

**Minutes of the Meeting of
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority
held on Wednesday, 13 December 2017, at 2.00 pm
at Headquarters, Shrewsbury**

Present

Members

Councillors Adams, Carter (Chair), Dee, Hartin, Hosken, Mellings, Milner, Minnery, Murray, Phillips, Price, Roberts (Vice-Chair), Sahota and Wynn

Officers

Rod Hammerton	Chief Fire Officer	CFO
Andy Johnson	Deputy Chief Fire Officer	DCFO
Dave Myers	Assistant Chief Fire Officer	ACFO
Jonathan Eatough	Clerk to the Fire Authority	Clerk
James Walton	Fire Authority Treasurer	Treasurer
Joanne Coadey	Head of Finance	HoF
Andrew Kelcey	Head of Resources	HoR
Germaine Worker	Head of Human Resources and Administration	HHRA
John Harrison	Company Manager	CM
Lynn Ince	Executive Support Officer	ESO

External Bodies

John Campion	Police and Crime Commissioner (from 2.05 pm)	PCC
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The Chair welcomed Dave Myers, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, to his first Fire Authority meeting.

The Chair also commented that it was good to see Councillor Dee following her recent bereavement. Councillor Dee thanked the Fire Authority and Service for the support that had been given to her during this time.

The Chair also welcomed Councillor Roberts back after his recent recuperation from surgery.

1 Apologies for Absence

Councillor Jones. Councillors Pardy and Pinter did not attend the meeting.

2 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

Councillors Hartin, Hosken, Mellings and Roberts declared Disclosable Pecuniary Interests in items 13 and 16 as Directors of Shropshire Fire Risk Management Services.

It was agreed that the Members concerned, together with the Deputy Chief Fire Officer who is also a Director of the Company, would leave meeting for items 13 and 16.

The Fire Authority agreed that the order of the agenda be varied to allow agenda item 13 to be considered immediately before agenda item 16 so that the Members concerned would only need to leave the meeting once.

3 Public Questions

None

4 Non-Exempt Minutes

Resolved that the non-exempt minutes of the Fire Authority Meeting, held on 4 October 2017, be agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

5 Meeting Schedule 2017

The Fire Authority received a schedule of proposed dates for 2018 meetings of the Fire Authority and its committees for approval.

This will be revisited at the Annual Meeting of the Fire Authority in June 2018, as new Members may have been appointed, following the Annual Meetings of Telford & Wrekin and Shropshire Councils. At this time officers will present a schedule from June 2018 to May 2019, which will tie in with the planning of meetings by the two Councils.

Resolved that the Fire Authority agree the draft Meeting Schedule 2018.

6 Strategy and Resources Committee Non-Exempt Minutes

Resolved that the non-exempt minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting, held on 9 November 2017, be noted and the recommendations at item 5, as given below, be agreed.

Item 5 – Financial Performance to September 2017, including Annual Treasury Review 2016/17 and Mid-Year Treasury Review 2017/18

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 update on capital activities, and approve changes to the appliance schemes detailed in paragraph 6 of the report;
- d) Note the update on corporate risk;
- e) Note the annual review of treasury activities for 2016/17;
- f) Note performance against prudential indicators to date in 2017/18; and
- g) Note the mid-year review of treasury activities for 2017/18.

7 Standards and Human Resources Committee

Members received the non-exempt minutes of the Standards and Human Resources Committee meeting, held on 16 November 2017 and considered the recommendations at items 6 and 14 of those minutes.

In relation to paragraph 6 of report 14, Members asked for more information regarding BME groups and job share contracts. The HHRA explained that this was something that had come out of community discussions but was unable to add any further detail at this stage. The HHRA undertook to bring a more detailed report on the options to target recruitment of under-represented groups to the next meeting of the Standards and Human Resources Committee.

Resolved that the minutes of the Standards and Human Resources Committee meeting, held on 16 November 2017, be noted and the recommendations at items 6 and 14, as given below, be agreed.

Item 6 – Ethical Framework Matters

Resolved that the Fire Authority

- a) Note the review of the Members Code of Conduct;
- b) Note the review carried out by officers of related procedures and documents; and
- c) Agree the proposed amendments to the Members Code of Conduct.

Item 14 – Wholetime Recruitment

Resolved that the Fire Authority

- a) Note the use of the Fire Service College managed electronic system as the preferred method of recruiting ten Wholetime Firefighters in 2018;
- b) Approve the use of post code restricting the campaign to the West Midlands region, Cheshire, Wrexham and Powys, in order to support the Service's ambition of becoming a more inclusive employer; and
- c) Note the various options being tried to improve on the recruitment and targeting of under-represented groups.

8 2017/18 and Later Years Budget Summary

This report summarised the budgets that are proposed by the Strategy and Resources Committee. The results are 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 2018.

The HoF presented the report and highlighted the sections on the pay award, inflation and precept as set out on page 3 of the report. With regard to the Council Tax base, the HoF advised that Shropshire Council have an increase of 2.37% and Telford & Wrekin Council have an increase of 1.99%, which give a combined increase of 2.25%. The HoF advised that the Government will announce the financial settlement 19 December 2017 and when the settlement is confirmed, officers will report the detail to the Fire Authority.

The PCC asked if income figures in the table on page 3 of the report were based on a precept of 1.99% and an increase in Council Tax base of 0.8%. The HoF confirmed that this was correct.

Members confirmed that they were happy with the proposals set out in the report but asked if there would be opportunity to amend them if necessary. The HoF advised that the budget would be considered by the Strategy and Resources Committee in early February before being brought to the February meeting of the Fire Authority for final approval. This gives the opportunity for changes to be made if required.

In response to a query from Members about the General Reserves and the level of uninsured risks, the HoF explained that the Audit Commission had advised that the percentage level of the Authority's general reserve should be circa 5% which the Authority has maintained as a benchmark. The reserves are earmarked and have been set up for specified reasons. The uninsurable risk reserve contains an amount of money which can be allocated as needed.

Members asked if the 2% referendum level would change at all. The HoF advised that, to date, indications are that the referendum level will remain as is but further information may be given with the budget announcement. The CFO advised that lobbying with regard to precept setting levels has been taking place at a national level but there has been no positive response to this yet.

The Fire Authority raised concerns about the possible impact that borrowing for the Telford Central Project may have. The HoF provided reassurance that the savings from the shift pattern changes will cover this.

Resolved that the Fire Authority

- a) Approve the recommendations in section 5 of this report, relating to precept increase and prices contingency;
- b) Agree to base its revenue budget planning and consultation on the totals set out in section 5 of this report;
- c) Agree the recommendations on Reserves and Provisions, set out in report 7 of the Appendix to the report, and confirm the general reserve;
- d) Request the Strategy and Resources Committee to prepare a final budget package in February 2018, for final decision by the Fire Authority in February 2018; and
- e) Delegate authority for the decision to participate in the Business Rates Retention pilot to the Chair, Chief Fire Officer and Treasurer, as detailed in section 7 of the report.

Councillor Wynn left the meeting at this point (2.40 pm)

9 Rank to Role Dispute

This report informed Members of the ongoing dispute between the Service and the Fire Brigades Union (FBU), relating to the 'Rank to Role' process, and presented options for consideration by the Fire Authority for settling the dispute.

Councillor Wynn returned to the meeting at this point (2.43 pm)

The DCFO presented this report and explained that following the National Joint Council Circular in 2005, the Fire Service, nationally, moved from 12 ranks to 7 roles, but then the introduction of A and B elements resulted in there essentially being 13 levels in the new structure. At the time the only national guidance that had been issued about how roles should be considered for A or B ratings, related to the Retained Duty System (RDS). In 2012, the FBU registered a formal dispute with regard to the Service's lack of progress on implementing a process to determine which roles should get A or B rates of pay. The Working Group that had initially looked at 'Rank to Role' was reconstituted and at the end of 2014 it was agreed that the Croner job evaluation process should be undertaken. As shown on page 3 of the report, this evaluation process showed that there was the potential for separation of roles at Area Manager, Station Manager and Watch Manager level but it was recognised that this could cause promotion and resilience issues.

In 2017, both the Service and the FBU began to move towards a joint proposal in order to resolve the dispute but the proposal, as detailed in Appendix A to the report, had to be withdrawn following legal advice that it was ultra vires.

Option 3, as detailed in the report, allows for mixed roles with 'A's being made appropriately into B posts where necessary, for example station managers taking on project management responsibilities. The FBU have agreed the proposed changes to jobs, as detailed in Appendix C and have also agreed that back pay be limited to 1 year. The DCFO thanked the FBU for their engagement in the negotiations.

With regard to financial implications, the DCFO advised that option 3 does require an additional sum of £67k as a one-off to cover back pay. The annual pay bill will also increase by an additional £118k but the Service will see the benefit from this increase. The Strategy and Resources Committee have considered the option and believe that it represents value for money. The Standards and Human Resources Committee have also considered the option and have made some recommendations regarding points that should be borne in mind in future, as outlined on page 7 of the report.

Members thanked the DCFO for the full explanation of the issue which some members have experienced for many years. They also asked that the excellent relations between the FBU and SFRS be recognised and the FBU's work on this issue formally acknowledged.

The Fire Authority concurred that option 3 as detailed in the report was the most suitable way forward.

The PCC asked for an estimate of the costs involved in the job evaluation process. The CFO responded that the cost of the Croner evaluation process was circa £7k with the only additional costs relating to the time of the officers and FBU representatives involved in negotiations.

The CFO commented that the recognition given by Members to the time and commitment of officers in reaching this proposal was appreciated. A key element of the negotiation process has been the trust between the Service and the FBU. The issue was standing in the way of other changes and progress within the Service, so reaching an agreed proposal has been important.

The CFO also said that whilst there are costs associated with the proposal, there will be a benefit to the Service. It will also keep the structure of the Service 'flat' which helps in smaller organisations such as SFRS.

Resolved unanimously that the Fire Authority

- a) Note the work that has been undertaken by the Service and the Fire Brigades Union in attempting to find a solution to this dispute;
- b) Note the comments made by the Strategy and Resources Committee and the Standards and Human Resources Committee in relation to the three options included in this report, as stated in section 6; and
- c) Approve Option 3, as detailed in Section 5 of the report.

Councillor Minnery left the meeting at this point (3.15 pm)

10 Integrated Risk Management Planning IRMP 2 Fire Control Project

At its October meeting, the Fire Authority gave outline approval for a 12 month trial of a Flexible Rostering System, in Fire Control. This was given on the condition that sufficient progress could be made, by officers and the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) on the negotiated agreement required for the trial, so that full approval could be considered by the Fire Authority at this meeting.

Officers reported that agreement has been reached with the FBU on the details of a Flexible Rostering System for Fire Control and therefore officers sought approval from the Fire Authority for the 12 month trial to go ahead, from 1 January 2018.

If approved, at the end of the trial, officers will provide a report to the Fire Authority that will compare the results achieved from this system, the current Self Rostering system and the previous 2-2-4 system. This will enable the Service to make an informed decision on the most suitable shift system for Fire Control into the future.

The Service will continue to actively explore collaborative opportunities to improve resilience, efficiency and effectiveness in its control and mobilisation function, as directed by the Fire Authority at its October 2017 meeting.

Resolved that the Fire Authority note the update given and approve that the 12 month trial of Flexible Rostering go ahead, from 1 January 2018.

11 Corporate Risk Management Summary

This report updated Members on the status of risks on the Corporate Risk Register.

The PPCM presented the report and highlighted paragraph 6 on page 2 which detailed the Service's current position paragraph 6. This included the Wide Area Network risk being taken off the Register as it has been successfully transferred over to the new Service provider.

There are two contractual risks that are currently impacting on the Service, which are the Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) System and the Integrated Communications Control System (ICCS). With regard to the ERP System, the PPCM advised that the Service is currently undertaking an appraisal of options that may, potentially, allow it to continue using the ResourceLink system.

With regard to the ICCS, the PPCM advised that the system provider has informed SFRS that the system will become obsolete in August 2018. A meeting has been requested with Motorola to discuss the impact of this and future options for the Service. Officers undertook to update Members with regard to outcome of meeting.

Resolved that the Fire Authority note the contents of the report.

12 Exclusion of Press and Public

Resolved that the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

Councillor Adams left the meeting at this point (3.25 pm)

14 Strategy and Resources Committee Exempt Minutes (Paragraph 3)

Resolved that the exempt minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting, held on 9 November 2017, be noted.

15 Corporate Risk Management Summary (Paragraph 4)

Resolved that the Fire Authority note Appendix C to Report 11 – Corporate Risk Management Summary which contains exempt information.

Councillors Hartin, Hosken, Mellings and Roberts and the Deputy Chief Fire Officer left the meeting at this point. (3.30 pm)

13 Fire Authority Exempt Minutes (Paragraphs 1, 2 and 3)

Resolved that the exempt minutes of the Fire Authority Meeting, held on 4 October 2017, be agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

16 Shropshire Fire Risk Management Services (Paragraph 3)

This report set out further information as requested by the Fire Authority at its October 2017 meeting.

Resolved that the decision regarding the future of Shropshire Fire Risk Management Services Ltd. be deferred until the next meeting of the Fire Authority and that Officers be tasked to provide more accurate and up to date information in response to the queries raised at this meeting.

Councillors Hartin, Hosken, Mellings and Roberts and the Deputy Chief Fire Officer returned to the meeting at this point. (3.50 pm)

Chair's Announcements

The Chair reminded Members about the Festival of Carols that was taking place later that evening at the Barnabas Church, Shrewsbury

The Chair also encouraged Members to attend the Celebration of Success which will be held on Monday, 22 January 2018, 7.30 pm at Theatre Severn, Shrewsbury.

Finally, the Chair concluded the meeting by wishing Members and Officers a Happy Christmas and New Year. He also thanked them for their work and support during 2017.

The meeting closed at 3.55 pm.

Chair

Date _____