

**Non-exempt Minutes of the Meeting of
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority
held at 2.00 pm on Wednesday, 27 April 2011,
at the Business Development Centre, Telford.**

Present

Members

Councillors Mrs Barrow, Bennett, Mrs Blundell, Hartin, Hurst-Knight, Dr Jones, Kiernan, Mason, Mellings, Picken, Price and West (Chair)

Officers

Chief Fire Officer, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Assistant Chief Fire Officer (CPO), Treasurer, Corporate Services Manager, Management Support Officer and Clerk to the Fire Authority.

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Adams, Dixon, Minnery and Roberts. Councillor Eade did not attend the meeting.

2 Declarations of Interest

The Chair reminded Members that they should declare any personal and/or prejudicial interests at this point and that they should leave the meeting room before any item, in which they have a prejudicial interest, was discussed.

There was an en bloc declaration of personal interest at this point from all members of Shropshire Council present at the meeting i.e. Councillors Mrs Barrow, Bennett, Hartin, Hurst-Knight, Dr Jones, Mellings, Price and West. The declaration related to Agenda Items 12 and 15a as these items concerned the placement of a contract with Shropshire Council.

3 Minutes

Members received the minutes of the Fire Authority meeting, held on 9 February 2011.

Councillor Kiernan thanked the Fire Authority for the best wishes that had been sent to him whilst he was recovering from his back operation.

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

Resolved that the minutes of the Fire Authority meeting, held on 9 February 2011, 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 Audit and Performance Management Committee

Members received the minutes of the Audit and Performance Management Committee meeting, held on 10 March 2011, and considered the recommendation at item 10, in the minutes, that the Fire Authority adopt the Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy, attached marked 5a.

It was proposed by Councillor Jones, seconded by Councillor Mellings, and

Resolved that the minutes of the Audit and Performance Management Committee meeting, held on 10 March 2011, be noted and that the Fire Authority adopt the Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy as recommended at item 10 of the minutes.

6 Strategy and Resources Committee Minutes

Members received the minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting, held on 17 March 2011, and considered the recommendations at items 7, 8 and 9 of the minutes.

Resolved that the minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting, held on 17 March 2011, be noted

Item 7 – Service Plan and Public Value Performance Measures

The latest version of the Service Plan, which was populated with the targets, was tabled to the meeting. (Copy to be attached to the signed minutes)

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

Resolved that the Fire Authority:

- a) Agree the proposed targets, as set out in the report; and
- b) Approve the contents and layout of the draft Service Plan 2011/12.

Item 8 – Financial Issues Update

It was proposed by Councillor Hartin, seconded by Councillor Hurst-Knight, and

Resolved that the Fire Authority:

- a) Note the position of the revenue budget;
- b) Approve an additional capital vote of £40,000 for the hybrid fire appliance in the 2010/11 capital programme;
- c) Note the financial issues of the St Michael's Street scheme;

- d) Note the current position on reserves and balances, and other balance sheet items; and
- e) subject to consideration of item 9 in the Strategy and Resources minutes
- e) Approve an Information and Communications Technology Improvements reserve.

Item 9 – Information and Communication Technology

It was proposed by Councillor Hartin, seconded by Councillor Hurst-Knight, and

Resolved that the Fire Authority agree that officers move some £300,000 from other related budgets into a new Information and Communications Technology Improvements reserve budget, on closing the 2010/11 accounts.

7 Strategy and Resources Committee Annual Report

This report presented the Annual Report of the Strategy and Resources Committee for the period March 2010 to March 2011.

Resolved that the Fire Authority note the report.

8 Human Resources Committee

Members received the minutes of the Human Resources Committee meeting, held on 7 April 2011, and considered the recommendations at items 6a, 7 and 8 of the minutes. These are set out below in the order, in which they were considered by the Committee

Item 8 – Proposed Delegation to Officers of consideration of Outside Employment Applications

It was proposed by Councillor Barrow, seconded by Councillor Hurst-Knight, and

Resolved that the Fire Authority agree that the Terms of Reference of the Committee be changed in order that consideration of Outside Employment applications is delegated to officers.

Item 6a – Human Resources Committee Terms of Reference

Councillor Hartin commented that since the meeting of the Human Resources Committee, members had questioned the rationale behind the proposal for the Human Resources Committee to receive minutes from the Pensions Panel and it was felt that this was not appropriate.

Councillor Price declared a personal interest at this point (2.10 pm) as the item related to the Firefighters Pension Scheme, of which he is a member.

Councillor Hartin therefore proposed the following:

That all decisions of the Pensions Panel be reported to the Fire Authority, and where there are financial consequences for the Authority, also included in the monitoring report on financial issues to the Strategy and Resources Committee, to enable that Committee to consider any implications for resources. This was seconded by Councillor Hurst-Knight and it was

Resolved that the following changes be made to the Terms of Reference of the Committee

Delete:

To consider and determine applications by uniformed personnel for permission to undertake outside employment, and to set conditions under which approval is granted

To review and amend, where required, the processes for dealing with applications for outside employment

Changes will be made to the relevant Committee Terms of Reference to reflect the process set out for receiving the decisions of the Pensions Panel.

Item 7 – Role Descriptions for Committee Chair and Vice-Chair

It was proposed by Councillor Hartin, seconded by Councillor Hurst-Knight, and

Resolved that the following be deleted from the Role Descriptions for the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Human Resources Committee

To consider, and grant provisional approval to (or otherwise), Applications for Outside Employment, together with the Chair / Vice-Chair of the Human Resources Committee.

Councillor Mason referred to the Member Training Schedule which was mentioned in the Human Resources Committee minutes and which had been distributed to members prior to the start of the meeting. Councillor Mason commented that he would like to see some training provided to new Members before they attended their first meeting, including Committee meetings. The Corporate Services Manager (CSM) explained that the training sessions are scheduled to tie in with Fire Authority meetings where possible.

Councillor Picken requested that New Dimensions be covered in training. Councillor Bennett asked what New Dimensions was. The Chief Fire Officer (CFO) explained that New Dimensions is an American phrase which came into use after 9/11. It concerns dealing with acts of terrorism etc but the terminology is currently changing.

9 Fire Authority Work Plan 2011-12

This report reviewed progress against the Fire Authority's 2010 / 2011 Work Plan and put forward a 2011 / 2012 Work Plan for consideration and approval by Members

The CSM explained to the Fire Authority that agreeing the Work Plan as set out in the report does not fetter their discretion to alter or vary it as needed.

Councillor Blundell referred to item 4 on the 2011 / 2012 Work Plan and asked that the wording be amended to 'Agree induction training for all Members' rather than 'Agree induction training for new Members'.

Councillor Hurst-Knight referred to item 46 on the 2011 / 2012 Work Plan which is 'Receive regular update reports on accommodation schemes' and commented that he would like brief updates at each meeting to keep members up to speed with developments. The CFO said that this could be done but only the Shrewsbury and Minsterley projects were currently outstanding.

It was proposed by Councillor Jones, seconded by Councillor Mellings, and

Resolved that the Fire Authority

- a) Note progress made against the Fire Authority 2010 / 2011 Work Plan (attached at Appendix A to the report); and
- b) Approve the 2011 / 2012 Work Plan (attached at Appendix B to the report), subject to item 4 on the plan being amended to read 'Agree induction training for all Members'.

10 Streamlining of Fire Authority Committees

This report proposed various changes to the Fire Authority's committee structure in order to make it more efficient.

Councillor Hartin commented that a tidy-up exercise with regard to the committee structure had been long overdue and that he felt that the shorter meeting agendas were much better. Councillor Jones echoed these sentiments.

Councillor Bennett referred to the Standards Committee and suggested that there may be opportunities for a shared regime when the Localism Bill becomes law. The CSM explained that prior to the announcement of the Localism Bill, joint working with Telford & Wrekin Council was being explored but this had been put on hold until the outcome of the Localism Bill was known. The Clerk commented that there was value in a shared regime but this would be dependent on the arrangements put in place by individual authorities.

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

Resolved that the Fire Authority agree to

- a) Merge the Appeals Committee with the Human Resources Committee;
- b) Dissolve the Urgency Committee; and
- c) Dissolve the Budget Working Group.

11 Approval of the Statement of Accounts 2010/11

This report set out changes in the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2011 as they affect the timing of the approval of the Statement of Accounts for the last financial year, reviewed the options for the Fire Authority and asked for approval for a way forward.

Councillor Hurst-Knight commented that option 4c as set out in the report had benefits financially and timewise and therefore proposed this option. Councillor Mellings seconded the proposal with the proviso that the Final Accounts go to the Audit and Performance Management Committee if possible and that this be accommodated within the meeting schedule if needed. Councillors Jones and Hartin both supported this proposal as being the best way forward.

It was therefore proposed by Councillor Hurst-Knight, seconded by Councillor Mellings, and

Resolved that the Fire Authority retain approval of the Statement of Accounts, rather than delegate to the Audit and Performance Management Committee and, that the Fire Authority approve option 4c as set out in the report.

At this point the Chair proposed that the order of the agenda be varied in order to allow item 12 to be considered in conjunction with exempt item 15a as the two were directly related. This would mean that items 13 and 14 would be considered next, then item 12, after which the meeting would move into exempt session to consider items 15a and 16 before returning to open session to consider the recommendations in report 12. The proposal was seconded by Councillor Price and agreed unanimously by the meeting.

13 Approved Mileage Allowance Payments

This report advised of the change made to the Government's 'approved mileage allowance payments' in the recent budget and asked the Fire Authority whether it wished formally to link the travel allowance payable to Members to such payments.

Councillor Hartin commented that this proposal would bring the Fire Authority in line with other local authorities and with the payments made to staff.

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

Resolved unanimously that the Fire Authority

- a) Note the change made to the Government's 'approved mileage allowance payments' in the recent budget;
- b) Agree to formally link the travel allowance payable to Members to such payments; and
- c) Agree to backdate application of the new rate to 1 April 2011.

14 Update on Memorandum of Understanding with Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service

Following earlier Fire Authority approval for the Service to enter into formal collaboration with Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Authority / Service (H&WFRS) it can be reported that significant progress has been made to date with, as a time-bound priority, a recently produced Outline Business Case (OBC) prepared by the two organisations. The OBC was prepared in respect of a joint application for central government funding to support the implementation of the proposed 'shared' control room infrastructure between the two Services. The OBC will now be supplemented by a formal overarching Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) setting out the full scope and expected outcomes of the collaboration, for consideration and agreement by each respective Fire Authority in June / July 2011.

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO) apologised to the Fire Authority for not bringing the MoU to the meeting for discussion. He further informed the Fire Authority that the OBC set out a request for £600,000 funding. The CFO further explained that the OBC set out why two Control Rooms were needed to secure resilience and it is hoped that some Government funding will be available in respect of this.

The ACFO reported that H&WFRS had purchased the same Command and Control system as the one that this Service is currently using. Councillor Price asked if H&WFRS's system would be ready before Shropshire's. The ACFO explained that Shropshire will be ready in June 2011 with Hereford and Worcester's being ready in January 2012. The 'lift and shift' of the Command and Control system relates to the Airwave system. Councillor Price asked how Control Room functionality will be maintained during the move. The ACFO explained that in the immediate term, fallback would be to Staffordshire then to the back-up Control Room at Telford Central. It is anticipated that the move will take one week at best, two at worst with planning being based on a two week window.

The Chair thanked the ACFO for all the work that he had undertaken in relation to this issue.

Resolved that the Fire Authority note the verbal update given.

12 Information and Communications Technology Strategy

This report set out proposals and recommendations to enter into negotiations with Shropshire Council to review options to enter into a shared services arrangement to secure improvements to the Service's Information and Communications Technology (ICT) infrastructure. The shared services arrangement, if approved at a later date, will make effective use of the proposed ICT reserve to support migration to the Council's new wide area network to underpin the Services ICT Strategy for the next 3 to 5 year period.

The issues discussed are complex. The report endeavoured, therefore, to act as a summary overview, with more detailed information available on request.

Councillor Hartin asked if the Service had been able to access any of the legacy Communities and Local Government assets following the termination of the Regional Control Centre project. The ACFO explained that a list of equipment had been circulated and that the Service had been successful in securing Mobile Data Terminals (MDTs) from the assets available.

Councillor Bennett then asked for clarification of the following points
This is a very important piece of work in the short / medium term, how will member responsibility be handled?
What are the staffing implications of the improvements set out in the report;
and
Have there been any discussion with Shropshire Council to ensure greatest synergy is achieved.

The CFO explained that with regard to the first issue, delivery of the improvements outlined is very complicated with support being provided by the Shropshire Council ICT team. Progress will be reported to the Fire Authority and to Chair's Briefing on an exception basis. Members will be monitoring both the inputs and outputs.

The ACFO then explained that with regard to staffing, there are currently four members of staff in the ICT department. It is envisaged that some work will be passed to staff at Shropshire Council which may give potential to reduce staff in line with the Public Value findings. He also explained that Shropshire Council had approached the Service regarding the use of drill towers for their proposed improvements to broadband services across the county.

Councillor Bennett then asked if there were any implications for Telford & Wrekin Council with regard to the issues set out in the report. The CFO explained that the proposals include Telford & Wrekin Council and will aid in bringing together ICT over the Shropshire area.

The CFO explained that more detail will be provided at the next Fire Authority meeting and at future meetings with the business case to follow at a later date.

15 Local Government Act 1972

It was proposed by Councillor Picken, seconded by Councillor Mellings, and

Resolved that, under the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded 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 12A to the Act, by virtue of paragraphs 1, 2 and 5.

15a Information and Communications Technology Strategy – Procurement Implications (Paragraph 5)

This report was supplementary to agenda item 12 and set out observations concerning the procurement route adopted by Shropshire Council.

Members therefore considered the observations set out in this report prior to arriving at a decision in respect of the recommendations set out in agenda item 12.

16 Human Resources Committee (Paragraphs 1 and 2)

Members received the exempt minutes of the Human Resources Committee meeting, held on 7 April 2011.

Resolved that the exempt minutes of the Human Resources Committee meeting, held on 7 April 2011, be noted.

The meeting reverted to open session at this point. (3.00 pm).

12 Information and Communications Technology Strategy

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

Resolved unanimously that in order to address ICT deficiencies, and to optimise opportunities to do so as an integral element of the Shrewsbury Fire Station / Headquarters refurbishment programme, the Fire Authority:

- a) Authorise officers to enter into formal discussions with Shropshire Council for the purposes of:
 - i developing a detailed business case, which sets out the benefits, full costs and budget implications, arising through the potential option to migrate to the Council's ICT network; and
 - ii ensure the business case adheres to Government shared services guidance¹
- b) Note the observations set out at exempt agenda item 15a;
- c) Request that officers present the business case to the next meeting of the Fire Authority on 15 June 2011 for full consideration;
- d) Agree a special exemption, under D1 of the Fire Authority's Standing Orders relating to Contracts, from the requirement to obtain tenders on the grounds of urgency (details of which are set out at section 6 of the report);
- e) Authorise the placement of an order to Shropshire Council for the provision of a dedicated 1Gb circuit between Shirehall and the new Headquarters building; and

¹ <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/rethinkingservicedelivery3>

- f) Approve, as a one-off payment, the use of £31k set-up costs from monies to be allocated to the ICT reserve to support recommendation e) above, with additional revenue costs of £8k to be met from existing ICT budgets.

The meeting closed at 3.00 pm.

Chair.....

Date.....