

**Minutes of the Meeting of
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority
Meeting at The Shirehall, Shrewsbury
at 2.00 pm on Wednesday, 30 April 2008**

Present

Councillors Lt Col Allen, Box, Gibbon, Groom, Hartin, Dr Jones, Mason, Mellings, Minnery, Picken and West (Chair)

Before business commenced the Chair presented a commendation award to Mr Ted Hughes and Mr Brian Davies of Upton Magna. Both gentlemen had demonstrated acts of bravery in their actions to rescue a lady from a fire in her property.

Members then observed a minute's silence in memory of Fire Authority Member Councillor Rod Davies, who had passed away on 3 April 2008. Councillor Davies joined the Fire Authority in May 2005 and played an active part in the Integrated Risk Management Planning Members' Working Group. He was also a member of the Audit and Performance Management Committee and the Human Resources Committee and the Lead Member for Learning and Development. Members and officers joined the Chair in offering condolences to his family on his untimely death.

The Chair informed the meeting about Sub Officer Trevor Williams who attended 10 Downing Street to receive a Spirit of Fire Award for donating a kidney to his young son.

The Chair welcomed Councillor Gibbon, a Conservative Member from Shropshire County Council, who had joined the Fire Authority on 10 April 2008.

1 Progress with Transition to a Unitary Council in Shropshire

The Chief Executive of Shropshire County Council provided a short update on progress with the transition to a unitary council in Shropshire. A copy of the presentation slides is attached to the signed minutes.

The Leader of Shropshire County Council (who attended the meeting with the Chief Executive) commented that it was heartening to see the joint working that was taking place and the way the changes were being taken forward.

The Chief Fire Officer commented that he was being 'kept in the loop' with regard to the transition to a Unitary Authority. He also commented that the Fire Authority have a positive experience of working with the Telford & Wrekin unitary authority and hope that it will be the same with Shropshire. He also informed the meeting that Shropshire is currently the only fire authority with a target in the Local Area Agreement (LAA). This should have a positive effect on things such as the Use of Resources assessments etc.

Resolved that the Fire Authority note the presentation of the Chief Executive of Shropshire County Council

2 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Major Coles, Dr Drummond, Eade, Mrs Greenaway, Mrs Holyoak and Hurst-Knight.

3 Declarations of Interest

Members were reminded that they should declare any personal and/or prejudicial interests at this point and that they should leave the meeting before any item, in which they had a prejudicial interest, was discussed.

Councillor Mellings declared a personal interest in Item 6b – Appointment of Non-Elected, Independent Members to the Standards Committee as he sits on Shropshire County Council's Standards Committee with the two nominees.

4 Minutes

Members received the minutes of the Fire Authority meeting, held on 13 February 2008.

Resolved that the minutes of the Fire Authority meeting, held on 13 February 2008, be signed by the Chair as a correct record

5 Public Questions

There were no questions, statements or petitions from members of the public.

6 Standards Committee

6a Minutes

Members received the minutes of the Standards Committee, held on 18 February 2008.

Resolved that the minutes of the Standards Committee, held on 18 February 2008, be noted

6b Appointment of Non-Elected, Independent Members to the Standard Committee

This report recommended the appointment of two candidates as non-elected, independent members of the Fire Authority's Standards Committee.

Having considered the recommendation of the recruitment panel, the Fire Authority

Resolved that it appoint Mr Paul Brereton and Mr David Turner as two additional, non-elected, Independent Members of its Standards Committee

7 Strategy and Resources Committee

Members received the minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting, held on 6 March 2008.

Councillor Dr Jones referred to item 6a in the minutes and reported that the County Council's Corporate Service Group is currently working on a 'welcome pack'.

Councillor Mellings welcomed and endorsed the inclusion of Indicator 49 in the Local Authority Agreement. He also asked about the report detailing fire deaths which had occurred in the last five years, which the Strategy and Resources minutes say would be brought to the April meeting of the Fire Authority, but which was not on the agenda for the meeting. The Chief Fire Officer explained that this report would be taken to the May meeting of the Audit and Performance Management Committee.

Resolved that the minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting, held on 6 March 2008, be noted

8 Audit and Performance Management Committee

8a Minutes

Members received the minutes of the Audit and Performance Management Committee meeting, held on 13 March 2008.

Resolved that the minutes of the Audit and Performance Management Committee meeting, held on 13 March 2008, be noted

8b Annual Audit and Inspection Letter

The Treasurer brought the Annual Audit and Inspection Letter to Members for formal approval. It was noted that, although the document had 'Draft' marked across it, it was actually the final version. After the papers for the meeting had been sent out, the Audit Commission had provided a copy of the Letter, from which 'Draft' had been removed. This version was tabled at the meeting and a copy is attached to the signed minutes.

The Treasurer commented that the Audit Commission had been very complimentary towards the Fire Authority. Some areas for action had been identified at the Audit and Performance Management Committee meeting and these have been taken up and implemented.

Councillor Box commented that it was an excellent letter and offered congratulations to officers on it.

Resolved that the Fire Authority formally approve the Annual Audit and Inspection Letter

9 Financial Monitoring and Review

This report, is one in a regular sequence, informing the Fire Authority of the financial performance since the previous report, or in the last quarter, whichever period was shorter. It sought approval for any necessary action, where appropriate.

The Treasurer said that reporting significant changes to Balance Sheet items would help with achieving a level 4. He also asked if there were any particular issues that Members would like to see included in the Key Financial Health Indicators

The Treasurer explained that Members were not being asked to approve the budget variations in paragraph 5 of the report as it is too early to seek formal approval to virements. He also pointed out that the table in paragraph 5 should show minus figures for the Audit Commission fees ie budget savings. A further report on the budget variations will be brought before Members once the final accounts have been closed.

The Treasurer then drew Member's attention to the figures under 2007/08 and later years' starts. He explained that the £18,900 efficiency saving from the purchase of Kangoos instead of Ford Rangers would remain in the capital reserve. This would help the authority to deliver its efficiency targets and would also help with the St Michael's Street project.

Councillor Box asked if the £92,100 for the Training drill towers was the same as the 2007/08 underspend of £17,500. The Treasurer explained that an annual £20,000 had originally been set aside for the drill towers but this was not adequate and therefore it needs to be revisited. Councillor Box felt that it may therefore be better to wait until the project is fully appraised before approving any virements.

The Assistant Chief Officer explained that the station which was to have the first drill tower had raised several issues relating to the design of the tower. Consequently, modifications have been made to the design of the towers and it was estimated that the cost per tower would now increase to approximately £40,000. There are also further planning issues to be resolved.

Councillor Groom raised concerns about the provision of further Management Information data and the time / resources that are required to provide this. He had reservations about providing information for information's sake and expressed support for reporting on an exception basis. The Treasurer explained that the provision of the data would not require any more money to be spent, but officers felt that they should be aspiring to improve services. Councillor Jones commented that this issue had been discussed at the Audit and Performance Management Committee meeting and the Committee are aware of it

Resolved that the Fire Authority:

- a) Note the position on the Final Accounts and Revenue Budget (paragraphs 4 and 5);
- b) Approve the capital virements in paragraph 6;
- c) Approve the retention of capital efficiencies in the Capital Reserve (paragraphs 7 and 8);
- d) Note the extended monitoring of other balances (paragraph 9); and
- e) Ask its Audit and Performance Management Committee to consider financial performance indicators (paragraph 10)

10 Appointment of Clerk and Monitoring Officer and Deputy Clerk and Monitoring Officer

Sue Kembrey, the Fire Authority's Clerk and Monitoring Officer had recently taken up a new appointment and it was, therefore, necessary to put in place interim arrangements until such time as her position had been filled at Borough of Telford & Wrekin.

Resolved unanimously that the Fire Authority appoint:

- a) Roger Woliter as Clerk and Monitoring Officer; and
- b) Matthew Cumberbatch as Deputy Clerk and Monitoring Officer

to the Fire Authority, until such time as a further report is brought to Members in this respect.

11 Lead Member Presentation

Councillor Allen, Lead Member for Procurement and Asset Management, gave his annual presentation to the Fire Authority and circulated his presentation slides (a copy of which is attached to the signed minutes).

Councillor Hartin commented that the presentation had highlighted a lot of additional possibilities in relation to equalities and sustainability in procurement. He asked why the Service was not going any further with some of these issues. Councillor Allen explained that the Service is doing as much as is sensible but some of the issues may prove costly to address. The Head of Resources further explained that whilst procurement can be used to drive wider social benefits, it is important to look at the balance and at how funding is used. Councillor Hartin explained that he could see why some issues were not being addressed but he was unsure why others such as EQIAs were not

being acted upon. The Head of Resources explained that issues such as EQIAs are now being followed up. The Chief Fire Officer explained that this issue has important links to other items on the meeting's agenda; particularly paper 13 which looks at the Equality Standard for Local Government.

Councillor Box asked if procurement was ever undertaken with other fire services. The Head of Resources explained that the Regional Management Board has a group which looks at the procurement of items that are not available through Firebuy.

Councillor Hartin asked if there was any update on the situation with Firebuy. The Head of Resources explained that the situation is still unclear. Communities and Local Government will provide funding until September 2008 and alternative funding is currently being looked at, which may include a possible fee on purchases made. The issue with the Integrated Clothing Project is also still unresolved.

Resolved that the Fire Authority note the annual presentation of the Lead Member for Procurement and Asset Management

12 National Framework and Equality Strategy

The Chief Fire Officer advised that officers had hoped to present the National Framework and Equality Strategy to Members at this meeting, as they had been due to be issued at the beginning of April. An enquiry to Communities and Local Government had, however, revealed that their publication had now been delayed until the end of May 2008.

The Chief Fire Officer also reported that he and the Chair of the Authority will attend the national launch of the Fire and Rescue Service Equality and Diversity Strategy on 28 May 2008.

Resolved that the Fire Authority note verbal report of the Chief Fire Officer

13 Equality Standard for Local Government

This report provided Members with information and an update on progress of activity to meet the Equality Standard for Local Government.

Councillor Groom referred to point 3.2.3 on Appendix 1 of the report, as he felt that the provision of translation services needs careful monitoring. The Assistant Chief Officer explained that the Service is very mindful of this issue and translated documents are only provided when requested. The Service also uses a facility called Language Line which provides translation services on 'a pay as you go' basis.

Councillor Box asked if any consideration had been given to having an Equality and Diversity Member Champion. He asked that this be considered at Fire Authority's Annual General Meeting in July.

Councillor Jones asked if there was any opportunity for Members to attend the Equality and Diversity Steering Group meetings. The Chief Fire Officer said that this could be arranged.

Having understood the different levels and requirements of the Equality Standard for Local Government, Members

Resolved that the information in this report be noted

14 Fire Authority Corporate Plan 2008/09

This report informed Members of the recently published Fire Authority Corporate Plan 2008/09. The Plan replaced the existing Best Value Performance Plan 2007/08. The Corporate Plan would be supplemented by an Annual Report 2007/08, which would be brought before Members in June 2008 for consideration and approval.

Councillor Box commented that it was a good plan but he asked why the unit price for each poster was £38. The Chief Fire Officer explained that the poster had been given a special coating so that they could be written on enabling departments / watches / stations to develop their own specific priorities and targets.

Both Councillor Groom and Councillor Jones thought that the plan was excellent, particularly as it would be seen everyday.

Councillor Hartin asked how it was ensured that stations / watches are completing the section for priorities and targets. The Chief Fire Officer explained that stations / watches are expected to include this in the presentations that they give when visited by the Senior Management Team.

Resolved that Members note the recently published Fire Authority Corporate Plan 2008/09

15 Integrated Risk Management Plan Members' Working Group Update

This report advised Members of the progress made by the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) Members' Working Group (the Group) towards the implementation of the improvements required by the Authority's IRMP Action Plan 2008/09. It also asked Members to approve the recommendations made by the Group at their meeting, held on 10 April 2008, and sought delegated authority for the Group to approve the draft Action Plan 2009/10 and commence this year's IRMP consultation process.

The IRMP Manager talked through the report and gave a brief update on some of the issues in the paper.

The issue of water rescue provision and flooding response was discussed by Members who felt that this was an area that the Service needed to look at in depth.

The Chief Fire Officer informed Members that the Learning Skills Council is looking at how funding can be provided for the proposed amalgamation of Wellington Fire Station and TCAT.

Resolved that the Fire Authority:

- a) Note the progress made towards implementation of the 2008/09 IRMP Action Plan:
 - i Approve the proposals put forward by the IRMP Members' Working Group for consultation on the risk profile of individual station areas; and
 - ii Continue development work for:
 - a. Small fires and difficult access vehicle;
 - b. Future aerial appliance provision; and
 - c. Water rescue provision;
- b) Delegate responsibility for the creation of the draft Action Plan 2009/10 to the Group;
- c) Delegate responsibility for the IRMP consultation process, to be conducted between July and November 2008, to the Group; and
- d) Note that all Members of the Fire Authority are invited to attend any of the IRMP consultation sessions

Councillor Hartin left the meeting at this point (3.40 pm)

16 FiReControl Local Authority Controlled Company

Full Business Case

The Chief Fire Officer advised that, following feedback from the Local Government Association and other stakeholders, Ministers had agreed to release the next version of the full business case in June rather than March 2008, as had been agreed previously. At this time it should be possible to provide information on current control rooms' operating costs and a number of other important assumptions, such as the staffing model, the facilities management contract and group services.

A business case Assumptions Review Group was being established to provide assurance that the assumptions were prudent and credible. The Group would be chaired by the Chair of Wiltshire Fire Authority and would include other members of the Project Board, Senior Operational Group and the key delivery working groups. Representatives would be drawn from all nine regions.

Resolved that the Fire Authority note the latest position regarding the full business case

Appointment of Alternative Director to FireControl Local Authority Controlled Company

This report recommended that Members appoint an Alternative Director to the FireControl Local Authority Controlled Company to represent the Fire Authority, when its nominated Director, Cllr Allen, was unable to attend, thus ensuring that the Authority always had representation.

Councillor Box proposed that Councillor West be nominated as an Alternative Director to the Fire Control Local Authority Controlled Company. This was seconded by Councillor Jones.

Resolved that the Fire Authority:

- a) Agree to nominate an Alternative Director;
- b) Nominate Councillor West as an Alternative Director to represent the Fire Authority on occasions where the current Board member was unable to attend Company meetings; and
- c) Agree that the current Board Member write to the Company Secretary with details of the nominated Alternative Director

Councillor Hartin returned to the meeting at this point (3.45 pm)

Update Report from Director

Councillor Allen, the Fire Authority's Director on the Board of the FireControl Local Authority Controlled Company, provided a verbal update on developments.

Resolved that the Fire Authority note the verbal update of Councillor Allen

17 Environmental Management System Certification

The Head of Resources advised that Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service had achieved the ISO14001:2004 standard for environmental management for all activities at all of its sites. Officers believed that this was first Fire and Rescue Service to achieve such certification. A copy of the certificate is attached to the signed minutes.

ISO 14001 is the international standard for environmental management and requires an organisation to assess and understand fully its total environmental impact, identify improvements and monitor their effectiveness.

Working to the ISO standard has enabled the Service to understand clearly its environmental impact and take practical and cost-effective steps to minimise harm, while continuing to provide services to the community.

Councillor West asked for a brief explanation of the ISO14001 criteria. The Head of Resources explained that ISO14001 is high on public organisation agendas. It is a recognised system for understanding environmental impacts and achieving a balance in relation to them. It also looks at making a real practical difference in relation to environmental issues. Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service sought registration with the British Standards Institution which involved a six day assessment process. This led to the award of ISO14001 standard.

The Chief Fire Officer thanked the Head of Resources for the work that he had put into achieving this certification. Councillor Hartin commented that it was a fantastic achievement and advised that the Fire Authority try to get more publicity regarding this achievement within the fire community. The Chief Fire Officer advised that a press release had been sent out to national fire publications.

Resolved that the Fire Authority note the verbal report of the Head of Resources

18 Local Government Act 1972

Resolved, under section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, that 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 Paragraph 3 – Information relating to the financial affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)

19 Retained Firefighters and the Part-Time Workers Regulations Tribunal Outcome

This report informed Members about the outcome of the court case regarding Part-Time Workers (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations.

Resolved that the Fire Authority note the contents of the report

The meeting closed at 4.00 pm

Chair.....

Date.....