

REPORT OF THE LANCASHIRE COMBINED FIRE AUTHORITY - 18 DECEMBER 2023

Chairman's Welcome and Introduction

Members received an update on the following:

Major Fire Incident in Lancaster

On Sunday 3 December 2023 ten fire engines from Lancashire and Cumbria were called to a derelict commercial building fire at the former SupaSkips site on Port Royal Avenue, Lancaster. The fire was deep-seated in 13,000 tonnes of compacted waste and the Service had been on site every day working with national and local partners. Lancaster City Council had provided funding to clear the site which was now expected to be before Christmas.

Gas Explosion in Blackburn

The Service had attended a gas explosion on London Road, Blackburn the previous evening. The drone and Service dog were used to assist in the rescue of a casualty from the collapsed building.

Demonstration of Hagglund Vehicle

The Chair invited Members to a demonstration of the Hagglund Vehicle on the rise of the meeting. He advised that the all-terrain Hagglund vehicle made it easier to access rural areas during extreme weather events. The Hagglund had now been converted for flood response and would be better able to support the communities in Lancashire.

Staff News

Members noted that the Service had recently celebrated the dedication and talent of over fifty staff who were honoured with long service, good conduct awards, commendations, Star Awards and for academic accomplishments. The Authority congratulated winners and those shortlisted in the Asian Fire Service Association and the Excellence in Fire and Emergency Awards.

The Clerk to the Authority and Monitoring Officer advised that this would be the last meeting for the Principal Member Services Officer who would be leaving the Service early in the New Year. The Chairman and Leader of the opposition thanked Mrs Brooks for her dedication and reliability over the many years she had been in the role.

Presentation by Fire Cadets, Isaac Kelly and Kit Nicholls

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer was pleased to introduce Fire Cadets Isaac Kelly and Kit Nicholls who had attended the meeting to present to Members their experiences and inform of the benefits of the Fire Cadets programme from their personal perspective and for the Service. Members applauded the presentations given and on behalf of the Authority the Chair wished Isaac and Kit every success in their future careers.

North West Fire Control - Continuing the Collaboration

The report set out the background to North West Fire Control centre (NWFC) which was created after the collapse of a national project. NWFC served the areas of Cheshire, Cumbria, Greater Manchester and Lancashire. From May 2014 staff started answering Lancashire's 999 calls, mobilising resources to incidents and assisting operational staff with the management of incidents.

NW Fire Control Limited (the Company) as the legal entity that provided the services to the partner fire and rescue services was jointly owned by the fire and rescue authorities and liability was limited by guarantee. NWFC had been a difficult and costly exercise to create with parties to the collaboration advised that it should be seen as a long-term and 'almost permanent' arrangement, due to the complexity and cost of ending it.

The Authority was committed to continuing the NWFC collaboration and agreed increased costs associated with: i) shared costs (based on an apportionment model) which increased Lancashire's proportion from 25.5% to 28.05%; ii) the replacement of a new mobilising system; and, iii) additional resourcing costs to deliver aspects of the business plan that supported increased expectations on the sector as a result of recommendations from the Manchester Arena Inquiry and a new Fire Standard for fire control rooms.

Updated Whistleblowing Policy

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services had published a report on values and culture in Fire and Rescue Services in March 2023. The report recommended that Chief Fire Officers should make sure that their Service provided a confidential way for staff to raise concerns via their Whistleblowing processes by 1 October 2023. This recommendation was supplemented by the National Fire Chief Council's recommendations on values and culture. In response, the Service had established Safecall, with effect from August 2023.

Fire Protection Reports

Members received a report that summarised Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service prosecutions pertaining to fire safety offences under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety Order) 2005. There were currently three cases in the judicial system for offences with one set for trial in July 2024, one set for sentencing at Preston Crown Court in December 2023 and one plea hearing had recently been adjourned until January 2024.

Given the rapidly evolving regulatory change in building fire safety, an update on Fire Protection and Business Support was also provided, detailing how the Service was adapting delivery whilst developing its workforce, to ensure that it kept pace with the changes and improved public and firefighter safety within the built environment.

Members noted that since April 2023 there had been 1,977 business fire safety checks delivered, of which 1,702 (86%) had resulted in a satisfactory outcome, with 275 being deemed unsatisfactory resulting in follow up business safety advice. The protection department followed up activities which had resulted in three legal notices being issued, including the prohibition of two premises and around 100 informal letters issued to indicate fire safety improvements.

The new Building Safety Act came into force on 1 October 2023, requiring Responsible Persons of High-Rise buildings to register their building with the Building Safety Regulator (BSR). To date LFRS had been notified that only 30% of the county's relevant buildings had been registered. LFRS operated as part of the Northwest Region to support the Building Safety Regulator (the Health and Safety Executive) and had implemented a dedicated role within its Protection team.

Members also noted arson risk reduction included five cases of which three incidents involved youths, one defendant following a guilty plea to 'arson being reckless as to whether life is endangered' was sentenced to serve two years and ten months in prison and one defendant who also pleaded guilty received five years imprisonment.

Operational Incidents of Interest

The Authority received a report that provided information relating to operational incidents of note since the last meeting. As this had been a very busy operational period, the report detailed only the larger deployments or more complex incidents. Full details of the following incidents were provided in the report:

- Six fire engines attend a commercial building fire in Bamber Bridge;
- Three fire engines attend a car on fire with persons trapped;
- Ten fire engines attend a commercial building fire in Blackburn;
- Four fire engines attend disused waste storage building in Lancaster;
- Fire crews attend a fatal boat fire in Nateby;
- Six fire engines attend a commercial building fire in Blackburn;
- Four fire engines attend a fatal incident on the river Lune;
- Fire crews attend a fatal house fire near Ribchester;
- Ten fire engines attend a commercial building fire in Longridge;
- LFRS attend a suspected explosive device in Burnley.

DAVID O'TOOLE
Chair

LFRS
Fulwood

REPORT OF THE LANCASHIRE COMBINED FIRE AUTHORITY - 19 FEBRUARY 2024

Chairman's Welcome and Introduction

The Chair announced that as they were considering the 2024/25 Council Tax Precept and Budget, any Member in arrears on their Council Tax could not vote or speak on that item.

The Chair invited Members to a viewing of the Service's new Command Unit on the rise of the meeting.

Pay Policy Statement for 2024/25

In accordance with the provisions of the Localism Act 2011 a pay policy statement for 2024/25 was considered and approved. The pay policy published data on senior salaries and the structure of the workforce and demonstrated the principles of transparency. The pay policy statement set out the Authority's policies for the financial year relating to the remuneration of its chief officers; the remuneration of its lowest paid employees; and the relationship between the remuneration of its chief officers and that of other employees who were not chief officers.

Budget Report 2024/25

The Financial Strategy encompassed: the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), the Capital Strategy, the Reserves Strategy, and the Treasury Management Strategy.

The Authority considered and approved a report of the Treasurer that presented a Net budget requirement for 2024/25 of £75.2m. The Authority considered and approved council tax options for 2024/25 which met the requirements to a deliver a balanced budget, taking into account the current economic climate and the commitments of the Service, and determined a 2.99% (5 pence per week) increase resulting in a council tax of £84.73 for a Band D property.

Fire Protection Reports

Members received a report that summarised Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service prosecutions pertaining to fire safety offences under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety Order) 2005. There were currently four cases in the judicial system for offences and one set for trial in July 2024, one set for sentencing in January 2024 and two were set for plea hearings in February 2024.

Given the rapidly evolving regulatory change in building fire safety, an update on Fire Protection and Business Support was also provided, detailing how the Service was adapting delivery whilst developing its workforce, to ensure that it kept pace with the changes and improved public and firefighter safety within the built environment.

Protection teams continued to investigate and build files in relation to further cases where offences were believed to have been committed, which involved a number of types of premises. The LFRS Protection Department was also supporting a joint enforcement case

with a local authority, Health & Safety Executive and Lancashire Constabulary regarding a complex converted mill.

Members noted that during the 23/24 performance year to end December 2023, there had been 2,517 business fire safety checks delivered. Around 275 had led to unsatisfactory outcomes and were triaged by Fire Protection teams during the period with both informal and formal enforcement taken.

The new Building Safety Act came into force on 1 October 2023, requiring Responsible Persons of High-Rise buildings to register their building with the Building Safety Regulator (BSR). LFRS operated as part of the Northwest Region to support the Building Safety Regulator (the Health and Safety Executive) and had implemented a dedicated role within its Protection team.

Members also noted arson risk reduction included one case with one defendant, who was also the occupier, following a guilty plea to 'arson with reckless' was sentenced to 32 months imprisonment.

Operational Incidents of Interest

The Authority received a report that provided information relating to operational incidents of note since the last meeting. As this had been a very busy operational period, the report detailed only the larger deployments or more complex incidents. Full details of the following incidents were provided in the report:

- Waste fire within former power station in Lancaster.
- Fatal road traffic collision in Down Holland.
- Person rescued from Blackpool building fire.
- Explosion involving domestic properties in Blackburn.
- Road traffic collision with car on fire in Lytham.
- Male trapped under wagon in Altham.
- Firefighters rescue casualties from Blackpool domestic building fire.

DAVID O'TOOLE
Chair

LFRS
Fulwood