

**Minutes of the Meeting of  
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority  
held at the Shirehall, Shrewsbury  
on Wednesday, 11 June 2008, at 2.00 pm**

**Present**

Councillors Lt Col Allen, Box, Major Coles, Dr Drummond, Eade, Gibbon, Greenaway, Hartin, Mrs Holyoak (Vice-Chair), Hurst-Knight, Dr Jones, Mason, Mellings, Minnery, Picken and West (Chair)

The Chair informed the meeting that Councillor Groom had been elected Mayor of the Borough of Telford & Wrekin for 2008/09 and had therefore stood down from the Fire Authority. Councillor Adrian Williams, Independent Member, Telford & Wrekin Council will replace him on the Fire Authority, with effect from 23 May 2008. A letter of thanks will be sent to Councillor Groom from the Fire Authority.

**1 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Williams.

**2 Declarations of Interest**

There were no Declarations of Interest.

**3 Non-Exempt Minutes**

Members received the non-exempt minutes of the Fire Authority meeting, held on 30 April 2008.

Councillor Major Coles abstained from approving the minutes of the Fire Authority meeting held on 30 April 2008 as he had not attended the meeting.

**Resolved** that the non-exempt minutes of the Fire Authority meeting, held on 30 April 2008, be signed by the Chair as a correct record

**4 Public Questions**

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

**5 Strategy and Resources Committee**

Members received the minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting, held on 22 May 2008.

Councillor Major Coles referred to item 8 in the Strategy and Resources minutes in relation to Personal Accident insurance and Fire Authority membership. The Chair advised that this issue is currently being looked into by officers.

**Resolved** that the minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting, held on 22 May 2008 be noted.

## **6 Review of the Code of Corporate Governance**

This report requested Members to agree and adopt the proposed Code of Corporate Governance 2008/09, attached as an appendix to the report.

Councillor Major Coles commented that he had found the layout of the document showing the alterations very clear and helpful. The Head of Risk Management said that credit for this should go to the Corporate Services Manager as he had adopted the format that she had used last year.

Councillor Holyoak commented that the document was now very positive.

**Resolved** that Members agree and adopt the Fire Authority's proposed Code of Corporate Governance 2008/09, attached as an appendix to the report.

## **7 Statement of Accounts 2007/08**

This report informed Members of the 2007/08 closure of accounts, and asked the Fire Authority to approve formally the Statement of Accounts 2007/08, attached as an appendix to the report.

The Treasurer explained that £4,000 had been reclassified as part of the net underspend rather than expenditure slipping into 2008/09. This means that the figure in recommendation ii) should be £258,000 instead of £262,000. This relates to the explanatory foreword on page 3 of the Statement of Accounts. This also that £49,000 could be added to the capital reserve if recommendation iii) is approved.

The Treasurer also pointed out that in paragraph 4 i) and ii) of the report, reference is made to approving virements from the General Reserve. This should be virements from the General Fund. The General Reserve is used for specific purposes such as the Retained Duty System pensions, whereas the General Fund is the monies that are left at the end of a year where income has exceeded expenditure. £258,000 would be added to the budget to complete those programmes that were not completed last year.

With regard to recommendation v), the Treasurer advised that the outcome of the Retained Duty System pension scheme will not be known until September 2008 at the earliest. It has been confirmed that RDS firefighters with service between 2000 -2006 will be eligible for the pension scheme however it is impossible to put a figure on the actual cost. The Treasurer would therefore not recommend putting everything into the General Reserve in an effort to offset this, as costs could be manageable especially if the Government provide funding or borrowing is approved.

The Treasurer referred to paragraph 4 part iv) of the report and highlighted the impact that inflation will have on the cost of fuel and utilities etc. He also informed members that the firefighters pay settlement had been agreed at 2.45% which was well within the 3.5% that had been set aside. In relation to the capital budgets referred to in part v) of paragraph 4 expenditure has slipped but investments have also increased.

The Treasurer also advised that recommendations for spending monies obtained from Government grants currently sitting in creditors and receipts in advance, will be brought to the Fire Authority as and when appropriate.

Councillor Box asked if the underspend referred to was on the budget of £3.5 million. The Treasurer explained that the £258,000 has slipped across the board and therefore should be looked at in the context of the £20 million budget, which would be reasonable in the view of the auditors. The actual underspend is £100,000. Specific reasons have been identified for some of it and these have been taken account of in this year's budget.

Councillor Major Coles referred to page 33 of the Statement of Accounts and asked for an explanation of the £4,000 of bad debt that had been written off. The Treasurer explained that debt is mainly written off for special service provision where the recipient of the service can not be contacted. The Principal Accountant explained that the figure of £4,000 is a cumulative provision and £230 has actually been written off this year.

Councillor Box proposed, Councillor Minnery seconded and it was

**Resolved** that the Fire Authority

- i Approve the Statement of Accounts 2007/08, attached as an appendix to the report, subject to the incorporation of the Annual Governance Statement and audit;
- ii Approve virements of £258,000 for expenditure slipped to 2008/09;
- iii Approve virements of £51,000 for the items in paragraph 4ii;
- iv Approve an additional £49,000 contribution to the capital reserve;
- v Leave the General Reserve unchanged pending further information;
- vi Note the current position on delivering the capital programme; and
- vii Note the movements in Balances.

## 8 Annual Governance Statement

This report asked the Fire Authority to formally approve the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) 2007/08, which must be included as part of the Statement of Accounts 2007/08. It also asked Members to formally approve the AGS Improvement Plan 2008/09.

**Resolved** that the Fire Authority

- a) Accept and sign off the Annual Governance Statement 2007/08; and
- b) Approve the AGS Improvement Plan 2008/09.

## 9 Annual Report 2007/08

This report sought Member approval of the draft contents and format of the Fire Authority Annual Report 2007/08.

Councillor Minnery pointed out some typos in the document and some areas where acronyms had been used without an explanation of what they stood for. The Programme Manager assured members that the document would be thoroughly reviewed before publication. Councillor Minnery also commented that the Annual Report was a vast improvement.

Councillor Box asked if the document would be downloadable from the website. The Programme Manager said that it would be and a printed version would also be available if required.

Councillor Hartin referred to page 14 of the Annual Report and asked if the good news stories contained in the report had been publicised anywhere else. The Chief Fire Officer advised the meeting that Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service were being viewed as a best practice example for the Leonardo project with several fire and rescue services visiting Shropshire next week. He also advised that the Assistant Chief Fire Officer was currently in Slovenia, as Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service and Falck had been nominated for an award in relation to Leonardo. The Service is also currently considering applying for Beacon Status in relation to Leonardo.

Councillor Mellings commented that the Annual Report was very positive and a good opportunity to reinforce the fire safety message. He also suggested that a list of Fire Authority members be included in the document in order to promote accountability.

**Resolved** that the Fire Authority

- a) Consider and approve the draft contents and format of the proposed Annual Report (as appended to the report); and
- b) Delegate final approval of the Annual Report contents to the Chief Fire Officer following consultation with the Chair prior to release by no later than 30 June 2008.

## 10 Medium Term Financial Plan

The report sought the Fire Authority's approval to the contents and publication of the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for 2008/09 to 2011/12.

Councillor Minnery commented that it was one of the best MTFPs that he had read.

Councillor Hartin said that as there had been comprehensive discussion of the MTFP at the seminar immediately prior to the Fire Authority meeting, Members had no further questions as they felt fully informed.

Councillor Box proposed, Councillor Minnery seconded and it was

**Resolved** that the Fire Authority

- a) Approve the MTFP attached as an appendix to this report; and
- b) Delegate authority to the Chief Fire Officer and Treasurer, in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair, to make minor amendments to the MTFP prior to publication if necessary.

## 11 Anti Fraud and Corruption Policy

The Fire Authority's Anti Fraud and Corruption Strategy is communicated to all members and staff, and is also available on the Authority's website at

[www.shropshirefire.gov.uk/engine/managing-the-service/policies-and-strategies.htm](http://www.shropshirefire.gov.uk/engine/managing-the-service/policies-and-strategies.htm)

The Strategy has been reviewed by Officers, and the processes detailed within the document are unchanged. Therefore with the exception of budget information and employee numbers, no changes are proposed following the review.

Councillor Box asked if any fraud or corruption had taken place. The Principal Accountant explained that there had been some incidents which had required investigation and records of these had been kept.

Councillor Major Coles asked if members should be kept informed of these incidents. The Principal Accountant advised that any major incidences would be brought to the Fire Authority for information. The Chief Fire Officer then gave a possible example concerning bonus points being claimed from garages whilst filling up brigade vehicles.

**Resolved** that the agenda paragraph be noted

## 12 **FiReControl Local Authority Controlled Company 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.

Councillor Major Coles referred to the recruitment of staff on a temporary basis to cover the transition to the Regional Control Centre (RCC). He suggested that there could be another way to cover this if any leave etc was stopped during the transition period, staff could start straightaway. Councillor Allen said that the provision of extra staff would not cost the Fire Authority anything. It is also necessary as staff will need to undergo training beforehand. He assured members that the RCC Directors are working to ensure that no time or money is wasted.

Councillor Hartin asked if the choice of the facilities management company had been dictated by the Government and also if any further information had been received about the use of the building. Councillor Allen said that there is still no further information available as to why the building has been designed in the way that it has. He also said that the facilities management company currently has defence contracts and can therefore provide the service at a much cheaper rate than any of its competitors.

Councillor Box asked about the testing of staff during recruitment. Councillor Allen confirmed that staff will need to be trained and practised before the transition to the RCC. In addition, existing procedures in fire and rescue services will need to be adapted to work with the RCC. The Chief Fire Officer clarified that any existing Control staff will need to apply and go through the selection tests for the new Control Centre. There are currently approximately 160 people employed in Fire Control across the region and it is anticipated that this will reduce to just over 80. Potential difficulties could arise from the fact that there are currently more supervisory positions at present than there will be in the RCC.

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

## 13 **Fire and Rescue Service National Framework 2008-11**

This report advised Members of the recently released Fire and Rescue Service National Framework 2008-11.

The Chief Fire Officer advised Members that the Assistant Chief Fire Officer will be analysing the changes in the National Framework and will bring a report to both the Strategy and Resources Committee and the Fire Authority outlining the changes and their implications. The National Framework is also linked to the new Equality and Diversity Strategy. A report on this will be brought to the next meeting of the Fire Authority.

**Resolved** that the Fire Authority note the contents of the appended National Framework document.

#### **14 Integrated Risk Management Plan Members' Working Group Update**

This report provided Members with details of the timetable for the 2009/10 Integrated Risk Management Planning (IRMP) presentations and an invitation to attend the fire station IRMP presentations. In addition, a verbal update was given at the meeting by the IRMP Manager on the outcomes of the IRMP Members Working Group meeting held on 10 June 2008, in respect of progress on the 'Fire Cover Review for the remaining areas of Shropshire'

A formal report on the Fire Cover Review for the remaining areas of Shropshire will be brought to the July meeting of the Fire Authority. It appears that there will be negligible cost savings and the enhancement of the role of resilience stations is being looked at.

**Resolved** that the Fire Authority:

- a) Note the dates of the IRMP Station Presentations, and invitation to attend in support of the IRMP Members Working Group; and
- b) Note the verbal progress report on the Fire Cover Review for the remaining areas of Shropshire.

#### **15 European Commission Lifelong Learning Programme (Leonardo da Vinci)**

This report advised Members of the completed 2007/08 Leonardo Staff Exchange Programme and the successful securing of funds to facilitate a further exchange programme during 2008/09.

Councillor Hartin asked for further details about the visit to Finland to look at Regional Control Centres. The Chief Fire Officer confirmed that the opportunity to participate in this visit had been offered to, and taken up by, officers from other authorities in the West Midlands region.

**Resolved** that the Fire Authority

- a) Note the completion of the 2007/08 Leonardo Staff Exchange Programme; and
- b) Having considered the information provided, agreed to nominate 3 members of the IRMP Working Group to participate in the 2008/09 programme, visiting the Falck organisation in Denmark.

**16 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)

**17 Exempt Minutes**

Members received the exempt minutes of the Fire Authority meeting, held on 11 June 2008.

**Resolved** that the exempt minutes of the Fire Authority meeting, held on 11 June 2008, be signed by the Chair as a correct record

The meeting closed at 3.30 pm

**Chair**.....

**Date**.....