

**Non-Exempt Minutes of the Meeting of
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority
Strategy and Resources Committee
held at Brigade Headquarters, Shrewsbury,
on Thursday, 24 May 2007 at 2.20 pm**

Although scheduled to commence at 2.00 pm the meeting did not start until 2.20 pm when Councillor Eade arrived, as without his presence the meeting would not have been quorate.

Present

Councillors Box, Eade, Hartin and West

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Mrs Holyoak.

2 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3 Minutes

Members received the minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting, held on 8 March 2007.

Resolved that the minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting, held on 8 March 2007, 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 Service and Budget Planning

This report proposed a service and budget planning process, for approval by the Fire Authority on 18 July 2007.

The Treasurer highlighted the need to integrate all of the Fire Authority's plans, and specifically those relating to partnerships, because of the possible implications for all resources not just finances. He needed to know as early



as possible what the implications would be in order to ensure that there were sufficient resources to enable those plans to be delivered.

Resolved that the Committee agree the budget and service planning process as outlined in the report and scheduled in the appendix

6 Medium Term Financial Plan

Following on from the report, which was agreed at the March 2007 meeting of the Strategy and Resources Committee, the Chief Fire Officer gave a presentation, outlining progress on the Medium Term Financial Plan. A copy of the presentation slides was tabled and is attached to the signed minutes.

At the end of the presentation the Treasurer added that officers were now looking to invest for more than twelve months, as its reserves and balances were building up. This had not been possible before the Fire Authority had become a precepting authority, because it had been required to return any underspends to the constituent authorities.

Members then discussed the uncertainty surrounding Government funding and the level at which capping might be introduced. It was felt that it could be even lower than 5% and a lower rate should, therefore, be considered in the Plan. A debate also took place about lobbying local Members of Parliament and the necessity for there to be clarity about the issues to be raised with them.

Having noted the contents of the presentation, the Committee

Resolved that it should form the basis of the Medium Term Financial Plan

7 CIPFA (Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy) Statistics Analysis

The Integrated Risk Management Planning (IRMP) Manager gave a presentation providing an analysis of the CIPFA statistics. A copy of the presentation slides was tabled together with a breakdown of the analysis, copies of which are attached to the signed minutes.

Councillor Eade asked whether some of the statistics were skewed as a result of the inclusion of London. The IRMP Manager responded that officers had omitted London in a number of the graphs to see what difference it made. There had, however, been no significant affect to the trend line and they had, therefore, decided to include it.

It was noted that there still appeared to be various anomalies in the figures provided by some Brigades. These had been investigated further and queried by our officers. The Chief Fire Officer added that he still did not have complete confidence in the figures provided by CIPFA, as they were slightly flawed. Following representations from this Authority last year, however,



CIPFA had provided assurances that the figures this year would be more accurate. These would be used in moving forward with the IRMP process.

Resolved that the Committee note the contents of the presentation

8 Regional Fire Control Centre / Firelink

This report updated Members of the Committee on the financial outlook for the Fire Authority of these national schemes. This would inform the Medium Term Financial Plan and the three-year budgeting process for 2008/09 to 2010/11.

The Treasurer brought Members' attention to the summary statement in his report. The Chair expressed his reservations as to whether there would be a net nil cost to the Fire Authority over the next three years. The Chief Fire Officer responded that the Government had advised that there would be no additional cost to authorities. The Treasurer added that this was his first attempt at costing but he did not think that there would be either large efficiencies to be gained or significant additional costs.

A discussion took place regarding the FireLink radio system and the fact that this Authority was well placed because it had introduced Airwave some years previously.

Resolved that the Committee note the current position, and agree the issues that the Fire Authority will need to address as part of its financial planning (outlined in section 9 of the report)

9 Best Value Performance Plan 2007/08 – Target Setting

A process to enable target setting has been developed by the Service. The purpose of this report was to explain that process, which, in turn, would enable Members to review and set challenging and realistic targets for inclusion within the impending and subsequent performance plans for 2007/08, 2008/09 and 2009/10. An amended version of the Appendix to the report was tabled and is attached to the signed minutes.

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer ran through the process, which the Fire Authority had used the previous year to set its targets, and the methodology for the target setting regime for the current year. The latter was more scientific in its approach, whereas the process previously had relied purely upon professional judgement. He explained in principle how the process would work and the Chief Fire Officer then ran through the first of the Best Value Performance Indicators in the Appendix to the report to show how it worked in practice.

Councillor Box was concerned as to whether some of the targets were demanding enough. Officers responded that they believed they were, particularly as it was necessary to consider what resources would be required in order to gain improvements and achieve the targets set. They confirmed



that the Fire Authority should not merely be coasting but aiming for perfection through continuous improvement.

Members discussed how realistic the target was for fire deaths and the risk involved in setting too low a target. Having considered the issue they agreed that the target should remain at one.

Resolved that the Committee:

- a) Approve the process for setting targets; and
- b) Approve the proposed targets for 2007/08, 2008/09 and 2009/10 for inclusion within the Best Value Performance Plan

10 Income and Charging Consultation

The Strategy and Resources Committee received a report at its meeting on 25 January 2007 concerning consultation by the Department of Communities and Local Government on Extension to Charging. Fire Service Circular 10/2007 accompanied the findings of the consultation and included further consultation on adding one specific category to the Charging Order. The Treasurer advised that the proposal was to give fire authorities the power to charge for providing administrative and support services. This had been added because of the likelihood that Regional Control Centres would want to buy in such services from one or more of their constituent authorities. Officers felt that it would be a useful extension of charging powers and recommended responding accordingly.

Resolved that the Treasurer respond to this further consultation in accordance with the recommendation from officers

11 Statement on Internal Control

This report set out the draft Statement on Internal Control (SIC) to be included in the Fire Authority's Final Accounts for 2006/07.

The Head of Performance and Risk advised that, since he had written the report, the Risk Management Group had met, considered the draft SIC Improvement Plan and agreed the following changes:

IRN 22 – As this was not considered to be a corporate risk but rather a departmental issue, this should be removed from the draft Plan. Councillor Box challenged this decision. The Head of Performance and Risk responded that, although Brigade Orders had not been updated, the work continued to be carried out and there was no impact on achievement of the Fire Authority's aims and objectives. Councillor Box accepted this argument.

IRN 22 would be replaced by another improvement requirement, namely that procedural manuals should be developed for the various office functions undertaken by the Level 2 Commanders, in order to avoid potential problems when there are staff changes in the department. The Head of Operational



Response would be the Improvement Owner and the completion date would be July 2007.

The Committee noted that the completion date for IRN 1 and 2 was November 2007.

Having considered the draft Statement on Internal Control 2006/07 and SIC Improvement Plan 2007/08, the Committee

Resolved that the draft Statement on Internal Control 2006/07 and SIC Improvement Plan 2007/08, incorporating the changes discussed, be agreed and forwarded for agreement and signature at the meeting of the Fire Authority in June

12 Corporate Risk Management Summary

This was the latest of the regular Risk Summary Reports to the Strategy and Resources Committee. As previously, these reports were intended to enable Members to meet the requirements of this Committee's Terms of Reference as they relate to the Fire Authority's management of corporate risk.

The Head of Performance and Risk highlighted pages 14, 15 and 16 of his report, which detailed the most significant risks faced by the Fire Authority. These were all risks, which had already been brought to the attention of Members.

Resolved that the Committee note the contents of the report

13 Local Government Act 1972

Resolved that, in accordance with section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act, the public be excluded from the meeting for the consideration of item 14 on the grounds that it 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 3 and 4

14 Corporate Risk Management – Exempted Information (Paragraphs 3 and 4)

The Committee had received an open session report, which summarised the Fire Authority's current exposure to corporate risk. This report supplemented the open session report, as it contained information that was exempt from publication by virtue of the Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A.

Councillor Box asked whether officers had considered amalgamating the two risks shown in the Appendix to the report. The Head of Performance and Risk responded that he did not feel it appropriate, as one was generic and one specific.



Councillor Box also raised a further connected issue, which officers agreed to include in the exempt section of the Register.

Resolved that Members note the contents of this report, in conjunction with the Corporate Risk Summary discussed at item 12

The meeting closed at 3.45 pm.

Chair.....

Date.....



Definitions of Exempt Information Local Government Act 1972 – Schedule 12A

Part 1 Descriptions of Exempt Information: England

Paragraph 1

Information relating to any individual

Paragraph 2

Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual

Paragraph 3

Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding the information)

Paragraph 4

Information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holders under, the authority

Paragraph 5

Information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings

Paragraph 6

Information which reveals that the authority proposes:

- (a) to give under any enactment a notice under or by virtue of which requirements are imposed on a person; or
- (b) to make an order or direction under any enactment.

Paragraph 7

Information relating to any action taken or to be taken in connection with the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime

