

**Minutes of the Annual Meeting of
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority
held on Wednesday, 17 June 2015, at 3.00 pm
at Headquarters, Shrewsbury**

Present

Members

Councillors Mrs Barrow, Carter (Vice-Chair), Hartin, Hurst-Knight, Dr Jones, Kiernan, Mason, Mellings, Minnery, Price, Reynolds, Roberts, and West (Chair)

Officers

Chief Fire Officer, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Treasurer, Head of Finance, Head of Service Delivery, Head of Service Delivery Transformation, Head of Planning and Performance, Clerk to the Fire Authority, Corporate Support Manager and Executive Support Officer

1 Election of Chair

It was proposed by Councillor Minnery and seconded by Councillor Hartin

That Councillor West be elected Chair of the Fire Authority to hold office until immediately after the election of Chair at the next Annual Meeting.

There being no other nominations, Councillor West was duly elected Chair.

Upon taking the Chair, Councillor West thanked the Fire Authority for re-electing him and for the support of both Members and officers and commented that he was in a very privileged position to work with such a good Fire Authority.

2 Appointment of Vice-Chair

It was proposed by Councillor West and seconded by Councillor Hartin

That Councillor Minnery be appointed Vice-Chair of the Fire Authority to hold office until immediately after the appointment of Vice-Chair at the next Annual Meeting.

It was proposed by Councillor Hurst-Knight and seconded by Councillor Mellings

That Councillor Carter be appointed Vice-Chair of the Fire Authority to hold office until immediately after the appointment of Vice-Chair at the next Annual Meeting.

There being no other nominations, a vote was taken and with 4 votes for Councillor Minnery and 8 votes for Councillor Carter, Councillor Carter was duly appointed Vice-Chair.

3a Vote of Thanks and Welcome

The Fire Authority gave a vote of thanks to Councillors Austin, Mrs Bould, Miss Reynolds and Thompson, who had left the Fire Authority in May. The Chair advised that he would be sending a letter of thanks to each of them. He then presented a Shropshire fire mark to Councillor Austin in recognition of his contribution to the Fire Authority during the 17 years since its inception.

The Chair welcomed Councillors Fletcher, Reynolds and Turley to the Fire Authority, together with Councillor Mason, who had been reappointed to the Authority. Councillors Fletcher and Turley were unable to attend the meeting due to prior commitments.

The Chair emphasised to Members the importance of attending all meetings and advising officers at the earliest opportunity, if they were unable to do so. Councillor Mrs Barrow asked about having substitutes for Committees. The Corporate Support Manager advised that this was not feasible, because there were only three Members, who did not sit on either the Strategy and Resources or Audit and Performance Management Committees and who could, therefore, act as substitutes. There were also issues with continuity and knowledge, if substitutes were used.

4 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Fletcher, Turley and Wynn. Councillor Adams did not attend the meeting.

5 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 that they should leave the room prior to commencement of the debate.

Councillor Price declared an interest in item 10, as a member of the Firefighters' Pension Scheme.

6 Public Questions

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

7 Minutes

Members received the non-exempt minutes of the Fire Authority meeting, held on 29 April 2015.

It was proposed by Councillor Minnery, seconded by Councillor Hurst-Knight, and

Resolved that the non-exempt minutes of the Fire Authority meeting, held on 29 April 2015, be agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record

8 Audit and Performance Management Committee Minutes

Members received the minutes of the Audit and Performance Management Committee meeting, held on 23 April 2015, and considered the recommendation at item 9 relating to the Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Strategy, and at item 15b concerning the Fire Industry Association complaint.

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

Resolved that the minutes of the Audit and Performance Management Committee meeting, held on 23 April 2015, be noted and that the recommendation at item 9, as given below, be agreed.

Item 9 – Review of Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Strategy

Resolved that the Fire Authority agree the Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Strategy, as recommended by the Audit and Performance Management Committee.

Councillor Minnery asked if Board members of Shropshire Fire Risk Management Services Ltd should leave the meeting whilst the next item was discussed. The Clerk advised that, on this occasion, it was not necessary.

Item 15b – Shropshire Fire Risk Management Services Ltd Performance Reporting

It was proposed by Councillor Dr Jones, seconded by Councillor Hurst-Knight, and, on a vote with Councillor Minnery abstaining, it was

Resolved that the Fire Authority agree the approach of officers to the complaint made by the Fire Industries Association

9 Constitutional Issues

9a Committee Composition and Allocation of Seats to Political Groups

This report asked the Fire Authority to agree both the composition of its Committees and the allocation of seats on its committees to political groups.

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

Resolved unanimously that the Fire Authority agree the Committee composition and allocation of seats to political groups, specifically:

- a) That the political balance requirements should not apply to the Authority's Pensions Panel; and
- b) The allocation, as proposed in the Appendix to the report

9b Committee Membership and Constitution

This report asked the Fire Authority to confirm appointments to committees and to the Local Government Association Fire Services Commission and to review the constitution of its committees.

The Corporate Support Manager advised that the Authority was asked to agree that the Strategic Planning (StraP) Working Group membership should consist of the Chair and Vice-Chair of Fire Authority and the Chair of the Strategy and Resources Committee. Named Members would be appointed to the Group by the Clerk, who had delegated authority to do so in consultation with the Group Leaders.

Councillor Dr Jones felt that the StraP Working Group Terms of Reference (on page 14 of Appendix B) should be amended to include reference to equality and diversity. She then moved the recommendations, subject to this amendment.

Councillor Hartin commented that he was in support of removing the special responsibility allowances for the StraP Working Group, as the rationale for paying them no longer existed. He also proposed that Councillor West be appointed as the Authority's representative on the Local Government Association Fire Services Commission.

Councillor Minnery requested that the Committee Membership matrix include roles, where appropriate, in future.

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

Resolved that the Fire Authority:

- a) Agree the appointment of Members to serve on committees, as set out in Appendix A to the report, with the exception of the StraP Working Group (Members to be appointed by the Clerk and Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Group Leaders in accordance with the authority delegated to him);
- b) Appoint Councillor West as its representative on the Local Government Association Fire Services Commission;
- c) Agree the proposed amendments to the constitution of its various committees, as set out in Appendix B to the report, including reference to equality and diversity in the StraP Working Group constitution; and
- d) Having agreed the amended constitution of the StraP Working Group, agree that no special responsibility allowance be paid to its members or Chair

Committee Clerk's Note

Since the meeting the Clerk, in consultation with the Chair, has agreed that the StraP Working Group will consist of Councillors Carter, Minnery, Price, Roberts and West (Conservative), Councillors Dr Jones and Reynolds (Labour) and Councillor Hartin (Liberal Democrat).

9c Pension Board Update

Members noted that the update on the Pension Board provided on the agenda.

Councillor Minnery proposed that the Fire Authority did not nominate a Member to sit on the Pensions Board due to the potential conflict of interest. This was seconded by Councillor Mrs Barrow, and it was

Resolved unanimously that the Fire Authority not nominate a Member to the Pensions Board

9d Review of Member Role Descriptions

This report asked Members to review and agree the Fire Authority's Member Role Descriptions.

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

Resolved that the Fire Authority confirm the role descriptions without amendment

9e Review of Scheme of Standing Orders

This report reviewed the Fire Authority's Standing Orders for the Regulation of Proceedings and Business and Standing Orders relating to Contracts and asked Members to consider and decide upon the amendments proposed.

In accordance with the Fire Authority's Standing Orders any amendments proposed would stand adjourned until the next meeting of the Fire Authority.

The Corporate Support Manager advised that the Financial Regulations Standing Orders would be brought to the October meeting of the Fire Authority, following completion of the major review currently being undertaken by officers. The Scheme of Delegation to Officers would also be brought to that meeting, as it was possible that the Scheme might be affected by the changes proposed to the Financial Regulations.

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

Resolved that the amendments, as proposed in the report, to:

- Standing Orders for the Regulations of Proceedings and Business; and
- Standing Orders relating to Contracts

stand adjourned until the next meeting of the Fire Authority

10 Statement of Accounts 2014/15

This report set out the key revenue issues, which had arisen from work on the Statement of Accounts 2014/15, and sought approval for use of the General Fund balance in 2015/16.

The Head of Finance talked through the report and highlighted the table on page 3, which set out the variances to the revenue budget that had been mirrored in the 2015/16 budget.

Referring to the table on page 3 and, in particular, the Training and Health and Safety variance, Councillor Hartin asked if there were any concerns about the significant underspend. The Chief Fire Officer explained that the underspend was partly made up of savings associated with the annual audit peer assessment across the West Midlands region. The Service's establishment profile was not changing with regard to fire investigation, Hazmat or command training, because the workforce was shrinking and the officer cadre was static. The Service was acutely aware of the need for both specialised and basic skills to keep its employees safe.

Councillor Hartin asked if the feedback from the Representative Bodies was still positive. The Head of Finance responded that the Health and Safety Committee, which included the Representative Bodies, had not raised any challenge or issues.

Councillor Mellings asked what the impact of the variances was on the current year. The Head of Finance replied that within the 2015/16 budget there had been a £300k reduction to the pay and prices contingency. By 2020 the pensions and capital reserves would have reduced by £300k. The total £800k reduction achieved so far would continue to reduce into the future.

Councillor Carter thanked the Finance Team for the production of the Statement of Accounts and Service managers for ensuring that the Authority was in a healthy financial position.

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

Resolved unanimously that the Fire Authority:

- a) Approve the addition of £45,000 to 2015/16 revenue budgets, for expenditure that had slipped from 2014/15; and
- b) Approve the proposed use of the General Fund balance in 2014/15

11 Strategic Planning Process Timetable 2016/17

This report outlined how the Service would continue to align service, financial and improvement planning, the result of which would culminate in the 2016/17 budget, publication of the 2016/17 Annual Plan and an update of the 2015/20 Action Plan, if required.

Councillor Hartin asked where the StraP Working Group sat within the timetable. The Planning, Performance and Communications Manager advised that the Group would be convened as and when needed to fit in with the timetable set out in the report.

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

Resolved that the Fire Authority note the contents of the report and agree the timetable set out in the appendix to the report

12 Wide Area Network

This report provided an update of the progress made to implement the Service's own Wide Area Network (WAN) and asked the Fire Authority to consider whether it wished to commit further time and resources to exploring any opportunities this might offer.

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer highlighted the opportunities that officers believed the WAN could offer to the Service. She also advised that the Service believed that it had sourced the necessary technical procurement assistance.

Councillor Hartin expressed his disappointment that the Service could not currently commit to supporting the provision of broadband to the more rural communities. He was keen to ensure that, if possible, this could be utilised in those areas still not covered after Phase 2 had been completed. He asked if any work had been undertaken with other authorities. The Assistant Chief Fire Officer replied that there had been little extra work with other fire authorities and that officers shared Members' disappointment with the situation. The Pilot Scheme, which would end in March 2016, included a company associated with the company supporting the Service's WAN. The Scheme involved wireless broadband being trialled in current 'not spots' and it was hoped that the evidence gathered would help to determine how to deliver broadband connection to the hardest to reach areas of the Country. The Service was happy to be involved with future broadband delivery schemes but full consideration did need to be given to the amount of resources and time committed to this issue going forward.

Councillor Minnery commented that he shared Member and officer disappointment and felt that, whilst it was too soon to say a definitive no, there was not sufficient information to say yes. He, therefore, proposed that the decision be deferred for six months. Councillor Carter concurred with Councillor Minnery's comments and proposal. He commented that Telford & Wrekin Council's engagement with the rural economy showed that broadband was a 'moving feast' and that it would be better to discuss this in more detail in six months, when the Government's approach to the issue should also be clearer.

The Chair commented that he felt that this was a sensible decision. Councillor Hartin supported the proposal put forward by Councillor Minnery, with the proviso that officers maintain a watching brief on the issues involved.

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

Resolved that the decision regarding whether officers should continue to invest time and financial resources in commissioning professional support to explore the potential opportunities for exploiting the Service's information technology infrastructure be deferred for six months

13 Public Value Review Update

This report provided Members with a final summary of all the achievements of the Fire Authority's Public Value review undertaken in 2010.

The Head of Service Delivery Transformation drew Members' attention to the appendix on page 5 of the report, which showed that the Service was £80k short of its original target for total cumulative savings. He explained that the major variance was due to planned reductions to the building maintenance budget. As the savings from this could not be guaranteed into the future, it was deemed inappropriate to include them in the cumulative figures, quoted in the appendix to the report.

Councillor Mrs Barrow thanked all of the officers involved in delivering the Public Value Review but especially the Head of Service Delivery Transformation. This sentiment was echoed by the Fire Authority as a whole. Councillor Carter commented that both the Public Value and the Integrated Risk Management Plan consultation sessions had been very useful in capturing the opinions of rural fire stations, the public and local councillors. Councillor Price added that he was pleased that the Authority had got so close to its target savings. The changes to the crewing of the Rescue Tender had been of particular concern.

The Chair highlighted the importance of the Public Value Review process, which had put the Fire Authority in its current excellent situation. The Chief Fire Officer added that it was outstanding that the Fire Authority led Public Value Plan, which involved the whole organisation, had cut the budget by £3.2m. This was achieved without any redundancies or industrial relations issues and Shropshire was currently the only fire service in West Midlands with a balanced budget. He thanked the current Head of Service Delivery Transformation and the former Chief Fire Officer and Assistant Chief Fire Officer for the work that they had put into it over the past five years.

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

Resolved that the Fire Authority note the contents of the report

14 Corporate Risk Management Annual Report 2014/15

This report informed Members about the corporate level risk management work that has been undertaken during the previous twelve months.

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

Resolved that the Fire Authority note the report

15 Partnership Working

This report provided Members with an overview of the partnership working being undertaken by the Fire Authority and Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service.

Councillor Price commented that this was a rewarding report, which detailed the immense amount of partnership work undertaken by the Service. He asked if Shropshire Council was also engaging in a data-sharing protocol as Telford & Wrekin Council were doing. The Chief Fire Officer replied that the Telford & Wrekin Council initiative was a 'testbed' that would move on to Shropshire Council in due course.

With regard to sprinklers, the Chief Fire Officer explained that the Service had invested a minimum amount to show the benefits to housing providers and builders. Councillor Price asked if any publicity had been given to this initiative. The Chief Fire Officer replied that as yet it had not but this would be done in the near future. Councillor Carter asked if the constituent authorities' Planning Departments discussed the requirement to install sprinklers in new builds with planning applicants. The Chief Fire Officer replied that the standard response to all new build planning applications included advice on the provision of sprinklers.

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

Resolved that the Fire Authority note the report

16 Details of Lives Saved and those Protected from Harm

This paper highlighted the number of people, who had been protected from harm, or rescued by operational crews during the year 2014/15 and from April to May 2015. It also attempted to provide an economic value for the rescue work carried out by the Fire Service.

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

Resolved that the Fire Authority note the paper

17 Local Government Act 1972

It was proposed by Councillor West, 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 items on the grounds that they 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

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

Members received the exempt minutes of the Audit and Performance Management Committee meeting, held on 23 April 2015.

It was proposed by Councillor Dr Jones, seconded by Councillor Hurst-Knight, and

Resolved that the exempt minutes of the Audit and Performance Management Committee meeting, held on 23 April 2015, be noted

19 Shropshire Fire Risk Management Services Ltd Going Concern (Paragraph 3)

This report was deferred for consideration at a later meeting of the Fire Authority.

At this point the meeting reverted to open session.

20 Election of Chairs and Appointment of Vice-Chairs to Committees

Members of Committees were asked to elect a Chair and appoint a Vice-Chair, to hold office until the Fire Authority's Annual Meeting in June 2016.

Strategy and Resources Committee

Chair

It was proposed by Councillor Mrs Barrow and seconded by Councillor Minnery that Councillor Roberts be elected Chair of the Strategy and Resources Committee.

There being no other nominations, Councillor Roberts was duly elected Chair.

Vice Chair

It was proposed by Councillor Roberts and seconded by Councillor Minnery that Councillor Hartin be appointed Vice-Chair of the Strategy and Resources Committee.

There being no other nominations, Councillor Hartin was duly appointed Vice-Chair.

Strategic Planning Working Group

Chair and Vice-Chair

The Chair and Vice-Chair would be elected at first meeting of Strategic Planning Working Group following this Fire Authority meeting.

Audit and Performance Management Committee

Chair

It was proposed by Councillor Mellings and seconded by Councillor Hurst-Knight that Councillor Dr Jones be elected Chair of the Audit and Performance Management Committee.

There being no other nominations, Councillor Dr Jones was duly elected Chair.

Vice Chair

It was proposed by Councillor Hurst-Knight and seconded by Councillor Dr Jones that Councillor Mellings be appointed Vice-Chair of the Audit and Performance Management Committee.

There being no other nominations, Councillor Mellings was duly appointed Vice-Chair.

Standards and Human Resources Committee

Chair

It was proposed by Councillor Mrs Barrow and seconded by Councillor Price that Councillor Adams be elected Chair of the Standards and Human Resources Committee.

There being no other nominations, Councillor Adams was duly elected Chair.

Vice Chair

It was proposed by Councillor Mrs Barrow and seconded by Councillor Mellings that Councillor Price be appointed Vice-Chair of the Standards and Human Resources Committee.

There being no other nominations, Councillor Price was duly appointed Vice-Chair.

Brigade Managers' Employment Panel

Chair

It was proposed by Councillor Minnery and seconded by Councillor Mrs Barrow that Councillor West be elected Chair of the Brigade Managers' Employment Panel.

There being no other nominations, Councillor West was duly elected Chair.

Vice-Chair

It was proposed by Councillor Mrs Barrow and seconded by Councillor West that Councillor Minnery be appointed Vice-Chair of the Brigade Managers' Employment Panel.

There being no other nominations, Councillor Minnery was duly appointed Vice-Chair.

Pensions Panel

The members of the Pensions Panel agreed that the Chair of the Pensions Panel would be elected on an ad-hoc basis.

The meeting closed at 4.30 pm.

Chair.....

Date.....