

**Minutes of the Annual Meeting of
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority
held on Wednesday, 10 July 2013, at 3.00 pm
at Service Headquarters, Shrewsbury**

Present

Members

Councillors Adams, Mrs Barrow, Bennett, Mrs Bould, Carter (from 3.35 pm), Cherrington, Hartin, Dr Jones, Kiernan, Mellings, Minnery (Vice-Chair), Picken, 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, Head of Operational Planning, Clerk to the Fire Authority, Corporate Support 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 commented that it was an honour to be re-elected as Chair the Authority.

2 Appointment of Vice-Chair

It was proposed by Councillor West and seconded by Councillor Kiernan

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 colleagues for their support and for the fact that Members showed no regard to politics or parochial matters in their Fire Authority work.

3a **Vote of Thanks and Welcome**

The Fire Authority gave a vote of thanks to Councillors Blundell and Roberts, who left the Fire Authority in May 2013. A vote of thanks was also given to Mr Tebbutt, who stood down as Independent Person on the expiration of his term of office on 30 June 2013. Prior to his appointment as Independent Person, Mr Tebbutt had also been a non-elected Independent Member and Chair of the Fire Authority's Standards Committee.

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

Resolved that a letter of thanks be sent from the Chair of the Authority to Councillors Blundell and Roberts and Mr Tebbutt.

The Chair then welcomed Councillor Picken back to the Fire Authority and welcomed Councillor Cherrington, who has joined the Fire Authority from Shropshire Council, to his first Authority meeting.

3b **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Hurst-Knight and from the Treasurer, Mr Walton. Councillor Carter had advised that he may arrive late and subsequently joined the meeting at 3.35 pm.

4 **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.

5 **Public Questions**

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

6 **Minutes**

Members received the non-exempt minutes of the Fire Authority meeting, held on 24 April 2013.

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

Resolved that the non-exempt minutes of the Fire Authority meeting, held on 24 April 2013, be agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record

7 **Audit and Performance Management Committee Minutes**

Members received the minutes of the Audit and Performance Management Committee meeting, held on 6 June 2013.

The Chair of the Authority referred to item 9 on page 5 of the minutes and advised Members that the Chief Fire Officer had written to all Shropshire MPs asking them to lobby the Chancellor in an attempt to gain some recognition of the specific financial pressures facing the Fire Authority.

Councillor Barrow referred to item 15a on page 7 of the minutes and asked for clarification on why target 1b – the first fire engine will arrive with a minimum competent crew on 100% of occasions – had not been achieved. The Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Corporate Services) (ACFO CS) explained that the issues which had caused the failure involved a very small number of people and were being actively addressed. The Occupational Health provider has had a detailed look at their administration systems which has led to their processes being amended.

Councillor Barrow then asked if firefighters left the service because they had not attained the required fitness standards. The ACFO CS explained that this was not the case and that firefighters normally leave the Service because of ongoing physical and / or medical problems.

Resolved that the minutes of the Audit and Performance Management Committee meeting, held on 6 June 2013, be noted

8 **Constitutional Issues**

8a **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.

The Corporate Support Manager (CSM) clarified that the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Fire Authority and the Chair of the Human Resources Committee sit on the Pensions Panel.

The general consensus of the meeting was that the current arrangement of the Pensions Panel not being part of the political balance requirement should be maintained.

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

Resolved unanimously that the Fire Authority agree the Committee composition and allocation of seats to political groups, as proposed in the Appendix to the report, including that the Authority's Pension Panel should not be subject to the political balance requirements

8b 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.

An amended version of Appendix A to the report, which showed the Labour, Liberal Democrat and Independent nominations to Committees was tabled to the meeting (a copy of which is attached to the signed minutes).

It was proposed by Councillor Minnery 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 Jones and it was

Resolved that the Fire Authority:

- a) Agree the appointment of Members to serve on committees, as set out in the tabled version of Appendix A to the report;
- b) Delegate authority to the Monitoring Officer to approve changes to committee membership, proposed during the year by the appropriate Political Group Leader;
- c) Appoint Councillor West as its representative on the Local Government Association Fire Services Commission; and
- d) Agree the proposed amendments to the constitution of its various committees, as set out in Appendix B to the report

8c Review of Member Role Descriptions

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

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

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

8d 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.

The CSM talked through the proposed amendments as set out in the report and advised that these were mainly related to legislative changes or for clarification purposes.

The CSM further explained that the proposed changes to the Scheme of Delegation to Officers as set out on page 2 of the report were being made to cover the current situation where the Service is without a Deputy Chief Fire Officer and that these amendments are being made subject to the Brigade Managers' Employment Panel recommendations to the Fire Authority regarding the Brigade Manager posts.

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 Adams, seconded by Councillor Price, 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

9 Statement of Accounts 2012/13

This report set out the key revenue issues, which have arisen from work on the Statement of Accounts 2012/13, and sought approval for use of the General Fund balance in 2013/14.

The Head of Finance (HoF) presented the report and talked through the factors that had led to the balance of the General Fund at the end of 2012/13 being £1.36m. It is anticipated that this balance can be used to enable further reductions to be made to the revenue budget in future years and officers will present recommendations for its use to the September 2013 meeting of the Fire Authority.

The HoF also talked through the implications of the Spending Review 2014 as exemplified in the appendix to the report. The initial announcement indicated a further 7.5 % reduction to fire and rescue authorities, however this is now likely to be closer to a further 10% reduction when the monies that have been top-sliced from the Control Grant are taken into consideration. This equates to an approximate deficit of £1.9m for this Authority in 2019/20.

Councillor Barrow asked that a breakdown of the £147,000 of slipped expenditure be brought to the next Strategy and Resources Committee meeting for consideration. Councillor Mellings asked that the overspends referred to on page 3 of the report also be considered by the Strategy and Resources Committee. The HoF undertook to provide this information to the next Strategy and Resources Committee meeting.

Councillor Minnery stated that the recommendations for the use of the General Fund balance should be considered by the Strategy and Resources Committee before being brought to the Fire Authority and requested that a meeting of the Strategy and Resources Committee be convened in early September.

Councillor Minnery then proposed the recommendations with the addition to recommendation c) of '... following consideration by the Strategy and Resources Committee in early September. This was seconded by Councillor Cherrington, and it was

Resolved unanimously that the Fire Authority:

- a) Approve the addition of £147,000 to 2013/14 revenue budgets, for expenditure that has slipped from 2012/13;
- b) Approve the use of a Service Delivery Reserve, to fund initiatives in service delivery and prevention; and
- c) Task officers to review the revenue budget and present recommendations for the use of the General Fund balance in 2013/14, to the September meeting of the Fire Authority, following consideration by the Strategy and Resources Committee in early September.

10 Strategic Planning Process Timetable 2014/15

This report outlined how the Service will continue to align service, financial and improvement planning, the result of which will culminate in the 2014/15 budget, Medium Term Corporate Plan 2014/19 and the publication, in April 2014, of the 2014/15 annual, one-year Service Plan.

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

Resolved that the Fire Authority note the contents of the report and agree the timetable set out in the appendix to the report.

11 2020 Strategic Planning Process Update

This report updated Members on the Strategic Planning Process, which is being used to develop the Fire Authority's Strategic Integrated Risk Management Plan.

The Head of Operational Planning (HoOP) reported that Phase 1 of the Process which is the Departmental Impact Assessments is now underway. This will be completed by 1 September 2013 with the outcomes being presented to the Fire Authority for consideration at its meeting on 25 September 2013.

Councillor Carter arrived at this point (3.35 pm)

Resolved that the Fire Authority note the new timetable for the Strategic Planning Process and the progress made to date against that process.

12 Service Plan 2013/13 (Internet / Web Based)

This report presented the proposed internet / web based Service Plan for 2013/14.

Councillor Bennett asked if monitoring data was available for public use of the Service's website. The Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Service Delivery) (ACFO SD) confirmed that usage data is available and the Fire Authority agreed that this information be considered by the Audit and Performance Management Committee on a yearly basis.

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

Resolved that the Fire Authority approve the proposed Service Plan 2013/14.

13 Facing the Future: findings from the review of efficiencies and operations in fire and rescue authorities in England

In December 2012, Sir Ken Knight, the outgoing Fire and Rescue Adviser, was commissioned by the Fire Minister to undertake a review into efficiencies and operational improvements in the delivery of fire and rescue services in England. This report provided an overview of each of the five chapters of the review report produced by Sir Ken and, where appropriate, provided commentary in respect of the position of Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS).

The Chief Fire Officer (CFO) presented the report and explained that its purpose was to distil the main points that are applicable to Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service, from Sir Ken Knight's report. The report does reflect well on this Service and it is a useful document for the Service to check against. The CFO also explained that the Facing the Future report was an internal report of the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and, as such, does not contain any recommendations.

Following the report's publication, the Brigade Managers took part in a teleconference on 23 May 2013 with the Fire Minister, Sir Ken Knight and English Fire and Rescue Services. The key messages from this teleconference are set out in the appendix to the report but the Minister was keen to emphasise that the Government are not seeking to privatise fire and rescue services.

Councillor Adams commented that it is clear that SFRS will have significant deficits in the last years of this decade and asked what help the Service will receive from Government to address these deficits. The CFO explained that there appear to be no real advantages from the report. There are examples of good practice but there is no mention of any tangible assistance for fire and rescue services.

Councillor Price commented that he had been present when Sir Ken Knight met with SFRS. This had appeared to be a good meeting which had inspired debate but the report itself was disappointing in many ways. SFRS is already operating at its minimum and cannot reduce its costs further.

Councillor Carter referred to the changes that are occurring within the Ministry of Defence and the increased number of part-time soldiers and suggested that a similar move towards Retained Duty System (RDS) firefighters in all parts of the country, including London, may mean that the pot of money is split differently with more resources possibly being directed towards rural fire and rescue services.

The CFO responded that the Spending Review announced that there would be money available to improve efficiencies but SFRS would be excluded from accessing this because of the efficiencies that the Service is already achieving. Councillor Carter agreed with this comment and stated that the Fire Authority needs to look at what can be done to protect the service that it already provides and how this existing service can be recognised. The Chair reported that the Authority is trying to arrange a meeting with the Fire Minister to seek recognition of what the Service is doing and that this is the correct way forward.

Councillor Thompson commented that the future cuts are frightening both in terms of jobs and potential fires and that the Service needs to lobby local MPs. The Chair confirmed that the Service keeps in close contact with the local MPs and that the Fire Minister copies the local MPs into any correspondence that he has with the Chair of the Authority.

Councillor Jones commented that the report seems to focus on numbers of incidents but does not mention risk.

Resolved that the Fire Authority note the contents of the report

14 Horizon Scanning: Mergers / Amalgamation of Emergency Services

This report acted as a 'horizon scanning' document to raise awareness of the current debate concerning mergers / amalgamation of the nation's emergency services.

Councillor Bennett commented that in his view these proposals were disappointing, with what appeared to be a top down rather than a bottom up approach. Referring to the All-Party Parliamentary Group report recommendations as set out on page 2 of the report, Councillor Bennett commented that recommendations 4 and 7 appeared to contradict each other.

The ACFO SD explained that a National Operations and Co-ordination (NOC) Centre as referred to in recommendation 4 already exists within each blue light service and that the NOCs report directly to the COBRA Committee. With regard to recommendation 7, Local Resilience Forums (LRFs) are a statutory requirement but they do not have any statutory powers.

Councillor Hartin commented that these recommendations seem to represent a move in the opposite direction to localism. Councillor Hartin also noted that Mark Pritchard MP for the Wrekin was an author of the All-Party Parliamentary Group report. The Chair reported that he and the Chief Fire Officer would be requesting an urgent meeting with Mr Pritchard to discuss the report and its implications.

Councillor Adams asked for further explanation of recommendation 7 which refers to LRFs having the power to direct members and funding taken from savings. The ACFO SD said that he could not provide any further clarification on this issue at present.

Councillor Minnery referred back to report 13 on the agenda for this meeting and commented that he was taking comfort from the Fire Minister's comment that 'he is particularly 'wary' of a single fire and rescue service model as it goes against localism and would incur large implementation costs.

Councillor Carter commented that public buy-in with regard to Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) is still unproven and that he believes that there are opportunities for joint working on a local basis

Resolved that the Fire Authority note the contents of the report

15 Partnership Working

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

The Chair welcomed the report and the more focussed approach that is being taken to partnership working within the Service.

Councillor Minnery referred to section 7 of the report which details the work that has been undertaken by SFRS in Romania and formally moved that all involved be commended for their work and it be noted that the Fire Authority appreciate the efforts of all those involved.

Resolved that the Fire Authority note the contents of the report

16 Corporate Risk Management Summary

This report informed Members about the corporate level risk management work that has been undertaken during the previous twelve months.

Councillor Jones, Risk Management and Audit Champion, reported that the corporate risk training session in November 2012 had been very useful and the resulting review of the corporate risk management process had led to the development of a far better system for managing corporate risk.

Resolved that the Fire Authority note the contents of the report

17 Local Government Act 1972

It was proposed by Councillor Minnery, seconded by Councillor Barrow 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.

18 Exempt Minutes (Paragraphs 1, 2 and 3)

Members received the exempt minutes of the Fire Authority meeting, held on 24 April 2013.

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

Resolved that the exempt minutes of the Fire Authority meeting, held on 24 April 2013, be agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record

At this point the meeting reverted to open session

19 Election of Chairs and Appointment of Vice-Chairs to Committees

Members of Committees were asked to elect a Chair and appoint a Vice-Chair, to hold office until the Fire Authority's Annual Meeting in July 2014.

Strategy and Resources Committee

Chair

It was proposed by Councillor Thompson and seconded by Councillor Minnery that Councillor Carter be elected Chair of the Strategy and Resources Committee.

There being no other nominations, Councillor Carter was duly elected Chair

Vice Chair

It was proposed by Councillor Barrow and seconded by Councillor Carter that Councillor Minnery be appointed Vice-Chair of the Strategy and Resources Committee.

There being no other nominations, Councillor Minnery was duly appointed Vice-Chair.

Strategic Risk and Planning Working Group

It was noted that the Chair of the Strategy and Resources Committee normally sits on the Strategic Risk and Planning (STRaP) Working Group however Councillor Carter is not currently a member of the STRaP Working Group.

Councillor Minnery therefore proposed that Councillor Carter sit on the STRaP Working Group in addition to its existing 7 members. The CSM reminded the Authority that members of the STRaP Working Group receive a Special Responsibility Allowance of £1,000 per annum. Councillor Hartin seconded Councillor Minnery's proposal and it was

Resolved unanimously that Councillor Carter should sit on the STRaP Working Group

Chair

It was proposed by Councillor Minnery and seconded by Councillor West that Councillor Hartin be elected Chair of the Strategic Risk and Planning Working Group.

There being no other nominations, Councillor Hartin was duly elected Chair

Vice Chair

It was proposed by Councillor Minnery and seconded by Councillor West that Councillor Price be appointed Vice-Chair of the Strategic Risk and Planning Working Group.

There being no other nominations, Councillor Price was duly appointed Vice-Chair.

Audit and Performance Management Committee

Chair

It was proposed by Councillor Mellings and seconded by Councillor Bennett that Councillor Jones be elected Chair of the Audit and Performance Management Committee.

There being no other nominations, Councillor Jones was duly elected Chair

Vice Chair

It was proposed by Councillor Jones and seconded by Councillor Bennett that Councillor Mellings be appointed Vice-Chair of the Audit and Performance Management Committee.

There being no other nominations, Councillor Mellings was duly appointed Vice-Chair.

Human Resources Committee

Chair

It was proposed by Councillor Barrow and seconded by Councillor Price that Councillor Adams be elected Chair of the Human Resources Committee.

There being no other nominations, Councillor Adams was duly elected Chair

Vice Chair

It was proposed by Councillor Cherrington and seconded by Councillor Price that Councillor Kiernan be appointed Vice-Chair of the Human Resources Committee.

There being no other nominations, Councillor Kiernan was duly appointed Vice-Chair.

Standards Committee

Chair

It was proposed by Councillor Mellings and seconded by Councillor Carter that Councillor Bennett be elected Chair of the Standards Committee.

There being no other nominations, Councillor Bennett was duly elected Chair

Vice Chair

It was proposed by Councillor Bennett and seconded by Councillor Jones that Councillor Mellings be appointed Vice-Chair of the Standards Committee.

There being no other nominations, Councillor Mellings was duly appointed Vice-Chair.

Brigade Managers' Employment Panel

Chair

It was proposed by Councillor Minnery and seconded by Councillor Hartin that Councillor West be elected Chair of the Brigade Managers' Employment Panel.

There being no other nominations, Councillor West was duly elected Chair

Vice Chair

It was proposed by Councillor Minnery and seconded by Councillor Hartin that Councillor Barrow be appointed Vice-Chair of the Brigade Managers' Employment Panel.

There being no other nominations, Councillor Barrow was duly appointed Vice-Chair.

Pensions Panel

The members of the Pensions Panel agreed that the Chair of the Pensions Panel would be elected on an ad-hoc basis.

The meeting closed at 4.28 pm.

Chair.....

Date.....