

**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, 10 November 2016 at 2.00 pm**

Present

Members

Councillors Mrs Barrow, Carter, Hartin (Vice-Chair), Roberts (Chair), Turley and West

Officers

Chief Fire Officer, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Head of Finance and Executive Support Officer

1 Apologies for Absence

Councillor Wynn did not attend the meeting and subsequently gave his apologies for absence. The Treasurer had given his 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 that they should leave the room prior to the commencement of the debate on that matter.

No Member declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest.

3 Minutes

Members received the minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting, held on 8 September 2016.

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

Resolved that the minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting, held on 8 September 2016, 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 September 2016, including Annual Treasury Review 2015/16 and Mid-Year Treasury Review 2016/17

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

Councillor Carter referred to the table on page 2 of the report and asked if officers had a rough idea of Wide Area Network (WAN) costings in relation to Telford Central. The Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO) responded that it was difficult to know at present. All stations now have the opportunity to use up to 100mb. Shrewsbury and Telford Central are already using 100mb and Telford Central as the Service's back up site has additional data traffic from other stations. The ACFO also explained that the appraisal for the procurement process for the replacement WAN had been more accurate. Extra capacity had been added as it was known that data usage would grow due changes in working methods.

Councillor Hartin asked for reassurance as to what maximum extra charge is likely to be. The ACFO explained that there are possibly three sites that are still using 10mb links and these may incur a small amount of extra charges on a pro-rata basis.

Councillor West asked if the legal fees for the Crown Court fire safety prosecution case be recouped. The Chief Fire Officer (CFO) explained that the Service would only be able to recoup £3,000 of the £15,000 costs. Councillor Barrow asked if the Service could insure against issues such as this. The CFO undertook to look into this but commented that as the Service is an enforcement authority which is undertaking its statutory duty it is expected to incur such costs.

Councillor Roberts asked if the Prevention Consultancy costs could also be clawed back. The CFO explained that the Service are statutory consultees on building regulations issues. Due to the complexity of the site concerned, it had been necessary for the Service to seek assistance from a specialised consultant. The CFO stated that again the costs related to a statutory duty of the Service and therefore it was unlikely that they could be claimed back. The CFO also explained that further investment might be needed in relation to this issue, to ensure due diligence.

Councillor Barrow referred to table showing current investments on page 8 of the report and queried the number of councils listed. The Head of Finance explained that councils are viewed as safe counterparties for investment and that investment decisions are guided by the Treasurer and Shropshire Council.

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

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;
- c) Approve the change in frequency of capital activity reports to the Committee and note the update on capital schemes;
- d) Note the annual review of treasury activities for 2015/16;
- e) Note performance against prudential indicators to date in 2016/17; and
- f) Note the mid-year review of treasury activities for 2016/17

6 Provisions, Reserves and Funds

This report set out the issues, which the Fire Authority will need to consider as part of its annual review of provisions, reserves and funds.

The Head of Finance (HoF) presented the report and explained that the levels of the General Reserve, as detailed in the appendix to the report, remain static apart from any inflation changes. The HoF also explained that the Equipment Replacement Fund is now the New Operational Equipment Reserve.

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

Resolved that the Committee agree to propose to the Fire Authority that it

- a) Confirm the current position of reserves and provisions; and
- b) Review the level of the General Reserve

7 2017/18 and Later Years Revenue and Capital Budgets

This report brought together the elements of an initial revenue budget, based on current planning assumptions, and sought the Committee's approval for this outline to be recommended to the Fire Authority in December 2016.

The HoF presented the report and informed Members that the Service is still awaiting confirmation from Home Office regarding approval of the Efficiency Plan which was submitted in October following Fire Authority approval.

With regard to the Apprenticeship Levy, as detailed on page 4 of the report, the HoF advised that confirmation was being sought as to whether the figure the Levy is based on includes RDS employees.

Councillor Hartin referred to the Pay and Prices Contingency and asked when the Service needed to start factoring the impact of the Brexit decision into its budget setting process. The HoF advised that she is to consult with officers to identify areas that may, potentially, be affected. The CFO commented that the challenge, at present, is knowing where the impact is going to come. It is likely that the impact will be felt later in the budget setting process, therefore officers will keep the issue on the back burner for now.

Councillor Roberts thanked the HoF for her work and her presentations to the Committee.

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

Resolved that the Committee recommend that the Fire Authority

- a) Notes the revisions and the committed changes to the base budget, as shown in section 4 of the report;
- b) Bases its pay and price contingency in the revenue budget on the calculations set out in section 5 of the report;
- c) Approves the use of revenue balances to fund the capital programme, which will be confirmed at the February 2016 meeting; and
- d) Approves the expenditure figures associated with those approved assumptions as a basis for developing the budget at the meeting of the Fire Authority on 14 December 2016.

The meeting closed at 2.45 pm.

Chair.....

Date.....