

**Minutes of the Meeting of
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority
Strategy and Resources Committee
held at Headquarters, Shrewsbury
on Thursday, 12 September 2013 at 2.00 pm**

Members

Councillors Mrs Barrow, Carter (Chair), Hartin, Minnery (Vice Chair), Miss Reynolds, Thompson and West

Officers

Chief Fire Officer, Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Service Delivery), Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Corporate Services), Treasurer, Head of Finance, Head of Resources, Head of Operational Planning, Planning and Performance Manager and Executive Support Officer

1 Apologies for Absence

No apologies for absence had been received.

2 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

There were no Disclosable Pecuniary Interests.

3 Minutes

Members received the minutes of the meeting of the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting, held on 14 March 2013.

It was proposed by Councillor Minnery, seconded by Councillor West, and, with Councillor Carter abstaining, as he had not been present at the meeting, it was

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting of the Strategy and Resources Committee, held on 14 March 2013, be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record

4 Public Questions

No public questions, statements or petitions had been received.

5 Committee Constitution and Training

This report brought the latest version of the Committee's constitution to the notice of its Members. It also asked Members to consider what training, if any, they wished to receive in order to fulfil their role on the Committee.

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

Resolved that the Committee:

- a) Note the constitution of the Strategy and Resources Committee (attached as an appendix to the report); and
- b) Agree that any Member training needs would be addressed as and when they were identified by individuals

6 Ceasing of Permanent Crewing of the Rescue Tender

This report advised Members that permanent crewing of the Rescue Tender (RT) would cease as of 1 January 2014, in line with the Public Value recommendations set out in 2010, and that the RT would then be switch crewed.

The Chief Fire Officer (CFO) presented the report and explained that the decision to cease permanent crewing of the RT had originally been pushed back in the 2020 proposals to the latest possible time but it was now necessary for the proposal to be implemented. From 1 January 2014, the RT would be switch crewed as per the method set out at section 5 of the report.

Councillor West reminded Members that when the decision was made to push it back, the proposal actually concerned total cessation of RT crewing. He also commented that this report had been discussed at length at the September meeting of the Strategic Risk and Planning Working Group, where some Members had expressed their unhappiness with the decision to cease permanent crewing and had asked that monitoring be undertaken to ensure that best use was made of the resource. The CFO confirmed that intelligent mobilising would be exercised by Fire Control to ensure best use was made of the RT resource.

Councillor Hartin commented that there appeared to be only this option available with regard to the RT and asked how staff consultation on the issue had gone. The CFO confirmed that all staff at Wellington had been consulted on the issue and were fully engaged with the changes.

Councillor Thompson commented that it appeared that the Service's hands were tied on this matter due to the budget cuts. The CFO confirmed that this was the case but reminded Members that the appliance would remain available. There might be a slight reduction in availability but the aim was to maintain current levels of turnout.

It was proposed by Councillor Minnery, seconded by Councillor Hartin, and with 6 Members voting for and 1 Member voting against, it was

Resolved that the Committee note:

- a) Cessation of permanent crewing of the Rescue Tender as of 1 January 2014; and
- b) That the Rescue Tender would be switch crewed from that time

7 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 Strategic Risk and Planning Group (StRaP).

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Service Delivery) (ACFO (SD)) presented the report to the meeting and explained the following about the appendices. Appendix A listed the impact assessment results for the proposals considered in Phase One, with Appendix E depicting the cost savings versus impact of each of the proposals. Appendix B listed the proposals that the StRaP Working Group was recommending should go forward for Member-led Impact Assessment. Appendix C detailed those options that will be implemented by officers on an as-and-when basis, i.e. those that can be implemented with minimal consultation and impact. Finally, the options listed in Appendix D were those that had been set aside for the foreseeable future, as StRaP Members considered that they were not appropriate for implementation at this time.

Councillor Hartin, as Chair of the StRaP Working Group, referred to Appendix D and explained that the StRaP Group had set aside option Ex1, as it wished to see the outcome of potential national plans to amalgamate the nation's emergency services before pursuing this further. The other options listed had been deemed unsuitable for implementation at this time, particularly in light of some of the recommendations that would be going forward for full impact assessment.

Councillor Carter commented that it should be noted that the StRaP Group had not gone for the cheaper options, as some of these were very important to service delivery.

Councillor West referred to option AC8 on Appendix B, relating to the closure of up to 4 retained stations across the County, and explained that he and the CFO had met with Owen Paterson MP to explain the reasons for this proposal being put forward. Mr Paterson was concerned at the circumstances that had led to this and had committed to raising the issue with the Fire Minister.

Councillor Mrs Barrow commented that, whilst she would not go against the decisions made by StRaP Group, she was uncomfortable with taking some of the options forward, particularly those that would put pressure on people whilst they waited for the outcomes of the full impact assessment and subsequent decisions by the Fire Authority. Councillor Hartin agreed that it was difficult, particularly with the options relating to retained stations and wholtime pumps, which go against the red lines set by the Authority. However, there was currently no choice but to take these forward, as the estimated savings were not insignificant and, therefore, the impacts of the options needed to be properly assessed.

Councillor Carter expressed concerns that the Service was leaving itself open to attack by taking forward the options set out in Appendix B. He noted that, as the total savings were in excess of what was required, it would be seen to be possible to remove one or two of the more contentious options and still meet the savings needed.

The ACFO (SD) responded that the Service was not misleading anybody by taking these options forward for consideration. Some of the options were mutually exclusive and so all needed to be included in future consultation. Councillor Hartin commented that options AC4 and AC8 on Appendix B had very similar impact scores and so it was right to take both of these forward. The ACFO (SD) commented that strategic decisions needed to be made and, if it was perceived that the options were pitting staff against staff, this could increase subjectivity.

The Head of Operational Planning (HoOP) commented that options AC1 and AC4 would give the Service more options and room for manoeuvre in the future. Councillor Carter agreed that all of the options should be kept in, as this might help to facilitate fuller discussions between local MPs and the Fire Minister.

The CFO reported that he and the Chair of the Fire Authority were due to meet with local MPs the following day to discuss the issue of rural funding. There was also a meeting scheduled for 4 October 2013 with Owen Paterson MP and Baschurch Parish Council members. The CFO confirmed that there was a wider strategy in place to maintain an ongoing process of pressure on the Fire Minister

It was proposed by Councillor Minnery, seconded by Councillor West, and, with 6 Members voting for and 1 Member voting against, it was

Resolved that the Committee:

- a) Note the summary outcomes, derived though the Phase One Impact Assessment; and
- b) Recommend to the Fire Authority that:
 - i StRaP members 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 receive, from the Strategy and Resources Committee in February 2014, refined proposals for consideration for formal consultation and implementation

8 Use of General Fund Balance 2012/13

This report set out proposals for the use of the General Fund balance following the 2012/13 financial year end, and provided more information to the Committee regarding budgets, which were overspent at the end of the year.

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

Resolved that the Committee:

- a) Recommend that the Fire Authority 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

9 Capital Update on Activity and Finance

This report provided an overview of all of the capital schemes within the Brigade and their current status.

The Planning and Performance Manager (PPM) presented this report and, referring to the Appendix, explained that the Training Improvements Scheme would be carried forward into 2013/14.

Councillor Hartin referred to the table on page 2 of the report, which set out the changes to the timing of schemes, and asked why the replacement of Ford Rangers and Land Rovers had been brought forward, whilst the Light Pumping Unit scheme had been moved back. The Head of Resources (HoR) explained that the provision of fire-fogging units on the Ford Rangers and Land Rovers was an operationally higher priority than the Light Pumping Unit. The timing of the schemes had, therefore, been swapped.

Councillor Hartin also referred to the Wellington station improvements set out on page 2 of the report, which totalled an estimated £200,000, and asked if these works were vitally urgent. The HoR explained that replacing the appliance bay doors would create savings on heating bills. The biomass heating system had originally been looked at for Tweedale but the project was delayed, pending decisions about crewing at that station. Biomass heating was thought to be feasible for Wellington and should help to reduce heating costs. If these two projects were to be carried out at Wellington, it made sense to complete all the works needed by enhancing the dormitories as well.

Councillor Hartin asked what the savings on heating costs were estimated to be. The HoR replied that the estimate was £8,000 per annum, although this was subject to a feasibility study and cost benefit analysis.

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

Resolved that the Committee:

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

10 Local Government Act 1972

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

Resolved that, under section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting 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 Paragraph 3.

11 Capital Update on Activity and Finance (Paragraph 3)

The Committee received the second part of the Appendix to Report 11 – Capital Update on Activity and Finance, which contained exempt information.

The PPM advised that this part of the appendix was to be updated and would be brought back to the November meeting of the Committee.

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

Resolved that the Committee note the Appendix to Report 11 – Capital Update on Activity and Finance

The meeting closed at 2.45 pm.

Chair.....

Date.....