

Minutes of the Meeting of Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority Meeting held at The Shirehall, Shrewsbury, on Wednesday, 14 June 2006 at 2.00 pm

Present: Councillors Lt Col Allen, Davies, Dr Drummond, Eade, Hartin, Mrs Holyoak, Hussey, Hurst-Knight, Lloyd, Minnery, Morgan, Picken, Tandy and West

Before the meeting commenced, the Chair welcomed Councillor John Hurst-Knight, from Shropshire County Council, as a new member to the Fire Authority. Councillor Hurst-Knight, who is a member of the Community Liaison Panel, has taken the place of Councillor Benyon, who is unwell. Members agreed that a message of support should be sent to Councillor Benyon.

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Box, Mellings and Mrs Swift.

2 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3 Minutes

Members received the minutes of the Fire Authority meeting, held on 10 May 2006.

Resolved: *that the minutes of the Fire Authority meeting, held on 10 May 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 Strategy and Resources Committee

Members received the minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting, held on 25 May 2006 and considered the recommendation at item 7.

Resolved: *that Members:*

- a) *Note the minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting, held on 25 May 2006; and*
- b) *Agree the recommendation at item 7.*



6 Statement on Internal Control

This report, which was presented by the Treasurer, asked the Fire Authority to approve formally the Statement on Internal Control (SIC) 2005/06, which must be included as part of the Statement of Accounts 2005/06. It also asked Members to approve formally the SIC Improvement Plan 2006/07.

The Treasurer pointed out that, although the SIC was to be included in the Statement of Accounts, it had been brought to the meeting as a separate agenda item because of its importance. The Treasurer also advised that there had been positive feedback from the internal auditors and that a formal report, relating to their findings was to be produced.

Resolved: *that Members:*

- a) *Accept and sign off the Statement on Internal Control 2005/06; and*
- b) *Approve the SIC Improvement Plan 2006/07.*

7 Final Accounts 2005/06

This report updated Members on the 2005/06 closure of accounts, and asked the Fire Authority formally to approve the Statement of Accounts 2005/06, attached as an appendix. Amendments to pages 30 and 37 of the appendix to the report were tabled at the meeting (copies of which are attached to the signed minutes). The Treasurer explained that these were technical, minor amendments and did not affect the figures within the report, merely the notes.

Brief explanations of each section of the Statement of Accounts were provided by the Principal Accountant, who also clarified the following issues that had been raised at the Members' briefing session on 7 June.

In relation to page 22, Income on Other Services had dropped from £432k to 196k due to a Transitional Grant being awarded in 2004/05. The decrease in income from Fire Certificates from £5k to £1k was due to changes in legislation, which meant that fewer fire certificates were being issued.

In relation to page 28, Debtors had increased from £760k to £905k because of Transfer Values In, which were due from the pension schemes of other brigades, for operational personnel transferring into the Brigade. The Principal Accountant advised that interest was payable on the amounts due from the date employees transferred in and the Fire Authority would not, therefore, be out of pocket.

One Member commented that he had found the briefing session to be very useful and it was good to have further explanation of the documents in advance of the main meeting. The Member also commented on the balance sheet and the extent to which liabilities exceeded assets.

Resolved: *that Members approve the Statement of Accounts 2005/06, attached as an appendix to the report, subject to the incorporation of the Statement on Internal Control and Audit.*

8 Medium Term Financial Plan 2006/07 to 2008/09

This report sought the approval of Members for the contents and publication of the Fire Authority's Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP).



One Member asked what the review strategy for the MTFP was. The Chief Fire Officer responded that the MTFP would be reviewed through the Strategy and Resources Committee and the timetable for review would be linked to the budget setting process and production of the Performance Plan. The Member also pointed out the importance of updating the Plan with new information.

Resolved: *that Members:*

- a) *Note the current background to, and purpose of, the MTFP;*
- b) *Agree the contents of the MTFP; and*
- c) *Agree to the annual updating and publication of the MTFP in conjunction with the Performance Plan.*

9 Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy Benchmarking of Expenditure

This report informed Members of the findings of a preliminary analysis of comparative financial information for Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs) reported by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA). It also sought guidance from Members as to the means by which they would wish further, more detailed examination of the information to be progressed.

The Chief Fire Officer informed the meeting that CIPFA were to carry out a more detailed analysis, on behalf of the Audit Commission, for the Use of Resources assessment before the end of July.

Resolved: *that Members:*

- a) *Note the findings of analysis conducted to date;*
- b) *Instruct officers to carry out further analysis of the financial information, focussing upon those areas where the expenditure of the Fire Authority is above that of similar FRAs; and*
- c) *Delegate to its Strategy and Resources Committee responsibility for receiving this further information, and for then considering a course of action for proposal to the Fire Authority.*

10 Efficiencies – Analysis of Notable Practice Guide

This report provided Members with information concerning an analysis of notable practice case studies from other Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs), as compiled by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM), the Local Government Association (LGA) and the Chief Fire Officers' Association (CFOA). It also sought Members' guidance on which of the case studies they felt warranted further examination in the interest of identifying further efficiency savings to fund service improvements.

A Member asked how feedback would be given to the Fire Authority. The Chief Fire Officer responded that this would be done through the Strategy and Resources Committee.

Resolved: *that Members*

- a) *Note and confirm the findings of the analysis to date;*
- b) *Agree the proposals as to which case studies require further exploration; and*
- c) *Agree that the method of analysis conducted in this case is suitable for use with further examples of notable practice.*



11 Performance Plan

This report advised Members of the statutory obligation set out in the Local Government Act 1999 that required fire and rescue authorities to prepare and publish an annual Performance Plan by no later than the end of June each year. Members were asked to consider and approve the proposed draft plan for 2006 – 08.

The Fire Authority debated the setting of the targets for BVPI 143(i) with several Members commenting that they felt morally uncomfortable with setting a target of greater than zero for fire deaths per year. Whilst these moral concerns were accepted by the Fire Authority, it was agreed that such targets needed to be set and that they should be realistic and achievable.

One Member felt strongly that the target for this year should be set at 0 but other Members pointed out that it would have to be set at 1, as there had already been a fire death this year.

Following comments from the Chair, it was proposed by Councillor Tandy and seconded by Councillor Picken that the following amendment to the second recommendation in the report be made:

That the Fire Authority agree the BVPI targets, set out in Appendix D of the report, and specifically that the targets for BVPI 143 (i) - number of deaths arising from accidental fires in dwellings per 100,000 population be set at 1 for 2006/07 and 0 for 2007/08 and 2008/09.

On a vote with 14 Members voting for and 0 voting against, it was

Resolved: *that Members*

- a) *Approve the proposed amendment to the Corporate Aims and Objectives*
- b) *Agree the BVPI targets, set out in Appendix D of the report, and specifically that the targets for BVPI 143 (i) - number of deaths arising from accidental fires in dwellings per 100,000 population – should be set at 1 for 2006/07 and 0 for 2007/08 and 2008/09.*

12 Fire and Rescue Service National Framework 2006-2008

This report informed Members of the release of the final Fire and Rescue National Framework 2006-08 document.

Resolved: *that Members note the release of the final Fire and Rescue National Framework 2006-08.*

The meeting closed at 2.45 pm.

CHAIR:.....

DATE:.....

