

**Minutes of the Meeting of  
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority  
Strategy and Resources Committee  
held at Brigade Headquarters, Shrewsbury,  
on Thursday, 18 September 2008 at 2.00 pm**

**Present**

Councillors Box, Eade (Chair), Hartin, Holyoak (Vice-Chair), Picken and West

**1 Election of Chair**

It was proposed by Councillor Mrs Holyoak and seconded by Councillor Box

That Councillor Eade be elected Chair of the Strategy and Resources Committee.

There being no other nominations, Councillor Eade was duly elected Chair to hold office until the meeting of the Committee immediately following the Annual Meeting of the Fire Authority.

**2 Appointment of Vice-Chair**

It was proposed by Councillor West and seconded by Councillor Box

That Councillor Mrs Holyoak be appointed Vice-Chair of the Strategy and Resources Committee.

There being no other nominations, Councillor Mrs Holyoak was duly appointed Vice-Chair to hold office until the meeting of the Committee immediately following the Annual Meeting of the Fire Authority.

**3 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Minnery.

**4 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**5 Minutes**

Members received the minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting, held on 22 May 2008.

**Resolved** that the minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting, held on 22 May 2008, be agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record

## **6 Public Questions**

No questions, statements or petitions had been received from members of the public.

## **7 Financial Planning Strategy 2009/10**

The Authority agreed that officers use July, August and September to review budgets, including capital schemes, efficiencies and budget pressures, in order to lead to a progress report to Strategy and Resources Committee on 18 September 2008. This initial planning paper set out the broad main issues and was intended to focus attention on the key planning issues that must be addressed.

**Resolved** that the Committee seek the approval of the Authority on 15 October 2008 to a strategy that identifies a balanced budget in 2009/10 and each year thereafter, both on the pessimistic and optimistic assumptions set out in the report.

## **8 Financial Performance to August 2008**

This report provided information on the financial performance of the service to date, and sought approval for action, where necessary.

In answer to a question from Members, the Principal Accountant explained that half the underspends reported in the retained revenue budget would be used for retained development and would be the subject of a further report.

**Resolved** that the Committee

- a) note the position of the revenue budget;
- b) approve virements to the revenue budget where requested;
- c) note the position on the capital programme;
- d) note performance against prudential indicators; and
- e) note the information provided on balance sheet items.

## **9 Capital Update on Activity and Finance**

The purpose of this report was to provide an overview of all the capital schemes within the Brigade and their current status.

Members queried the position with regard to the purchase of a small fires unit and were informed that a report would be forwarded to the next Fire Authority meeting in October advising Members on the available options.

Members also noted that the capital budget for Building Improvements was fully spent for 2008/09 and that only one major scheme remained, Cleobury Mortimer, which was planned for 2009/10.

**Resolved** that the Committee note the progress on Capital Schemes.

## **10 Annual Treasury Report 2007/08**

This report informed Members of the treasury activities for 2007/08, as required by the Code of Practice on Treasury Management.

The report demonstrates that the Fire Authority borrowed at the optimum time for interest rates and that a good interest rate had been achieved for the Fire Authority's investments. A review of the Fire Authority's investment strategy concluded that it was consistent with good borrowing practice.

**Resolved** that the Committee note the contents of the report

## **11 Audit Commission Value for Money Profile Tool 2008**

Councillor Box declared a prejudicial interest at this point and left the room at 2.45pm.

This report provided Members with details of a 'value for money profile tool' recently provided by the Audit Commission to support their auditors in undertaking this years 'use of resources' and 'direction of travel' audits which form important parts of the fire and rescue performance assessment for 2008.

The Chief Fire Officer highlighted the areas that had changed from last year's tool and discussed with Members the proposed responses to auditors on behalf of the Fire Authority. Following a question from Members about the Audit Commission's response to the Fire Authority's comments on last year's profile tool, it was noted that there had been some change but that this was not significant.

**Resolved** that the Committee

- a) note the findings of an analysis conducted by officers of the 2008 version of the 'value for money profile tool' provided by the Audit Commission;
- b) approve the proposed responses to auditors on behalf of the Fire Authority;
- c) did not identify any areas where they felt that further more detailed analysis would be beneficial; and
- d) wish the findings of the analysis to be forwarded to the Audit Commission to assist with future improvement of the 'value for money profile tool'.

## 12 Audit Commission Performance Information Profile Tool 2008

Officers tabled a replacement report 12 (copy attached to signed minutes)

This report provided Members with details of a 'performance information profile tool' recently provided by the Audit Commission to support their auditors in undertaking this year's Direction of Travel audit which forms part of the fire and rescue performance assessment for 2008/09.

The approach the Audit Commission had taken in summarising Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service's performance disadvantaged the results, as not all the indicators in the tool had been used. The Corporate Health Indicators, where Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service had performed well, had not been included in the final analysis. The Chief Fire Officer also drew attention to other areas listed in the report that disadvantaged Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service.

Members were content with the officers' response to the tool.

Following consideration by Members it was **resolved** that the Committee note the findings of an analysis conducted by officers of the performance information profile tool developed and provided by the Audit Commission.

## 13 Integrated Risk Management Planning

Councillor Box rejoined the meeting at this point.

### 13a Review of Strategic Integrated Risk Management Planning

This report summarised the benefits the Fire Authority has been able to achieve through the introduction of Integrated Risk Management Planning (IRMP).

Members were pleased with the results gained and wished to continue with the IRMP Members' Working Group. Members also wished to thank officers for all their hard work, with special thanks to ADO Joe Whelan, IRMP Manager.

**Resolved** that the Committee

- a) note the contents of the report; and
- b) recommend to the Fire Authority that the IRMP Members' Working Group should continue to drive improvement in the Service through their work in this important area.

## 13b Integrated Risk Management Planning Research Report

This report informed Members about the recent publication of a Communities and Local Government report that looks at the connection between fire risk and the socio-demographic make-up of the population covered by a Fire and Rescue Service. It also discussed how this variation in risk could be used to develop future benchmarking targets for both internal and external purposes.

Officers reassured Members that the datasets used were fairly robust with a small margin for error and that there was confidence in the figures being produced.

It was noted that the new factors identified by the research would be incorporated into the FSEC model at a later date, however this did not prevent the Brigade targeting these newly identified groups immediately.

**Resolved** that the Committee note the contents of the report.

## 14 Update on FiReControl Business Case

This report informed Members about the contents of the recently published FiReControl Business Case (Regional Annex). It outlined the issues identified in the Business Case and set out the cost and strategy impact described in the publication.

With regard to cost apportionment, the Treasurer outlined the various options and discussed with Members the advantages and disadvantages of each. Members agreed to recommend the use of population as basis for apportionment.

Members were advised that if an agreed regional approach to cost apportionment was not forthcoming, that an independent mediator would be used.

**Resolved** that the Committee

- a) note the contents of this report;
- b) recommend that the Fire Authority tasks the Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority Regional Control Centre Board Member to ensure that the Regional Control Centre Director produces regular financial reports on the total cost of West Midlands Regional Control Centre;
- c) recommend that the Fire Authority tasks Officers and the Regional Control Centre Board Member to have further discussions about the affordability of the increased staffing numbers for the Regional Control Centre; and
- d) recommend the use of population as basis for apportionment.

## 15 Wellington Fire Station Co-location with TCAT

This report updated the Strategy and Resources Committee on progress with proposals to co-locate Wellington Fire Station in to the new college planned by Telford College of Arts and Technology (TCAT).

Amended plans were tabled (copy attached to signed minutes) at the meeting for discussion with Members, who agreed in principle to continue to pursue the development. The new plans may eliminate the need to move Wellington Fire Station to temporary accommodation which would provide savings and reduce any interruptions to service delivery.

TCAT were still awaiting approval for the funding from the Learning Skills Council, following this, the move would then be subject to Fire Authority approval of final business case.

**Resolved** that the Committee

- a) note the provisions of this report;
- b) consider the service and financial implications of the scheme; and
- c) authorise Officers to continue work on the development of this scheme.

## 16 Station Training Facilities

This report updated the Strategy and Resources Committee on progress with the provision of training facilities at stations and requested additional capital funding for future years.

It was proposed by Councillor West and seconded by Councillor Holyoak that a report should be presented as part of the Budget reports in November to consider the allocation of additional capital funding in future years to accelerate provision of facilities.

Subject to the foregoing it was **resolved** that the Committee note the provisions of the report.

## 17 Use of Capital 2008

This report advised the Strategy and Resources Committee of capital investment made over the last 3 years and the benefits which have been obtained from this investment.

**Resolved** that the Committee consider the benefits achieved and consider these when considering future capital funding requests.

## 18 Asset Stewardship Report 2008

This report advised the Strategy and Resources Committee of the current condition of assets owned by the Authority and changes which have occurred in the financial year 2007/08. This is a summary of information previously provided in the form of budget working papers, capital appraisals and capital budget reports, together with additional information.

**Resolved** that the Committee note the current asset position.

## 19 Funding for the Organisational Development Centre and Fire Gateway Services 2008/09

This report informed Members of a letter received from the Interim Director of the Fire and Resilience Directorate of Communities and Local Government regarding funding for the Organisational Development Centre and Fire Gateway in 2008/09. The report also advised Members of a response made by the Chief Fire Officer to the Interim Director requesting further details.

The Chief Fire Officer tabled a response recently received from the Deputy Director which listed the subsidised services that were available to subscribers. Having explored the services listed, the subsidies gained would still not amount to the subscription being requested. Members agreed not to pay the subscription on this occasion.

Members also asked the Chief Fire Officer to invite the Director of the DCLG to Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service.

Subject to the foregoing Members **resolved** that the Committee

- a) note the contents of the report and the appended letters; and
- b) not to pay the subscription on this occasion.

The meeting closed at 4.10 pm.

**Chair**.....

**Date**.....