

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD AT THE COUNCIL OFFICES, STATION ROAD, WIGSTON ON TUESDAY, 27 OCTOBER 2015 COMMENCING AT 6.15 PM

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| <u>IN ATTENDANCE:</u> | | |
| Mayor - Councillor M L Darr Deputy Mayor - Councillor R F Eaton | | |
| COUNCILLORS (16): | | |
| Mrs L M Broadley | D A Gamble | |
| L A Bentley | Mrs S Z Haq | T Barr |
| G A Boulter | J Kaufman | Ms K Chalk |
| F S Broadley | R E R Morris | B Fahey |
| D M Carter | Mrs S B Morris | Dr T K Khong |
| M H Charlesworth | G S Atwal | |
| OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE (3): | | |
| S J Ball | Mrs A E Court | M W L Hall |

| Min Ref. | Narrative | Officer Resp. |
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| 37. | <p><u>CALLING TO ORDER OF MEETING</u></p> <p>The Meeting was called to order to receive His Worship, The Mayor and Deputy Mayor.</p> <p>A minute's silence was observed in memory of the late former Councillor, Peter Swift. The Mayor commended the former Councillor's notable 24-years of service as a Councillor of the Borough, including his term in the Office of Mayor for the municipal year 1999/2000.</p> <p>The Mayor confirmed that an earlier resolution by Members at a meeting of his Council held on 01 September 2015 to confer the Title of Honorary Alderman upon the former Councillor was to be honoured.</p> | |
| 38. | <p><u>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</u></p> <p>An apology for absence was received from Councillors J W Boyce, B Dave, Mrs L Eaton, Mrs H E Loydall, K J Loydall and R H Thakor.</p> | |
| 39. | <p><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</u></p> <p>None.</p> | |
| 40. | <p><u>MOTIONS ON NOTICE</u></p> <p>The Council gave consideration to and debated the Motion on Notice (at page 1) as delivered by the Chief Executive in respect of the Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Combined Fire Authority's (CFA) announcement to consult upon reductions to frontline services. This should be read together with these minutes as a composite document.</p> <p>The Motion was moved by Councillor G A Boulter who noted the subject-</p> | |

matter was an item before debate at an extraordinary meeting of Leicestershire County Council called on 08 October 2015.

The Member disapproved of the non-inclusiveness of the online consultation process insofar as not all potential Borough consultees have access to the internet. It was noted that at a well-attended public engagement event held at Wigston Fire Station on Friday 16 October 2015, the majority of residents had expressed opposition to the proposed cutbacks. A concern was further raised in respect the CFA's decision-making process in view of the recent abolition of its Scrutiny Committee in May 2015, subsequently limiting the scope to properly scrutinise the outlined proposals (at 1(b) of the Motion) and ascertain their potential consequences. A possible conflict of interest was also cited insofar as Chair and Vice-Chair of the CFA were the Leaders of Leicester/shire County and City Councils, respectively. It was stated that the outlined proposals, including the replacement of three fire engines with less-equipped Tactical Response Vehicles (TRV's), would adversely affect the ability of firefighters to adequately respond to emergencies throughout Leicester/shire and Rutland within the 10 minute response target for life-risk incidents. This was said to contribute to greater number of potential fatal/non-fatal casualties and engender implications as to the extent of fire damage and insurance queries.

The Motion was seconded by Councillor M H Charlesworth who reserved his right to speak upon the Motion.

Councillor Mrs L M Broadley stated that she was disappointed with the public engagement event held at Wigston Fire Station. She advocated that the selling of the Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service (LFRS) Headquarters ought to be given consideration as an alternative means to achieve the savings. It was further noted that a significant financial loss would be borne by the tax-payer in respect of recent investment made in the Central Fire Station subsequent to any intended closure/sale. A concern was raised as to the limited publication of the CFA's Public Consultation Summary Report for want of a more informed decision-making process. It was stated that the proposals would profoundly jeopardise the safety of Leicester/shire and Rutland residents, most notably in the Kibworth/Harborough areas, and that a comprehensive risk assessment was required before opposition was abandoned.

Councillor J Kaufman stated that it was the professional opinion of many spoken to frontline firefighters that the increasingly progressive nature of the cutbacks to the LFRS was dangerous. It was said that the proposals would reduce County-wide capacity to critically-low levels and further stretch the already-limited resources available at Wigston Fire Station in so providing the necessary relief-support to neighbouring areas affected by closures. The Member also reiterated the aforementioned concerns in respect of the CFA's lack of scrutiny opportunities.

Councillor G S Atwal advised that at a recent branch meeting of the Harborough Constituency Labour Group, party members had strongly-voiced opposition to the outlined proposals in terms of the increased pressure upon the LFRS's resources to address emergency situations.

Councillor Mrs S Z Haq stated that she opposed the intended cutbacks and requested that sounder advice be given to the CFA in terms of efficiency-

savings and forward-thinking planning in this policy area.

Councillor D A Gamble invited opposition Members to lobby their Leaders and counterparts from their respective political groups in the neighbouring Leicester/shire authorities to oppose the outlined proposals. He further stated that the suggested replacement TRV's were ill-equipped and under-crewed to undertake life-saving operations and therefore posed potential safety hazards to firefighters and service-users alike within the prescribed fire safety procedures and protocols.

Councillor G S Atwal confirmed that the Harborough Constituency Labour Party Group has written to the City Mayor of Leicester City Council, Sir Peter Soulsby, and other local Labour Party groups.

Councillor M H Charlesworth commended the County-wide effort of the Liberal Democrats in bolstering publicity in respect of the opposition campaign which sought to emphasise serious reservations to the outlined proposals. He raised a concern as to CFA's single-polity committee structure in terms of the combined governance, finance and scrutiny portfolios. The Public Consultation Summary Report was said to be insubstantial and was presented under a guise of efficiency-savings in which its Integrated Risk Management Plan has been described as unsafe by Senior LFRS Officers. The Member was of the opinion that the online consultation process was flawed and entertained potential scope for procedural improprieties due to the 10-day consultee period, adding that the CFA was to be encouraged to acknowledge it's feedback. A further concern was raised in respect of the CFA's 10% allocation of its budget to reduce its existing debts. The Member summarised the non-frontline orientated alternatives (at 3(a) of the Motion) which were noted to have received support from City and Country Councillors across the political spectrum. The Member raised a concern as to the over-politicisation of this policy area vis-à-vis the need to safeguard the residents of Leicester/shire and Rutland. He surmised that the proposals of this magnitude risked the LFRS being unable to provide a safe level of service within the Borough and beyond.

Councillor G A Boulter urged that the Motion receive unanimous cross-party consensus commensurate to the strong representation gauged across all residents of the Borough opposing the outlined proposals, adding this was not only a county-wide but also a nation-wide concern.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED THAT:

Following the announcement by Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland Combined Fire Authority to consult on significant reductions to front-line services, we believe Oadby & Wigston Borough Council should respond, and the Council's response should be agreed at an extraordinary meeting of the Council.

1. That this Council notes that:-

a) The Central Government Grant to the CFA is projected to fall from £17.8m in 2013/14 to £9.1m by 2019/20.

b) The proposals being consulted on will result in:

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">i. The removal of 11 out of 30 fire engines;ii. The loss of 88 fire-fighters;iii. The closure of Kibworth and Central fire stations. <p>2. That this Council notes with concern:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) That the closure of Central and Kibworth fire stations will adversely affect the 10 minute response time to get to a life-threatening emergency.b) That the recent removal of the Scrutiny Committee at the CFA has limited the scope to scrutinise any decision.c) The lack of detail given to Members of the CFA, the FBU and members of the public when considering these proposals.d) That the proposed cuts are front-line orientated. <p>3. That this Council therefore calls on the CFA to:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) Withdraw the current proposals and explore other alternatives including:-<ul style="list-style-type: none">i. Selling the Fire HQ and use the funds for transformation work.ii. Explore other sources of income including cooperation with the other blue-light services in Leicestershire.iii. Look at collaboration with other neighbouring fire services for efficiency savings on back office functions.b) Recognise that the proposed cuts, taken together with significant housing growth in Leicestershire and population | |
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THE MEETING CLOSED AT 6.51 PM



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MAYOR
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TUESDAY, 08 DECEMBER 2015
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