

MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL

AGENDA ITEM 4

COMMITTEE REPORT

CCORPORATE AFFAIRS AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

25th JUNE 2015

CONSULTATION ON THE PROPOSED CHANGES TO CLEVELAND FIRE AUTHORITY

Assistant Director – Organisation and Governance

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1. To consider the Council's response to consultation on proposed changes to Cleveland Fire Authority (CFA) as agreed by the Fire Authority on 27th March 2015.

BACKGROUND

2. Cleveland Fire Authority's Community Integrated Risk Management Plan 2014/18 sets out, amongst other things, the Authority's vision; strategic goals; and its medium term financial position. This includes reference to a budget shortfall, over the four years to 2017/18, of £5.8m.
3. Taking account of the above, the Plan fundamentally re-engineers the Brigade's community safety services and the way they are delivered. It also sets out the Authority's future agenda for change captured within a series of approved organisational, risk management, prevention, protection and emergency response proposals to 2018.
4. One of the proposals is to review Cleveland Fire Authority's governance arrangements which was established as a result of the Authority wanting to demonstrate leadership by remaining 'fit for purpose' in terms of its structure and work and contributing to the overall Authority efficiency savings of £40,000. The review was approved at an Extraordinary meeting of the Fire Authority held on 7th March 2014 where Members resolved to 'review the governance of the Fire Authority to examine the number of Committees and elected members required to govern the Cleveland Fire Authority'.
5. The main focus of the consultation is therefore on proposed changes to the Fire Authority's governance arrangements.

Current Arrangements for Cleveland Fire Authority

6. In terms of the consultation exercise, the current arrangements subject to review are set out in Appendix 1 and fall into the following broad areas:

- statutory functions of CFA emanating from legislation;
- membership, currently consisting of 23 Councillors (see table below);
- appointment and rotation of Chair and Vice Chair;
- Members Allowances; and
- Committee Structure and appointments to Outside Bodies.

Seat Allocation to Constituent Authorities since 1996 – 23 seats available							
	Pop.	As % of Overall Population	Member to Population Ratio	Electors *	As % of Overall Electors	Member to Elector Ratio	Number of Seats
Hartlepool	92,665	16.6	1:23,166	72,478	16.5	1:18,119	4
Middlesbrough	138,939	24.8	1:23,156	107,219	24.5	1:17,689	6
Redcar and Cleveland	134,945	24.1	1:22,490	107,472	24.5	1:17,912	6
Stockton	193,196	34.5	1:27,599	150,920	34.5	1:21,560	7
Total	559,745	100	1:24,336	438,089	100	1:19,047	23

*Office for National Statistics – Population Estimates for UK, England & Wales – Mid 2013

7. Strategic direction was also provided for the review, details of which can be found at Appendix 2.

Proposed Arrangements for Cleveland Fire Authority

8. The Fire Authority at a meeting on 27 March 2015 considered an options paper (see Appendix 3) which reviewed those existing arrangements and agreed to the following:

- Cleveland Fire Authority will remain statutorily responsible for the functions set out in the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004; the Civil Contingencies Act and the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. In addition it will continue to take cognisance of all other legislation applying to its operations.
- The Government’s blueprint of priorities and objectives for fire and rescue services as set out in its document the ‘Fire and Rescue National Framework for England’ will continue to influence the Authority’s work.
- CFA’s indicative terms of reference are set out in Appendix 3(i).
- The number of elected Members on Cleveland Fire Authority will be twelve as set out in the table below.

Council	Pop.	% of Overall pop.	Electors*	% of Overall Electors	No of Members
Hartlepool	92,665	16.6	72,478	16.5	2
Middlesbrough	138,939	24.8	107,219	24.5	3
Redcar and Cleveland	134,945	24.1	107,472	24.5	3
Stockton	193,196	34.5	150,920	34.5	4
Total	559,745	100	438,089	100	12
Member/Elector Ratio					
Cleveland Fire Authority			1:36,507		
Average Combined Authority			1:37,948		
Average Metropolitan Fire Authority			1:72,321		
Member/Population Ratio					
Cleveland Fire Authority			1:46,645		
Average Combined Authority			1:47,997		
Average Metropolitan Fire Authority			1:79,428		

- The Fire Authority will be underpinned by two committees; an Executive Committee and an Audit and Governance Committee.
- The number of elected Members on the Executive Committee will be five; one from each constituent authority and the Chair of the Fire Authority.
- The number of elected members on the Audit and Governance Committee will be seven plus two Independent Persons.
- The level of delegation/decision making in respect of the Executive and Audit and Governance Committees will be increased (see Appendices 3(ii) and 3(iii) respectively).
- The appointment of the Chair and Vice Chair will remain the same as it is currently with the Chair and Vice Chair being rotated across the constituent authorities on a two yearly basis.

9. The efficiency savings arising from the implementation of the outcomes of the review were anticipated to be set at £40,000 and these savings would contribute to the budget deficit.
10. It was also highlighted that Stockton on Tees Borough Council currently elect Members to the Fire Authority for a four year term of office, with the other Councils appointing on an annual basis. The other Authorities would need to be consulted

to ascertain if they wished to extend the terms of office of their elected members in respect of the Fire Authority to a four year term.

11. The Department for Communities and Local Government had been contacted in relation to the review and advised as follows

- that the outcomes from the CFA would not require amendments to the existing Combination Scheme Order; and
- that the level of consultation and proposed subsequent changes were a matter for the Fire Authority.

12. Whilst the agreed position of Cleveland Fire Authority on which it is consulting is set out above, in reaching its position, some of the key options for change it considered (as detailed in Appendix 3), included:

- five options in terms of the total number of elected Members to serve on the Fire Authority, ranging from 12 to 16 Members. No option was considered to remain the same. Under the CFA option of 12 twelve members, Middlesbrough's allocation of seats would reduce from 6 to 3;
- a rationalisation of the Committee structure from six bodies to two, an Executive Committee and Audit and Governance Committee, both of which would have increased responsibilities. Under such arrangements, the Executive Committee membership would reduce for 7 to 5 with each Council having one place plus the Chair of the Fire Authority. Audit and Governance would continue to have seven members plus two independent persons; and
- a proposed extension, in Middlesbrough's case, to a four year term of office rather than annual.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

13. There are no financial implications arising from this report

RECOMMENDATIONS

14. The views of the Committee are sought on:

- a) the proposed revised arrangements in respect of Cleveland Fire Authority as detailed in this report; and
- b) whether the Council wishes to extend the terms of office of its elected Members in respect of the Fire Authority to four years.

BACKGROUND PAPER

15. Letter and supporting documentation from Cleveland Fire Authority with regard to the Consultation on the Proposed Changes to Cleveland Fire Authority.

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