858		<hr/> 27,055,158	<hr/> 370,417	<hr/> 27,425,575

HUMBERSIDE FIRE AUTHORITY MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES SCHEME 2023/24 - PROPOSED DRAFT SCHEME FOR PUBLICATION

The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 made provision for Combined Fire Authorities to establish Member Allowances Schemes from May 2003.

The Fire Authority, at its meeting of 10 February 2023, agreed that the allowances for Elected Members be frozen at their current level for 2023/24 as set out below.

	£
1. Basic Allowance (per annum)	
All Members	4,457
2. Special Responsibility Allowances:	
a. The Chair of the Authority	11,137
b. The Vice Chair of the Authority	8,356
c. The Chairs of Committees	561
3. Independent Co-opted Members of the Governance, Audit and Scrutiny (GAS) Committee	
a. Chairperson of the Committee	£1,680/year (£140 per month)*
b. All other Members of the Committee	£1,480.50 each/year (£123.375 per month)*
4. Childcare & Dependant Carer Allowances (per hour)	
a. Childcare	5.80
b. Dependant	10.40
5. Travel Allowances	
a. Car Allowances - In accordance with the National Joint Council for Local Government Services casual user rate:	
Up to 999cc	0.469**
Over 999cc	0.522**
(up to first 8,500 miles per annum, thereafter £0.144*)	
b. Motorcycle	0.240
c. Bicycle (per mile)	0.05
d. Public Transport	Actual Cost
6. Subsistence Allowances	
Actual cost not exceeding	
a. Breakfast - more than 4 hours before 11.00am	6.46
b. Lunch - more than 4 hours including 12noon to 2.00pm	8.92
c. Tea - more than 4 hours including 3.00pm to 6.00pm	3.50
d. Dinner - more than 4 hours ending after 7.00pm	11.03
e. Overnight (covering 24 hours)	
London #	136.40
Outside London	120.42
f. Out of Pocket Expenses (per night)	4.92

Notes

* Based on 7 meetings a year it recognises that Members of the Joint Independent Audit Committee (JIAC) for Humberside Police and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Humberside are paid an attendance allowance based on the rates set by the Home Office for attendance at Appeals Tribunals. The Authority has agreed that the Independent Co-opted Members of the GAS) Committee should be paid on a similar basis, and that they receive an annual allowance (paid monthly rather than an as attendance allowance) calculated on the same basis as that adopted for the JIAC. Mileage and bridge toll costs will continue to be met as before. The only exceptions to the above remuneration arrangements for Independent Co-opted Members of the GAS Committee will be on the very rare occasions when they might be asked to attend training arranged for them in support of their role e.g. Treasury Management training when such attendance will qualify for the one-off £26 hourly rate + travel expenses + bridge tolls. In addition, for attendance at HFA Member Days/HFA meetings, GAS Committee Members will be reimbursed for their travel expenses and bridge tolls.

** Not increased by NJC since 1 April 2010

Includes Local Government Association and Annual Fire Conferences overnight attendances outside London.