

Fire Authority Treasurer

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

For further information about this report please contact Paul Raymond, Chief Fire Officer, on 01743 260201, or Joanne Coadey, Head of Finance, on 01743 260215.

1 Purpose of Report

This report informs Members of the Authority of a change in the Fire Authority's Treasurer.

2 Recommendations

The Fire Authority is asked to note the report.

3 Background

Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 requires every local authority, including Fire Authorities, to make arrangements for the proper administration of their financial affairs and requires one officer to be nominated to take responsibility for the administration of those affairs.

The Section 151 Officer is usually the local authority's Treasurer and must be a qualified accountant belonging to one of the recognised chartered accountancy bodies. This Officer has a number of statutory duties, including the duty to report any unlawful financial activity involving the authority (past, present or proposed) or failure to set, or keep to, a balanced budget.

The Section 151 Officer also has a number of statutory powers in order to carry out this role, such as the right to insist that the local authority makes sufficient financial provision for the cost of internal audit. The appointment of this Officer is a process not easily conducted through open contract because of the specialist nature of the role.

Following the retirement of the Fire Authority's Treasurer in August 2011, the Authority entered into a service level agreement for Treasurer Services with Shropshire Council.

As several service level agreements are in place between the two authorities, the Council is well informed about the Fire Authority's financial systems and position. It has a large and multi-disciplinary finance team that provides a wide range of expertise, with a number of staff qualified to carry out the Section 151 role, thus offering resilience and the necessary expertise.

Until December 2012, the Treasurer role for the Fire Authority was fulfilled by Rachel Musson, the Council's Corporate Head of Finance and Commerce and Section 151 officer.

4 Update to Current Arrangement

Following Rachel Musson's departure from Shropshire Council in December 2012, the Council's Head of Financial Advice and Section 151 officer, James Walton, has been appointed as Treasurer for the Fire Authority.

5 Financial Implications

The change in arrangements will not increase current costs budgeted for financial management.

6 Legal Comment

At its meeting on 15 June 2011 the Fire Authority agreed to enter into a two-year Service Level Agreement with Shropshire Council for the provision of Section 151 Officer / Treasurer Services. That agreement is still in force and this report informs Members of a change in personnel at the Council and therefore under that Agreement.

7 Equality Impact Assessment

Officers have considered the Service's Brigade Order on Equality Impact Assessments (Human Resources 5 Part 2) and have decided that there are no discriminatory practices or differential impacts upon specific groups arising specifically from this report. An Initial Equality Impact Assessment has not, therefore, been completed.

8 Appendices

There are no appendices attached to this report.

9 Background Papers

Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority
15 June 2011, Paper 9 - Fire Authority Treasurer