

**Minutes of the Meeting of
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority
held on Wednesday, 25 April 2012 at 3.00 pm,
at Service Headquarters, Shrewsbury**

Present

Members

Councillors Adams, Mrs Barrow, Bennett, Mrs Blundell, Hartin, Hurst-Knight, Dr Jones, Kiernan, Mellings, Minnery (Vice-Chair), Murray, Picken, Price, Roberts, Thompson and West (Chair)

Officers

Chief Fire Officer, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Treasurer, Head of Finance, Performance and Risk Manager (for item 9), Monitoring Officer, Corporate Services Manager and Executive Support Officer

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Carter.

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 were no declarations of interest.

3 Minutes

Members received the non-exempt minutes of the Fire Authority meeting, held on 13 February 2012.

Councillor Kiernan thanked the Fire Authority for their kind thoughts during his recovery from surgery.

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

Resolved that the non-exempt minutes of the Fire Authority meeting, held on 13 February 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 Audit and Performance Management Committee

Members received the minutes of the Audit and Performance Management Committee meeting, held on 1 March 2012, and considered the recommendations at items 8, 12 and 13.

The Head of Finance (HoF) reported that the audit contract for the West Midlands region has been awarded to Grant Thornton and that the Treasurer and the HoF will be attending a meeting on 30 April 2012 to meet representatives from the company. The 2012/13 audit fee will be approximately £38,000, which is a significant reduction from the 2011/12 audit fee of approximately £63,000.

Resolved that the minutes of the Audit and Performance Management Committee meeting, held on 1 March 2012, be noted and that the recommendations at item 8, 12 and 13 of the minutes, as given below, be agreed

Item 8 – Internal Audit Programme 2012/13 to 2015/16

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

Resolved that the Fire Authority:

- a) Note the extension of the Internal Audit contract with Shropshire Council as the provider;
- b) Approve the programme of audits for 2012/13, as set out in the appendix to the report; and
- c) Note the proposed programme of audits for years 2013/14 to 2015/16

Members also noted the decision made by the Chief Fire Officer to purchase internal audit services from Shropshire Council following consultation with the Treasurer, Monitoring Officer and Chair of the Fire Authority. The decision was made on the basis set out in section 3 (page 2) of paper 5a on the agenda for this meeting.

Item 12 – Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Strategy

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

Resolved that the Fire Authority agree the Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Strategy as set out in paper 5b

Item 13 – Whistleblowing Policy

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

Resolved that the Fire Authority agree the Whistleblowing Policy, as set out in paper 5c

6 Strategy and Resources Committee

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

Councillor Dr Jones referred to item 7 on page 3 of the minutes and asked for an explanation of the rationale behind the change to indicator 3a – fire related deaths and serious injuries in the community be reduced to less than 30 during 2012/13 – where the target had been increased from 30 to 35. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer (DCFO) responded that the Service had combined the targets for serious injuries and deaths in order to add gravity to the impact that fires have on communities and individuals.

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

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

Item 8 - Financial Performance to February 2012

Resolved that the Fire Authority:

- a) Note the position of the revenue budget;
- b) Approve virements to the revenue budget where requested;
- c) Note performance against prudential indicators to date in 2011/12; and
- d) Note performance in Treasury Management to date in 2011/12

7 Strategy and Resources Committee Annual Report

This report presented the Annual Report of the Strategy and Resources Committee for the period March 2011 to March 2012.

Resolved that the Fire Authority note the Annual Report of the Strategy and Resources Committee

8 Fire Authority Work Plan 2012 / 13

This report reviewed progress against the Fire Authority's 2011 / 2012 Work Plan and put forward a 2012 / 2013 Work Plan for consideration and approval by Members.

Councillor Hurst-Knight asked if a report on the pilot scheme that was being undertaken with Landlord Services in south Shropshire would be brought to the Fire Authority. The DCFO explained that this was the pilot of a data sharing protocol with Shropshire Council and that he was happy to provide a formal analysis of the scheme and its impacts to a future meeting of the Fire Authority.

Councillor Bennett referred to item 48 – Ensure provision of appropriate training for all Members - on the 2012 / 2013 Work Plan and suggested that when the Independent Person for Standards is appointed, an introduction meeting be held between that Person and the Fire Authority. The Monitoring Officer undertook to do this once the appointment had been made. Councillor Bennett also suggested that an induction programme be established for new Members in preparation for any changes that may occur following the constituent authorities' annual meetings in May. The Corporate Services Manager responded that she would ensure that this was put in place.

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

Resolved that the Fire Authority:

- a) Note progress made against the Fire Authority 2011 / 2012 Work Plan, as detailed at paragraph 4 of the report; and
- b) Approve the 2012 / 2013 Work Plan (attached at the appendix to the report), without amendment

9 Consolidated 2020 Strategic Planning Process

This report set out summary proposals for the consolidation of the Fire Authority's existing planning processes, enabling the creation of a '2020 Strategy'. The 2020 Strategy would represent a long-term strategic Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) for the communities of Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin. The proposals set out in the report have been discussed and agreed in principle by the Authority's Strategic Risk and Planning (STRaP) Working Group.

The Performance and Risk Manager informed the meeting that the Service is looking to work with an external provider to facilitate the process outlined in the report and is currently in talks with the University of Brighton regarding this.

Councillor Thompson left the meeting room at this point (3.20 pm).

Councillor Bennett commented that he had found the report difficult to comprehend, as it contained many acronyms and discussion of academic theory, and he asked if a simplified explanation could be provided to Members. The Chief Fire Officer (CFO) acknowledged that scenario planning is extremely complex, which was why the Service was hoping to work with the University of Brighton. The CFO also reassured Members that they will be provided with a full explanation of the process before it begins.

Councillor Thompson returned to the meeting room at this point (3.25 pm).

Councillor Adams commented that the process appears complicated and bureaucratic and queried the resources that would be needed to complete it. The CFO responded that officers want to make sure that the scenarios to be considered are as correct as possible even if this does require complex planning. It is preferable to do this than to deal with the aftermath of not planning for possible scenarios.

Councillor Dr Jones commented that members of the Strategic Risk and Planning (STRaP) Working Group had had the advantage of receiving a presentation on this topic before it was considered at the STRaP meeting. She also commented that there was sound thinking behind the process set out in the report. Councillor Mrs Barrow echoed Councillor Jones' comments and stated that the Authority has no option but to do what is set out in the report.

Councillor Roberts asked if there were any cost implications involved in working with the University of Brighton. The CFO replied that the work would be carried out at nil cost to the Authority

Committee Clerk's Note

It has since been decided that all of the scenario planning work will be carried out in-house by officers of the Service.

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

Resolved that the Fire Authority:

- a) Approve the proposals set out within this report; and
- b) Instruct officers, working in conjunction with members of STRaP, to prepare and bring to the Fire Authority a formal programme brief for the implementation of a consolidated 2020 strategic planning process

10 Use of Balances and Reserves to Secure Resilience and Efficiency

This report made recommendation to Members about the use of reserves and opportunity savings to secure resilience and efficiency for the Authority.

The HoF informed the Fire Authority that the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) has awarded the Authority an additional £900,000 of capital grant for 2012/13.

The HoF advised that the bottom row of the table on page 4 of the report had been inserted in error at that point, as the item is instead included in the table at the top of page 5 of the report.

Councillor Minnery commented that the proposals laid out in the report made absolute sense. Councillor Mrs Barrow seconded this opinion.

The HoF referred to the table at the bottom of page 7 of the report, which sets out the predicted surplus and/or deficit for the next five years, and explained that the figures in this table are based on the assumption that the precept policy will remain as agreed in February 2012. Any changes to the precept amount will have a knock-on effect on the figures in this table.

Councillor Mellings asked if the additional £900,000 of capital grant had to be used for a specific purpose and if it was correct that the table at the bottom of page 7 showed a deficit in two years rather than one. The HoF explained that DCLG has stipulated that the additional grant must be used for capital grant. It will, therefore, be put towards the Headquarters project, which will allow the Authority greater flexibility. The HoF also explained that the table at the bottom of page 7 is correct in showing a deficit in years 2014/14 and 2015/16. This is as a result of the purchase of appliances but is not a great cause for concern, as the savings from this will take effect in 2016/17 and will help to smooth out deficits in following years.

The Chair then explained that the meeting needed to go into closed session in order to consider the appendix to the report. The CFO explained that the Fire Authority was not trying to hide anything by going into closed session but that it was necessary, as the document concerned contains sensitive commercial information.

There was a discussion between the Monitoring Officer and the Vice-Chair of the Authority as to whether the appendix needed to be considered before the recommendations in paper 10 were dealt with. It was decided that the recommendations should be dealt with before the meeting went into closed session.

It was proposed by Councillor Minnery, seconded by Councillor Price and with Councillor Thompson voting against, it was

Resolved that the Fire Authority:

- a) Note the contents of the report;
- b) Approve the proposed use of reserves and balances in 2012/13; and
- c) Having considered the use of reserves and balances in future years, note the long-term effect of these decisions on revenue surplus / deficit

11 Local Government Act 1972

It was proposed by Councillor Minnery, seconded by Councillor Price 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 3 and 4

12 Use of Balances and Reserves to Secure Resilience and Efficiency (Paragraphs 3 and 4)

Members received the paper Schedule of Capital Expenditure to 2018/19 (the appendix to paper 10).

Resolved that the Fire Authority note the paper Schedule of Capital Expenditure to 2018/19 (the appendix to paper 10 on this agenda)

13 Fire Authority Exempt Minutes (Paragraphs 3 and 4)

Members received the exempt minutes of the Fire Authority meeting, held on 13 February 2012.

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

Resolved that the exempt minutes of the Fire Authority meeting, held on 13 February 2012, be agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record

The meeting closed at 4.00 pm.

Chair.....

Date.....