

**Non-Exempt Minutes of the Meeting of
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority
held on Wednesday, 11 February 2009, at 2.00 pm
at Shropshire Education and Conference Centre, Shrewsbury**

Present

Councillors Box, Major Coles, Gibbon, Greenaway, Hartin, Mrs Holyoak (Vice-Chair), Hurst-Knight, Dr Jones, Mason, Mellings, Minnery, West (Chair) and Williams

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Dr Drummond and Picken.

2 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.

There were no Declarations of Interest.

3 Non-Exempt Minutes

Members received the non-exempt minutes of the Fire Authority meeting, held on 17 December 2008.

Resolved that the non-exempt minutes of the Fire Authority meeting, held on 17 December 2008, 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 22 January 2009 and considered the recommendations at items 5 and 10.

Resolved that the Fire Authority note the minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting held on 22 January 2009 and agree the recommendations at items 5 and 10.

5a Human Resources Committee

Members received the public summary of the exempt minutes of part 2 of the Human Resources Committee meeting held on Thursday 4 December 2008, which commenced at 2.00 pm.

Resolved that the Fire Authority note the public summary of the exempt minutes of part 2 of the Human Resources Committee held on Thursday, 4 December 2008.

6 Changes to Member Appointments and Meeting Dates

This report requested the Fire Authority to agree to changes in member appointments following the resignation of Lieutenant Colonel (Lt Col) Allen from the Fire Authority. It also requested the Fire Authority to decide how the Authority meetings that were due to be held in June and July 2009 should be rescheduled.

Resolved that the Fire Authority:

- a) Agree Councillor Kiernan's appointment to Committees as set out in paragraph 4 of the report;
- b) Appoint Councillor Gibbon as Asset Management and Procurement Champion;
- c) Endorse Councillor West's continuation in the role of Director of the West Midlands Fire and Rescue Services Regional Control Centre Limited Company;
- d) Agree that the role of Alternative Director be left vacant until the Annual General Meeting of the Fire Authority;
- e) Appoint Councillor Minnery to the Urgency Committee to replace Councillor West; and
- f) Agree Option B, as set out in paragraph 5 of the report, with regard to rearranging Fire Authority meetings.

7 Member Champion Reporting Dates

Members received a schedule of proposed dates for Member Champions to present their annual reports to the Fire Authority.

Resolved that the Fire Authority agree the Member Champion presentation proposed for 29 April 2009 and that a revised timetable should be brought back to the Fire Authority to reflect the changes to meeting dates agreed at Agenda Item 6.

It was proposed and agreed that Agenda Items 8, 8a and 9 should be considered together by the Fire Authority.

8 Revenue Budget and Capital Programme – Budget Recommendations 2009/10

The report incorporated the recommendations of the Strategy and Resources Committee on 22 January 2009 for this Authority's 2009/10 Budget and precept, and updated the figures for any changes that have taken place since then.

The Treasurer informed the meeting of two amendments to this report. These were that the figure showing the Scheme cost change in the table in paragraph 4 of the report should read +490 rather than +90 and that in Appendix A to the report, in the appendix to report 11, the figure for the Shrewsbury Project in 2010/11 should read 3,090 not 2,600. The Treasurer also apologised for the late addition of paper 8a to the agenda.

The Treasurer drew Members' attention to the predicted surplus / deficit amounts as shown in paragraph 6 of the report and provided a reassurance that the Fire Authority is equipped to deal with these.

Councillor Major Coles referred to Report 9 and asked what arrangements had been made for a leaflet to accompany Council Tax bills. The Treasurer explained that a draft leaflet had been produced, which was similar to those provided over the last few years. As in previous years, the leaflet emphasises the fire safety aspect of the Service's work.

Councillor Hartin referred to Appendix C of Report 8, which contained feedback from the Consultation on the Budget Strategy. Councillor Hartin highlighted the fact that the feedback from the public scrutiny panels had shown that Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority has a clear budget strategy, which is supported by the public stakeholder panels.

Resolved that the Fire Authority:

- i Approve its capital programme as set out in Appendix A to the report;
- ii Agree the provisions and reserves set out in Appendix A and paragraph 5 of the report;
- iii Agree the revenue budgets set out in paragraph 6 of the report; and
- iv Approve the key finance principles for service and financial planning set out in paragraph 8 of the report.

8a Minimum Revenue Provision Policy 2009/10

The Fire Authority considered a report in October 2008, which detailed changes to the regulations governing the amount of revenue provision in respect of capital financing. Members approved the resulting Minimum Revenue Provision policy for 2007/08 and 2008/09. This statement recommended that the policy is continued into 2009/10.

Resolved that the Fire Authority approve the Minimum Revenue Provision policy for 2009/10.

9 Revenue Budget: 2009/10 Precept

This report sought Fire Authority approval to a budget for 2009/10; Council Tax levels for 2009/10; and precepts on billing authorities and related matters. The Authority is required to issue a precept before 1 March 2009 and all items in the "Recommendations" must be taken together. For ease of reference the key elements of the budget are set out in the appendices to the report.

Resolved that the Fire Authority:

- a) Approve that a net budget requirement is set at £20,846,418 (calculated in accordance with the provisions of Section 43(4) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992);
- b) Approve a total precept of £12,807,411 to be levied on the billing authorities;
- c) Approve a Council Tax resulting in a basic amount of Council Tax at Band D calculated in accordance with the provisions of the 1992 Act (Section 44) of £81.45;
- d) Approve, under Section 40(2) of the 1992 Act:
 - i The amount of Council Tax calculated for each category of dwelling in each billing authority's area, as follows:

Band	2008/09
	Council Tax
	£ p
A	54.30
B	63.35
C	72.40
D	81.45
E	99.55
F	117.65
G	135.75
H	162.90

- ii The amount calculated (in accordance with Section 48 of the 1992 Act) as payable by billing authorities for 2009/10, as follows:

Council	Precept £
Shropshire Council	8,714,956
Telford & Wrekin Council	4,092,455
	<hr/>
	12,807,411

- e) Approve that the Treasurer:
 - i Issue the necessary precepts and information to the billing authorities in accordance with the provisions of Chapter IV of Part 1 of the 1992 Act and be authorised to make any amendment to the above to reflect the final approved budget, after consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Fire Authority; and

- ii Is authorised to make payments required from, and to, reserves and provisions within the approved budget strategy and within the Authority's Financial Rules, in conjunction with the Chair and Vice-Chair;
- f) Approve the revenue budget and pensions account illustrated in Appendix A, for budgetary control in accordance with approved standing orders;
- g) Approve the Best Value Accounting – Code of Practice Provisional Revenue Account at Appendix B; and
- h) Approve the schedule of reserves and provisions at Appendix C.

10 Annual Review of Charges – Special Services

This report presents proposed increases in charges made for special services.

Councillor Major Coles asked about the issuing of fire certificates and if there was the facility to buy extra copies of the certificates at cheaper prices. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer (DCFO) explained that new fire certificates are no longer issued. Councillor Major Coles then asked how he would know if premises were safe if no fire certificate is displayed. The DCFO explained that the responsibility for ensuring the safety of premises is now on the owner / occupier following the Regulatory Reform Act. The role of the Fire Service is to audit the risk assessments and fire safety work undertaken by the owner / occupier and there was no requirement to issue certificates.

Resolved that the Fire Authority approve that the proposed charges for special services be applied from 1 April 2009.

11 Audit Commission National Report – Rising to the Challenge: Improving Fire Service Efficiency

This report informed Members of national research conducted by the Audit Commission and reported during December 2008 in their publication entitled 'Rising to the Challenge: Improving Fire Service Efficiency'. It also provided a brief analysis of which areas for forcing out further efficiencies (as identified by the Commission) are available to Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority.

The Chief Fire Officer (CFO) informed the Fire Authority that Performance Assessment results had been announced but were embargoed until Thursday 12 February. The CFO then talked through the report and provided a brief commentary on each of the efficiency savings areas identified in the report. The CFO particularly drew Members' attention to page 4 of the report and the issue of Retained Duty System (RDS) staff. Councillor Box commented that what was being held up as 'best practice' in Merseyside was actually far less cost effective than our RDS system.

He also commented that it could be seen that the Fire Authority was 'a slave to its own success' as it has already implemented many of the ideas outlined in the report and therefore may find it harder to gain further efficiencies.

Resolved that the Fire Authority:

- a) Note the contents of the report; and
- b) Agree the proposed approach for further analysis and reporting of the Audit Commission report.

12 Fire Authority Corporate Plan 2009/10

This report sought Member approval of the proposed contents of the Fire Authority's 2009/10 Corporate Plan. The Corporate Plan will be supplemented by an Annual Report 2008/09, which will be brought before Members in at the Annual General Meeting for consideration and approval.

Councillor Major Coles referred to Appendix A to the report and asked if Strategic Aims 1 and 2 should refer to 'risk to life *and injury*' and 'Protect life *and injury*'. The Assistant Chief Fire Officer responded that this was an issue of semantics. The Fire Authority agreed, as they felt that it was clear that the phrase 'risk to life' encompassed fatalities as well as injury risk.

Resolved that the Fire Authority:

- a) Consider and approve the Strategic Aims and Corporate Objectives (Appendix A) and Improvement Priorities (Appendix B);
- b) Delegate authority to the Strategy and Resources Committee to consider and agree:
 - (i) Performance Targets for 2009/10;
 - (ii) Other supplementary information to be included within the Corporate Plan; and
 - (iii) Final layout and publication of the Corporate Plan; and
- c) Receive, at the Annual General Meeting, the proposed Annual Report 2008/09.

13 Integrated Risk Management Planning Members' Working Group Update

This report presented Members with a summary of the Public Stakeholder Scrutiny Panels conducted by Opinion Research Services during January 2009. A full presentation including feedback and the questions and answers posed at the two consultations held in Shrewsbury and Ludlow was delivered by officer to the Integrated Risk Management Planning (IRMP) Members' Working Group on 22 January 2009.

In addition an update on the Station Risk Analysis Work currently being completed by station staff was presented to the Group. Members are requested to note the main outcomes from the Panels and the progress being made with the Station Risk Analysis Returns.

The Head of Risk Management reported that of the number of outstanding Station Risk Analysis returns had reduced since the report was written and the number outstanding was now in single figures.

Councillor Hartin referred to the attendance at the Public Stakeholder Scrutiny Panels, which was lower than the normal number of 16 attendees. Councillor Hartin asked if the Panels would revert back to half days next year. The CFO explained that, as the issues being consulted upon were smaller this year, the consultation had been combined with the budget consultation, however it was probable that the consultation would revert to two separate half-day sessions next year.

Councillor Hurst-Knight asked if those stations whose returns were still outstanding had a history of not returning consultation documents. The Head of Risk Management explained that this was the first time that the Station Risk Analysis exercise had been undertaken. A lot of information had been provided to the stations and it had been expected that there would be a low number of returns, however officers were pleased with the high quality of returns and the level of detail included in them. The Head of Risk Management further explained that this was a different type of consultation, with each station being asked to return one piece of work rather than individual questionnaires.

Resolved that the Fire Authority:

- a) Note the summary of responses to the Public Stakeholder Panels; and
- b) Note the progress being made with Station Risk Analysis Returns.

14 Member Champion Presentations

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

Councillor Hartin referred to the mass decontamination exercise that had been held 'behind closed doors' at Nesscliffe Camp and asked if any modelling was being done to take into account that an incident of this nature would probably occur in a public environment. The DCFO explained that this was being taken into consideration but, as it was the first time that all three emergency services had undertaken an exercise together, it was important to avoid showing the public the unavoidable mistakes that can occur when so many agencies practice together for the first time. The 'casualties' who were played by young people and off-duty firefighters had been instructed to be as difficult as possible so these issues are being addressed and generally the Police were excellent at controlling the difficult people.

Councillor Major Coles asked why there was not much reference to terrorism in the presentation. Councillor Minnery responded that all the areas covered in the presentation do relate to possible terrorist incidents, such as mass decontamination and urban search and rescue, but he had not wished to dwell on the issue of terrorism.

Councillor Hartin asked when the response to the Pitt Review was likely to be received. The DCFO explained that the Government has given £2 million to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to look at the response. In the meantime, water / flood rescue provision within Shropshire will move forward but on smaller scale.

Resolved that Members note the presentation of the Civil Resilience Champion

15 FiReControl and FireLink Update

This report updated Members on current activity surrounding the national FiReControl and FireLink projects.

Councillor Hartin commented that the general feeling of Members is that the Fire Authority is going in the right direction in relation to the Regional Control Centre (RCC). He expressed concern at the call for extra staff and cited the fact that the RCC would have eight trainers for approximately 80 staff, which is the same number of trainers that Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) has for 600+ staff. The DCFO commented that, if the need for extra staff has been identified, then this needs to be funded by the Government not by the Fire Services.

Councillor Box asked for further clarification on the Airwave issue outlined in paragraph 6 of the report. The DCFO explained that a comparison of the current running costs and those that would be incurred under the new agreement was being undertaken. The DCFO is seeking assurance that SFRS will not be required to pay extra for what will be an identical radio system.

Councillor Williams asked what the implications would be of SFRS not moving to the RCC. The DCFO explained that SFRS has no choice in the matter, as it is a legal and best value requirement.

Resolved that the Fire Authority:

- a) Note the contents of the report;
- b) Task officers with ensuring that any additional costs for running the Regional Control Centre do not impact on the tax payers of Shropshire (paragraph 4.4); and
- c) Task the Chief Fire Officer with pressing Communities and Local Government for further information on funding arrangements for replacement of the Regional Control Centre mobilising system in eight years' time (paragraph 4.6)

16 Wellington Accommodation Update

A decision on funding for the Telford College of Arts and Technology (TCAT) development is still awaited from the Learning and Skills Council, and is now expected in March 2009. TCAT are progressing with the project and have submitted a detailed planning application for the new college buildings, including use of our land and construction of a new fire station. TCAT are also submitting a planning application for the use of the Telford Whitehouse Hotel as temporary fire station accommodation. TCAT have agreed to underwrite the costs incurred in reaching a legal agreement on the transfer of land in the event that the scheme does not progress and work on this is ongoing.

The Head of Resources clarified that the Whitehouse Hotel application is for use of a currently disused area of the hotel, which will become conferencing facilities when the fire station leaves, and not for the use of bedrooms at the hotel.

Councillor Hartin asked if the value-for-money issue raised by the Learning and Skills Council had been resolved. The Head of Resources reported that TCAT had reached a satisfactory resolution and will give SFRS the building and piece of land on a rent-free lease. Councillor Hartin then asked what the timescales for the planning application were. The Head of Resources explained that he did not know but that he could find out.

Resolved that the Fire Authority note the verbal update given by the Head of Resources

17 Local Government Act 1972

Resolved that, under section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for item 18 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 paragraphs 1 and 2.

18 Brigade Manager Personal Request

This report asked Members to consider a personal request received from a Brigade Manager.

Resolved that the Fire Authority agree the three recommendations set out in the report

19 Urgent Item

Under the provision of section 100(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972 it was moved and accepted that an urgent item of business be considered.

The Chair read out a brief statement relating to the item.

Resolved that the Fire Authority note the Chair's statement.

The meeting closed at 3.35 pm

Chair.....

Date.....