

**Minutes of the Meeting of
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority
held at 2.00 pm on Wednesday, 21 July 2010
at Shropshire Education and Conference Centre, Shrewsbury**

Present

Members

Councillors Adams, Mrs Barrow, Mrs Blundell, Dixon, Hartin (from 2.05 pm), Hurst-Knight, Dr Jones, Kiernan, Mason, Mellings, Minnery (Vice-Chair), Picken, Price (from 2.15 pm), Roberts and West (Chair)

Officers

Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Corporate, Performance and Operations), Treasurer, Corporate Services Manager, Management Support Officer and Clerk

1 Election of Chair

It was proposed by Councillor Mellings and seconded by Councillor Minnery

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 commented on the excellent cross-party working that takes place in the Fire Authority and thanked Members for their support.

2 Appointment of Vice-Chair

It was proposed by Councillor Roberts and seconded by Councillor Mellings

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.

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

Councillor Minnery echoed the sentiments expressed by Councillor West about cross-party working.

3 Apologies for Absence and Welcome to New Members

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Davies and Eade. Councillor Price had advised that he would be late due to a clash with another meeting.

The Chair welcomed Councillors Blundell and Dixon, who have been appointed to the Fire Authority by Telford & Wrekin Council. The Chair also informed the Fire Authority that he had spoken to Councillor Eade and welcomed him back to the Fire Authority.

4 Declarations of Interest

The Chair reminded Members that they should declare any personal and/or prejudicial interests at this point and that they should leave the meeting room before any item, in which they have a prejudicial interest, was discussed.

There were no declarations of interest at this point.

A prejudicial interest was declared later in the meeting at item 13, details of which appear in the minutes under that item.

5 Non-Exempt Minutes

Members received the minutes of the Fire Authority meeting, held on 16 June 2010.

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

Resolved that the minutes of the Fire Authority meeting, held on 16 June 2010, be agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record

6 Public Questions

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

Councillor Hartin joined the meeting at this point (2.05 pm).

7 Non-Exempt Minutes of Brigade Managers' Employment Panel

Members received the non-exempt minutes of the Brigade Managers' Employment Panel meeting, held on 16 June 2010.

Resolved that the non-exempt minutes of the Brigade Managers' Employment Panel meeting, held on 16 June 2010, be noted

8 Constitutional Issues

8a 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 allocations of seats on its committees to political groups.

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

Resolved that the Fire Authority agree:

- a) That the political balance requirements do not apply to the Fire Authority's representation on the West Midlands Regional Management Board or to the Authority's Pensions Panel;
- b) That the Retained Review Implementation Group be disbanded; and
- c) The Committee composition and allocation of seats to political groups, as set out in the appendix to the report.

8b Appointments to, and Constitution of, Committees

This report asked the Fire Authority to confirm appointments to committees and outside bodies and to review the Terms of Reference, quorum and delegations for its Committees.

A matrix indicating proposed committee membership was tabled, a copy of which is attached to the signed minutes.

It was proposed by Councillor Hartin that the recommendations be agreed with the Chair being appointed as the representative on the Local Government Association Annual Assembly and Fire Services Forum. This was seconded by Councillor Hurst-Knight and it was

Resolved that the Fire Authority:

- a) Agree the appointment of Members to serve on committees, representation on the West Midlands Regional Management Board, including Substitute Members, and representation on West Midlands Fire and Rescue Services Regional Control Centre Limited, as set out in Appendix A to the report;
- b) Appoint the Chair as its representative on the Local Government Association Annual Assembly and Fire Services Forum; and
- c) Agree the Terms of Reference for each committee, as set out in Appendix B to the report.

8c Review of Member Role Descriptions

The purpose of this report was to review, and agree the Fire Authority's existing Member Role Descriptions.

Councillor Mellings referred to the Member Role Description (at Appendix A to the report) and commented that it did not contain any reference to Members' undertaking training. Whilst he understood that it may be implicit that Members undertake training, he felt that an explicit reference to this should be included in the Member Role Description. He also commented that Member training should be looked at, especially since Member Development Reviews have not been carried out for the past two years. The Chair agreed that this was an issue that needed to be addressed.

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

Resolved that the Fire Authority agree the existing Role Descriptions, as detailed in the report, subject to the inclusion of a reference to Member training in the Member Role Description

8d Review of Scheme of Delegation to Officers and of Standing Orders

This report reviewed the Fire Authority's Scheme of Delegation to Officers and Standing Orders and asked the Authority to agree proposed amendments.

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

Councillor Price joined the meeting at this point (2.15 pm).

It was proposed by Councillor Minnery, seconded by Councillor Mrs Barrow, and, on a vote, with all voting in favour, except Councillor Price, who abstained, as he had joined the meeting after the report had been presented,

Resolved that the Fire Authority agree the proposed amendments to:

- The Scheme of Delegation to Officers;
- Standing Orders for the Regulations of Proceedings and Business;
- Standing Orders relating to Contracts; and
- Financial Regulations Standing Orders

9 Financial Monitoring Report 2010/11

This report updated Members on financial matters affecting the 2010/11 budget and their implications for later years. It also sought approval to budget variations.

The Treasurer talked through the report, bringing a number of issues to the attention of the Fire Authority. A summary of the relevant points discussed is given below.

The Treasurer highlighted the potential National Insurance saving that was outlined in section 4 of the report and also the fact that pay awards are a key item, which may impact on the Authority.

The Treasurer drew the Fire Authority's attention to the major savings identified in section 7 of the report and stressed that, with regard to vacancies, it will become increasingly difficult to deliver savings as future years' budgets are reduced.

The St Michael's Street scheme is currently on budget and it is likely that there will be significant sums available in the Un-earmarked Capital Reserve, for which the Fire Authority will have a number of options. The Treasurer recommended, however, that the decision as to how this money should be used be reserved until later in the year.

The Treasurer explained that no further information had been received regarding Retained Firefighters' Pensions, however it had been confirmed that the Terms and Conditions period will be extended to April 2010. Again Pensions is a major issue for the Authority, as it is such an unknown.

The Treasurer informed the Fire Authority that a bankers' term deposit had been arranged at relatively favourable terms. As a result £1.9 million had been transferred from the Debt Management Office to Natwest.

Councillor Mellings referred to section 10 of the report and commented that this appeared to be a prudent borrowing arrangement. He also referred to section 9(i) of the report and asked what the likely timescale for the decision relating to the use of the Un-earmarked Capital Reserve would be. The Treasurer explained that the decision could be considered at the December meeting of the Fire Authority, when the budget to be consulted upon with the public would be established. This would then mean that it could be revisited at the January meeting of the Strategy and Resources Committee, if necessary, which would then allow it to be taken to the February meeting of the Fire Authority for final decision.

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

Resolved that the Fire Authority:

- a) Note the implications of the Government's Emergency Budget and other national developments for future financial planning;
- b) Note the results of budget monitoring to date;
- c) Agree to reserve a decision on the use of the likely balance on the Un-earmarked Capital Reserve until later in the year; and
- d) Continue the current borrowing and investment strategy

10 Voice/Data Communications, Command and Control Systems Refresh: Update

This report advised Members of the recent award of contract for the provision of a fully-managed Command and Control system to replace existing obsolescent legacy equipment.

Resolved that the Fire Authority note the contents of the report

11 2010 Public Value Review Update

This report advised Members of progress to date with the Service's 2010 Public Value review.

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO) explained that a meeting of the Strategic Risk and Planning (STRaP) Working Group would be held in early August to consider the consultation that will be carried out over the summer months. The Chair advised that the Fire Authority meeting, scheduled for 13 October 2010, has been postponed and will be rescheduled to early November in order to accommodate the anticipated Comprehensive Spending Review announcement on 20 October 2010.

Committee Clerk's Note

The next meeting of the Fire Authority meeting has subsequently been rescheduled to 4 November 2010.

Councillor Mellings commented that it was good to hear that Public Value was moving forward positively. He asked if the 24 outcomes selected for development and implementation could be circulated to all Members of the Fire Authority in order to continue the Member role and involvement, which had been more 'hands-on' in the Integrated Risk Management Process.

The ACFO explained that Members of the STRaP Working Group would be expected to lead on 45 internal consultations, 6 public consultations and sessions with the Local Joint Committees. Other Members would also be involved. The ACFO confirmed that the 24 outcomes would be taken to STRaP in early August and then circulated to the wider Fire Authority.

Resolved that the Fire Authority note the contents of the report

12 Integrated Strategic Planning Process 2011/12

This report outlined how the Service will continue to align service, financial and improvement planning, culminating in the publication of the 2011/12 Corporate Plan and a five-year, joint, medium-term service and financial plan.

Councillor Hartin referred to the postponement of the October Fire Authority meeting and asked if this meant that the Strategy and Resources Committee in November would also need to be moved. Officers undertook to consider whether this would be necessary.

Committee Clerk's Note

The meeting has subsequently been postponed from 11 to 24 November.

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

Resolved that the Fire Authority:

- a) Agree the Strategic Planning timetable in Appendix A to the report; and
- b) Note the changes to Service, Financial and Improvement planning

13 Firemen's Pension Scheme Order 1992 Delegations

This report referred to the decisions to be made by, and the discretionary decision making powers of, the Fire Authority under the Firemen's Pension Scheme Order 1992 and requested the Authority to delegate certain decision making powers, emanating from that Order, to its recently created Pensions Panel.

Councillor Price declared a prejudicial interest at this point in that, as he is in a receipt of a Firefighter's pension, any decision made may affect his financial position.

Councillor Price left the meeting room at this point (2.40 pm).

Councillor Dixon referred to item 13 in the Appendix to the report, which relates to withdrawing a pension on conviction of certain offences and asked how this could be done. The Corporate Services Manager explained that this is a specific discretion, which is given under Government legislation. The Clerk explained that there are defined offences, to which this delegation applies.

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

Resolved that the Fire Authority approve:

- a) The proposals for delegation of powers under the Order (set out at the appendix to this report); and
- b) That any decisions to be made or discretionary powers exercisable under the Order, which are not included in the list at the appendix, be delegated to the Pensions Panel.

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

14 Partnership Working and the Outcomes

The purpose of this report was to provide Members with an overview of the outcomes of partnership working within the Fire Authority and Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service.

Members discussed a number of partnerships with Councillor Minnery commenting that his understanding was that the work of the West Midlands Regional Management Board (the Board) appeared to be suspended and queried the merit in reviving it.

The Chair responded that at the national meetings in London it does appear that every other Board is still working. However it may be that in the West Midlands the Board has a more structured role. The ACFO explained that the West Midlands had been identified as a lead region by the Audit Commission and that regional working had been embedded within the Region but the Board had reached a point of uncertainty about 18 months ago.

The Government has stated that it wishes to abolish regional working but at a recent national meeting, attended by the ACFO, it was explained that current legislation does not allow this to happen and Regional Management Boards are scheduled to run until October 2011.

Councillor Minnery responded that Shropshire Council is currently talking to neighbouring authorities but not necessarily within existing boundaries. He asked if there was enthusiasm for similar informal working links with the fire and rescue services, particularly as Members should be able to talk with their counterparts in other fire authorities. The Chair replied that regional working is still needed but all that could be done at the moment was to keep an eye on the Regional Management Boards.

Councillor Dixon referred to the Senior Citizens Forums, which run in both Telford & Wrekin and Shropshire but which did not feature in this report. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer (DCFO) explained that Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service is engaged with these Forums and has made fire safety presentations at some of their recent meetings.

Councillor Hurst-Knight commented that the Service's attendance at Local Joint Committee meetings has helped with education about barn and grass fires. He expressed concern over the withdrawal of the Service from safety meetings, for example for bikers. He indicated that he would be raising this issue with the Community Safety Partnership. The DCFO explained that an officer does currently attend every meeting of the Committees and the aim is to secure a slot at each meeting, at the end of the year, to address the outcomes of the Public Value consultation. The DCFO also explained that there is currently a review being undertaken as to how road safety issues will be taken forward within the Service.

Resolved that the Fire Authority note the contents of the report

15 Corporate Risk Management Summary

This was the fourth Annual Corporate Risk Management Summary Report to Members. These reports aim to inform Members about the corporate level risk management work that has been undertaken during the previous twelve months, as well as summarising the risk environment in which the Service is currently operating.

The Treasurer presented this report on behalf of the Head of Operations and Risk. He highlighted the major risks, as identified in the report, and advised that these had not yet been updated for actions taken at the June meeting. The Treasurer also informed the Authority that these risks are likely to remain as high risk on the Risk Register, as their financial impact is still over the £75,000 risk tolerance limit.

Councillor Hartin asked for an update on the issue of Pensions contributions and also on the FiReControl Project. The Chair informed the Authority that EADS are currently behind on delivering the FiReControl Project and that the Minister for Fire has stated that the project must cutover by the date specified and must be on budget and quality, otherwise the contract was likely to be terminated.

The Chair had also asked about the Retained Duty pension scheme at the Fire Services Management Committee, where it was apparent that many other fire and rescue services were unaware of the problems surrounding this issue. The Minister stated that the Department was 'looking at every issue in depth' but did not provide any further response.

Resolved that the Fire Authority note the contents of the report

16 Local Government Act 1972

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

Resolved that, under section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting 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 Paragraphs 1, 2, 3 and 4

All officers, except the Clerk to the Authority, Treasurer, Corporate Services Manager and Management Support Officer left the meeting at this point before the exempt items on the agenda were considered.

17 Corporate Risk Management Summary – Exempt Information (Paragraphs 3 and 4)

The Authority had received an open session report, which summarised its current exposure to corporate risk. This report supplemented that one, as it contained information that is exempt from publication by virtue of the Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A.

Resolved that the Fire Authority note the contents of this report, in conjunction with the Corporate Risk Management Summary discussed in open session

The Treasurer left the meeting at this point before the next exempt item was considered.

**18 Exempt Minutes of Brigade Managers' Employment Panel
(Paragraphs 1, 2, 3 and 4)**

Members received the exempt minutes of the Brigade Managers' Employment Panel meeting, held on 16 June 2010.

Resolved that the exempt minutes of the Brigade Managers' Employment Panel meeting, held on 16 June 2010, be noted

The meeting closed at 3.05 pm.

Chair.....

Date.....