

**Minutes of the Meeting of  
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority  
Strategy and Resources Committee  
held on Wednesday, 23 September 2009 at 2.00 pm  
at Headquarters, Shrewsbury**

**Present**

**Members**

Councillors Mrs Barrow, Hartin, Minnery (Chair), Picken, Roberts (Vice-Chair),  
Dr Winchester and West

**Officers**

Chief Fire Officer, Corporate Services Manager, Head of Performance and Risk,  
Head of Resources, Management Support Officer, Principal Accountant and  
Programme Manager

**1 Election of Chair**

It was proposed by Councillor West and seconded by Councillor Mrs Barrow

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

There being no other nominations, Councillor Minnery 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 Mrs Barrow and seconded by Councillor Dr  
Winchester

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

There being no other nominations, Councillor Roberts 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**

There were no apologies for absence from Members.  
Apologies for absence had been received from the Treasurer.

#### **4 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **5 Non-Exempt Minutes**

Members received the non-exempt minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting, held on 21 May 2009.

It was proposed by Councillor Minnery, seconded by Councillor West and

**Resolved** that the non-exempt minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting, held on 21 May 2009, be agreed and signed by the Chair as a true record

#### **6 Public Questions**

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

#### **7 Financial Planning Strategy**

This report sought the Committee's approval to submit recommendations to the Fire Authority, firstly on the role of the Integrated Risk Management Planning (IRMP) Working Group in formulating financial service strategy, and secondly on the work programme for service and financial planning leading to budget proposals in December.

In presenting the report the Chief Fire Officer brought Members' attention to the projections set out on page 2. He also referred to the section on Grant Losses and advised that he was attempting to set up a meeting of the Budget Working Group in October. He would invite local Members of Parliament to this meeting in order to start the lobbying process about the grant formula on behalf of the Fire Authority.

The Chair asked what progress the IRMP Team had made in examining fire cover in Telford and Shrewsbury, including new shift patterns described in the Audit Commission publication 'Rising to the Challenge' (referred to in the minutes of the Committee's last meeting). The Chief Fire Officer responded that the Team had started this work and it would be included in future strategies. So far, however, nothing had been identified, which would give immediate savings. The Head of Performance and Risk added that officers were continuing to explore opportunities with the Family Group and other Brigades, which would be incorporated into the five-year plan.

It was proposed by Councillor West, seconded by Councillor Roberts and

**Resolved** that the Committee recommend to the Fire Authority that it:

- a) Extend the terms of reference of the IRMP Working Group to cover consideration of all major issues effecting service levels and the financial position of the Authority, in particular potential service developments and reductions, efficiencies and major capital projects;
- b) Amend the reporting process of the IRMP Working Group so that it reports directly to the Strategy and Resources Committee;
- c) Request the Strategy and Resources Committee to examine how short-term expenditure reductions might be made in 2010/11, with least impact on service delivery;
- d) Request the Strategy and Resources Committee to build up service delivery from a zero base and produce a set of what-if service reductions, which would protect core service delivery;
- e) Add capital investment plans in Telford to the 2012/13 programme, and Wellington to the 2013/14 programme;
- f) Request officers to seek to fund any minor new developments from existing budgets; and
- g) Explore ways of lobbying to improve the current grant distribution to this Authority with any new formula to be used from 2011/12 onwards

## **8 Response to Consultation on 'Consolidation of Council Tax Demand Notice Regulations including Efficiency Information'**

This report proposed responses to a Communities and Local Government consultation on the Council Tax (Demand Notices) (England) Regulations due to be issued in 2009.

It was proposed by Councillor West, seconded by Councillor Mrs Barrow and

**Resolved** that the Committee respond as set out in paragraph 4 of the report

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

This report provided an overview of all the capital schemes within the Brigade and their current status.

The Programme Manager brought Members' attention to the under-spends and recommendations set out in Section 4. An increase of £15,000 for the boat vehicle was requested so that a larger vehicle could be purchased. This would allow increased storage for kit and provide room for staff to change.

A lengthy discussion took place about the breathing apparatus upgrade scheme and the reason for its delay. Members noted that officers did not wish to sacrifice the enhanced safety feature of the Service's current apparatus in order to gain additional technological functionality.

West Midlands Regional services were currently jointly moving to a new set and there had been some criticism that this Service had not joined the collaborative opportunity. Officers had not done so, however, because the upgrade did not incorporate the enhanced safety feature, which this Service has in its breathing apparatus sets and around which many of the Service's safety procedures are built.

Members noted that the hold-up in the appliance replacement scheme had resulted from delays from the chassis suppliers and the liquidation of one of the large bodybuilding companies. Of the five appliances, which should already have been delivered, one would be ready in early October, two later in October and the remaining two in November.

It was proposed by Councillor West, seconded by Councillor Picken and

**Resolved** that the Committee:

- a) Note the progress so far on current schemes; and
- b) Agree that the recommendations on those schemes highlighted in Section 4 of the report be made to the Fire Authority

## **10 Financial Performance to July 2009, including the Annual Treasury Report 2008/09**

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

The Principal Accountant brought Members' attention to the table in Section 4 of her report and in particular the £120,000 shortfall in investment interest and the £200,000 saving in pay, which would be ongoing. It was noted that the figures in the bottom part of the table on page 3 were out of alignment.

Referring to the section on Prudential Indicators, the Principal Accountant advised that the Fire Authority continued to operate well within the indicators it had set.

A discussion then took place about the optimum means of financing the Headquarters refurbishment in the current economic climate. Members were keen to ensure that the Fire Authority made the best use of its finances and, therefore, tasked officers with exploring all opportunities with the Authority's treasury management advisors at Shropshire Council.

It was proposed by Councillor Mrs Barrow, seconded by Councillor Picken and

**Resolved** that the Committee:

- a) Note the position of the revenue budget;
- b) Approve virements to the revenue budget where requested  
*(as set out in section 4 of the report);*

- c) Note the position on the capital programme;
- d) Note performance against prudential indicators;
- e) Note the annual review of treasury activities for 2008/09;
- f) Note performance in Treasury Management to date in 2009/10; and
- g) Note the information provided on balance sheet items

## **11 Use of Capital 2009**

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

**Resolved** that the Committee note the report

Councillor Hartin left the meeting at this point (2.45 pm).

## **12 Asset Stewardship Report**

This report advised of the current condition of assets owned by the Authority and changes, which had occurred in the financial year 2007/8. This was a summary of information previously provided in the form of budget working papers, capital appraisals and capital budget reports, together with additional information.

A discussion took place about the potential value of the Telford site, if the Fire Authority were to locate the facilities elsewhere. All agreed that the sale of land in the current economic climate would not be prudent.

Councillor Hartin returned to the meeting at this point (2.55 pm).

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

## **13 Response to consultation on Fire and Resilience Programme in-service management**

This report outlined the proposed response to the above consultation document.

It was proposed by Councillor Mrs Barrow, seconded by Councillor Picken and

**Resolved** that the Committee agree to the consultation response without amendment

## **14 Corporate Risk Management Summary**

This was the latest of the regular Risk Summary Reports to the Strategy and Resources Committee. As previously, these reports are 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 progress reported related to that achieved since the last Annual Summary Report, received by the Fire Authority at its meeting in July 2009.

The Head of Performance and Risk pointed out that no new threats or opportunities had been added to the Corporate Risk Register since the last summary report but risk 60 had been closed. The impact of changes at Shropshire Council had not been as great as it could have been and the Executive Group had, therefore, agreed to close this risk.

Members discussed the possibility of strike action in the light of what was happening within other Fire and Rescue Services, the effect, which it could have upon this Service, and the plans in place to mitigate the risks.

The Committee also considered risk 66 relating to the FireLink / FireControl projects and the possibility that the projects might be abandoned or changed dramatically. The Chief Fire Officer informed Members that, in light of the age of the Service's existing mobilisation system, officers were developing a business case for a new system, possibly linking with Hereford and Worcester. Such a system would provide enhanced resilience and would be affordable. As soon as officers had fleshed out the business case they would bring a report to Members for consideration.

**Resolved** that the Committee note the report

## **15 Local Government Act 1972**

It was proposed by Councillor Picken, seconded by Councillor Mrs Barrow and

**Resolved** that, under the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded 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 12A to the Act, by virtue of paragraph 4

## **16 Corporate Risk Management Summary**

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

**Resolved** that the Committee note the report

The meeting closed at 3.10pm.

**Chair**.....

**Date**.....