



## **Report on Avon Fire Authority to the meeting of North Somerset Council, 14 July 2020**

As with all local authorities, we are attempting to become accustomed to virtual meetings. This has involved a certain amount of cancelled, re-arranged and scaled back meetings, but a full meeting of the Fire Authority did manage to take place on 12 May 2020.

At this meeting the authority reviewed and approved its Pay Policy Statement, which it does annually. This is available to view on the authority's website, although there are some statistics which are not yet available and will be added in due course. There were no significant changes from the statement for last year.

At the meeting we also carried out the annual review of the remuneration of the Chief Fire Officer and other senior officers. It was agreed that there would be no increases.

The authority set its revenue budget as usual at its meeting in February, as I reported last time. But since then it has been necessary to make adjustments to this, including the capital programme, as a result as the unexpected events around the Covid-19 pandemic. This has included the £192,000 received from the Government to go towards some of the additional costs associated with the pandemic.

There was also an application to consider from the Police and Crime Commissioner to join the Fire Authority as a full member, now that the law has been changed to permit this. There was some concern over some aspects of the application and the lack of information over how the status of this member would differ from other members of the authority, and so it was decided that we should seek further legal guidance before a decision could be made.

The Fire Service's response to Covid-19 continues to evolve, as it adapts in line with the Government and partner organisations. First and foremost, the service has continued to provide its essential emergency response throughout. There are currently around 1.43% of the staff off work due to self-isolation, which is manageable with good planning and preparation. The authority and the service awaits further details from the Government on the easing of lockdown and will consider how this will affect the service.

The agreement to support South Western Ambulance Service which I previously reported has been extended to 15<sup>th</sup> July. This has moved from Phase 1, which involved supporting emergency care assistants with low acuity calls, or those deemed a lower risk, to Phase 2 where fire service drivers are riding with fully trained paramedics for higher category call outs. These volunteers have gone above and beyond their normal roles, for which huge credit and thanks is due.

**Cllr Robert Payne**