

**Minutes of the Meeting of
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority
held on Wednesday, 25 September 2013, at 3.00 pm
at Shropshire Conference Centre, Shrewsbury**

Present

Members

Councillors Adams, Mrs Barrow, Bennett, Carter, Cherrington, Hartin, Hurst-Knight Dr Jones, Mellings, Minnery (Vice-Chair), Price, Miss Reynolds, Thompson and West (Chair)

Officers

Chief Fire Officer, Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Service Delivery), Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Corporate Services), Head of Finance, Clerk to the Fire Authority, Corporate Support Manager and Executive Support Officer

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Mrs Bould, Kiernan and Picken and from the Treasurer, Mr Walton.

Councillor Kiernan had advised that he would be taking a leave of absence from the Fire Authority until January 2014 at the earliest.

2 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

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.

No Disclosable Pecuniary Interests were declared.

3 Public Questions

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

4 Minutes

Members received the minutes of the Fire Authority meeting, held on 10 July 2013.

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

Resolved that the minutes of the Fire Authority meeting, held on 10 July 2013, be agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record

5 Standards Committee Minutes

Members received the minutes of the Standards Committee meeting, held on 4 September 2013 and considered the recommendations at item 7 regarding the Members' Code of Conduct.

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

Resolved that the minutes of the Standards Committee meeting, held on 4 September 2013, be noted and that the recommendations at item 7, regarding the Members' Code of Conduct, be agreed

6 Annual Report of the Standards Committee

This report advised of the work carried out by the Fire Authority's Standards Committee during 2012/13.

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

Resolved that the Fire Authority note the Annual Report of the Standards Committee

7 Brigade Managers' Employment Panel Non-Exempt Minutes

Members received the non-exempt minutes of the Brigade Managers' Employment Panel meeting, held on 12 September 2013.

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

Resolved that the Fire Authority note the non-exempt minutes of the Brigade Managers' Employment Panel meeting, held on 12 September 2013

8 Strategy and Resources Committee Minutes

Members received the minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting, held on 12 September 2013, and considered the recommendations at items 8 and 9.

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

Resolved that the minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting, held on 12 September 2013, be noted and that the recommendations at items 8 and 9, as given below, be agreed

Item 8 – Use of General Fund Balance 2012/13

Resolved that the Fire Authority:

- a) Approve proposed uses for the General Fund balance, including the creation of new reserves and provisions, where necessary; and
- b) Note the information provided regarding the position of revenue budgets at the end of the year

Item 9 – Capital Update on Activity and Finance

Resolved that the Fire Authority:

- a) Note progress so far on current schemes; and
- b) Approve changes and additions to the capital programme, as set out in section 4 of the report

9 Review of Scheme of Delegation to Officers and of Standing Orders

The purpose of this report was for Members to receive and note the amendments to the Scheme of Delegation to Officers and Standing Orders, which were agreed at, and stood adjourned from, the Annual Meeting of the Fire Authority.

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

Resolved that the Fire Authority note the amendments to the Fire Authority's Scheme of Delegation to Officers and to its Standing Orders (as set out at paragraphs 3, 4, 5 and 6 of the report), which stood adjourned from the Annual Meeting of the Fire Authority held on 10 July 2013

10 Integrated Risk Management / 2020 Planning Process: Phase One Impact Assessment Summary Outcomes

This report set out the summary outcomes arising from the Phase One Impact Assessment, together with the recommendations of the Fire Authority's Strategy and Resources Committee.

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Service Delivery) (ACFO (SD)) presented the report and talked through each of the appendices in turn. The ACFO (SD) explained that Appendix A summarised the options that had been subject to the initial impact assessment process. Any proposals that had estimated savings of less than £5,000 had been removed from the list and the remaining proposals totalled an estimated £4 million of savings.

The ACFO (SD) clarified that the proposals listed in Appendix B were options, not recommendations, and that these would be subject to a full impact assessment, rather than consultation, at this stage of the process.

Councillor Adams referred to Appendix B to the report and asked for further explanation regarding the savings from shift patterns and what the situation was with Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service (H&WFRS) with regard to a whole or partial merger of control rooms.

The ACFO (SD) explained that the wholetime shift system accounted for 80% of the staffing budget and reducing the staffing numbers by up to 25% should equate to a saving of approximately £1.3 million. Options FC3 + 4 would require a partnership with H&WFRS, with the potential savings being based on collective numbers of staff. There was currently a Memorandum of Understanding in place between the two Fire Authorities with regard to establishing resilient control rooms.

Councillor Mellings commented that the estimated £1.9 million of budget deficits was based on assumptions regarding cost inflation etc and asked if the validity of these assumptions had been checked recently and if options, such as cash limited budgets, had been explored. Councillor Mellings also commented that the scores, given in the tables within the report, merely gave a ranking with further information being needed for decision-making purposes. Councillor Carter, as Chair of the Strategy and Resources Committee, assured the Fire Authority that this detail would be provided at the appropriate stage of the process.

Councillor Price commented that this was a sad position for the Fire Authority to be in with some difficult decisions having to be considered. The issues did, however, need to be considered at this point, although all the options did not need to be carried through at that time.

The Chief Fire Officer commented that, with regard to Phase One of the process and the 60 options detailed in it, the budget impacts of the issues involved needed to be investigated further before any future consideration.

Councillor Thompson thanked officers and Members for their work on Phase One of the process and commented that the local MPs and the Fire Minister should be made aware of the issues involved.

The ACFO (SD) commented that he fully appreciated that the figures, given in the document, were purely indicative and that there was a 10% margin of error included in them. The budget cuts would have an incremental growth and their effects would become more apparent in 2015/16. A more measured approach could, therefore, be taken. The ACFO (SD) referred to paragraph 7 of the report, which related to the horizon scanning of possible mergers of the blue light services and commented that, if the suggested mergers took place, there would obviously be implications for the IRMP / 2020 Planning Process.

Councillor Bennett commented that the IRMP / 2020 Strategy was a clear and thorough piece of work, which would develop a range of options to address a variety of scenarios but these were changeable times and he, therefore, agreed that the assumed budget deficits should be assessed each year.

Councillor West commented that historically this Fire Authority had always planned ahead to enable it to make the right decisions and this current process was ensuring that forward planning was maintained.

Councillor Carter commented that the Strategy and Resources Committee had deliberated long and hard in order to make what it viewed as the right decisions.

It was proposed by Councillor Carter, seconded by Councillor Hartin, and with 13 Members voting for and 1 Member voting against, it was

Resolved that the Fire Authority:

- a) Note the summary outcomes, derived through the Phase One Impact Assessment; and
- b) Approve that
 - i Members of the Strategic Risk and Planning Group (StRaP) lead the Phase Two Impact Assessment process, providing due consideration to the options presented at Appendix B;
 - ii Officers lead internal impact assessments and implement (as appropriate) the options presented at Appendix C; and
 - iii The Fire Authority receives from the Strategy and Resources Committee in February 2014 refined proposals for consideration for formal consultation and implementation

11 Response to Consultation – Local Government Finance Settlement 2014/14 and 2015/16

This report set out the Fire Authority's proposed response to the Government's consultation on future grant settlements.

The Head of Finance (HoF) presented this report and explained that the consultation was responding to the control totals for future grant settlements and not to the actual values involved.

Councillor Dr Jones referred to page 2 of the report and the response to consultation question 1, which stated that the Fire Authority agreed with the proposal to protect council tax freeze grant, but was disappointed in further funding cuts. Councillor Dr Jones suggested that the wording of the response be amended to reflect more strongly the Fire Authority's current position. Councillor Minnery agreed with this suggestion and the HoF undertook to do this before the response was submitted to the Department for Communities and Local Government.

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

Resolved that the Fire Authority note the response to the Government's consultation on future grant settlements

12 Annual Statement of Assurance 2012/13

This report presented for consideration and approval the proposed internet / web-based version of the Fire Authority's Annual Statement of Assurance (draft) for 2012/13.

Councillor Bennett asked if there was a counter on the website to monitor how many times pages and documents were accessed. The ACFO (SD) confirmed that there was and that these figures were reviewed regularly.

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

Resolved that the Fire Authority approve the draft Annual Statement of Assurance 2012/13

The Corporate Support Manager (CSM) explained that this agenda item was to be taken to the Audit and Performance Management Committee meeting which was had been due to be held on 5 September 2013. This meeting had, however, been cancelled, as it was inquorate, and had been rescheduled for 27 September 2013. The agenda for that meeting included the Statement of Accounts and the Letter of Representation, which must be approved and signed by 30 September 2013. Officers, therefore, requested that the Fire Authority approve alternative arrangements to ensure that this requirement was met, in the event that the meeting on 27 September 2013 were inquorate.

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

Resolved that authority be delegated to the Treasurer, in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Audit and Performance Management Committee, to approve the Statement of Accounts and Letter of Representation in the event that the Audit and Performance Management Committee meeting on 27 September 2013, were inquorate.

13 Powers of Entry Delegations

This report set out arrangements to authorise certain employees with powers of entry when carrying out duties on behalf of the Fire Authority.

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

Resolved that the Fire Authority approve:

- a) That authority be delegated to the Chief Fire Officer to authorise officers to exercise powers of entry under:
 - Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004
 - Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
 - Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974and any statutory re-enactment or amendment or Regulations made thereunder; and
- b) That authority be delegated to the Chief Fire Officer to maintain and review a register of all formally authorised warrant card holders

14 Shropshire Fire Risk Management Services

This report provided an update on the progress made by the Fire Authority controlled company, Shropshire Fire Risk Management Services.

In addition to the recommendations set out in the report, the CSM asked the Fire Authority to consider the following additional recommendation c), which was 'to agree that, until such time that the company agrees its own Financial Regulations Standing Orders and supporting procedures, the company will adhere to those of the Fire Authority'.

With regard to recommendation b), which related to the company's reporting procedures, Councillor Bennett suggested that the Audit and Performance Management Committee should receive quarterly performance reports from the company. He also suggested that performance for the first 12 months should be measured against the company's first-year Business Plan, with future performance indicators being set by the Audit and Performance Management Committee. Councillor Hartin commented that he was going to suggest the same approach and Councillor Dr Jones confirmed that she was happy with quarterly reports being presented to the Audit and Performance Management Committee.

Councillor Minnery reported that he had been appointed as Chair of the Board of Directors for the company and that things were moving forward with the company. There was currently £17,000 of work on the order books for the company and the next Board meeting was scheduled for 1 October 2013.

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

Resolved unanimously that the Fire Authority:

- a) Note the progress made by Shropshire Fire Risk Management Services;
- b) Agree that the company report quarterly to the Audit and Performance Management Committee, with the first twelve months performance being measured against the company's first-year Business Plan and future performance indicators being decided by the Audit and Performance Management Committee; and
- c) Agree that, until such time as the company agrees its own Financial Regulations Standing Orders and supporting procedures, the company adhere to those of the Fire Authority

15 Response to Sir Ken Knight report – Facing the Future: findings from the review of efficiencies and operations in fire and rescue authorities in England

This report brought to Members' attention the letter, setting out Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority's response to Sir Ken Knight's review of efficiencies and operations in fire and rescue authorities in England, which was published in May 2013.

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

Resolved that the Fire Authority note the contents of the report

16 Member Training

A Member Training programme had been considered and agreed by the Human Resources Committee in March 2013, however, due to the volume of Fire Authority activity since then, it had not been possible to run short training sessions prior to Authority and Committee meetings.

It was, therefore, proposed that a one-day Member Conference be held before the end of the year to address training requirements.

Officers would contact Members via email in October to identify a suitable date for the event.

Resolved that the Fire Authority note the update given on Member training.

At this point the CFO gave a brief update on the industrial action that was taking place that day. The CFO reported that the industrial action had been planned for, and, as a consequence, 21 out of the Service's 28 appliances would be available during the strike period, together with 2 contingency appliances and the rescue tender and aerial ladder platform. The wholetime appliances and 2 retained duty system appliances were not available. The CFO also reported that the Fire Brigades Union in Shropshire had agreed that they would respond to life threatening incidents during the industrial action period. The situation had been managed well and the expected service had been provided to the communities of Shropshire.

17 Local Government Act 1972

It was proposed by Councillor Minnery, seconded by Councillor Dr 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 item on the grounds that it 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 and 3.

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

Members received the exempt minutes of the Brigade Managers' Employment Panel meeting, held on 12 September 2013.

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

Resolved that the Fire Authority note the exempt minutes of the Brigade Managers' Employment Panel meeting, held on 12 September 2013

The meeting closed at 3.50 pm.

Chair.....

Date.....