

**Minutes of the Meeting of
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority
held at Shropshire Education and Conference Centre, Shrewsbury,
on Wednesday, 16 July 2008 at 2.00 pm**

Present

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

1 Election of Chair

It was proposed by Councillor Hartin and seconded by Councillor Holyoak

That Councillor West be elected Chair of the Fire Authority to hold office until the Annual Meeting in 2009.

There being no other nominations, Councillor West was duly elected Chair.

On taking the Chair, Councillor West commented that he had enjoyed the last 12 months as Chair and thanked Members for their support throughout the year.

2 Appointment of Vice-Chair

It was proposed by Councillor Minnery and seconded by Councillor Allen

That Councillor Holyoak be appointed Vice-Chair of the Fire Authority to hold office until the Annual Meeting in 2009.

Councillor Minnery proposed that Standing Order 2 Part 2 'In the year when the Chair is a Member of Shropshire County Council the Vice Chair shall be a Member of Borough of Telford & Wrekin and vice versa' be suspended until the next Annual Meeting of the Fire Authority. This was seconded by Councillor Allen.

Resolved that Standing Order 2 Part 2 be suspended until the next Annual Meeting of the Fire Authority.

There being no other nominations, Councillor Holyoak was duly appointed Vice-Chair.

3 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Box.

4 Declarations of Interest

Members were reminded that they should declare any personal and/or prejudicial interests at this point and that they should leave the meeting before any item, in which they had a prejudicial interest, was discussed.

Councillor Jones declared a personal interest in Item 19 – Wellington Fire Station Co-location with Telford College of Arts and Technology (TCAT) as her husband is employed at TCAT.

5 Minutes

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

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

Councillor Hartin congratulated the Chief Fire Officer on being awarded the Queens Fire Service Medal (QFSM) in the Queen's Birthday Honours. Councillor Major Coles also offered his congratulations to the Chief Fire Officer.

6 Public Questions

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

7 Member Appointments and Constitution of Committees 2008/09

This report asked the Fire Authority to agree appointments to Committees, appointment of Member Champions and the Terms of Reference for each of its Committees. It also sought the appointment of a representative on the Local Government Association (LGA) Annual Assembly and Fire Service Forum and asked the Authority to endorse the existing appointment of Councillor Box to the LGA Fire Services Management Committee.

Councillor Jones informed the meeting that an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) had been carried out on the report and this had highlighted the fact that the only Committee which did not have a female sitting on it was the Appeals Committee. This issue will be raised with the Leader of the Main Opposition Group with a view to changing the membership of this Committee. The EQIA also recommends that both constituent authorities be asked to take wider representation issues into account when making nominations to the Fire Authority.

Resolved that the Fire Authority

- a) Note the allocation of seats on its committees to political groups (as set out in Appendix A to the report), including the resolution that under section 17 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, the political balance requirements of that Act do not apply to the Fire Authority's representation on the West Midlands Regional Management Board;
- b) Agree the appointment of Members to serve on committees and of Substitute Members for the West Midlands Regional Management Board, as set out in Appendix B, with Councillor West replacing Councillor Allen on the Urgency Committee;
- c) Agree the appointment of existing Member Champions, as set out in Appendix C, and appoint Councillor Holyoak as Learning and Development Champion;
- d) Agree the appointment of Councillor Jones as Equality and Diversity Champion;
- e) Agree the Terms of Reference for each Committee, as set out in Appendix D;
- f) Appoint Councillor West as its representative on the Local Government Association (LGA) Annual Assembly and Fire Service Forum; and
- g) Endorse Councillor Box to continue his existing appointment on the LGA Fire Services Management Committee,

8 Scheme of Delegation to Officers and Standing Orders

The purpose of this report was to review the Fire Authority's Scheme of Delegation to Officers and Standing Orders and to agree proposed amendments.

Councillor Major Coles asked if the only changes to be made to the Standing Orders were those outlined in the report. The Management Support Officer confirmed that this was correct.

Resolved that the Fire Authority

- a) Note the review of the Scheme of Delegation to Officers and Standing Orders relating to Contracts; and
- b) Agreed the proposed amendments to the Standing Orders for the Regulations of Proceedings and Business and the Financial Regulations Standing Orders.

9 Audit and Performance Management Committee

Members received the minutes of the Audit and Performance Management Committee meeting, held on 29 May 2008.

Resolved that the Fire Authority note the minutes of the Audit and Performance Management Committee meeting, held on 29 May 2008.

10 Human Resources Committee

Members received the non-exempt minutes of the Human Resources Committee meeting, held on 5 June 2008 and considered the recommendations at items 4 and 5.

A letter from West Mercia Constabulary confirming that the Chief Constable has approved the employment of Community Support Officers as Retained Duty System Firefighters which related to item 5 on the Human Resources Committee minutes was tabled to the meeting (copy attached to signed minutes).

Resolved that the Fire Authority note the non-exempt minutes of the Human Resources Committee meeting held on 5 June 2008 and agree the recommendations at items 4 and 5.

11 Standards Committee

Members received the minutes of the Standards Committee meeting held on 16 June 2008.

Resolved that the Fire Authority note the minutes of the Standards Committee meeting held on 16 June 2008.

12 West Midlands Regional Management Board

Members received the minutes of the West Midlands Regional Management Board (WMRMB) meeting, held on 24 April 2008 and considered the recommendations at items 6/08, 8/08, 9/08 and 10/08.

Councillor Hartin asked that Members inform the Management Support Officer if they are unable to attend WMRMB meetings so that the attendance of Substitute Members can be arranged.

Resolved that the Fire Authority note the minutes of the WMRMB meeting, held on 24 April 2008 and agreed the recommendations at items 6/08, 8/08, 9/08 and 10/08.

Councillor Hartin referred to item 5/08 in the WMRMB minutes and asked for an update on the situation with Regional Control Centre staffing. The Chief Fire Officer confirmed that a survey of Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) Control Room staff had been undertaken and that at this stage indications were that approximately 50% of these staff were considering applying for posts with the Regional Control Centre.

13 Member Champion Presentation

Councillor Dr Drummond gave a presentation on her activities as Young People's Champion and circulated her presentation slides (a copy of which are attached to the signed minutes).

Resolved that Members note the presentation of the Young People's Champion.

Councillor West gave a presentation on his activities as Vulnerable Persons Champion and circulated his presentation slides (a copy of which are attached to the signed minutes).

Resolved that Members note the presentation of the Vulnerable Persons Champion.

14 Financial Performance to June 2008

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

The Principal Accountant reported that the figure for Control in the table on page 2 of the report should be shown as a minus figure. The Principal Accountant also reported that the vacancies figure had increased by £10,000 and was now at £30,000 for the first quarter of 2008/09.

Councillor Major Coles referred to the issue of bad debt provision and the suggestion that he had made at the Fire Authority meeting in June 2008 that a deposit or cash on delivery should be requested before special services are undertaken. The Treasurer responded that this suggestion had been noted but as special service provision normally arises under emergency conditions it would be difficult to request payment at the time of delivery.

Councillor Major Coles also referred to the revenue budget which he noted had no provision for Member insurance. This issue had been raised at the June 2008 meeting of the Fire Authority and was of concern to Councillor Major Coles as he considered that there were potentially greater risks to Members of the Fire Authority due to the nature of the activities involved such as attending exercises.

The Chair informed the meeting that the issue had been investigated and it had been established that Telford & Wrekin Council Members are covered by the insurance provided by their authority but Shropshire County Council Members are not covered for any outside bodies that they sit on. The Treasurer is currently in the process of obtaining quotes for insuring Shropshire County Council Members. Councillor Hurst-Knight asked who would pay for the insurance. The Chair replied that the Fire Authority would have to pay as it is a separate legal entity. The Authority approved the

Treasurer, after consulting the Chair, obtain personal accident insurance, incur the necessary expenditure and inform members of the terms

Councillor Hartin asked for clarification of the transfer of borrowing approval from ICT to appliances. The Treasurer explained that the Authority needs to approve virement from the ICT schemes to the appliances and maintain borrowing for appliances due to their increasing cost, which is an effect of rising steel prices. It is prudent to maintain the remaining borrowing approval from the ICT schemes in case contingencies arise in the future.

Councillor Eade commented that he found the format of the report very clear and an improvement on previous reporting methods.

Resolved that the Fire Authority

- a) Note the position of the revenue budget;
- b) Approve virements to the revenue budget where requested;
- c) Note the position on the capital programme;
- d) Approve changes to the schemes contained within the capital programme;
- e) Note performance against prudential indicators;
- f) Note the information provided on balance sheet items; and
- g) Note the key financial indicators to be considered by Audit and Performance Management Committee.

15 Annual Efficiency Statements: Backward Looking 2007/08 and Forward Looking 2008/09

This report sought the approval of the Authority to the submission of its Backward Looking Annual Efficiency Statement (AES) for 2007/08, and Forward Looking AES for the current year.

Councillor Jones asked the Treasurer to explain how the £201,000 efficiencies estimated for 2008/09 would be made up. The Treasurer explained that £100,000 of vacancy efficiencies had been put forward and used in the 2007/08 budget. An extra £60,000 of vacancy efficiencies had been identified in 2008/09 and this, together with the £41,000 saving from the rearrangement of duties in collaboration with partners and the £100,000 that has been earmarked for redirection within the Retained service make up the £201,000 efficiencies that will be submitted to Communities and Local Government.

Resolved that the Fire Authority agree to submit the Annual Efficiency Statements set out in the appendix.

16 Integrated Strategic Planning Process 2009/10

This report outlined how the Service will continue to align service, financial and improvement planning, the result of which will culminate in the publication of the 2009/10 Corporate Plan.

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer highlighted the interdependencies between Committees as shown in the Gantt Chart at Appendix C to the report.

Resolved that the Fire Authority

- a) Endorse the process and note the key milestones; and
- b) Recognise the interdependency behind service, budget and improvement planning.

17 Consultation on the Distribution of Fire Capital Grant

This report sought approval to formal comments responding to the Communities and Local Government (CLG) consultation paper on distributing £78 million of capital grant in 2009/10 and 2010/11.

Councillor Hartin commented that option C as referred to in the proposed submission to CLG seems to be the most obvious solution to the issue of grant distribution. Councillor Hartin also requested that reference be made to the additional cost of appliances in the submission to CLG. The Treasurer confirmed that this issue would be included in the response sent.

Resolved that the Fire Authority agree to submit comments as set out in the appendix to the report.

18 Integrated Risk Management Planning Outcomes of the Fire Cover Review for Shropshire

This report provided Members with details of the outcomes from the 'Fire Cover Review for the remaining areas of Shropshire'. The report also set out early work on developing an enhanced support role for resilience and other stations.

In addition to the report, a short presentation covering the most salient points of the Fire Cover Review, was given to the meeting by the Integrated Risk Management Planning (IRMP) Manager to assist Members in their decision making. (A copy of presentation slides is attached to the signed minutes).

Councillor Hurst-Knight expressed concern that consultation with the firefighters is ongoing. The IRMP Manager confirmed that consultation sessions had been held at 9 stations so far and that the sessions were being used to develop local risk knowledge.

Councillor Hartin referred to the IRMP session which he had attended at Ludlow on the previous evening and discussions that had been had about using skills already existent in station for example utilising Retained Duty System firefighters farming experience to deal with large animal rescue. The IRMP Manager responded that the areas identified were significant roles. He also stressed that these were initial thoughts and the IRMP consultation sessions provide an opportunity for stations to input their ideas.

Councillor Minnery as Chair of the IRMP Members' Working Group acknowledged that these recommendations had been brought to the Fire Authority before the end of the consultation period but there were two reasons for doing so. Namely that the issues had been reported in the press and had 'set hares running' which meant that issues needed to be clarified and that the case for retaining the stations identified in the report was so strong that the decision could be made before the consultation was concluded.

Resolved that the Fire Authority

- a) Note the conclusion of the outcomes from the Fire Cover Review for the remaining areas of Shropshire; and
- b) Approve the recommendations of the IRMP Members Working Group that:
 - i. The current level of fire cover provision is maintained;
 - ii. The role of resilience stations is developed; and
 - iii. Further work is carried out into the provision of additional support for incidents.

19 Wellington Fire Station Co-location with TCAT

This report advised the Authority of the current position with proposals to co-locate Wellington Fire Station in to the new college planned by TCAT.

Councillor Eade commented that he believed there were issues with access onto highways from the current site and asked if there had been any consideration given to where the fire station would be relocated. Councillor Eade also asked if the Learning Skills Council (LSC) had any reservations about the co-location and whether the estimated £150,000 - £200,000 for temporary accommodation would come from the revenue or capital budget.

The Chief Fire Officer responded that access had been considered and suitable areas of the site had been identified. Consideration also has to be given to Retained Duty System and their access to the station when responding. With regard to any reservations that the LSC may have had, the Chief Fire Officer confirmed that the LSC money would not be spent on the fire station but there would be several areas of the building that would be identified as dual use.

The Treasurer reported that the funding for the temporary accommodation is not an issue as it could be treated as capital if it was used for over a year. Councillor Eade expressed concern about this amount coming from the revenue budget. The Treasurer said that he would not wish to borrow to cover the amount but the capital reserve might be a source of funding if the scheme went forward.

Resolved: that the Fire Authority

- a) Note the provisions of this report;
- b) Confirm the principle of transferring our Wellington site to TCAT in exchange for a 50-year lease on a new building and the provision of a site suitable for construction of a fire station on termination. Full authorisation only to be made subject to a fully costed report being provided; and
- c) Authorise Officers to continue work on the development of this scheme.

Councillor Minnery and Councillor Major Coles left the meeting at this point (3.35 pm)

20 Fire and Rescue Service Equality and Diversity Strategy 2008-2018

This report brought to Members attention the recently launched national Equality and Diversity Strategy for the Fire and Rescue Service for the next ten years; the main areas covered by the strategy, and our responsibilities as defined by it.

Councillor Eade commented that he thought some of the targets would be challenging to attain.

Resolved that the Fire Authority

- a) Note the introduction of the national Equality and Diversity Strategy 2008-2018; and
- b) Approve the draft action plan and ask the Service's Equality and Diversity Steering Group to populate the detail including defining responsibilities and timescales with a view to these then being incorporated into the Corporate Equality Plan as appropriate.

Councillor Major Coles returned to the meeting at this point (3.40 pm)

21 FiReControl Local Authority Controlled Company

Regional Control Centre Regional Business Case Annex

On 7 July 2008, after the Fire Authority papers were prepared, the Regional Business Case Annex for the Regional Control Centre was published. A verbal update on progress with the Business Case was given to the meeting and copies of the Business Case Annex (which had been circulated to Members electronically) were tabled to the meeting.

The Chief Fire Officer drew the Fire Authority's attention to pages 9 and 27 of the Business Case which highlighted resilience payments and staffing costs.

The Chief Fire Officer also informed Members that a detailed study of the Business Case will be undertaken by Officers and their findings will be reported to the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting on 18 September 2008.

Resolved that the Fire Authority note the verbal update.

22 Partnerships Annual Report

This report provided Members with an overview of the partnerships currently held on the Partnership Register and underlined any outstanding achievements through partnership working. The report also highlighted the good practice that was identified during the internal audit by Shirehall and informed the Fire Authority of future developments.

Councillor Jones commented that the report provides confirmation of anecdotal evidence that Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service is held in high regard by its partners.

The Chief Fire Officer thanked the Programme Support Officer for the work that had been done on partnerships.

Councillor Hurst-Knight echoed the previous comments and cited an example of partnership working in Bridgnorth where the Personal Safety Task Group, chaired by Assistant Divisional Officer Quinn is working to reduce the number of motorcycle fatalities. Councillor Hurst-Knight asked that the firefighters involved in the work be thanked. It was agreed that the Chair should write to thank the staff involved.

Resolved that the Fire Authority note the contents of the report.

23 Annual Report

The Authority's Annual Report and Medium Term Financial Plan have recently been released and can be accessed at the Service's website. A summary of the Annual Report has been published and copies were issued to Members at the Authority meeting. The summary Report has also been issued to key external stakeholders / stakeholder groups.

Councillor Major Coles asked about the distribution of the Annual Report. The Assistant Chief Fire Officer explained that 5,000 copies of the new format Annual Report had been produced at a cost of £1,750. These will be distributed to key stakeholders such as the Audit Commission, and to the public through fire stations, libraries and the outreach vehicle.

Resolved that the Fire Authority note the verbal update.

24 European Commission Lifelong Learning 'Leonardo' Gold Award

The Service together with its Danish partner Falck, Europe's largest provider of fire and rescue services, have clinched the prestigious European Commission Lifelong Learning 'Leonardo' Gold Award for quality in an international project. The Anglo-Danish project, funded through the EC's Lifelong Learning Programme, is a unique and innovative partnership that to date has enabled over 50 staff from both organisations to undertake one-week exchange placements, with a further 20 placements planned for 2008. Over 200 short-listed international projects from 27 European countries were judged by the Commission, with the top three nominations in five categories recently invited to Ljubljana to attend an awards ceremony hosted by Slovenia who were holders of the 2008 European Union Presidency.

The Fire Authority congratulated all the Officers that had been involved with the Leonardo exchange programme with Councillor Allen requesting that particular thanks be recorded to the Assistant Chief Fire Officer who had originated the project.

Councillor Major Coles asked if a press release had been issued regarding the award. Officers confirmed that one would be done.

Resolved that the Fire Authority note the verbal update.

25 Corporate Risk Management Summary

This was the third Annual Corporate Risk Management Summary Report to Members. These reports aim to inform Members about the corporate level risk management work that has been undertaken during the previous twelve months, as well as summarising the risk environment in which the Service is currently operating.

The Head of Risk Management drew the Fire Authority's attention to the 'average risk level of all currently 'live' threats' and the 'Average level of opportunity' as detailed on page 15 of the report and the changes that had occurred in these figures.

Resolved that the Fire Authority note the contents of the report.

26 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 22, 23 and 24 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 of confidential information.

27 Corporate Risk Management Summary – Exempted Information (Paragraphs 3 and 4)

The Authority received an open session report, at item 25, which summarised its current exposure risk to corporate risk. This report supplements the report at item 25 as it contains information that is exempt from publication by virtue of the Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12a.

Resolved that the Fire Authority note the contents of the report, in conjunction with the Corporate Risk Management Summary discussed at item 25.

28 Human Resources Committee (Paragraphs 1, 2 and 4)

Members received the exempt minutes of the Human Resources Committee meeting, held on 5 June 2008.

Resolved that the Fire Authority note the exempt minutes of the Human Resources Committee meeting, held on 5 June 2008.

29 Brigade Managers’ Employment Panel (Paragraphs 1, 2, 3 and 4)

29 Members received the minutes of the Principal Officers’ Employment Panel meeting held on 8 April 2008.

Resolved that the Fire Authority note the minutes of the Principal Officers’ Employment Panel meeting held on 8 April 2008.

29a Members received the minutes of the Brigade Managers’ Employment Panel meeting, held on 11 June 2008 and considered the recommendation on page 3 of the minutes.

Councillor Dr Drummond left the meeting at this point (4.30 pm)

Resolved that the Fire Authority note the minutes of the Brigade Managers’ Employment Panel meeting, held on 11 June 2008, and agree the recommendation on page 3 of the minutes but that no funding be provided for the use of consultants.

The meeting closed at 4.45 pm

Chair.....

Date.....