

**Minutes of the Meeting of
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority
held at The Civic Offices, Telford,
on Wednesday, 18 October 2006 at 2.00 pm**

Present: Councillors Box, Davies, Eade, Hartin, Mrs Holyoak, Hurst-Knight, Hussey, Minnery, Morgan, Picken, Mrs Swift and West

Councillor David Lloyd

The Chair paid tribute to Councillor David Lloyd, who had died recently. Councillor Lloyd had served on the Fire Authority for many years and was involved in the work of the Human Resources Committee and the Integrated Risk Management Planning Members' Working Group. He had always had the best interests of the Fire Authority and the Service, particularly its people, at heart and he would be sadly missed. On a personal note the Chair said that he had never met a kinder, gentler, more engaging man.

All those present at the meeting observed a minute's silence as a mark of respect for Councillor Lloyd.

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Allen, Mellings and Tandy.

2 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3 Minutes

Members received the non-exempt minutes of the Fire Authority Annual Meeting, held on 19 July 2006.

Resolved: *that the non-exempt minutes of the Fire Authority Annual Meeting, held on 19 July 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 Review of Scheme of Delegation to Officers and Standing Orders

Members received the amendments to the Scheme of Delegation to Officers and Standing Orders which were considered at, and stood adjourned from, the Annual Meeting of the Fire Authority.

Resolved: *that Members agree the amendments to the Fire Authority's Scheme of Delegation to Officers and Standing Orders (set out at paragraphs 3, 4, 5 and 6 of the report), which stood adjourned from the last meeting of the Authority.*

6a Member Champions

This report asked Members to consider and agree Role Descriptions for Member Champions. It also detailed the proposed timetable for their reports to be presented to the Fire Authority.

The Corporate Services Manager advised that the Role Descriptions had been drawn up and agreed with each Member Champion, taking into account any comments they had made. It was noted that Councillor Davies would not be able to attend the December meeting of the Fire Authority. Members, therefore, agreed that he, as Member Champion for Learning and Development, should present his report to the February 2007 meeting.

Subject to the foregoing, it was

Resolved: *that Members*

- a) *Agree the Role Descriptions for its Member Champions (attached at Appendix A to the report); and*
- b) *Note the proposed timetable for presentation of their reports to the Fire Authority (attached at Appendix B).*

6b Civil Resilience Update

This report gave an update on Councillor Picken's activities as the Member Champion for Civil Resilience over the last six months and outlined the proposed activities for the remainder of the year.

Following Councillor Picken's presentation Members raised a number of issues relating to civil resilience and, in particular, about the link with the National Mutual Aid Agreement and Incident Command arrangements. The Chair then thanked Councillor Picken for his report.

Resolved: *that Members note the content of Councillor Picken's report.*

6c Information and Communications Technology Update

Councillor Box gave a presentation on his activities as Member Champion for Information and Communications Technology (ICT). A copy of the presentation slides is attached to the signed minutes.



A discussion took place as to whether the issues raised by internal audit were being dealt with. It was noted that a new Brigade Order had been written, which put in place key ICT strategies, systems and processes to meet the Audit Commission's requirements. Councillor Box added that it was his intention to report back in more depth on various ICT issues. Members agreed that he should identify a list of possible issues and report back to the December meeting of the Fire Authority.

Resolved: *that Members note the content of Councillor Box's presentation.*

7 Audit and Performance Management Committee

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

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

8 Strategy and Resources Committee

Members received the non-exempt minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting, held on 21 September 2006, and considered the recommendations at items 7 and 8, the reports relating to which were attached.

A discussion ensued as to whether the Fire Authority's target of £252,000 for efficiency savings was achievable without cuts in services. The Treasurer assured Members that an efficiency saving could not, by definition, reduce the level of service provided. Members were unable, however, to agree a common approach to efficiencies and, therefore, decided that point c) in recommendation 7 of the minutes should be deferred for consideration until item 11 on the agenda – Annual Efficiency Statements.

Resolved: *that Members:*

- a) *Note the minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting, held on 21 September 2006; and*
- b) *Agree the recommendations at items 7 and 8, with the exception of 7 c).*

9 West Midlands Regional Management Board

Members received the minutes of the West Midlands Regional Management Board (WMRMB) meeting, held on 5 June 2006, and considered the recommendations at items 14/06, 18/06, 20/06, 21/06 and 22/06. Although these recommendations were noted at the Annual Meeting of the Authority in July, it was necessary for Members to agree them.

Resolved: *that Members agree the recommendations at items 14/06, 18/06, 20/06, 21/06 and 22/06 in the minutes of the West Midlands Regional Management Board meeting, held on 5 June 2006.*



Members also received the minutes of the WMRMB Annual Meeting, held on 28 July 2006, and considered the recommendations at items 30/6, 31/06, 33/06, 34/06 and 35/06.

Resolved: *that Members:*

- a) *Note the minutes of the West Midlands Regional Management Board Annual Meeting, held on 28 July 2006;*
- b) *Agree the recommendations at items 30/06, 33/06, 34/06 and 35/06; and*
- c) *Agree the proposed schedule of meetings referred to at item 31/06.*

In addition Members were requested to confirm that Councillors Allen (Conservative), Box (Labour) and Mellings (Liberal Democrat) be substitute representatives on the WMRMB:

Resolved: *that Councillors Allen (Conservative), Box (Labour) and Mellings (Liberal Democrat) be substitute representatives on the WMRMB.*

10 Prudential Guidelines 2006/07

This report informed Members of the Fire Authority's progress against its agreed prudential guidelines for 2006/07. It also reported the actual prudential guideline figures for 2005/06.

The Principal Accountant drew Members' attention to the fact that the proportion of invested money at variable rates had exceeded the 20% guideline on 31 March 2006. This was in the Fire Authority's interests and further work would be undertaken to establish the most advantageous percentage for 2007/08.

Subject to the foregoing, it was

Resolved: *that Members*

- a) *Note that the guidelines had been complied with during 2005/06; and*
- b) *Note the position for 2006/07.*

11 Annual Efficiency Statements

This report informed Members of the latest requirements of the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) for submitting annual efficiency statements (AESs) and sought approval for the Strategy and Resources Committee to agree the next submission.

Referring to the debate, which had taken place at item 8 regarding efficiencies, the Treasurer advised that it was good corporate governance to challenge reports and figures put forward by officers. He gave the background to setting the target of £252,000 and agreed with Members that the Fire Authority's past history of achieving efficiencies did make it difficult to find further efficiencies. It was, however, the duty of officers to continue to do so. He was, therefore, comfortable with the figure put forward.



Having agreed that it was important to have had the debate, Members accepted the advice of the Treasurer and

Resolved: *that the Fire Authority*

- a) *Set a target of £252,000 for efficiencies;*
- b) *Delegate final consideration of the annual efficiency statement submission to the Strategy and Resources Committee; and*
- c) *Note the latest DCLG requirements and the efficiencies now being reported for 2006/07.*

12 Road Traffic Collision Spending

This report updated Members on progress made on the Road Safety Strategy, since the last meeting of the Fire Authority, and brought forward proposals for implementing further strands of the Strategy with immediate effect. The report also discussed the impact that this would have on Service budgets.

Members were supportive of the proposals within the report and agreed the funding required to implement them. They were, however, keen for the situation to be monitored to quantify the effect of the Strategy on reducing road traffic collisions and the number of attendances made by the Service.

Resolved: *that Members*

- a) *Note the content of the report; and*
- b) *Approve funding as proposed in the report.*

13 National Mutual Aid Protocol for Serious Incidents

This report sought the approval of the Fire Authority for participation in a National Mutual Aid Protocol, aimed at ensuring the ready availability of fire and rescue service resources in the event of large-scale emergencies, wherever they occurred.

Some Members were concerned about the liability of the Fire Authority in the event of a major incident and the lack of clarity within the Protocol in this respect.

On a vote with seven Members voting for, three against, and two abstentions, it was

Resolved: *that Members approve the participation of the Fire Authority in the National Mutual Aid Protocol for Serious Incidents.*

14 Mutual Insurance

This report outlined current developments in procuring insurance cover. It asked the Fire Authority if it wished to consider seeking further information on the current proposal to establish a "Guaranteed Indemnity Mutual" (GIM).

The Vice-Chair was concerned about the number of unknowns surrounding the GIM. Members agreed that they did not currently have sufficient information, upon which to make an informed decision about participation. Councillor Minnery also had his doubts about the actual savings, which could be made by this Fire Authority, and whether sufficient information would be available within the next few months.



It was, therefore, proposed by Councillor Morgan, seconded by Councillor Minnery and

Resolved: *that the Fire Authority:*

- a) *Retain a watching brief for the present regarding joining an English Fire and Rescue Authority GIM; and*
- b) *Task officers with reporting back to the Fire Authority's Strategy and Resources Committee, as and when further information became available.*

The Chair adjourned the meeting at this point (3.35 pm) for a comfort break and the meeting resumed at 3.45 pm.

15 Regional Fire Controls Update

The Chief Fire Officer advised that the business case for the Regional Control Centre had been received the day before and officers were currently analysing it. The analysis and legal documents already received would be brought to the half-day seminar to be held for Members during November.

Resolved: *that Members note the update given on the agenda and the verbal report provided by the Chief Fire Officer.*

16 Firebuy and the Integrated Clothing Project

This report updated Members on the current position with Firebuy Ltd. and the Integrated Clothing Project.

Resolved: *that Members note the current position with Firebuy Ltd. and the Integrated Clothing Project.*

17 Retained Review Implementation Progress

This report informed Members of the progress of the Retained Review Implementation Project.

The Retained Project Manager provided an update on the current recruitment position, outlined in the table on page four of his report, and advised that there had been a 100% increase in the number of applications forms sent out in September and October of the current year compared with the same months the previous year.

The Chair congratulated the Retained Support Officers on their achievements to date and said how much they were appreciated by retained duty staff. He welcomed Retained Support Officers Glyn Davies (based at Ludlow) and Tony Talbot (based at Market Drayton), who gave a presentation on their work. A document supporting their presentation, entitled 'Retained Support Officers Work Study' was tabled (a copy of which is attached to the signed minutes).

Councillor Minnery asked that Members' satisfaction at the roll-out of the programme be minuted. He also conveyed his thanks to the staff involved and to the Retained Review Implementation Group, chaired by Councillor Box. The Chair thanked the Retained Support Officers for their presentation.

Resolved: *that Members note the progress of the Retained Review Implementation Project.*



18 Fire and Rescue Service Performance Framework 2006/07 - Overview

This report provided Members with a summary overview of the Fire and Rescue Performance Framework 2006/07, introduced by the Audit Commission. The Fire Authority's 'Self-Assessment: Direction of Travel and Use of Resources' document was tabled, a copy of which is attached to the signed minutes.

The Vice-Chair congratulated officers on the Self-Assessment, which had involved a considerable amount of work.

Resolved: *that Members note*

- a) *The contents of the report; and*
- b) *That they might be called upon by auditors to provide evidence qualifying the Fire Authority's performance.*

19 Quality of Service Survey after the Incident Survey 2005/06

This report presented to Members the actions being taken by officers, following publication of the above report, which had previously been presented to the Audit and Performance Management Committee.

Members agreed that the positive feedback to all operational staff should take the form of a newsletter from the Chair, thanking staff on behalf of the Fire Authority, for their work.

In response to a question regarding benchmarking the Chief Fire Officer replied that other fire authorities did participate in the survey. He undertook to bring a report to the next meeting of the Fire Authority, subject to availability of the benchmarking information.

Resolved: *that*

- a) *Officers ensure that suitable positive feedback is provided to all operational staff;*
- b) *Officers review the information currently provided and improve this, if necessary;*
- c) *Officers review the process of post-fire support to communities and implement improvements, where this is cost-effective; and*
- d) *A further audit be carried out each year and that provision be identified in the budget for this purpose.*

20 Integrated Risk Management Planning

The Chief Fire Officer provided a verbal update on the latest developments in the Fire Authority's Integrated Risk Management Planning. He commented upon the involvement of all Members in the consultation process and advised that the Audit Commission had been impressed with Member engagement in that process.

Resolved: *that Members note the verbal report of the Chief Fire Officer.*



21 Fire Conference 2006 Telford

The Chief Fire Officer advised that he would be facilitating, and the Service's Retained Project Manager would be presenting at, a workshop on the Retained Review. As the cost of the workshop was minimal, he proposed that the Retained Review Implementation Group attend.

Resolved: *that Members*

- a) *Note the update given on the agenda; and*
- b) *Agree that the Retained Implementation Group attend the workshop.*

22 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 23, 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.*

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

Members received the exempt minutes of the Fire Authority Annual Meeting, held on 19 July 2006.

Resolved: *that the exempt minutes of the Fire Authority meeting, held on 19 July 2006, be agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.*

24 Strategy and Resources Committee (Paragraphs 3 and 4)

Members received the exempt minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting, held on 21 September 2006.

Resolved: *that Members note the exempt minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting held on 21 September 2006.*

25 Civil Contingencies Act 2004 (Paragraph 7)

This report updated Members on compliance with the requirements of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.

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

26 Phasing Out of Long Service Increment (Paragraph 4)

This report sought the opinion of Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority in response to a request made by the Fire Brigades Union (FBU).

Resolved unanimously: *that the Fire Authority*

- a) *Not agree to the request of the FBU;*
- b) *Act in accordance with the legal advice provided;*



- c) *Write to the Employers' Side of the National Joint Council, the Department for Communities and Local Government and the Local Government Association Fire Forum, requesting a speedy resolution of the issue; and*
- d) *Copy the letter to the West Midlands Regional Management Board to be included as an item of correspondence on the agenda for the next meeting.*

The meeting closed at 5.10 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.

