

**Minutes of the Meeting of
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority
held on Wednesday, 10 December 2014, at 3.00 pm
at Service Headquarters, Shrewsbury**

Present**Members**

Councillors Austin, Mrs Barrow, Mrs Bould, Carter, Hartin, Hurst-Knight, Dr Jones, Kiernan, Price, West (Chair) and Wynn

Officers

Chief Fire Officer, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Treasurer, Head of Finance, Clerk to the Fire Authority, Corporate Support Manager and Executive Support Officer

External

Dr Worrall (Retired Assistant Chief Fire Officer)

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Adams, Bennett, Mellings, Minnery, Miss Reynolds and Thompson.

2 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

The Chair reminded Members that they must not participate in the discussion of, or voting on, any matter, in which they had a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (DPI) and should leave the room prior to commencement of the debate.

Councillors Mrs Barrow, Hartin and Kiernan each declared a DPI in relation to items 7 and 15 on the agenda, as Directors of Shropshire Fire Risk Management Services Ltd.

The Members concerned had been granted a dispensation by the Standards Committee, which allowed them to take part in the discussion of, and voting on, matters relating to Shropshire Fire Risk Management Services Ltd., providing that legal opinion considered the participation to be appropriate. On this occasion, the items to be considered concerned the performance of the company and were for information purposes only. It was, therefore, deemed appropriate for the Members concerned to participate in the discussion of these items.

Councillor Price declared an interest in item 13 on the agenda which related to the Staff International Exchange Programme. Councillor Price is a trustee of the Operation Sabre charity mentioned in the report.

3 Minutes

Members received the minutes of the Fire Authority meeting, held on 8 October 2014.

It was proposed by Councillor Austin, seconded by Councillor Price, and

Resolved that the minutes of the Fire Authority meeting, held on 8 October 2014, be agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record

4 Public Questions

No questions, statements or petitions had been received from members of the public.

5 Meeting Schedule 2015

The Fire Authority received a schedule of proposed dates for 2015 meetings of the Fire Authority and its committees for approval.

The Corporate Support Manager advised that this would be revisited at the Annual Meeting of the Fire Authority in June 2015, at which time new Members might have been appointed, following the Annual Meetings of Telford & Wrekin and Shropshire Councils. Officers would then present a schedule from June 2015 to May 2016, which would tie in with the planning of meetings by the two Councils.

Members were asked to inform the Executive Support Officer if they wished to receive meeting invites electronically, i.e. via Outlook.

It was proposed by Councillor Price, seconded by Councillor Dr Jones, and

Resolved that the Fire Authority agree the schedule of proposed dates for 2015 meetings of the Fire Authority and its committees

6 Standards and Human Resources Committee

Members received the minutes of the Standards and Human Resources Committee meeting, held on 6 November 2014, and considered the recommendation at item 6b relating to the Members' Code of Conduct.

It was proposed by Councillor Mrs Barrow, seconded by Councillor Dr Jones, and

Resolved that the minutes of the Standards and Human Resources Committee meeting, held on 6 November 2014, be noted and the recommendation at item 6b, as detailed below, be agreed.

Item 6b – Members’ Code of Conduct

Resolved that the Fire Authority agree the amendments to the Members’ Code of Conduct

7 Audit and Performance Management Committee Non-Exempt Minutes

Members received the non-exempt minutes of the Audit and Performance Management Committee meeting, held on 6 November 2014.

It was proposed by Councillor Dr Jones, seconded by Councillor Kiernan, and

Resolved that the non-exempt minutes of the Audit and Performance Management Committee meeting, held on 6 November 2014, be noted

8 Strategy and Resources Committee

Members received the minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting, held on 20 November 2014, and considered the recommendations at item 5 relating to financial performance to September 2014.

It was proposed by Councillor Carter, seconded by Councillor Mrs Barrow, and

Resolved that the minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting, held on 20 November 2014, be noted and the recommendations at item 5, as detailed below, be agreed.

Item 5 – Financial Performance to September 2014, including the Annual Treasury Review 2013/14 and Mid-Year Treasury Review 2014/15

Resolved that the Fire Authority:

- a) Note the position of the revenue budget;
- b) Approve virements to the revenue budget, where requested;
- c) Note the annual review of treasury activities for 2013/14;
- d) Note performance against prudential indicators to date in 2014/15; and
- e) Note the mid-year review of treasury activities for 2014/15

9 2015/16 and Later Years Budget Summary

This report summarised the budgets proposed by the Strategy and Resources Committee. The results were put forward to the Fire Authority for approval as the basis for consultation, leading to a final decision at the Fire Authority meeting in February 2015.

The Head of Finance (HoF) explained that the budget assumptions, as set out on page 2 of the report, had been considered and agreed by the Strategic Risk and Planning (StRaP) Working Group before being agreed by the Strategy and Resources Committee.

She also explained that the table on page 2 of the report included the officer-led reductions identified in the 2020 consultation process. The Capital Programme would be brought to the Fire Authority in February 2015 for approval.

Councillor Hartin, as Chair of the StRaP Working Group, reported that the budget assumptions had generated considerable discussion at both the Working Group and the Strategy and Resources Committee meetings. However, it had been agreed that the assumptions should include increased grant reductions and that the Fire Authority should continue to include a 2% precept increase in budget planning to provide some certainty for the future.

It was proposed by Councillor Wynn, seconded by Councillor Dr Jones, and

Resolved that the Fire Authority agree:

- a) To base its revenue budget planning and consultation on the totals set out in section 3 of the report;
- b) To base its capital programme on that set out in report 7 of the Appendix, subject to further additions, and to consideration of the prudential guidelines and minimum revenue provision policy by the Strategy and Resources Committee in February 2015;
- c) The recommendations on Reserves and Provisions, set out in report 6 of the Appendix, and confirm the general reserve; and
- d) Request the Strategy and Resources Committee to prepare a final budget package in February 2015, for final decision by the Fire Authority in February 2015

10 The Scheme for Payment of Members' Allowances 2015/16

This report asked the Fire Authority to consider and agree its 2015/16 Scheme for the Payment of Members' Allowances and whether or not it wished to amend its 2014/15 Scheme.

Councillor Dr Jones said that the Labour and Liberal Democrat Members felt that the increase in allowances should be accepted, as an equivalent increase had been applied to staff salaries. There were also concerns about the long-term implications, should they continue not to accept increases in their allowances. They also felt that it would be better to apply the change with effect from 1 April 2015.

Councillor Carter commented that he personally could not accept the increase because of the ongoing national economic situation.

It was proposed by Councillor Dr Jones, seconded by Councillor Hartin, and on a vote with 9 Members voting for and 2 Members voting against, it was

Resolved that the Fire Authority agree:

- a) Its Scheme for Payment of Members' Allowances 2015/16 to take effect from 1 April 2015 (a draft of which is set out at the appendix to the report);

- b) That basic and special responsibility allowances should increase by the 2.2% agreed by the National Joint Council; and
- c) That the 2.2% increase should take effect in the 2015/16 Scheme from 1 April 2015; and
- d) Travel and subsistence allowances should increase automatically by the percentage awarded by the National Joint Council, if any

11 Rescue Tender Crewing Review

This report provided an update on the impact to the public following a decision to no longer primary crew the Rescue Tender (RT).

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer explained that the report set out the review data from the closedown of the trial, which showed that the change in RT crewing had had little detrimental effect. The trial period had shown there to be no significant impact on workloads and also that any risks were within a tolerable range. There were, however, corporate issues, such as the ongoing recruitment freeze and the Service going above its establishment figure, which needed to be addressed.

Councillor Price commented that during the Public Value Review there had been reluctance from both the public and staff to the change in crewing of the RT. He noted the issues set out in the report regarding recruitment and said that recommendation c) in the report should be expedited with a timeframe so that the Fire Authority was able to reverse the RT crewing decision at the first opportunity.

Councillor Dr Jones referred to the data on page 2 of the report and proposed that recommendation c) should be amended to read 'To support a decision that, should future resource levels allow, a return to primary crewing the RT, on a permanent or temporary basis, should be considered a priority'.

Councillor Price then proposed that recommendation c) be amended to read 'To support a decision that, should future resource levels allow, a return to primary crewing the RT, on a permanent or temporary basis, should be considered *as soon as possible*'.

Councillor Carter then proposed that the recommendation should be amended further to read 'To support a decision that a return to primary crewing the RT, on a permanent or temporary basis, should be considered as soon as possible'. Councillor Carter commented that he understood that this could not be done immediately due to financial issues and that it needed to be financially viable before the decision could be reversed.

Councillor Hartin commented that the key point was about ensuring that any changes to crewing of the RT would have a minimum impact on the public of Shropshire. The data on page 2 of the report showed that the RT was needed and did produce results, so there should be a move back to permanent crewing, if possible.

At this point, Councillor Dr Jones withdrew the first proposal to amend recommendation c) in the report.

The DCFO reminded Members that the option of switch crewing the RT has been shown to be viable and also commented that he would not want to overplay the 'significant effect' referred to in the report.

The Chief Fire Officer (CFO) explained that the current establishment figure could not currently accommodate any changes and that, as shown in the report, the impact of the RT crewing changes had been minimal. Officers did, however, recognise that the Service was at the point where it needed to refresh its recruitment. The CFO suggested that a report on the recruitment issues should be brought to the Fire Authority, before any further decisions on crewing could be taken.

The Chair suggested that the wording of recommendation c) in the report be left as it was, as it reflected the position of the Service at present and that a report on the recruitment issues referred to be brought to a meeting of the Fire Authority.

Councillor Carter said that after hearing the comments of both the CFO and the DCFO he was withdrawing his proposed change to recommendation c). He stated, however, that the issue needed to be monitored and asked that officers ensure that it was brought back to the Fire Authority.

Councillor Hartin commented that he, and other Members, believed that the RT was an asset that should be permanently crewed in future and that was why Members had sought to strengthen the recommendation in the report.

Councillor Dr Jones said she was happy to accept recommendation c), as set out in the report, if officers felt that it was an accurate expression of the Service's current situation. The Chair confirmed that, at this point in time, recommendation c) was adequate as it was.

It was proposed by Councillor Dr Jones, seconded by Councillor Price, and

Resolved that the Fire Authority agree:

- a) To recognise the feasibility of continuing to "switch crew" the Rescue Tender whilst recognising the potential negative impacts;
- b) To support a decision to continue to "switch crew" the Rescue Tender; and
- c) To support a decision that, should future resource levels allow, a return to primary crewing the Rescue Tender, on a permanent or temporary basis, should be considered

12 Details of Lives Saved and those Protected from Harm

This paper highlighted the number of people, protected from harm, or rescued by operational crews during April to November 2014. It also attempted to provide an economic value for the rescue work carried out by the Fire Service.

The DCFO explained that this information would form the basis of rhetoric regarding the value provided by the Service and that it would be used increasingly in Service communications. The method for calculating the data is not precise but there is a more accurate method is not currently available.

It was proposed by Councillor Hartin, seconded by Councillor Carter, and

Resolved that the Fire Authority note the paper

13 Staff International Exchange Programme

This report brought to a formal close the Fire Authority's Staff International Exchange Programme and provided a summary overview of the Programme since its inception.

Councillor Dr Jones commented that the Programme had given beneficial insights to both officers and Fire Authority Members and had boosted the Service's reputation. She thanked Dr Worrall for his work on the Programme.

Councillor Mrs Barrow echoed these sentiments and commented that Dr Worrall had been the driver behind the Programme and had put in a considerable amount of work to make it a success.

Thanking Dr Worrall for his work, Councillor West commented that he had taken part in several visits, which had been most enlightening.

Dr Worrall thanked the Fire Authority and successive Chief Fire Officers for their support.

The Chief Fire Officer commented that it had been a worthwhile Programme and the experiences and links that it brought were invaluable to the Service.

It was proposed by Councillor West, seconded by Councillor Hartin, and

Resolved that the Fire Authority note the contents of the report

14 Local Government Act 1972

It was proposed by Councillor Dr Jones, seconded by Councillor Hartin, and

Resolved that, under section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting room for the following item on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information, as defined by the provisions of Part I of Schedule 12(A) to the Act, by virtue of Paragraph 3.

15 Audit and Performance Management Committee Exempt Minutes (Paragraph 3)

Members received the exempt minutes of the Audit and Performance Management Committee meeting, held on 6 November 2014.

It was proposed by Councillor Dr Jones, seconded by Councillor Mrs Barrow, and

Resolved that the exempt minutes of the Audit and Performance Management Committee meeting, held on 6 November 2014, be noted

Before closing the meeting, the Chair wished all Members and officers a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year and thanked them for their support during 2014.

The meeting closed at 3.50 pm.

Chair.....

Date.....