

**Minutes of the Meeting of
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority
Strategy and Resources Committee
held at Brigade Headquarters, Shrewsbury,
on Thursday, 8 March 2007 at 2.00 pm**

Present:

Councillors Box, Eade, Hartin, Holyoak, Hussey and West

Councillor Hartin, as Vice-Chair of the Committee, chaired the meeting, as Councillor Morgan, the Chair of the Committee was not present.

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Morgan.

2 Declarations of Interest

Councillor West arrived at this point.

There were no declarations of interest.

3 Non-Exempt Minutes

Members received the non-exempt minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting, held on 25 January 2007.

Resolved that the non-exempt minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting, held on 25 January 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 Revenue and Capital Monitoring to January 2007

This report formed part of the regular monitoring process undertaken throughout the year. It detailed the latest position on revenue and capital budgets, and recommended action where necessary.

Councillor Eade asked whether it was possible to control the overspend on uniforms, as it was quite significant. The Principal Accountant replied that it was now intended to re-issue second hand fire kit, which would result in



savings. Amounts for fire kit had been included in the budget for both wholetime and retained recruits but she would check the retained review budget to ensure that costs had been allocated to the correct budgets.

The Chair referred to the Capital Programme and asked when the building work at Prees would start. The Principal Accountant replied that she assumed it would be in the current financial year. If not, the money allocated for this purpose would go forward into the 2007/08 financial year. She undertook to find out when the work would commence.

Committee Clerk's Note

The Head of Resources has since advised that the building work will commence in the next few weeks, depending upon the availability of the contractor.

Resolved that the Committee

- a) *Note progress on the revenue budget;*
- b) *Recommend that the Fire Authority approve the variations shown at paragraph 4 of the report; and*
- c) *Note progress on the Fire Authority's capital programme*

6 Annual Efficiency Statement – Forward Looking 2007/08

This report submitted the 2007/08 Forward Looking Annual Efficiency Statement (AES) for scrutiny by the Committee prior to submission, as required by 12 April 2007.

Resolved that the Committee submit its Forward Looking AES based on the Appendix to the report

7 Medium Term Financial Plan - 2007

This report recommended a structure for the Medium Term Financial Plan 2007 (MTFP 2007) and set out the key issues for discussion and amendment.

The Treasurer advised that it was the intention of officers to build upon last year's plan and bring out key issues. It was, however, important that the effort put into the plan was justified in that it helped with the management of the Service.

The Chair asked whether the improvement opportunities identified by the Audit Commission would be included. The Treasurer responded that the plan should be aligned to the Fire Authority's priorities and linked to budgets.

A discussion took place about the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review and the uncertainty surrounding the amount of funding the Fire Authority would receive in 2008/09 and future years. The Treasurer referred to the budgets for the next 3 years, which had been formulated on the basis of reasonable assumptions. He felt that the MTFP 2007 should be used to



demonstrate what would be the best and worst outcomes and it should contain a sensitivity analysis of service plans. Furthermore, those plans should be embedded in the finance. The Chief Fire Officer agreed. Officers could consider the various 'what if' scenarios in the context of the Integrated Risk Management Plan and other service issues and then assess what risks each would present. It was, however, for Members to decide the way forward.

Some Members voiced concern about the additional work this would create for officers, whether it was necessary, particularly the minutiae, and also about the political and staff sensitivities of some scenarios. The Chief Fire Officer said that it would create additional work but a number of officers would be involved and, if started now, it could be managed. Senior officers would commence the work at high level and then approach the heads of departments for their priorities.

The Treasurer added that he believed that the Fire Authority should do this. The MTFP needed to prepare the Authority for the future in an orderly way. He accepted that there were sensitivities but the options would be set out in order of priority of reductions or growth. The Authority was not likely to know until December what the 2008/09 funding from the Government would be, so work should commence now.

The Treasurer referred to the outline Capital Programme and the £4M required in 2 years for the Headquarters move. Funding that increased capital expenditure would create growth, which needed to be managed. The MTFP could be used for this purpose.

After further discussion Members agreed that the Fire Authority did need to prepare itself for all eventualities, otherwise it could expose itself to significant risks and problems. Using the MTFP in the way proposed by officers would enable the Authority to mitigate those risks and problems. It must, however, be carefully managed.

It was, therefore, proposed by the Chair, seconded by Councillor Eade and

Resolved unanimously *that the Committee agree the structure for the MTFP 2007 and the key issues to be included, including improvement opportunities, as proposed by the Chief Fire Officer and Treasurer*

8 Statement on Internal Control

This report informed Members of the process, which would be put in place to ensure that the Fire Authority's Statement on Internal Control would be ready for inclusion in the Final Accounts for 2006/07.

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



9 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 10 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

10 Exempt Minutes (Paragraphs 3 and 4)

Members received the exempt minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting, held on 25 January 2007.

Resolved that the exempt minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting, held on 25 January 2007, be agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record

The meeting closed at 2.40 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

