

**Minutes of the Annual Meeting of
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority
held on Wednesday, 18 July 2012, at 2.00 pm
at Service Headquarters, Shrewsbury**

Present

Members

Councillors Adams, Mrs Barrow, Bennett, Mrs Blundell, Mrs Bould, Carter, Hartin, Hurst-Knight, Dr Jones, Kiernan, Mellings, Minnery (Vice-Chair), Price, Thompson and West (Chair)

Officers

Chief Fire Officer, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Corporate, Performance and Operations), Treasurer, Head of Operations, Clerk to the Fire Authority, Corporate Services Manager and Executive Support Officer

1 Election of Chair

It was proposed by Councillor Hartin and seconded by Councillor Jones

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 thanked Members and colleagues for re-electing him to the role. He also praised Members for their ongoing support and help and for working well together for Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service.

Councillor West welcomed Councillor Frances Bould from Telford & Wrekin Council to her first Fire Authority meeting.

2 Appointment of Vice-Chair

It was proposed by Councillor West and seconded by Councillor Bennett

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 thanked Members for re-appointing him to the role of Vice-Chair and commented that this was an excellent Authority, with which to be involved.

3a Presentation and Vote of Thanks

The Chair and Chief Fire Officer (CFO) formally thanked Councillor Roy Picken, who stepped down from the Authority in May 2012, for his service to the Fire Authority. The CFO gave a resumé of Councillor Picken's 14 year involvement with the Authority, which had seen him sit on a number of committees. He also highlighted Councillor Picken's interest in civil resilience and emergency planning, which had led to him taking on the role of Member Champion for Civil Resilience and thanked him for being a supportive and enthusiastic Member of the Authority. The Chair of the Authority then presented Councillor Picken with a Fire Authority plaque. Councillor Picken said that it had been a privilege to serve on the Fire Authority and that it was one of the best organisations, with which he had been involved.

The Chair also gave a vote of thanks to Mr Tebbutt and Mr Brereton, former Independent Members of the Standards Committee and Telford & Wrekin Councillor Murray.

3b Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Miss Reynolds and Roberts.

4 Declarations of Interest

The Chair reminded Members that they must not participate in the discussion or voting on any matter, in which they have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest, and should leave the room prior to the commencement of the debate.

5 Minutes

Members received the non-exempt minutes of the Fire Authority meeting, held on 25 April 2012.

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

Resolved that the non-exempt minutes of the Fire Authority meeting, held on 25 April 2012, 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.

7 Human Resources Committee Minutes

Members received the minutes of the Human Resources Committee meeting, held on 19 April 2012.

Resolved that the minutes of the Human Resources Committee meeting, held on 19 April 2012, be noted

8 Strategy and Resources Committee Minutes

Members received the minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting, held on 17 May 2012 and considered recommendation b) at item 7.

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

Resolved that the minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting, held on 17 May 2012, be noted and that recommendation b) at item 7, as given below, be agreed

Item 7 – Integrated Strategic Planning Process and the Medium Term Corporate Plan

Resolved that the Fire Authority:

- b) On the recommendation of the Strategy and Resources Committee, agree the strategic planning timetable, as set out at Appendix B to the report

9 Audit and Performance Management Committee Minutes

Members received the minutes of the Audit and Performance Management Committee meeting, held on 14 June 2012.

Resolved that the minutes of the Audit and Performance Management Committee meeting, held on 14 June 2012, be noted

10 Confirmation of Code of Conduct and Standards Issues

This report considered final arrangements for the new standards regime at the Authority in accordance with the provisions of the Localism Act 2011 and regulations made under it, which had come into force since this matter was last considered by the Authority on 13 February 2012.

The Clerk explained that there were some amendments to be made to the recommendations before Members considered them. These were that recommendation f) be removed. Historically, the Committee had been excluded from the political balance requirements in order to facilitate the inclusion of Independent Non-Elected Members. As there is no longer any requirement to have Independent Members, it was suggested that the Committee be brought in to the political balance calculations.

Therefore recommendation c) was amended to read 'That a *politically balanced* Standards Committee is established with a membership of 5'.

Councillor Bennett moved recommendations a) to e) as amended with the further addition to e) that a reserve Independent Person also be appointed. The Clerk commented that this made sense and that three applications had been received for the Independent Person vacancy.

The amended recommendations were seconded by Councillor Kiernan and it was

Resolved unanimously that the Fire Authority endorse its decisions made on 13 February 2012, namely:

- a) Approve the Code of Conduct, attached at Appendix A to the report, for adoption as the Authority's Code of Conduct to come into effect immediately;
- b) That the Code of Conduct includes specific provisions requiring that the Member leave the room, when he/she has a discloseable pecuniary interest;
- c) That a politically balanced Standards Committee is established with a membership of 5;
- d) That Members confirm the arrangements for dealing with complaints and making decisions about complaints that have been investigated, as set out in Appendix B; and
- e) Note that a recommendation regarding the appointment of the Independent Person and a Reserve Independent Person will be brought to the Authority at its meeting on 26 September 2012.

11 Constitutional Issues

11a 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 allocation of seats on its committees to political groups.

As a result of the decision made at Item 10 on this agenda to establish a politically balanced Standards Committee, an amended appendix to the report was tabled to the meeting (a copy of which is attached to the signed minutes). The Corporate Services Manager (CSM) explained that the inclusion of the Standards Committee in the political balance requirements had not affected the allocation originally proposed for that Committee or for any others.

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

Resolved unanimously that the Fire Authority agree:

- a) That the political balance requirements should not apply to the Authority's Pension Panel; and
- b) The Committee composition and allocation of seats to political groups, as set out in the tabled version of the Appendix to the report.

11b Committee Membership and Constitution

This report asked the Fire Authority to confirm appointments to committees and to the Local Government Association Fire Services Commission and to review the constitution of its committees.

The CSM explained that, following the decision made at Item 10 on this agenda, the Terms of Reference for the Standards Committee need to be amended to read 'The Committee is politically balanced'.

Councillor Thompson asked that a calendar of meeting dates for the remainder of the year be emailed to Members. The CSM undertook to do this.

Councillor Dr Jones and Councillor Mellings were appointed to the Standards Committee, as the Labour and Liberal Democrat members respectively.

It was proposed by Councillor Adams that the recommendations be agreed with Councillor West being appointed as the representative on the Local Government Association Fire Services Commission. This was seconded by Councillor Minnery and it was

Resolved that the Fire Authority:

- a) Agree the appointment of Members to serve on committees, as set out in Appendix A to the report;
- b) Appoint Councillor West as its representative on the Local Government Association Fire Services Commission; and
- c) Agree the proposed amendments to the constitution of its various committees, as set out in Appendix B to the report

11c Member Champions

This report examined the Fire Authority's Member Champion roles and asked Members to consider whether the roles as they currently stand should be abolished, with the exception of those for Equality and Diversity and Risk Management and Audit.

Councillor Hurst-Knight proposed the recommendations contained in the report and commented that the proposals would be beneficial to the Authority.

Councillor Hartin asked what the process would be for identifying suitable projects and appointing appropriate Member Champions. The CFO explained that there would be a flexible approach to this with input being welcomed from both officers and Members.

Councillor Minnery seconded the proposed recommendations and it was

Resolved that the Fire Authority agree to:

- a) Abolish the standing Member Champion roles with the exception of those for Equality and Diversity and Risk Management and Audit;

- b) Appoint appropriate Member Champions on a task and finish basis, as and when required, to promote, encourage, challenge and drive improvement in specific subject areas, as determined by the Fire Authority; and
- c) Complete a Member Skills Audit.

11d Review of Member Role Descriptions

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

The CSM clarified that, following the decisions made at Item 11c on this agenda, all of the Member Champion Role Descriptions would be deleted with the exception of those for the Equality and Diversity Champion and the Risk Management and Audit Champion.

The CSM also corrected an error in the report: on page 2, the amendments to the Role Descriptions for both the Chair and the Vice-Chair of the Strategy and Resources Committee should have been deletions deletions.

Subject to the above, it was proposed by Councillor Minnery, seconded by Councillor Hurst-Knight, and

Resolved that the Fire Authority agree the Role Descriptions, as detailed in the report

11e 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 Members to consider and decide upon the amendments proposed.

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

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

Resolved that the Fire Authority agree the amendments proposed 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

12 Statement of Accounts 2011/12

This report set out the key revenue issues, which have arisen from work on the Statement of Accounts 2011/12, and sought specific approval for virements from the General Fund in 2012/13

The Treasurer presented the report to the meeting and advised that £300,000 will be put into the proposed Service Transformation Programme Staff Reserve, with the remaining balance be placed into the Income Volatility Reserve.

Councillor Carter queried whether the figure of £184,000, the proposed addition to 2012/13 revenue budgets in recommendation a) of the report, was correct. The Treasurer confirmed that this was a typographical error and that the figure should read £148,000.

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

Resolved unanimously that the Fire Authority:

- a) Approve the addition of £148,000 to 2012/13 revenue budgets, for expenditure that has slipped from 2011/12;
- b) Approve the creation of a Service Transformation Programme Staff Reserve, for the secondment and backfilling of staff to complete the Programme;
- c) Approve the creation of an Income Volatility Reserve, to protect the Authority against detrimental transitional changes in grant and business rates; and
- d) Approve the transfer of the balance of the General Fund of £1,263,000 to the reserves, as set out in paragraph 5 of the report, subject to review during the preparation of the 2013/14 budget

13 Annual Report

This report asked Members to delegate approval of the Fire Authority's Annual Report 2011/12 to the Audit and Performance Management Committee.

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

Resolved that the Fire Authority delegate final approval of the Annual Report 2011/12 to the Audit and Performance Management Committee

14 Public Value Review Update

This report set out a summary of progress against the agreed outcomes, as set out within the Fire Authority's Public Value review undertaken in 2010.

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO) presented this report and highlighted the key areas set out in the paper. The ACFO drew Members' attention to paragraph 5 of the report in particular, which reviewed Year 1 of the Public Value programme.

The ACFO explained that part of the difference between the forecast and actual reduction was due to the rounding up and down of figures. Savings have been achieved through the reduction of support staff and operational staff posts as set out in the Public Value programme.

The reduction in operational staff has had no impact on appliance availability. The reduction of 6 Incident Commanders has, however, had an impact on officer resilience. The Service is now at its absolute lowest numbers for officer cover, which is impacting on the capacity of operational officers on a day-to-day basis and is also impacting on attendance at cross-border incidents.

The ACFO then referred to paragraph 6 of the report, which detailed the Public Value initiatives that are to be implemented in 2012/13, the major one of which is the move to switch crewing of the Aerial Ladder Platform (ALP). The appendix to the report sets out the initiatives that will be undertaken in 2013 to 2015, including the cessation of permanent crewing of the rescue tender. The ACFO explained that it was initially estimated in 2010 that £2.9 million savings needed to be achieved. It is now more likely, however, that the Service will need to achieve £4 million of savings, which will be identified through the 2020 Strategic Planning Process.

Councillor Minnery referred to the issue of officer resilience and suggested that a review of this be the first task and finish project for an appointed Member Champion. Councillor Minnery also asked about response times and whether the effect of actual turnout time is taken into consideration, i.e. is the national average based on wholtime response only. The CFO explained that this is a national and local issue. Wherever you live and work in Shropshire, you are facing similar risks as people living on for example Merseyside, where the response times are 6 minutes for the first appliance and a further minute or so for a second appliance. In Shropshire, response standards are 15 minutes for the first appliance and a further 5 or even 10 minutes for the second appliance. Cuts have different impacts on fire authorities, for example attendance times, and sparsity impacts these further.

Councillor Minnery left the meeting at this point (2.50 pm).

The CFO further commented that with regard to officer cover, the Service is aware that officer levels are at a minimum, especially during spate conditions. It will be useful to look at the issue of officer resilience but it is doubtful that any opportunities for improvement will be identifiable.

Councillor Price thanked the ACFO for the report and for highlighting those areas that are of concern and agreed that the issue of officer resilience needs to be investigated. Councillor Price then referred to page 4 of the report, which covered the relocation of a fire appliance from Telford Central to Tweedale and asked if the Representative Bodies had supported this change. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer (DCFO) explained that a six-month and a twelve-month review of the change had been carried out and that the situation will remain as is until the financial position is clear. The Fire Brigades Union (FBU) have been involved in both reviews and the Service has made it clear to the FBU that changes will be made, if necessary.

Councillor Minnery returned to the meeting at this point (2.53 pm).

Councillor Carter thanked officers for the honest report that had been presented to Members and commented that the right number of people is needed to provide the service that is expected by the people of Shropshire. He suggested that the Government should be lobbied, if necessary, and that the impact of the Retained Duty System (RDS) on response times needs to be recognised. Councillor Thompson echoed Councillor Carter's comments and expressed concern about the potential impacts on officers, for example increased levels of stress.

The CFO reported that the Authority has been lobbying Governments for many years with regard to funding and more recently for recognition of sparsity as a factor in funding. The Government is now consulting on a new Grant Formula, which does include sparsity as a factor for the first time. The safety of the public and of staff remains paramount to the Authority and the CFO urged Members to lobby Members of Parliament (MPs), if they have the opportunity. The Chair reported that the Authority has had some success with its lobbying of Bob Neill MP with regard to the recognition of rural sparsity and that lobbying will continue.

Councillor Dr Jones asked if there would be an opportunity to reopen the case for increased rescue boat funding. The Chair commented that this will need to be looked at, especially if spate flooding conditions, as recently experienced, continue. The CFO explained that this might prove more difficult to lobby for, especially given the recently published National Framework, which has placed responsibility for any fire and rescue risks with fire authorities. This effectively removes the argument for requesting further funding.

Councillor Hartin asked if the requirement for fire authorities to be responsible for all fire and rescue risks would have an impact on the Authority's insurance risk. The CSM explained that she is to look into this issue, which will have to be raised as a material fact with our insurers. There is also a risk that levels of public claims against the Service may increase.

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

Resolved that the Fire Authority note progress to date and establish a 'task and finish' project to look at officer resilience with Councillor Price being appointed as the Member Champion for this issue

15 2020 Strategic Planning Process: Summary Programme Plan

This report set out the summary programme plan for phase one of the Member-led, consolidated 2020 strategic planning process. The process spans an 18 to 24 month period with the outcome being a costed, long-term strategic Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP). The approach to the strategy has been agreed previously by the Fire Authority. The programme plan has been developed in consultation with members of the Authority's Strategic Risk and Planning Working Group (STRaP).

The ACFO highlighted the Appendix to the report, which sets out the proposed programme of activity from the present date to the December 2012 Fire Authority meeting. The ACFO also explained that there was an error in the second row of the table, where those involved should include the Members of the STRaP Working Group and any other Fire Authority Members, who would like to attend. Councillor Hartin asked if any MPs had confirmed their attendance. The ACFO confirmed that, as yet, no response had been received from the MPs concerned.

The Head of Operations gave a presentation outlining the Scenario Based Planning Process and how it will be used (a copy of the presentation slides is attached to the signed minutes).

Councillor Bennett asked if there would be a point in the process at which the Fire Authority would talk to other fire and rescue authorities about issues, such as potential mergers. The ACFO explained that the Authority is working with the Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA), which is conducting a national exercise on this subject and with the Federation of European Union (FEU) Fire Officer Associations, who are conducting a Pan-European exercise.

Councillor Carter agreed that this was an essential piece of work, which needed to be undertaken and commented that the public of Shropshire are very pro Fire Authority. They are, therefore, more likely to support proposed changes and the Fire Authority should make its views known in order to ensure that the public support the Authority.

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

Resolved that the Fire Authority approve the summary programme plan

16 Fire and Rescue National Framework 2012 Update

The Fire Authority received a verbal update on the Fire and Rescue National Framework 2012, as detailed on the agenda for the meeting.

The ACFO reported that the National Framework had been published the previous week and that it was very similar to the draft Framework. An Impact Assessment will be carried out on the Framework and its implications for the Fire Authority with a report on this being brought to the September 2012 Fire Authority meeting.

Councillor Minnery requested that a copy of the National Framework be emailed to Fire Authority Members. The ACFO undertook to do this.

Resolved that the Fire Authority note the update given

17 Partnership Working and the Outcomes

This report provided Members with an overview of the partnership working being undertaken by the Fire Authority and Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service.

Councillor Adams asked what mechanisms were in place for deleting partnerships that had run their course or that were no longer effective. The DCFO explained that the decision to delete partnerships is made by the Partnership Scrutiny Group, which the DCFO chairs.

Resolved that the Fire Authority note the contents of the report

18 Fire Control Project Update

The Fire Authority received a verbal update on the Fire Control Project, as detailed on the agenda for the meeting.

The ACFO reported that Group Manager John Harrison has been appointed to lead the project team, which is working on the joint control room arrangements. It is believed that Hereford and Worcester Fire Service's command and control function will go live in September 2012.

Resolved that the Fire Authority note the verbal update

19 Corporate Risk Management Summary

This report informed 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.

Resolved that the Fire Authority note the contents of the report

20 Local Government Act 1972

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

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 Paragraphs 3 and 4

21 Exempt Minutes (Paragraphs 3 and 4)

Members received the exempt minutes of the Fire Authority meeting, held on 25 April 2012.

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

Resolved that the exempt minutes of the Fire Authority meeting, held on 25 April 2012, be agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record

22 Human Resources Committee Exempt Minutes (Paragraph 3)

Members received the exempt minutes of the Human Resources Committee meeting, held on 19 April 2012.

Resolved that the exempt minutes of the Human Resources Committee meeting, held on 19 April 2012, be noted

The meeting closed at 3.30 pm.

Chair.....

Date.....