

**Minutes of the Meeting of
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority
Strategy and Resources Committee
held at Headquarters, Shrewsbury
on Thursday, 14 March 2013 at 2.00 pm**

Present

Members

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

Officers

Chief Fire Officer, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Treasurer, Head of Finance and Corporate Services Manager

Mrs Mack, formerly of the Audit Commission

1 Apologies for Absence

No apologies for absence had been received.

2 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

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

No pecuniary interests were disclosed.

3 Non-Exempt Minutes

Members received the non-exempt minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting, held on 24 January 2013.

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

Resolved that the non-exempt minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting, held on 24 January 2013, be approved 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 Strategy and Resources Committee Work Plan 2013/14

Members received a report, which reviewed progress against the Strategy and Resources Committee 2012/13 Work Plan and put forward a 2013/14 Work Plan for consideration and approval by Members.

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

Resolved that Members:

- a) Note progress made against the Strategy and Resources Committee 2012/13 Work Plan; and
- b) Approve the Work Plan for 2013/14, attached as an appendix, without amendment

The Chair welcomed Mrs Mack, who arrived at this point and who was attending to present her report on Fire Authority Funding (Appendix A to report 8). He also welcomed the Treasurer, Mr Walton.

6 Annual Report of the Strategy and Resources Committee

Members received a report, which presented the draft version of the Annual Report of the Strategy and Resources Committee, for consideration and approval by Members, prior to submission to the Fire Authority at its meeting in April.

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

Resolved that Members approve the draft version of the Annual Report of the Strategy and Resources Committee, without amendment

7 Service Plan and Public Value Performance Targets 2013/14

Members received a report, which presented the proposed annual summary Service Plan, with amended Public Value performance targets for 2013/14.

The Chief Fire Officer advised that various officer groups met monthly to scrutinise the performance targets and to look for continuous improvement. Referring to target 3b – injuries sustained to staff through fire fighting, he explained that an increase was proposed from 24 to 26 injuries. Officers had thought long and hard about this proposal but, with the benefit of five years' performance data, they felt that a target of 26 was realistic.

Members were concerned about the message that such an increase would send to staff, particularly as the aspiration should be to reduce the target year on year. Councillor Mrs Barrow asked whether officers had taken into consideration the reduction in firefighters, when reaching this figure.

The Chief Fire Officer responded that since 2009 the number of firefighters had reduced by 35. This was, however, a small proportion of the total number of firefighters and did not, therefore, have a significant impact on the target. He added that the target needed to be achievable and linked to business plans. If Members wished the target to remain at 24, he would go back to the Health and Safety team to see what active measures could be taken to achieve it.

It was proposed by Councillor Hartin, seconded by Councillor West and, on a vote with all in favour,

Resolved that the Committee:

- a) Agree the proposed summary Service Plan and Public Value performance targets for 2013/14, **with the exception** of the proposed target for 3b: injuries sustained to staff through fire fighting, which should remain at 24; and
- b) Receive a detailed underpinning Service Plan at the next meeting of the Committee in June 2013, for final approval by the Fire Authority at its meeting in July 2013

8 Shropshire Fire Authority Funding

Members received a report, which informed of work undertaken to explain the large reductions in Government grant faced by the Authority from 2011/12.

The Chief Fire Officer advised that Mrs Mack had worked for a number of years with the Audit Commission, carrying out external audits of fire authorities. As a result, she had in-depth knowledge of the relevant funding mechanisms and was well placed to research the reasons for the large reductions in grant, faced by this Fire Authority in the last three years.

Mrs Mack explained that the risk index had been simplified in 2011/12, when there was a swing in how deprivation was judged to focus on unemployment and lack of qualifications. This had resulted in a significant decrease in grant received by the Fire Authority and also appeared to have very little link to actual fire risk.

The Chief Fire Officer pointed out that the Fire Service nationally uses the Fire Service Emergency Cover (FSEC) software tool to carry out risk analysis, which does relate to fire risk. All FSEC modelling is, however, based on the previous set of criteria, used by Government to calculate grant, rather than on the criteria introduced in 2011/12. Mrs Mack added that there had been questions in Parliament about this and the National Audit Office had highlighted a number of anomalies in the latest funding mechanism.

Members were concerned that, although these issues had been raised with the Fire Minister and evidence produced to support this Fire Authority's case, the Government would not acknowledge the situation and no change in funding had been, or was likely to be, forthcoming. The Chief Fire Officer suggested that the Chair write again to the Minister, requesting responses to the specific questions raised in his previous letter of 22 February 2013 and that the second letter be copied to all Shropshire MPs, with Mrs Mack's report attached.

The Committee agreed that a second letter be sent to the Fire Minister from both the Chair and the Vice-Chair of the Authority and that Members speak to their MPs in advance about this course of action.

A discussion took place as to whether it would be worthwhile lobbying all other combined fire authorities (CFAs). The consensus was, however, that, CFAs were split on this issue, as some had fared reasonably well from the latest funding mechanism. The Chief Fire Officer, therefore, suggested that he contact those CFAs in a similar position to that of this Authority to pursue the matter.

Resolved that the Committee note the report and the papers appended

The Chair thanked Mrs Mack for attending the meeting to present her report and also for explaining the funding mechanism with such clarity.

9 Local Government Act 1972

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

Resolved that, under the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded for the following agenda item on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information, as defined by the provisions of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act, by virtue of paragraph 3

10 Exempt Minutes (Paragraph 3)

Members received the exempt minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting, held on 24 January 2013.

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

Resolved that the exempt minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting, held on 24 January 2013, be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record

The meeting closed at 2.45 pm.

Chair.....

Date.....