

**Non-Exempt Minutes of the Meeting of
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority
held on Wednesday, 12 December 2012 at 3.00 pm
at Service Headquarters, Shrewsbury**

Present

Members

Councillors Adams, Mrs Barrow, Bennett, Mrs Bould, Carter, Hartin, Hurst-Knight, Dr Jones, Kiernan, Mellings, Price, Miss Reynolds, Roberts, Thompson and West (Chair)

Officers

Chief Fire Officer, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Corporate, Performance and Operations), Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Human Resources), Head of Area Command, Head of Operations and Risk, Head of Prevention, Head of Finance, Clerk and Monitoring Officer to the Fire Authority, Corporate Services Manager and Executive Support Officer

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Mrs Blundell and Minnery.

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 that they should leave the room prior to the commencement of the debate.

The Clerk, in accordance with the authority delegated to him by the Fire Authority at its meeting on 18 July 2012, granted dispensations to all Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority Members to take part in the discussion of and voting on the setting of the Fire Authority budget and/or precept and the Scheme for the Payment of Members' Allowances. The dispensation is valid from 12 December 2012 to 11 December 2016 and each Member was given a letter, setting out the details of the dispensation. A copy of the letter has been placed on file with the signed minutes from the meeting.

There were no Disclosable Pecuniary Interests.

3 Minutes

Members received the non-exempt minutes of the Fire Authority Meeting, held on 26 September 2012.

It was noted that the Head of Finance had been omitted from the officers present on the minutes.

It was proposed by Councillor Dr Jones, seconded by Councillor Hurst-Knight and, with Councillors Mrs Barrow and Miss Reynolds abstaining, as they had not been present at the meeting, it was

Resolved that the non-exempt minutes of the Fire Authority Annual Meeting, held on 26 September 2012, 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 Constitutional Issues

5a Brigade Managers' Employment Panel

This report examined the current membership of the Brigade Managers' Employment Panel and asked the Fire Authority to consider whether it wished to make any changes and, if so, to agree what those changes should be.

Councillor Dr Jones said that the Labour Group was happy to cede one place on the Panel to ensure representation for each of the political groups. Councillor Hartin commented that he would prefer the political balance requirements not to be applied to the Panel and proposed that the ceded seat should be taken by Councillor Mellings of the Liberal Democrat Group.

It was, therefore, proposed by Councillor Hartin, seconded by Councillor Dr Jones, and on a vote with no Members voting against, and Councillors Adams and Mrs Barrow abstaining, it was

Resolved that the Fire Authority agree:

- a) To change the membership of the Brigade Managers' Employment Panel as detailed in recommendation b);
- b) That the seat, ceded by the Labour Group, be taken by Councillor Mellings of the Liberal Democrat Group; and
- c) That the political balance requirements should not apply to the Brigade Managers' Employment Panel

5b Brigade Managers' Employment Panel

Members received the non-exempt minutes of the Brigade Managers' Employment Panel meeting, held on 31 October 2012.

Resolved that the non-exempt minutes of the Brigade Managers' Employment Panel meeting, held on 31 October 2012, be noted

5c Meeting Schedule 2013

The Fire Authority received a schedule of proposed dates for 2013 meetings of the Fire Authority and its committees for approval.

Councillor Hartin asked for confirmation that the proposed meeting dates had been checked with both constituent authorities, in order to try and eliminate any potential clashes between meetings. The Corporate Services Manager confirmed that this had been done and that there were currently no known clashes.

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

Resolved that the Fire Authority agree the schedule of proposed dates for 2013 meetings of the Authority and its committees

6 Human Resources Committee

Members received the minutes of the Human Resources Committee meeting, held on 18 October 2012.

Resolved that the minutes of the Human Resources Committee meeting, held on 18 October 2012, be noted

7 Strategy and Resources Committee

Members received the minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting, held on 15 November 2012, and considered the recommendations at item 8 of the minutes.

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

Resolved that the minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting, held on 15 November 2012, be noted and that the recommendations at item 8 of the minutes, as given below, be agreed:

That the Fire Authority:

- a) Note the position of the revenue budget;
- b) Approve virements to the revenue budget, where requested;
- c) Note the decision of the Pensions Panel on 6 August 2012 relating to early release of pension benefits;
- d) Approve the use of Government grant for Control Room services;
- e) Note performance against prudential indicators to date in 2012/13; and
- f) Note the mid-year review of treasury activities for 2012/13.

8 Audit and Performance Management Committee

Members received the minutes of the Audit and Performance Management Committee meeting, held on 22 November 2012, and considered the recommendations at items 5 and 6 of the minutes.

Councillor Dr Jones emphasised the work that had been undertaken by the Finance Department with regard to the 2011/12 Audit.

It was proposed by Councillor Dr Jones, seconded by Councillor Hurst-Knight, and

Resolved that the minutes of the Audit and Performance Management Committee meeting, held on 22 November 2012, be noted and that the recommendations at items 5 and 6 of the minutes, as given below, be agreed:

Item 5 – External Audit Matters – Annual Audit Letter

That the Fire Authority formally approve the Annual Audit Letter 2011/12

Item 6 – Internal Audit Plan 2013/14

That the Fire Authority:

- a) Approve the programme of audits for 2013/14, as set out in the report; and
- b) Note the proposed programme of audits for years 2014/15 to 2015/16.

9 2013/14 and Later Years Budget Summary

This report summarised the budgets that are proposed by the Strategy and Resources Committee. The results are put forward to the Fire Authority for approval as the basis for consultation, leading to a final decision at the Fire Authority meeting in February 2013.

The Head of Finance (HoF) explained that since the Strategy and Resources Committee had taken place, there had been developments in expenditure on Incident Command training and large animal rescue training. The costs related to these developments were detailed on page 2 of the report.

The HoF talked through the Council Tax Freeze Grant, offered by the Government, and outlined the implications for the Authority of declining or accepting the Grant, as set out on page 3 of the report. The HoF confirmed that the Authority was basing its planning on a 2% increase in precept, as increasing the precept by more than 2% would trigger a referendum.

Councillor Hartin asked what information had come out of the Authority's meeting with the Fire Minister. The Chair explained that the meeting had been postponed from 11 December to the following Monday, 17 December and, therefore, there was no further information at present. Councillor Hartin then commented that the decision revolves around what we think the future will be, i.e. will there be a turnaround by 2016/17. As this is unknown, in the longer term it is better not to accept the Freeze Grant. The Chair agreed with this assessment and commented that the Fire Authority, and the Fire Service as a whole, need to lobby the Government with regard to budgets.

Councillor Mellings asked why there was no surplus on the Collection Fund and also what the rationale was for basing the Prices Provision on 4% for 2013/14. The HoF explained that the new Council Tax Support Scheme should increase the levels of Council Tax paid. It has, however, been recognised by councils that there could be issues with collecting monies, particularly from people, who have not previously paid any Council Tax.

Adjustments have been made to the predicted Council Tax income to reflect this. Further adjustments will be made throughout the year as the actual position becomes clear. With regard to Pay and Prices, the HoF explained that the Authority is erring on the side of caution and, having reduced its pay contingencies to 1% for 2013/14, felt it would be prudent to set the prices contingency at 4%.

The Chief Fire Officer (CFO) commented that there is concern even with the current cuts. In September 2012 the books were balanced and the Authority does have time to meet the predicted deficits but the situation can be likened to 'a moving platform with the targets moving away'.

Councillor Carter informed Members that he has requested a meeting with Eric Pickles MP and that he intended to raise this issue with him.

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

Resolved unanimously that the Fire Authority agree to:

- a) Base its revenue budget planning and consultation on the totals, set out in paragraph 7 of the report;
- b) Base its capital programme on that, set out in 7d in the Appendix, (the Green Book), subject to consideration of the prudential guidelines and minimum revenue provision policy by the Strategy and Resources Committee in January 2013;
- c) The recommendations on Reserves and Provisions set out in report 7e, and confirm the general reserve;
- d) Having considered the offer of a two-year council tax freeze grant, agree to decline the offer;
- e) Continue to base its planning and consultation on a precept increase of 2% in the precept in 2013/14, and the years following; and
- f) Request the Strategy and Resources Committee to prepare a final budget package in January 2013, for final decision by the Fire Authority in February 2013

9a Meeting with Fire Minister

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer (DCFO) informed the Fire Authority that the meeting, which was due to take place between Members, officers and the Fire Minister in London on 11 December 2012 had been postponed to Monday, 17 December 2012. Officers will advise Members of the outcome of the meeting after that date.

Resolved that the Fire Authority note the update given

10 2020 Strategic Planning Process Summary Phase One Outcomes

This report set out the summary outcomes arising from Phase One of the Fire Authority's agreed 2020 Strategic Planning Process.

Councillor Price commented that he had been involved with the sessions and that the majority of staff had engaged in them.

Councillor Dr Jones acknowledged that, whilst the issues considered had been identified in advance of the consultation, there was an opportunity for staff's own comments to be captured, together with any additional issues. She asked how any additional issues would be considered. The Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Corporate, Performance and Operations) (ACFO CPO) explained that any other scenarios would be considered in Phase 2 of the process.

Councillor Hartin asked for reassurance that officers are happy that no scenarios have been missed. The ACFO CPO responded that something probably has been missed, although the process has been approached from all angles. The scenarios will be prioritised due to budget constraints, with those identified as having a high likelihood and a high impact, i.e. those in the top right hand corner of Figure 1 on page 3 of the report, being addressed first.

The Chair commented that, in his role a peer assessor for fire authorities, it is noticeable that other authorities are undertaking public value consultation but are only looking as far as 2017. He thanked all those Members, who had participated in the consultation process.

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

Resolved that Members:

- a) Note the summary outcomes derived through Phase One of the 2020 Strategic Planning Process; and
- b) Instruct the Authority's Strategic Risk and Planning Working Group to proceed, in consultation with officers, to Phase Two

11 Aerial Ladder Platform Crewing Project Phase 3

This report informed Members of the outcome of the Aerial Ladder Platform (ALP) project and its various resilience options and sought the Fire Authority's approval of the Chief Fire Officer's recommendations for Phase 4 and final implementation.

The Fire Authority noted that the recommendation should read 'that the Fire Authority approve the Chief Fire Officer's recommendations as detailed in section 6 of the report' not '...as detailed in section 7 of the report'.

Councillor Hartin asked what the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) response had been to the pilot project. The Head of Area Command (HoAC) explained the FBU's preference was for the ALP and an appliance to proceed to incidents in order to provide support.

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

Resolved that the Fire Authority approve the Chief Fire Officer's recommendations, as detailed in section 6 of the report

12 Rescue Tender Crewing Project

This report informed Members of the outcome of the initial stages of the Rescue Tender (RT) crewing project and outlined the three options being put forward to staff for consultation.

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

Resolved that the Fire Authority:

- a) Note the summary results from the initial staff consultation on providing RT cover in the future;
- b) Agree to the Chief Fire Officer's recommendation that the Service consults on the three options, outlined in the report, and conducts a series of trials of each option; and
- c) Agree that the Chief Fire Officer report back to the Fire Authority in 2013 with proposals for an alternative staffing model for the Rescue Tender and, where necessary, other appliances from 2014 onwards

13 Operational Command Review

A major part of the cost reductions being delivered by the Public Value review is the 25% reduction in Operational Commanders, employed by the Service. Following concern raised by both officers and Members, the Authority tasked Councillor Price to carry out a review of current and future provision and to report to the Fire Authority. This report set out his findings and recommendations.

Councillor Price thanked officers for their co-operation whilst the review was being undertaken. He highlighted the additional issues that had been raised during the review, which are set out on pages 5 to 6 of the report.

Councillor Dr Jones welcomed the report and commented that there needs to be an understanding of the pressures and issues that officers are facing. The Chair thanked Councillor Price for his work and explained that the Service will continue to monitor the issues highlighted by the review.

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

Resolved that the Fire Authority:

- a) Note the contents of the report;
- b) Agree that the current level of officer cover is sufficient for normal operational situations;
- c) Task the Chief Fire Officer to review Executive Officer provision, when the Authority reduces to two operational Executives in 2013;
- d) Task the Chief Fire Officer to review the private use costs, charged to some officers, now that they are all on a 'recall to duty' rota; and
- e) Note the success of the first subject specific Authority Champion

14 Fire and Emergency Support Services

This report outlined work to introduce the British Red Cross Fire and Emergency Support Service to the whole of Shropshire, and sought Member approval for match funding for the Service.

The Head of Prevention (HoP) showed Members a short DVD, which explained the role and function of the Fire and Emergency Support Service (FESS). Councillor Price asked about the role that the Council's Emergency Planning Department play in responding to incidents such as flooding. The HoP explained that it is difficult for Emergency Planning to respond as quickly as the FESS.

Councillor Roberts asked if the FESS team was based locally. The HoP confirmed that about 60% of the FESS volunteers for Shropshire are based in the Shrewsbury area as is the volunteer co-ordinator.

Councillor Dr Jones asked about the FESS volunteers being used to provide community fire safety advice, as detailed on page 3 of the report. The HoP explained that this is being explored and that the volunteers would be used to complement existing fire safety work, rather than as a substitute.

Councillor Carter expressed support for the initiative and asked for clarification of the delay, detailed on page 2 of the report. The HoP explained that the British Red Cross have a vehicle, which they can use, as an interim facility, to undertake some of the work during the 12 week delay.

Councillor Bennett advised that there could be a possible issue with the Voluntary and Community Sector Assembly for Shropshire with regard to the procurement of services. The CFO undertook to address this with the Assembly, should the need arise.

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

Resolved that the Fire Authority:

- a) Note the contents of the report; and
- b) Approve funding of £19,000 to be taken from existing balances to part fund the project

15 The Scheme for Payment of Members' Allowances 2013/14

This report asked the Fire Authority to consider and agree its 2013/14 Scheme for the Payment of Members' Allowances.

Councillor West asked if the increase by the National Joint Council could be refused. The Corporate Services Manager explained that it is a Member decision as to whether or not this increase is accepted.

Councillor Mrs Barrow commented that she was happy not to accept any increase. Councillor Hartin commented that it was unknown as to what the increase would be and, if there was any, it would probably be very small.

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

Resolved unanimously that the Fire Authority agree:

- a) Its Scheme for the Payment of Members' Allowances 2013/14 to take effect from 1 April 2013 (a draft of which was set out at the appendix to the report); and
- b) That the basic, special responsibility, travel and subsistence allowances remain at the same level as 2012/13 and do not increase by the percentage awarded by the National Joint Council (if any) with effect from 1 April 2013

16 Shropshire Council Housing Initiative Update

This report updated Members on the initiative, which commenced in July 2012, with Shropshire Council Landlord Services (SCLS).

Councillor Carter left the meeting at this point (4.15 pm).

The HoP explained that, following the success of the pilot scheme in Bridgnorth, the initiative is now being extended. Wholtime firefighters from Telford Central have started visiting SCLS managed homes in Shifnal and personnel from Oswestry will start making visits in their area in early 2013.

Resolved that the Fire Authority note the contents of the report

17 Operational Performance Assessment

The Fire Authority received a verbal update on the Operational Performance Assessment (OpA), as detailed on the agenda for the meeting.

The CFO assured that Fire Authority that the OpA results will be brought before Members at the first possible opportunity.

Councillor Carter returned to the meeting at this point (4.18 pm).

Resolved that the Fire Authority note the verbal update given

18 Local Government Act 1972

It was proposed by Councillor Hartin, 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 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 and 3

19 Exempt Minutes (Paragraphs 1, 2 and 3)

Members received the exempt minutes of the Fire Authority meeting, held on 26 September 2012.

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

Resolved that the exempt minutes of the Fire Authority meeting, held on 26 September 2012, be agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record

20 Brigade Managers' Employment Panel (Paragraphs 1, 2 and 3)

Members received the exempt minutes of the Brigade Managers' Employment Panel meeting, held on 31 October 2012.

Resolved that the exempt minutes of the Brigade Managers' Employment Panel meeting, held on 31 October 2012, be noted

21 Recommendations from the Brigade Managers' Employment Panel (Paragraphs 1, 2 and 3)

This report presented recommendations from the Brigade Managers' Employment Panel for the consideration of the full Fire Authority.

It was proposed by Councillor Adams, seconded by Councillor Mrs Barrow, and with Councillor Hartin voting against and Councillor Reynolds abstaining, it was

Resolved that the Fire Authority agree the recommendations as set out in the report.

Before closing the meeting, the Chair wished all Members and officers a Happy Christmas and New Year and thanked them for their support during 2012.

The meeting closed at 4.40 pm.

Chair.....

Date.....