

**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, 14 March 2019 at 2.00 pm**

Present

Members

Councillors Carter, Hartin (Vice-Chair), Murray and Wynn

Officers

Rod Hammerton	Chief Fire Officer	CFO
Andy Johnson	Deputy Chief Fire Officer	DCFO
Dave Myers	Assistant Chief Fire Officer	ACFO
James Walton	Treasurer to Fire Authority	Treasurer
Joanne Coadey	Head of Finance	HoF
Germaine Worker	Head of HR and Administration	HHRA
Andrew Kelcey	Head of Resources	HoR
Lynn Ince	Executive Support Officer	ESO

1 Apologies for Absence

Councillors Pardy, Phillips and Roberts

2 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

None

3 Public Questions

None

4 Minutes

The ESO agreed to change the typo in paragraph 2 on page 5 of the minutes which should read '...he was rung'.

Resolved that the minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting, held on 31 January 2019, be agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record

5 Committee Work Plan 2019/20

This report reviewed progress against the Strategy and Resources Committee 2018/19 Work Plan and put forward a 2019/20 Work Plan for consideration and approval by Members.

The Committee did not make any amendments to the Work Plans but did ask what impact the proposed changes to the Committee structure would have. The CFO explained that this Work Plan will be carried forward and used to plan the new Committee's work.

Resolved that the Committee

- a) Note progress made against the Strategy and Resources Committee 2018/19 Work Plan; and
- b) Approve the Work Plan for 2019/20, attached at the appendix to the report, with / without amendment.

6 Committee Terms of Reference

This report asked Members to consider the Terms of Reference of the Strategy and Resources Committee, following the annual review conducted by officers.

Resolved that the Committee, having reviewed its Terms of Reference, as set out at the Appendix to the report, do not recommend any amendments to the Fire Authority

7 Review of Member Role Descriptions

This report asked Members to review the Role Descriptions for the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Strategy and Resources Committee and for the Chair of the Strategy and Planning Working Group.

Resolved that the Committee agree the Role Descriptions for the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Strategy and Resources Committee and for the Chair of the Strategy and Planning Working Group, as attached at the appendices to the report without amendment.

8 Financial Performance to December 2018

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

The HoF presented this report and talked through the changes that are needed to budgets going forward. The HoF advised that budgets will be reviewed from the bottom up to reflect current changes to spending.

The HoF then talked through the variances as set out in the report and highlighted the following points.

Area Command

The underspend that has been reported to previous meetings now needs to be apportioned to secondments such as the posts that are related to the HMICFRS Inspection and the Emergency Services Mobile Communications Project (ESMCP) Team secondments where the ESMCP Grant has already been used for 2018/19.

There has been an increased spend on overtime in the last month of the third quarter. The DCFO advised that this pattern is traditional. Overtime has always occurred through the year but the change to FireServiceRota has enabled the accrual of days and the use of them throughout the year. Once eight days have been accrued then individuals accrue overtime which has changed the profile of overtime expenditure. This is particularly true in the second quarter of the year as overtime will then be paid before Christmas. This is the second year of changes to the duty system and it is anticipated that the overtime profile will change accordingly. Due to the ongoing Collective Agreement discussions, watches are currently under minimum staffing levels which is also impacting on overtime expenditure. The introduction of integrated crewing contracts, enabling short term filling of posts by Retained Duty System employees, should also reduce overtime shifts.

Members asked if the Service was on top of the situation, which effectively seemed to be a blip but that was now sorted. The DCFO advised that until the Collective Agreement is signed off, the Service is working within the draft agreement to cover staffing shortages etc. The project finishes in March 2020 after which the budget will be flexed to reflect lessons learnt and to level out the changes that have occurred.

Executive and Resources

Laundry

There has been an £30k increase to the budget as the 2018/19 budget was insufficient to cover the cost of the aging personal protective equipment (PPE) stock and a more stringent cleaning regime. Members asked if the increased budget would now be sufficient. The HoR explained that this is not known at present but it may be balanced by the Service having purchasing more PPE so is has greater stocks available. Members then asked if it would be better to increase the budget by more now to avoid having to do it at a later date. The HoR advised that other areas of the budget are in a similar position, such as vehicle parts, and these will be brought back to the Committee during the year.

Water Officer Post

Members queried the impact of water officer post being vacant for the year. The HoR explained that the Water Officer Post has now been absorbed into another post and backfilled with more flexible role.

Vehicle Parts

Members asked if the Service was considering the purchase of in-house diagnostic equipment to facilitate vehicle maintenance. The HoR advised that Officers are looking at this and developing a business case for purchase of such a system.

Members asked about joint procurement across blue light services, for example for the purchase of smaller vehicles. The HoR advised that there are two Police purchasing consortiums. Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service are part of the southern consortium and this was used to procure Vauxhall Astras. Fire and Rescue Services are not in a position to do similar joint procurement for appliances due to these being tailored to the incident profiles of individual services. However the Service does access joint procurement and it does offer value. The CFO explained that the Service does take advantage of commonalities but it has been flagged up that individual Integrated Risk Management Plans give no coherence across the sector about standardised vehicles unlike previously.

Tyres

Members asked what the new legislation was in relation to tyres. The HoR explained that legislation previously stated that tyres over 10 years of age should not be used on light goods vehicles. A new assessment has now advised that for risk management tyres over 10 years of age should not be used at high speed on motorways. The HoF advised that the overspend for this should be £13k not £30 as stated in the report.

Corporate Services

ICT Software

Software has become more expensive which has led to additional expenditure. Officers have undertaken analysis of the expenditure over the year.

Pensions

Tax on injury pensions has been covered but there was one further individual that had to be paid. There has also been an increase in the number of pensions that needs to be reflected in the budget.

Resolved that the Committee recommend that the Fire Authority

- a) Note the position of the revenue budget;
- b) Approve virements to the revenue budget, where requested; and
- c) Note performance against prudential indicators to date in 2018/19.

9 Service Targets 2019/20

This report presented the proposed Service Targets for 2019/20.

The DCFO presented this report and advised that this was the continuation of the Service's 5-year plan for reduction of targets. The achievement of this reduction may not be easy as targets are becoming more challenging to reach. Whilst performance has improved after the last three months this is not fully addressing the performance shortfall from earlier years.

The DCFO then explained that it is the first time that the Service has not achieved the response target – "The first fire engine will arrive at an emergency incident with at least 4 firefighters within 15 minutes on 89% of occasions". Officers are exploring the reasons for this, but it appears that the main issue is a change in the profile of incidents. That is a decrease in urban incidents and an increase in rural property fires which increases response time. Members asked if officers had any initial thoughts as to why this change was occurring. The DCFO responded that this should be a natural outcome of prevention work with the benefits now being seen of all of the work that has been focussed on housing estates, combined with the difficulties of undertaking rural prevention work. There has also been a 50% reduction in incident numbers across the sector as a whole, over the last 10-15 years, which will also result in changes to the incident profiles.

The CFO added that the national picture shows that response times are increasing with a handful of other fire and rescue services also experiencing this 'doughnut' effect. It should also be noted that percentage type measures can be affected by a change in ratios of incidents but work on the Integrated Risk Management Plan should address this.

The CFO stated that the Service's reaction should be to continue to drive down the number of incidents in outlying areas.

Resolved that the Committee agree the proposed Service Targets for 2019/20 without amendment.

The meeting closed at 2.40 pm.

Chair.....

Date.....