

**Minutes of the Meeting of
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority
Strategy and Resources Committee
held in the Oak Room at Headquarters, Shrewsbury
on Thursday, 5 February 2015 at 2.00 pm**

Present

Members

Councillors Mrs Barrow, Carter (Chair), Hartin (Vice-Chair) (from 2.10 pm), Minnery, Miss Reynolds, Thompson and West

Officers

Chief Fire Officer, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Head of Operations, Head of Finance, Planning and Performance Manager and Executive Support Officer

1 Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

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, and should leave the room prior to the commencement of the debate.

No Disclosable Pecuniary Interests were declared.

3 Minutes

Members received the minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting, held on 20 November 2014.

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

Resolved that the minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting, held on 20 November 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 Financial Performance to December 2014

This report provided information on the financial performance of the Service, and sought approval for action, where necessary.

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

Resolved that the Committee recommend that the Fire Authority:

- a) Note the position of the revenue budget;
- b) Approve movements and virements to the revenue budget, where requested; and
- c) Note performance against prudential indicators to date in 2014/15

6 Revisions to the 2015/16 Revenue Budget

This report presented a final revenue budget package for 2015/16 for consideration by the Committee, and recommendation to the Fire Authority, taking into account latest information.

Councillor Hartin joined the meeting at this point (2.10 pm).

Councillor West commented that the financial situation was a moving picture but the report showed how well the Authority had done with regard to its finances. Councillor West thanked the Head of Finance for her work.

Councillor Carter commented that, whilst the future could not be foreseen, particularly after the General Election in May, he believed that the Authority had acted prudently to enable it to manage future possibilities.

Councillor Hartin commented that he was pleased with the current position of the 2019/20 budget, which had improved since December 2014.

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

Resolved that the Committee recommend that the Fire Authority agree a revenue budget of £21.228m for 2015/16, with a contribution to reserves of £574,000, subject to confirmation of collection fund balances and council tax base

7 Capital Programmes 2015/16 to 2019/20 and Prudential Guidelines

This report presented the capital programmes for 2015/16 to 2019/20, for consideration by the Committee in the context of Prudential Guidelines.

Councillor Hartin asked if there were any changes to note with regard to the Treasury Management Practices. The Head of Finance explained that the changes were mostly to job titles and that there was nothing major to report.

It was proposed by Councillor Mrs Barrow, seconded by Councillor Miss Reynolds, and

Resolved that the Committee recommend that the Fire Authority:

- a) The decision relating to the 2015/16 onward programmes be deferred until item 13 on the agenda, as these were set out in Appendix A to the report, which was an exempt paper;
- b) Approve the Prudential Indicators and the Treasury Strategy for 2015/16;
- c) Approve the Minimum Revenue Provision 2015/16; and
- d) Approve the Treasury Management Practices and Main Principles for 2015/16

8 Adequacy of Provisions and Reserves and Robustness of Budget

This report undertook a full analysis of reserves and provisions, provided an assurance on the adequacy of reserves and provisions, and gave an assurance on the robustness of the budget.

Councillor Carter asked if there had been any further feedback from the local MPs with regard to the Authority's reserves. The Chief Fire Officer (CFO) responded that there had been no contact recently. Councillor West commented that the issue was unlikely to crop up again, as the Authority would not be requesting money from the Minister.

Councillor Carter asked about the precept level. Councillor West explained that the national Combined Fire Authorities (CFA) Group, which he chaired, was raising the issue of lifting the referendum limit for the precept.

The CFO explained that the Rural Services Network had a lobby group, whose main thrust was to achieve an increase in Grant funding. The CFO had raised the issue of an increase in the Referendum Spending Limit with this group but it appeared to be opposed to their thinking. The group had undertaken to raise the issue with the Government but the CFO was not sure if this fitted with their main focus.

Councillor Carter commented that the Authority needed to keep talking about the precept issue with the public / local councils etc.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer (DCFO) commented that a twin-track approach with the Local Government Association and the Rural Services Network seemed to be the best route to address these issues. Councillor West explained that the CFA Group was able to meet with the Minister but it could only lobby on things that could happen.

The CFO linked this paper to paper 6 on the agenda – Revisions to the 2015/16 Revenue Budget, which showed the impact of Public Value and that it had put the Authority in a good position. As well as having generated reserves and provisions, Public Value had given the Authority a great opportunity to improve and move forward by developing a lean and effective service.

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

Resolved that the Committee:

- a) Recommend to the Fire Authority:
 - i) The reserves and provisions, as set out in the appendix to the report; and
 - ii) The Treasurer's assurances, covering the robustness of the 2015/16 budget and adequacy of the reserves and provisions; and
- b) To note the material uncertainties from 2016/17 onwards

9 Integrated Risk Management Plan Strategic Document and Action Plan 2015 – 2020

This report set out the draft Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) Strategic Document and Action Plan 2015-20 for consideration by the Committee.

The DCFO commented that the document was timely, as it highlighted the changes achieved by the Authority and the fact that the financial imperative to change was now not as strong. The focus of the IRMP document was on the sustainability of the organisation and achieving service improvements. The reviews included in the document would, however, also look at financial factors.

The DCFO highlighted the following in relation to the IRMP document:

- Although a stand-alone document, it was also part of the Medium Term Corporate Plan;
- It had been made easier to read and more digestible to the general public;
- As it was a five-year plan, the terminology used in it would be refreshed each year;
- The primary objective of the document was to mandate activities to achieve service improvements; and
- The workforce would need to engage fully with transformation and change in order to improve the Service.

The DCFO talked through each section of the report in turn. Some formatting issues were noted with the document, which would be addressed, once it had been finalised. It would then be printed professionally.

Councillor Carter thanked officers for producing a professional and concise document. Councillors Mrs Barrow and West agreed with his comments adding that the document was reader-friendly and accessible. Councillor Minnery also echoed the opinions expressed and stated that he was happy to go forward with the document as it was.

Councillor Minnery left the meeting at this point (2.45 pm).

Councillor Hartin asked if the readability of the document was sufficient and whether the front page could be made more engaging. The CFO reassured Members that this would be addressed before the document went to print.

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO) explained that the Medium Term Corporate Plan, of which this document was part, would be produced in accordance with the Authority's corporate branding guidelines. A meeting with the printers would take place the following day to look at branding and formatting. Councillor Mrs Barrow suggested that, as part of this, the title could perhaps be made more user-friendly.

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

Resolved that the Committee agree the IRMP Strategic Document and Action Plan 2015-20 for recommendation to the Fire Authority

10 Corporate Risk Management Summary

This was the latest of the regular risk summary reports to the Strategy and Resources Committee. The progress reported related to that achieved since the last Committee update in November 2014.

The Planning and Performance Manager (PPM) reported that there had been no new additions to the Risk Register since November. An audit of the Risk Register would be undertaken the following week and a report on that audit would be brought to the next meeting of the Committee.

Councillor Hartin asked about the current position regarding Risk ID 75, which concerned the European Working Time Directive "opt-out" option. The ACFO reported that a national consultation on this was currently taking place, with responses to be submitted across all business sectors. At this point, there was no indication of what would happen after the consultation had closed.

Councillor West referred to Risk ID 7 regarding the Fire Industry Association challenge, and asked what the current situation was. The CFO explained that the Department for Communities and Local Government had asked the 5 or 6 largest fire authorities affected to provide them with evidence but there was not yet any clarity about what the Government's response to the challenge would be. This Authority had not had any input into the evidence gathering but a watching brief was being kept on the situation and Members would be informed of any developments.

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

Resolved that the Committee note the contents of the report

11 Capital Update on Activity and Finance

This report provided an overview of all of the capital schemes within the Brigade and their current status.

It was noted that the second part of the appendix to this report would be considered in the closed session of the meeting (paper 14), as it was exempt from publication under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

Councillor Hartin referred to the Video Conferencing Scheme and asked for an update on the Wide Area Network (WAN), which would provide greater broadband width and in turn could also benefit local communities, particularly in the more rural areas of the County.

The ACFO responded that the installation of the WAN had been completed on 5 January 2015 with a speed of 10mb. This had since been increased to 100mb but there were still some sites that required further work. Officers had met with ITPS to discuss the options for wider community use and were currently investigating procurement issues and the identification of a suitable working model. Councillor Hartin asked if this information would be ready for the February meeting of the Fire Authority. The ACFO responded that it would not but it was likely that it would be ready for the April meeting.

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

Resolved that the Committee note the progress so far on current schemes

12 Local Government Act 1972

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

Resolved that, under the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded for the following agenda items on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information, as defined by the provisions of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act, by virtue of paragraph 3

13 Capital Programmes 2015/16 to 2019/20 and Prudential Guidelines (Paragraph 3)

The Committee received the Capital Programme from 2015/16 paper which contained exempt information. This was Appendix A to report 7 – Capital Programmes 2015/16 to 2019/20 and Prudential Guidelines

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

Resolved that the Committee confirm the 2015/16 onward programmes as part of its final precept deliberations

14 Capital Update on Activity and Finance (Paragraph 3)

The Committee received the second part of the appendix to report 9 – Capital Update on Activity and Finance, which contained exempt information.

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

Resolved that the Committee note the information contained in the appendix

The meeting closed at 3.00 pm.

Chair.....

Date.....