

REPORT OF THE LANCASHIRE COMBINED FIRE AUTHORITY 14TH SEPTEMBER 2020

1. CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

This was the first virtual meeting of the full Authority.

The Chairman welcomed new Members Councillor Jane Hugo from Blackpool Council and County Councillor Margaret Pattinson from Lancashire County Council who had replaced Councillor Fred Jackson and County Councillor Miles Parkinson on the Authority. The Authority recognised their long service and dedication to the work of the Authority.

The Authority congratulated former Deputy Chief Fire Officer David Russel on his promotion to Chief Fire Officer of Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service and wished him well in his new post.

The Authority recognised the sad loss of so many people who had lost their lives to the covid-19 pandemic.

The Authority recorded the excellent work the Service had done, and continued to do during this difficult time, not only to maintain a response to emergencies but to work in partnership especially supporting the Lancashire Resilience Forum for the benefit of the people of Lancashire.

2. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

The Authority appointed County Councillor Nikki Hennessy as its Vice-Chairman for the remainder of the term 2020/21.

3. EXECUTIVE BOARD SUCCESSION ARRANGEMENTS

The recruitment process for the Deputy Chief Fire Officer post was due to conclude later that week with a Member and Chief Fire Officer interview panel.

4. HMICFRS COVID-19 INSPECTION

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services had confirmed it was undertaking an interim review of Fire and Rescue Services in England of the sector's response to the covid-19 pandemic to draw out any common learning. The Service's inspection would take place virtually over the end of September / beginning of October and included interviews with the Chairman and Chief Fire Officer. The Service had conducted its own review of its response to the pandemic which included a staff survey. There had been a great contribution from all staff who were dealing effectively with the largest incident ever faced, alongside a lot of operational activity (such as wildland fires at Longridge Fell, Darwen Moor and Winter Hill, all at the same time and dealing with recent flooding in the north of the county). The Service had supported the people of Lancashire through the provision of support to the Lancashire Resilience Forum (for example, through the establishment of temporary field hospitals, undertaking processes for potential body recovery, face fit testing for the NHS and the distribution of PPE).

5. ANNUAL SAFETY, HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT REPORT

The Authority considered the Annual Safety, Health and Environment Report. The Service had again seen a very positive year in terms of performance. External audit visits were carried out in February 2020 against international standards for health and safety and the environment. The scope for both standards was the provision of fire, rescue and supporting services across Lancashire. The audits included all operational activity with visits to fire stations operating different duty systems and support departments. Certification to the standards was granted without any non-conformance or opportunities for improvement identified.

6. FIRE PROTECTION REPORTS

The Authority discussed the building risk review of all high rise buildings in Lancashire which was a programme to assess the safety of all high rise buildings in England with an upper floor more than 18m from access level. The focus was the external wall system. Since the initial attention on aluminium clad material brought about by the Grenfell Fire tragedy the programme now considered all external wall systems, their cladding material, insulation, cavity barriers and balconies etc. The Authority was pleased that the audit of the 73 buildings that fell within the programme in Lancashire would be completed in March 2021; in advance of the deadline of December 2021 in recognition that it would take time for responsible persons to undertake necessary surveys and reports to confirm the full construction details of their external wall systems.

It was noted that this was a really significant issue for the fire sector. Following the Grenfell Fire tragedy, resulting enquiries had highlighted inadequacies in the way the build environment had been constructed and regulated over the past 2 decades. There were changes to legislation currently going through parliament and it was clear that Government intended Fire and Rescue Services to play a significant part in the sector-wide improvements which were now necessary. Planning Committee had recently approved changes to the Service management structure to support the Fire Safety Inspection transformation.

7. RE-APPOINTMENT OF CLERK TO THE AUTHORITY

The Authority approved the re-appointment of Mr Mark Nolan as Clerk and Monitoring Officer to the Lancashire Combined Fire Authority for a period of twelve months, to the September meeting of the Authority in 2021.

FRANK DEMOLFETTA
Chairman

LFRS
Fulwood