

**Minutes of the Meeting of  
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority  
held at The Shirehall, Shrewsbury,  
on Wednesday, 20 December 2006 at 2.00 pm**

**Present:**

Councillors Lt Col Allen, Box, Major Coles, Dr Drummond, Eade, Hartin (Chair), Mrs Holyoak, Hurst-Knight, Hussey, Mellings, Minnery, Morgan (Vice-Chair), Picken, Mrs Swift, Tandy and West

The Chair welcomed Major Adrian Coles, who had joined the Fire Authority following by-elections at Shropshire County Council.

Members and officers then observed a minute's silence in memory of the two firefighters from East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service, who had lost their lives recently in the course of duty.

**1 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Davies.

**2 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**3 Minutes**

Members received the non-exempt minutes of the Fire Authority meeting, held on 18 October 2006.

**Resolved:** *that the non-exempt minutes of the Fire Authority meeting, held on 18 October 2006, 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 11 October 2006.

**Resolved:** *that Members note the minutes of the Standards Committee meeting, held on 11 October 2006.*

## 6 Strategy and Resources Committee

Members received the minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting, held on 16 November 2006. They agreed that they would consider the recommendations at item 6 in those minutes at item 16 on the agenda, with the exception of recommendation 6b.

Having considered that recommendation, Members

**Resolved:**

- a) *To note the minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting, held on 16 November 2006;*
- b) *To agree the Ten Year Capital Programme, subject to any variations, which might be required as a result of the outcome of the current Integrated Risk Management Planning (IRMP) consultation process;*
- c) *To agree the employment of consultants to provide a business case for the relocation of Service headquarters and for the development of the Telford Central site. Also, to provide more accurate financial information on the provision of two new fire stations in Shrewsbury as part of the longer-term IRMP process; and*
- d) *To agree the further development of the existing Capital Reserve to reduce the impact of proposed capital expenditure in 2009/10 and 2010/11.*

## 7 Human Resources Committee

Members received the non-exempt minutes of the Human Resources Committee meeting, held on 21 November 2006 and considered the recommendations at items 6 (the People Strategy), 7 (the Disability Equality Scheme) and 12 (the Member Development Plan).

It was noted that the paragraph on page 2 of the Disability Equality Scheme, which was supposed to be in Punjabi, had translated incorrectly. Officers, therefore, undertook to ensure that this was corrected.

### **Committee Clerk's Note**

The correct version does appear on the Fire Authority's website.

**Resolved:** *that Members*

- a) *Note the non-exempt minutes of the Human Resources Committee meeting, held on 21 November 2006; and*
- b) *Agree the recommendations at items 6, 7 and 12.*



## **8 Audit and Performance Management Committee**

Members received the minutes of the Audit and Performance Management Committee meeting, held on 7 December 2006.

**Resolved:** *that Members note the minutes of the Audit and Performance Management Committee meeting, held on 7 December 2006.*

## **9 West Midlands Regional Management Board**

Members received the minutes of the West Midlands Regional Management Board meeting, held on 27 October 2006, and considered the recommendations at items 49/06.

**Resolved:** *that Members note the minutes of the West Midlands Regional Management Board meeting, held on 27 October 2006, and agree the recommendations at item 49/06.*

## **10 Member Champion Presentations**

### **10a Older People's Champion**

Councillor Mrs Swift gave a short talk on her activities as Member Champion for Older People. She advised that the emphasis was on prevention of fires to enable older people to remain in their homes and live independently. The Older Persons' Officer then gave a presentation on the Service's work with older people. A copy of the presentation slides was tabled and is attached to the signed minutes.

The Chair thanked Councillor Mrs Swift and the Older Persons' Officer for their presentations. He then drew attention to the Service's smoke alarm and home safety risk assessment referral postcards, which Members might wish to hand out when meeting the public.

**Resolved:** *that Members note the talk of the Member Champion for Older People and the presentation of the Older Persons' Officer.*

### **10b Young People's Champion**

Councillor Dr Drummond gave a presentation on her activities as Member Champion for Young People. A copy of the presentation slides was tabled together with the 'Be Cool! Be Safe!' leaflet and a fire appliance money box. Copies of these are attached to the signed minutes.

The Chair thanked Councillor Dr Drummond for her presentation and the Youth Office for her attendance.

**Resolved:** *that Members note the presentation of the Member Champion for Young People.*



## 10c Information and Communication Technology Update

At the last meeting of the Fire Authority it was agreed that Councillor Box, as Member Champion for Information and Communications Technology (ICT), should identify a list of issues to be reported upon in future presentations to Members.

**Resolved:** *that Councillor Box will give future presentations on the following issues:*

- *Securing enhanced levels of resilience to the Service's existing Fire Control fallback arrangements, providing for business continuity, should the necessity arise to evacuate the Shrewsbury site;*
- *Managing effectively the transition, convergence and integration of existing ICT County based assets and data, to the nationally led Firelink and FiReControl projects; and*
- *Addressing the current shortfalls in data and information systems, through the provision of a performance management/information system supported by robust management practices.*

## 11 The Regional Fire Control Centre and Local Authority Controlled Company

This report updated Members on the formation of the Local Authority Controlled Company and requested Members to reach agreement on a number of issues relating to the setting up of the Company.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer advised Members of two minor changes to the Articles of Association, of which he had been notified since writing the report. It was noted that there were concerns about the Fire Authority's retaining sufficient control and the impact on its financial standing. The Memorandum and Articles of Association related merely to the setting up in January 2007 of what would, in effect, be a dormant company. The key document, which would set out how the Company would be run, would be the Members' Agreement. This would be brought to the Fire Authority for agreement in due course.

A discussion then ensued about the appointment of a named person as a director of the company. Having received the advice of the Clerk to the Fire Authority and its Solicitor, the Fire Authority

**Resolved:**

- To note the background information in the report, including a summary of the draft outline business case;*
- To note the discussion summary from the recent Members' Seminar;*
- To agree that Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority participate as a Member of the Company on the terms substantially as outlined in the report and its appendices;*
- To appoint Councillor Hartin as a Director of the Company;*



- e) *To authorise the Chief Fire Officer to take such steps as may be reasonably necessary to finalise documentation in order that the Company may be established by January 2007, including work on producing the Members' Agreement; and*
- f) *That the political group leaders nominate Members to attend the regional Members' seminar on 1 March 2007.*

## **12 Retained Review**

This report informed Members of the progress of the Retained Review Implementation Project and sought approval for re-profiling of future investment in the Retained Service to match latest recruitment targets better. The Retained Review Scrapbook (containing recent press articles) and an excerpt from the November issue of the FRS newsletter were tabled. Copies are attached to the signed minutes.

The Retained Project Manager advised that the extra large cab at Much Wenlock was now operational. Recommendation 2 on the Progress Report Matrix (attached as an appendix to the report) was, therefore, fully implemented. He referred to the new recruitment pack, which had been developed, and it was agreed that he would circulate a copy of this to Members.

A discussion took place regarding the high number of applicants failing the medical test and officers detailed the measures, which had been introduced to combat this.

Having highlighted his concerns about retention in the Retained Service, Councillor Eade suggested that the Fire Authority's Audit and Performance Management Committee look at the issue in more depth and consider how retention might be improved. The Chief Fire Officer, whilst accepting Councillor Eade's concerns, advised that the turnover rate amongst the Retained was 5% per year, as opposed to 4% for wholetime personnel. He appreciated that improvements could always be made but felt that implementation of the Retained Review had been a success and the feedback from Retained stations about the investment made by the Fire Authority was extremely positive.

Members and officers agreed that there was merit in the issue being considered in more depth.

**Resolved:** *that the Fire Authority*

- a) *Note the progress of the Retained Review Implementation Project;*
- b) *Approve re-profiling of future investment in the Retained Service to match updated recruitment targets better; and*
- c) *Task its Audit and Performance Management Committee with considering in depth how retention of Retained employees might be improved.*



The Chair adjourned the meeting at 3.40 pm, at which time Cllr Hurst-Knight left. The meeting reconvened at 3.45 pm.

### **13 Integrated Risk Management Plan Consultation Results**

This report advised Members of the outcome of an extensive three-month period of consultation on the Fire Authority's draft Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) Action Plan for 2007/08, and recommended changes to these documents as a result of that consultation. In addition, the report sought approval for the IRMP Members' Working Group (the Group) to progress the 2007/08 IRMP process to the implementation phase.

The IRMP Manager gave a presentation on the outcome of the consultation. A copy of the presentation slides is attached to the signed minutes.

Councillor Box, as Chair of the Group, thanked Members and officers, and in particular the IRMP Manager, Joe Whelan, for all their hard work during the consultation process.

**Resolved:** *that Members:*

- a) *Note the extent of the consultation exercise undertaken with staff, stakeholders and the public with regard to the draft IRMP Action Plan 2007/08;*
- b) *Approve the changes to the IRMP documents, as proposed by the Group as a result of feedback obtained through the consultation process;*
- c) *Delegate responsibility to the Group to progress the IRMP process, as detailed in Section 10 of the report; and*
- d) *Note the thanks of the IRMP Members to all staff, the Fire Brigades Union and the officers involved in the IRMP consultation.*

Cllr West left the meeting at this point (4.10 pm).

### **14 Review of Members' Allowances**

This report advised Members of the outcome of the review of Members' allowances conducted by the Independent Panel on Members' Allowances.

The Chair felt that it was not appropriate for the increases proposed by the Panel to be phased in as recommended in their report. The allowances received by Members of this Authority were already far less than those received by the majority of other authorities. Furthermore, Members had been bearing an increased workload for some considerable time. He proposed the following amendments to the Panel's recommendations contained within the report:

- The full increase in basic and special responsibility allowances be implemented with effect from 1 April 2006;
- For rail travel, to add in the phrase 'or where otherwise appropriate' after 'where there is a real need to work whilst travelling by rail'; and



- For Independent Members, to delete the phrase 'and provided they have incurred financial loss' after 'subject to application by individuals'.

The Chair moved, and Councillor Picken seconded, all of the recommendations made by the Panel, subject to the above amendments.

Councillor Eade felt that he could not agree to these proposals, because of their effect on the budget and Council Tax. He, therefore, moved, and Councillor Mrs Holyoak seconded, the following amendments:

That the basic allowance and special responsibility allowances remain at their current rate and no backdating takes place.

Councillor Morgan spoke against the amendment moved by Councillor Eade on the grounds that an Independent Panel had reviewed the allowances and recommended the increases. Councillor Box also spoke against the amendment as comparative information showed that there were only two authorities in the entire country, which received lower allowances. The Chair urged Members to vote against Councillor Eade's amendment, as the Panel had made it clear how far behind this Authority had already fallen.

Councillor Eade's amendment was then put to the vote. Four Members voted in favour, eight against and two abstained and the amendment was, therefore, lost.

Highlighting the heavy workload of the Integrated Risk Management Planning Members' Working Group, Councillor Box felt that the Group should receive an additional allowance. He, therefore, asked that consideration be given to this issue when the next review of Members' allowances took place. The Chair agreed that a specific request should be made to the Independent Panel to consider the remuneration of the Group during its next review.

Members were appreciative of the work of the Independent Panel and thanked them accordingly.

The recommendations of the Panel with the amendments proposed by the Chair were then put to the vote. With eight members voting in favour, four against and two abstentions, it was

**Resolved:** *that the recommendations made by the Independent Panel on Members' Allowances be agreed, subject to the amendments put forward by the Chair.*

Councillor Minnery left the meeting at this point (4.25 pm).

## **15 Monitoring of Revenue Budget and Capital Programme, including Prudential Indicators**

This report was part of the regular monitoring process undertaken throughout the year. It detailed the latest position on revenue and capital budgets,



recommending action where necessary, and also monitored the Fire Authority's Prudential Indicators.

**Resolved:** *that Members*

- a) *Note the progress on the revenue budget and the capital programme;*
- b) *Approve the virements, set out in paragraphs 4,5 and 6, noting those already agreed using powers delegated to the Chief Fire Officer and the Treasurer; and*
- c) *Note the Fire Authority's position against Prudential Indicators.*

## **16 Revenue Budgets 2007/08 and Projections for Later Years**

This report brought together the expenditure proposals considered by the Strategy and Resources Committee, updated for recent changes.

**Resolved:** *that Members note the expenditure proposals, set out in the report, and take them into account, when considering the total resources likely to be available, set out in the next report.*

## **17 Expenditure and Available Resources 2007/08 and Later Years**

This report set out the range of potential expenditure and available resources predicted in order that the Fire Authority could decide on its basis of budget consultation, prior to setting its precept in February.

The Treasurer pointed out that, as Members had either agreed, or agreed to include in the budget consultation process, all of the expenditure proposed in previous reports, total expenditure would increase by the £113,000 referred to in section 5 of his report.

It was proposed by the Chair and seconded by the Vice-Chair that an additional recommendation be added to those in the report, namely that the Fire Authority task officers with continuing to identify savings, which would not impact on services, in order to keep the percentage increase in the Council Tax to as near as 4% as possible.

Councillor Eade felt that the Fire Authority needed to look again at its base budget and at the growth items. It was necessary to bring costs and increases down to a reasonable level, so Members should be aiming for an increase of no more than 3.5%.

The recommendations, including the additional one proposed by the Chair and seconded by the Vice-Chair were then put to the vote. With nine Members voting in favour, two against and two abstentions, it was

**Resolved:** *that Members:*

- a) *Include in the budget consultation process all of the expenditure items either agreed or outlined in previous reports;*





- b) *Agree to the use of existing public scrutiny panels as a means of achieving feedback from the public on the budget proposals;*
- c) *Request the Strategy and Resources Committee, at its meeting on 25 January 2007, to propose a final budget package for consideration by the Authority on 14 February 2007; and*
- d) *Task officers with continuing to identify savings in order to keep the percentage increase in the Council Tax to as near as 4% as possible.*

## **18 Falck Exchange Programme**

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer gave a presentation on the Falck Exchange Programme. A copy of the presentation slides is attached to the signed minutes.

**Resolved:** *that Members note the contents of the presentation.*

## **19 Dates for Future Meetings**

This report, which was circulated to those present at the meeting and a copy of which is attached to the signed minutes, advised Members of the dates proposed for meetings of the Fire Authority and its Committees for 2007/2008.

**Resolved:** *that Members agree and note in their diaries*

- a) *The proposed amendments to dates of meetings of the Fire Authority and its Human Resources Committees and to the start time of its Standards Committee, as set out at Appendix A to the report; and*
- b) *The proposed dates for 2007/2008, as set out at Appendix B to the report.*

## **20 Quality of Service Survey Benchmarking Information after the Incident Survey 2005/06**

This report provided benchmarking information to Members of the Fire Authority regarding the 'After the Incident Survey' conducted during 2006.

**Resolved:** *that Members note the contents of the report.*

## **21 Integrated Clothing Project**

This report updated Fire Authority Members on the current position with the Integrated Clothing Project.

**Resolved:** *that the Fire Authority note the latest information available regarding the Integrated Clothing Project.*

Councillor Mellings left the meeting at this point (5.00 pm).



## 22 Co-Responder Legal Case Funding

This report sought the opinion of the Fire Authority in response to the request made by the Employers in paragraph 7 of Circular EMP/15/06 (attached to the report at Appendix A) that Fire and Rescue Services reconsider the manner in which case costs and appeal costs be shared in relation to co-responding.

The Assistant Chief Officer advised that the additional cost to the Fire Authority, if it decided to contribute to the appeal costs, was estimated to be between £1,500 and £2,000. The Fire Authority's Solicitor added that it was not possible to predict the outcome of the appeal. Under the circumstances Members agreed that they had already made a sufficient contribution and, therefore,

**Resolved:** *that the Fire Authority make no further contribution to funding the case and that the National Employers be advised accordingly.*

## 23 Local Government Act 1972

**Resolved:** *that, under section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for items 23a, 24, 25 and 26 on the grounds that they 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 1, 2, 3, 4 and 7.*

### 23a Exempt Minutes (Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4 and 7)

The Chair advised that consideration of the exempt minutes of the Fire Authority meeting, held on 18 October 2006, had inadvertently been omitted from the agenda and would, therefore be considered at this point. A copy of those minutes was circulated to all those present and is attached to the non-exempt signed minutes.

**Resolved:** *that the exempt minutes of the Fire Authority meeting, held on 18 October 2006, be agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.*

## 24 Human Resources Committee Exempt Minutes (Paragraphs 1 and 2)

Members received the exempt minutes of the Human Resources Committee meeting, held on 21 November 2006, and considered the recommendation at item 16.

**Resolved:** that Members

- a) *Note the exempt minutes of the Human Resources Committee meeting, held on 21 November 2006; and.*
- b) *Agree the recommendation at item 16.*



## 25 Phasing Out of Long Service Increment – Update (Paragraph 4)

This report updated the Fire Authority on the current situation regarding the phasing out of the Long Service Increment (LSI), following the decision of the Authority at its meeting on 18 October 2006.

The Assistant Chief Officer updated Members on developments, which had occurred since the report had been written.

Members were concerned about the effect upon the pensions of those employees, who had left the Service since the LSI had been cut or who would leave before July 2007, i.e. the date when Continuing Professional Development payments were likely to be made. They, therefore, asked the Assistant Chief Fire Officer to write to the National Employers, asking how the pensions of such employees would be affected.

**Resolved:** that Members note the report.

The meeting closed at 5.10 pm.

**Chair**.....

**Date**.....

