

**Minutes of the Meeting of
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority
held at 2.00 pm on Thursday, 4 November 2010
at the Business Development Centre, Telford**

Present

Members

Councillors Adams, Mrs Barrow, Mrs Blundell, Davies, Dixon, Eade, Hartin, Hurst-Knight, Dr Jones, Kiernan, Mason, Mellings, Minnery (Vice-Chair), Picken, Price, Roberts and West (Chair)

Officers

Chief Fire Officer, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Treasurer, Principal Accountant, Corporate Services Manager, Management Support Officer and Clerk

With regard to the current trial of 'paperless' Fire Authority meetings, it was agreed that hard copies of papers would be distributed to all Members for future Fire Authority meetings. Papers for Committee meetings will continue to be distributed electronically.

1 Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

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 at this point.

3 Minutes

Members received the minutes of the Annual Fire Authority meeting, held on 21 July 2010.

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

Resolved that the minutes of the Annual Fire Authority meeting, held on 21 July 2010, 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 Standards Committee

Members received the minutes of the Standards Committee meeting, held on 21 July 2010.

Resolved that the minutes of the Standards Committee meeting, held on 21 July 2010, be noted

6 Audit and Performance Management Committee

Members received the minutes of the Audit and Performance Management Committee meeting, held on 9 September 2010.

Resolved that the minutes of the Audit and Performance Management Committee meeting, held on 9 September 2010, be noted

7 Strategy and Resources Committee

Members received the minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting, held on 23 September 2010, and considered the recommendations at item 10.

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

Resolved that the minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting, held on 23 September 2010, be noted and that the recommendations at item 10, given below, be agreed:

- a) Approve budget allocation into new directorates for budget control purposes;
- b) Note the position of the revenue budget;
- c) Approve virements to the revenue budget where requested;
- d) Note the position on the capital programme, and approve a supplementary vote of £15,000 for appliance replacement, and other variations;
- e) Note performance against prudential indicators for 2009/10;
- f) Note performance against prudential indicators to date in 2010/11, approving any proposed amendments;
- g) Note the annual review of treasury activities for 2009/10;
- h) Note performance in Treasury Management to date in 2010/11; and
- i) Note the information provided on balance sheet items.

8 Human Resources Committee

Members received the minutes of the Human Resources Committee meeting, held on 12 October 2010, and considered the recommendations at item 7, recommendation c), item 7b, recommendation b) and item 9, recommendations c) and d).

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

Resolved that the minutes of the Human Resources Committee meeting, held on 12 October 2010, be noted and the following recommendations be agreed:

- **At item 7a, recommendation c)**
That the meetings of the Committee be reduced from three to two per year
- **At item 7b, recommendation b)**
That the existing Training and Development Questionnaire be sent out to all Members, following the return of which Committee Chairs liaise with officers to draw up an appropriate Member training plan
- **At item 9, recommendations c) and d)**
That the Fire Authority support:
 - c) Members' attendance at Equality and Diversity training; and
 - d) Members' representing the Authority at relevant community events

9 West Midlands Regional Management Board

Members received the minutes of the West Midlands Regional Management Board meeting, held on 25 August 2010, and considered the recommendation at item 6/10.

The Chief Fire Officer confirmed that approval to dissolve the West Midlands Regional Management Board had now been received from the Secretary of State.

Councillor Adams asked what savings were likely to be achieved from the dissolution of the Regional Management Board. The Chief Fire Officer explained that the resultant cash savings would only be small but there would be a saving in officer and Member time, as there would be no meetings to attend. There would be a loss of collaboration but this will now be picked up through the Chief Fire Officers' Association.

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

Resolved that the minutes of the West Midlands Regional Management Board meeting, held on 25 August 2010, be noted and the following recommendation, at item 6/10 be agreed:

That the Fire Authority agree to dissolve the West Midlands Regional Management Board and that it give delegated powers to its Chief Fire Officer, in consultation with its Chair, to take all necessary steps to achieve the dissolution of the West Midlands Regional Management Board at the earliest practical date, subject to the approval of the Secretary of State.

10 Constitutional Issues

10a Review of Scheme of Delegation to Officers and of Standing Orders

This report asked the Fire Authority to receive and note the amendments to the Scheme of Delegation to Officers and Standing Orders, which were agreed at, and stood adjourned from, the Annual Meeting of the Fire Authority.

Resolved that the Fire Authority receive and note the amendments to the Fire Authority's Scheme of Delegation to Officers and to its Standing Orders (as set out at paragraphs 3, 4, 5 and 6 of the report), which stood adjourned from the Annual Meeting of the Fire Authority, held in July 2010

10b Meeting Schedule 2011/12

The Fire Authority received a schedule of proposed dates for 2011/12 meetings of the Fire Authority and its committees, for approval.

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

Resolved that the Fire Authority approve the proposed meeting dates for 2011/12

11 Comprehensive Spending Review

Members had already received information from the Chief Fire Officer following the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review, announced on 20 October 2010. Officers are currently analysing the detail of the announcement and gave the following verbal update to Members.

Two letters were tabled to the meeting: one which was sent by the Fire Authority Chair to the Shropshire MPs; and one, which was sent by the Combined Fire Authorities Association to the Fire Minister and MPs. A copy of both letters is attached to the signed minutes.

The Treasurer reported that it may be 7 December 2010 before the Grant announcement takes place and that no further information is currently available. Planning is being based on a 25% cut in grant, which equates to £2.8 million in cash terms.

The Treasurer reported that the Minister had, following the announcement of the Comprehensive Spending Review confirmed that grant would be cut by 25% and that cuts involved would be end-loaded. In addition, a Tax Freeze Grant had been announced. All this continued to indicate a potential reduction of about £3 million over the next four years.

In terms of budget planning, a combined Strategic Risk and Planning (STRaP) and Budget Working Group meeting will be held on 12 November 2010, with an extra meeting being held on a future date if needed.

The base budget will then be taken to the Strategy and Resources Committee on 24 November 2010 for discussion.

Councillor Picken left the meeting at this point (2.20 pm)

The Chief Fire Officer referred to the tabled documents and explained that the Chair had written to the MPs regarding the lobbying that had been undertaken by the Metropolitan Fire Authorities in relation to grant cuts. The second letter had been sent to Bob Neill MP on behalf of the Combined Fire Authorities Association. Councillor Hartin informed the Authority that he had been trying to contact Andrew Stunell MP to discuss the grant reductions. As yet, Councillor Hartin has had no response. The Chair advised that Mark Pritchard MP had been in contact regarding a potential meeting with Bob Neill MP on 16 November 2010. If this goes ahead, it will be in London and will probably be attended by the Chair, Vice-Chair and the Chief Fire Officer. The latter also reported that Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Authority is working collaboratively with Shropshire with regard to lobbying.

Councillor Picken returned to the meeting at this point (2.23 pm)

Councillor Adams referred to the issue of the grant cuts being end-loaded then increasing and asked if the cuts would be £3 million per annum or cumulative over the four years. The Treasurer explained that they would be ongoing over the years and would build up to £3 million. He explained that there are currently numerous rumours about what will happen, which he does not dismiss outright.

Resolved that the Fire Authority note the verbal update given by Officers

12 Code of Corporate Governance 2010/11

This report presented to the Fire Authority the draft Code of Corporate Governance 2010/11 for consideration and adoption.

The Corporate Services Manager informed the Authority that the Code would be reworded to reflect the decision made at agenda Item 8 regarding the Member training process.

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

Resolved that the Fire Authority approve and formally adopt the Code

13 Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy

This report requested Members to consider and adopt the Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy for the Fire Authority, following the annual review conducted by officers.

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

Resolved that the Fire Authority adopt the Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy, attached as an appendix to the report

14 Annual Report of the Audit and Performance Management Committee

This report advised of the work carried out by the Fire Authority's Audit and Performance Management Committee since October 2009.

Resolved that the Fire Authority note the contents of the report

15 FiReControl Project Update

Contrary to expectations, the FiReControl Project was not mentioned in the Comprehensive Spending Review announcement on 20 October 2010. Fire authorities within the West Midlands region have been advised (via the Regional Control Centre) that Ministers are keeping in close touch with the project and there are ongoing discussions with the main contractor, EADS (now trading as Cassidian) regarding concerns about delivery of the project.

Ministers believe that the contractor should have the opportunity to deliver the contract to time, cost and quality; but there will be no additional funding to 'bail out the contract'. The key milestone date for contractual deliverables is June 2011. All non-committed expenditure in implementation funding to joint project teams around the country has been cut by 11 percent (the grant to this Fire Authority has been reduced by 5.2 percent).

The Chief Fire Officer reported that there are no planned announcements before the delivery date for the Regional Control Centre and it appears that the Government is in a difficult position due to the cost of exiting the contract. There is a team of officers working to ensure that, should the project fail, Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service's ability to respond to emergency calls will not be compromised.

Councillor Adams commented that the company are likely to come to the Authority when the costs exceed the funding given by Government for delivery of the project. He asked if this Authority would give them any further money and what the Authority would be left with. The Chief Fire Officer explained that the Authority is only spending money from Government on the project. The Authority would have its interim mobilising system in place, which would allow Members to look at the actual costs involved and to make a decision based on this. The Chief Fire Officer commented further that he did not think that the Government would allow this scenario to occur. Cassidian is trying to change the quality and cost terms of the project but the Government is standing firm.

Resolved that the Fire Authority note the verbal update given by officers

16 Public Value Review Update

In total, 40 Public Value Review sessions have been held across the Service, with around 95 percent of staff participating. The sessions have acted to raise awareness amongst staff of the complexities and likely impact of the recession upon both society and the Service.

Moreover, the sessions have enabled staff to take an active role in determining the priorities of the Service and influencing how the budget reductions might best be addressed without unduly compromising 'frontline' services to the community.

The outcomes of the Review are now in the process of being refined and aligned to the recent Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) announcement, although full details are not expected from the Government until December 2010. At this stage the speculative planning assumption of a 25 percent grant reduction appears to be consistent with the CSR announcement. Final recommendations from the Public Value Review will be presented to the Fire Authority for consideration and approval at its meeting in December 2010. Officers are at present confident of meeting reduction targets for the CSR period as currently estimated.

Councillor Barrow asked that the dates of the public consultation sessions be made available to Members. The Chief Fire Officer agreed that this would be done.

Councillor Dixon commented that he felt that the staff consultation sessions had been very successful with operational staff and that he had not detected any signs of dispute. The Chair agreed that firefighters do understand the reality of the cuts and do feel involved in the process.

Resolved that the Fire Authority note the verbal update given by Officers

17 Local Government Act 1972

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

Resolved that, under section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item on the grounds that it 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.

Councillor Price declared a prejudicial interest in the following item, as he is a member of the Firefighters' Pension Scheme, and he left the meeting room at this point (2.43 pm).

18 Pensions Panel (Paragraphs 1, 2 and 3)

The Chair of the Pensions Panel, Councillor Minnery, reported that at its meeting on 18 October 2010 the Pensions Panel had exercised a discretion under The Firefighters' Pension Scheme (England) Order 2006 regarding a question as to whom certain pensions should be payable. The decision was made following legal and pensions advice and had no financial implications for the Fire Authority.

Resolved that the Fire Authority note the update on the activities of the Pensions Panel

The meeting closed at 2.45 pm.

Chair.....

Date.....