

North Yorkshire County Council

Harrogate and Knaresborough Area Constituency Committee

Minutes of the special meeting held on Thursday, 28th July, 2022 commencing at 10.00 am at Harrogate Civic Centre.

Present: County Councillor Monica Slater in the Chair, and County Councillors Chris Aldred, Philip Broadbank, Sam Gibbs, Michael Harrison, Paul Haslam, Peter Lacey, Mike Schofield, Matt Walker, Arnold Warneken and Robert Windass.

Officers present: Ruth Gladstone.

Other Attendees: Zoe Metcalfe (North Yorkshire Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner), Mat Walker (Interim Deputy Chief Fire Officer), Dave Winspear (NYFRS Area Manager and Head of Transformation) and Tom Thorp (Assistant Chief Executive, Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for North Yorkshire). Paul James (Chair of North Yorkshire Fire Brigades Union (FBU)) and 4 public/press/FBU.

Apologies: County Councillors Pat Marsh, Hannah Gostlow and John Mann.

Copies of all documents considered are in the Minute Book

12 Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made at this stage of the meeting.

13 Public Questions or Statements

A statement was made by Paul James (Chair of North Yorkshire Fire Brigades Union). A copy of the statement is appended to these Minutes.

14 North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service - Risk and Resource Model 2022-25 - Consultation

Considered: The Risk and Resource Model 2022-25 consultation document for North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service, together with a more detailed technical document supplied by the Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for North Yorkshire.

North Yorkshire Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner Zoe Metcalfe, together with Mat Walker (Interim Deputy Chief Fire Officer) and Dave Winspear (NYFRS Area Manager and Head of Transformation) introduced the proposals and responded to the statement made by Paul James (Chair of North Yorkshire Fire Brigades Union). They, together with Tom Thorp (Assistant Chief Executive, Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for North Yorkshire), responded to Members' questions.

A recording of the meeting is available for viewing at <https://www.northyorks.gov.uk/live-meetings>

Note: During discussion about increases in deprivation and fuel poverty and the consequent use of solid fuel fire to heat homes, County Councillor Arnold Warneken declared an interest as he had a log business.

Resolved –

That the Committee respond as follows to the consultation:-

- The Committee has major concerns about the plan to reduce the night cover for Harrogate to one vehicle with a crew of 4 firefighters.
- The Committee welcomes investment proposals for increased spending on the prevention of fires, flooding and road traffic accidents.
- The Committee has concerns about the self-rostering proposal and the potential impact on staff.
- The Committee requests that current average response times to incidents are published to provide a benchmark against which any future targets set by North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service can be monitored, together with the impact of any changes that do come as a result of the proposals if adopted.

The meeting concluded at 12.35 pm.

My name is Paul James. I am the Brigade Chair of North Yorkshire of the Fire Brigades Union.

Thank you for having me today.

On the PFCC's own website, Statement of Corporate Governance, 1.1.3 Sates "*The Commissioner is elected in accordance with the law and has a duty to represent the views of the whole community*".

Yet the PFCC and the current Chief have both confirmed these are joint proposals put forward to the public. How can she then be impartial enough to represent the views of the community, when she has co-written these proposals?

2.1.1 Sates "This Code of Corporate Governance sets out how the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner will conduct their organisation in accordance with the Statement of Corporate Governance. It will do this by highlighting the key enablers for ensuring good governance".

The International Framework also states that: "To deliver good governance in the public sector, both governing bodies and individuals working for public sector entities must try to achieve their entity's objectives while acting in the public interest at all times. Acting in the public interest implies primary consideration of the benefits for society, which should result in positive outcomes for service users and other stakeholders".

The proposals include:

- Cutting the second fire engine from night-time cover at Harrogate and Scarborough fire stations
 - This will significantly increase the time in which the fire service can get the first and second fire engine to a fire or other emergency. The government's own modelling shows that your chances of survival falls exponentially as attendance times increase, Rescues from fires require a significant amount of resources in a short period of time to be effective. Home Office statistics show that although call volume falls during the evening the number of serious fires and fatalities do not follow the same trend. Harrogate still requires 2 appliances during the night to cover serious fires if positive outcomes are to be achieved. Under these proposals, during night time hours, Ripon, Tadcaster, Malton, Northallerton, and Selby will have more fire engines than Harrogate.
 - A recent government inspection of NYFRS was critical of the fact they do not publish a response time standard. It stated that '...the public doesn't know what level of service to expect. Response times have increased since 2010' Its the opinion of North Yorkshire FBU that this is for one reason and one reason alone.... our response times to much of the county are terrible. With 17 part time appliances unavailable on a regular basis we see fire engines from further afield drive past fire stations with an unavailable engine parked up to attend fires. We feel that the continuing avoidance of declaring a standard is the avoidance of transparency and accountability. These proposals will see Harrogate enter the response time race to the bottom that much of the rest of the county competes in. Currently Harrogate can mobilise to a small fire and large fire at the same time during the night, or respond to a high rise fire with enough crew to operate the Arial ladder platform (60m hydraulic ladder) under these proposals, they will not... if Harrogate fire engine is at a small fire and a house fire comes in... residents of Harrogate will be waiting for Knaresborough to attend, 20, 25, 30 minutes? Or from further afield. Boroughbridge, Ripon? The same goes if the arial ladder is needed on night, visit any fire station with an Arial ladder platform and the firefighters will list you the time critical rescues that have been made using the ladder. Councillors, do not be convinced this is a nice to

have. Councillors, do not be convinced into entering Harrogate into the race to the bottom we see elsewhere in North Yorkshire.

- Cutting the second fire engine from nighttime cover at Harrogate and Scarborough fire stations
 - NYFRS are replacing one botched cut with another, removing the contentious Tactical Response Vehicles which are crewed with too few firefighters to affect a rescue from a house fire, but replacing them with a full-sized fire engine only crewed half of the time.
 - Home Office statistics show that serious emergencies which require the most resources remain constant during the time period these cuts are proposed.
 - Under this plan the remaining crews at Scarborough and Harrogate will be waiting for part-time staff to travel from their home address to their local fire stations in Sherburn, Filey, Robbin Hoods Bay, Knaresborough, Summerbridge, and Ripon, then travel to the emergencies in Harrogate and Scarborough.
- Significantly cutting attendance to automatic fire alarm call outs
 - NYFRS attend less false alarms than the national average, highlighting the need to maintain a high level of response to automatic alarms.
 - We could have a situation where one firefighter in a car is being sent out to respond to fire alarms
- Removing the need to always use blue lights to automatic fire alarm responses at premises where people don't sleep, and not responding to these alarms for two extra hours per day.
- Halting monitoring of responses relative to a publicly stated target time, and instead implementing monitoring relative to "response principles".
- NYFRS's own analysis shows that the areas of 'High' and 'Very High' risk are concentrated in the very areas subject to the proposed cuts. A decade of under investment in the Fire and Rescue Service has dovetailed with an increase in response times both locally and nationally.
- Further cuts to emergency response in the county is not the answer, particularly when NYFRS claims to have a balanced medium-term budget. Council tax has increased by either the maximum or 0.01% shy of the maximum permissible amount year-on-year since 2010, yet NYFRS continually proposes to cut operational staff and slow response times to areas of the county most at risk.

According to the Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabularies and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) key facts:

- NYFRS attends less false alarms per 1000 people than the national average.
- NYFRS serves an area of 3209 square miles, the largest geographical area of any English Fire and Rescue Service.
- North Yorkshires Population has risen by 2%
- NYFRS Firefighter numbers has fallen by 2%
- NYFRS Fire False alarms per 1000 of population is below the national average