

**Minutes of the Meeting of
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority
held on Wednesday, 12 December 2018, at 2.00 pm
in the Oak Room, Headquarters, Shrewsbury**

Present

Members

Councillors Adams, Carter (Chair), Hartin, Hosken, Jones, Mellings, Milner, Minnery, Murray, Pardy, Phillips, Roberts (Vice-Chair), and Sahota

Officers

Rod Hammerton	Chief Fire Officer	CFO
Andy Johnson	Deputy Chief Fire Officer	DCFO
Dave Myers	Assistant Chief Fire Officer	ACFO
Jonathan Eatough	Clerk and Monitoring Officer	Clerk
James Walton	Treasurer	
Joanne Coadey	Head of Finance	HoF
Germaine Worker	Head of Human Resources and Administration	HHRA
Lynn Ince	Executive Support Officer	ESO

External Bodies

Tracey Onslow	West Mercia Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner	DPCC
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1 Apologies for Absence

Councillors Dee, Price and Wynn. Councillor Pinter did not attend the meeting.

1a Vote of Thanks and Welcome

The Chair thanked Councillor Blundell, who left the Fire Authority in October for her time and contribution to the Authority. The Chair welcomed Councillor Jane Pinter from Telford & Wrekin Council back to the Fire Authority.

2 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

None

3 Public Questions

None

4 Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the Fire Authority meeting, held on 10 October 2018, be agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

5 Strategy and Resources Committee Minutes

The DPCC asked for clarification regarding the justifiable response in relation to reserves that was referred to on page 4 of the minutes. The HoF explained that this was the Reserves Strategy which is available on the Service's website.

Resolved that the minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting, held on 8 November 2018, be noted and the recommendations at item 5, as given below, be agreed.

Item 5 – Financial Performance to September 2018, including Annual Treasury Review 2017/18 and Mid-Year Treasury Review 2018/19

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;
- d) Note the update on corporate risk;
- e) Note the annual review of treasury activities for 2017/18;
- f) Note performance against prudential indicators to date in 2018/19; and
- g) Note the mid-year review of treasury activities for 2018/19.

6 Committee Composition and Allocation of Seats to Political Groups

This report asked the Fire Authority to agree the composition of its Committees; the allocation of seats on its committees to political groups; and the membership of its Committees, following a change in membership from Telford & Wrekin Council.

The Clerk advised that he has delegated power to agree changes to Committee appointments and it was agreed that changes in membership would be notified to the Clerk and the ESO outside the meeting.

Resolved that the Fire Authority decide upon its Committee composition and allocation of seats to political groups, specifically:

- a) The allocation of seats, as proposed in Appendix A to the report; and
- b) The appointment of Members to serve on Committees, as set out in Appendix B to the report.

7 2019/20 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 2019.

The HoF presented and talked through report, highlighting following points:

- A further £200k has been factored into the budget in relation to Pensions
- It is difficult to predict future income due to Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) and the potential impacts of Brexit
- The following changes were highlighted to the 2023/24 figures on the table on page 3 and 4. Option 1 change from £66k to £272k, Option 2 change from £66k to £272k; Option 3 change from - £678k to - £480k and Option 4 change from £507k to £713k
- The figures on page 3 should be taken with caution. They are not the only options available and there is no certainty around them
- Council Tax base growth is aligned to housing growth in constituent authorities
- The Local Government Finance Settlement will hopefully be announced tomorrow (13 December)

The CFO thanked the HoF for producing a series of scenarios in such an uncertain financial environment and advised that the Fire Authority could operate without extreme alarm. The major issues are covered in the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) period and the Authority is entering a new planning period but this is not a point of panic.

Members commented that it was good to see a range of planning included in the report but thought that it may be necessary to increase the predicted pay award to 3.3% rather than 3% as inflation may soften.

The Chair advised that the funding issue has been raised at the Fire Service Management Committee (FSMC) where a range of fire authorities have expressed their unease regarding pay and a lack of funding. There are ongoing discussions between fire authorities and the Home Office and it is hoped that there will soon be an indication of how this will be resolved. This Fire Authority has managed its position well and is covered for future developments but it is an uncertain phase.

The DPCC asked what the Council Tax Base was last year. The HoF explained that it had been 2.2% and this was in line going forward.

On a wider point, Members cautioned that the Authority will need to take account of the issues of inflation, austerity and Council cuts when considering any increase in precept. Any additional precept may be questioned by the public in the current climate as the public want value for money. The Chair added that there does seem to be support for fire services when public consultation is undertaken.

Members asked if Authority's provisions, reserves and funds remained the same as previously reported. The HoF confirmed that they did.

Resolved that the Fire Authority

- a) Approve the recommendations set out in section 5 of the report, using option 1 for 2019/20, and allowing officers to continue to work on a range of planning scenarios for later years of the planning period.
- b) Agree the recommendations on Reserves and Provisions, set out in report 7 of the Appendix to the report, and confirm the General Reserve; and
- c) Request the Strategy and Resources Committee to prepare a final budget package in January 2019, for final decision by the Fire Authority in February 2019.

8 Cycle to Work Scheme

This report set out the method of operation of a cycle to work scheme operated by the Fire Authority and recommended that Members agree to the benefits accrued to the Authority, local authority partners and the environment by supporting the introduction of the scheme in to Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS).

The HHRA presented this report and apologised to Members for the lateness in sending it to them. The HHRA also clarified that the issues raised and debated by the Standards and Human Resources Committee at its December meeting were addressed in the paper.

Some Members expressed concerns about the product and the costing situation; and what they considered to be a poorly conceived position with regard to insurance. In spite of this however, there was no criticism of the report, other than in relation to the issue of insurance, and Members stood by the recommendations contained within the report. The HHRA and the CFO also explained that whilst they understood Members concerns regarding insurance, it would be wrong for them to advise the Fire Authority to spend on insurance provision as this would become a benefit in kind which would have wider implications for the Service.

Members queried if SFRS employees were able to access Shropshire Council's Cycle to Work scheme. The HHRA explained that they did not and that Shropshire Council were no longer running their Scheme.

Members also asked about the requirement for a further agreement with the provider following the 12 month payment period. The CFO explained that there are a number of options open to individuals following the lease period and that they are able to negotiate settlement prices with the provider.

Whilst some Members considered the £1000 cost limit to be insufficient, most members agreed that it was a normal limit and that most individuals choices would not go that high. The CFO also explained that the £1000 is a Government set threshold which is linked to tax. The HHRA explained that a key issue when deciding on the provider was also their ability to signpost employees to local retailers.

Members asked how often employees need to use the bicycles and also if On-Call employees could use them. The CFO explained that 50% of the cycle usage needs to be on qualifying journeys. This means a journey, or part of a journey, between their workplace, or between one workplace and another in connection with the performance of their duties and employment. On Call employees could therefore use the cycles to provide quicker response times.

The Chair asked if the Fire Authority would be provided with an update on the level of uptake for the Scheme, which he thought might be considerable given the recent initiative to promote health and wellbeing. The HHRA confirmed that Officers would report back on uptake six months after the Scheme commences.

Resolved that the Fire Authority, following recommendation from the Standards and Human Resources Committee,

- a) Note the report;
- b) Agree to setting up the scheme with Cycle Solutions;
- c) Agree to initially open the scheme twice in the first 12 months and then review;
- d) Set the upper limit of bike and accessory value at £1,000; and
- e) Agree to set aside £100,00 from reserves for the scheme.

9 Strategic Fire Alliance Update

This report updated Members on progress in delivering the Strategic Fire Alliance between Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service and Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service.

The CFO presented this report and informed Members of the following points:

- The Strategic Alliance Board, which consists of Project Board Officers and Members, met for the first time on 10 December 2018.
- Roger Phillips (Chair of Hereford & Worcester Fire Authority) has been appointed as Chair of the Strategic Alliance Board and Eric Carter has been appointed as Vice-Chair. The Chair of the Board will rotate annually between the two authorities.
- The Board has agreed its Terms of Reference (ToRs) which set out its co-ordination and delivery role.
- Fire Authority meeting dates need to be harmonised across both Services to facilitate reporting from the Alliance Board. The amended dates will be brought to the Fire Authority in February 2019.

- The Guiding Principles for the Fire Alliance Plan have been considered and will be kept as they were originally set out.
- The three priority projects, as set out on page two of the report, will underpin the Alliance's growth but capacity issues will need to be considered in relation to delivering the projects.
- A Service Level Agreement (SLA) for Finance based on 50/50 cost sharing will be drawn up for each project as it is commenced. Ongoing funding will then be considered as the Services come out of the initial projects with proxy indicators then being used to determine ongoing funding. If both Services go into the projects with a clear understanding of expected outcomes then this will allow for change if needed.
- The Programme Delivery Board will report back to the Alliance Board who will then report back to both Fire Authorities for decisions etc.

The Chair commented that it had been a very positive meeting and that whilst the Alliance is positive and the right step to take, it is important that both Fire Authorities have involvement in it.

The DPCC asked if, given that there can be issues with alliance working, the Services had spoken with the Police about their experiences and also had thought been given to an arbitration process. The CFO responded that information has been sought from the Police regarding their Alliance and both Services are entering this Alliance with an awareness of the possible issues involved. At present, the arbitration process would sit with the Alliance Board but this probably needs to be discussed further as it can be one of the many issues associated with forming an 'alliance of parts'.

Councillor Murray left the meeting at this point (2.55 pm)

Members asked for an idea of the number of employees in both Services, the area covered by the Services and the major risks identified in the area. The DCFO explained that major risks will be identified as part of the Integrated Risk Management Planning process.

Members thanked the CFO for the update and asked how the Alliance Board would report back to the Fire Authority, for example would the minutes of the Alliance Board meetings be provided to Fire Authority members. The CFO explained that a report from the Alliance Board will be provided to both Fire Authorities with the contents of the report being the same for both authorities. It was agreed that the ESO would email the Alliance Board ToRs to Fire Authority members.

Members asked for information on any costs incurred to date and how these have been shared between the Services. The CFO explained that, to date, any project costs have been picked up on the basis of work involved being something that the authority has been wanting to do. This is acceptable on a short term basis but a SLA is needed going forward.

Resolved that the Fire Authority

- a) Note progress to date; and
- b) Grant approval for officers to prepare Alliance option appraisals.

10 Integrated Risk Management Planning

This report sought approval from the Fire Authority for the current lifespan of the Integrated Risk Management Plan 2015-20 to be extended by one year in order to support collaborative working with Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service.

The DCFO presented the report and explained that there is a need to agree the risk methodology used by both Services. The suggested extension to the IRMP lifespan will facilitate this work being undertaken. The IRMP will be updated as usual on an annual basis with targets being brought to the June Fire Authority meeting for agreement.

Resolved that the Fire Authority approve the proposal to extend the lifespan of the current Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP 2015-20) by one year, to March 2021.

11 Judicial Review Update

The Clerk gave the following verbal update on the Judicial Review process.

The Home Office has submitted a Statement of Case but have not yet provided any exhibits so the next stage of the process cannot be triggered. Once the exhibits are received, consideration can be given as whether a response needs to be provided by Counsel. The case is on the 'warned' list but cannot currently come to trial due to the exhibits not yet being submitted.

Resolved that the Fire Authority note the update given.

12 HMI Inspection Update

The CFO gave the following verbal update on the recent inspection of Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS).

The HMICFRS Inspection is complete and the report is now due to be written and moderated. There are no immediate causes for concern and no anticipation of a repeat inspection.

Whilst the key message is that a major programme of change is not needed, the following areas for improvement and/or consideration were identified during the inspection:

- There is a delay in getting information to front line staff (related to Mobile Data Terminals)

- Prevention activity is targeted but doubts were noted about its review and evaluation
- Protection activity is effective and proactive but work is challenged by capacity
- On Call availability recognised
- Cross border relationships
- Financial Plans need to include Corporate Risk Management
- There were concerns about resources in ICT etc. but the Service has plans in place to address issues
- Culture of the organisation shows that staff feel valued by both the organisation and their colleagues
- The benefits of the Service Transformation Programme were noted in relation to ICT training and development
- Welfare and / or mental health support for under-represented groups needs to be explored further

The HMI Report on the Tranche 1 Inspections is due to be published on 14 December 2018. Indications are that HMI have used the full range of gradings available to them.

The Chair commented that it had been a pleasure to take part in the process with the different officers involved and that overall there are positive feelings about the inspection with the Service having performed well.

Resolved that the Fire Authority note the update given.

13 Corporate Risk Management Summary

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

The ACFO presented the report and advised that the risk rating for the ICCS System has been reduced and that a new risk related to Fitness Standards has been added to the Risk Register.

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

14 Exclusion of Press and Public

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 4.

15 Corporate Risk Management Summary (Paragraph 4)

Members received the exempt Appendix B to report 13 – Corporate Risk Management Summary.

Resolved that the exempt Appendix B to report 13 – Corporate Risk Management Summary be noted.

The meeting closed at 3.25 pm.

Chair.....

Date.....