

**Minutes of the Meeting of
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority
Strategy and Resources Committee Meeting
held at Headquarters, Shrewsbury
on Thursday, 21 May 2009 at 2.00 pm**

Present

Members

Councillors Box, Holyoak (Vice-Chair), Minnery and West

Officers

Chief Fire Officer Mr Taylor

Treasurer Mr Dixon

Management Support Officer Mrs Ince

Programme Manager Mr Edwards

In the absence of the Chair of the Committee (Councillor Eade) the Vice-Chair, Councillor Mrs Holyoak, chaired the meeting.

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence have been received from Councillors Eade, Hartin and Picken.

2 Declarations of Interest

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

There were no declarations of interest.

3 Minutes

It was proposed by Councillor West, seconded by Councillor Box and

Resolved that the minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting, held on 5 March 2009, be signed as a correct record

4 Public Questions

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

5 Medium Term Financial Plan 2009/10 to 2013/14

The Chief Fire Officer gave a presentation on the Medium Term Financial Plan 2009/10 to 2013/14. The presentation slides were circulated (a copy of which is attached to the signed minutes).

A brief summary of the more significant points discussed is given below.

Councillor Box commented that, whilst he accepted the logic of asking the Integrated Risk Management Planning (IRMP) Team to examine fire cover, he had concerns about the issue being made public through the IRMP process. Are the team being asked to do this or is it a case of the IRMP process / procedure being applied to the issue? The Chief Fire Officer (CFO) clarified that the issue will not be consulted on as part of this year's IRMP. Analysis needs to be undertaken using the FSEC tool to gauge whether or not the issue should be consulted on in next year's IRMP. The IRMP Manager has confirmed that it is feasible to do this analysis.

Councillor West commented that this is the way to go; robust plans need to be put in place in case of bad grant settlements in future years. He also asked for a further explanation of the shift system to be investigated, which it is estimated could lead to £350,000 of savings. The CFO explained that Merseyside had introduced a new shift system for those pumps, which deal with less than 300 calls a year, as described in the Audit Commission's recent report entitled 'Rising to the Challenge'.

Under the system, firefighters are on duty from 11.00 am to 11.00 pm. They then go to accommodation nearby and provide fire cover on a Retained Duty System (RDS) from 11.00 am to 11.00 am. They provide cover on this basis over four consecutive days, which are then followed by four days off duty. Firefighters are paid their normal wholtime pay, a shift allowance and RDS pay and earn approximately £40,000 a year.

This system means that a station can be crewed by 2 shifts made up of 2 watch managers and 12 firefighters rather than with the standard 4 watches, which require a total of 28 personnel. The system also has an effect on competence etc. It is also understood that Merseyside have now expanded this system to stations responding to over 850 incidents a year.

Councillor West asked what the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) response had been to this. The CFO explained that Merseyside had gone through an independent panel and won, however this win only applies to Merseyside.

It was proposed by Councillor West, seconded by Councillor Minnery and

Resolved that the Committee agree the following proposals as set out in the presentation:

- Task Officers to prepare an update for the 'what if' scenarios;
- All budgets to be examined;
- Task IRMP team to examine fire cover in Telford and Shrewsbury, including new shift patterns described in the Audit Commission publication 'Rising to the Challenge'; and
- Plan a Budget Working Group for August / September to consider the findings

6 Integrated Strategic Planning Process 2010/11: Financial Issues

This report considered the service and financial planning process in order to make recommendations to the Fire Authority in July 2009.

Councillor Box referred to point iv in paragraph 6 of the report and asked if it was correct that this read 2006. The Treasurer confirmed that this was correct, as the issue relates to the period between 2001 and 2006.

It was proposed by Councillor Box, seconded by Councillor Minnery and

Resolved that the Committee submit the financial planning timetable for 2010/11 (attached as an appendix to the report) for approval by the Fire Authority

7 Committee Terms of Reference

This report proposed amendments to the terms of reference of the Strategy and Resources Committee, following a review by officers, for recommendation to the Fire Authority.

It was proposed by Councillor Box, seconded by Councillor West and

Resolved that Members recommend to the Fire Authority the proposed amendments to the terms of reference of the Strategy and Resources Committee, attached as an appendix to the report, without making any amendments.

8 Role Descriptions for Committee Chair and Vice-Chair

This report sought to establish Role Descriptions for the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Strategy and Resources Committee.

It was proposed by Councillor Minnery that in both role descriptions the words 'in the media' should be removed from the bullet point under Main

Responsibilities which reads 'To represent the Fire Authority and its policies to the media in a positive and professional manner'. This was seconded by Councillor West and it was

Resolved that Members agree the Role Descriptions for the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Strategy and Resources Committee (attached at Appendix A and Appendix to the report respectively) for recommendation to the Fire Authority, subject to the amendment outlined above.

9 Capital Update on Activity and Finance

The purpose of this report was to provide an overview of all the capital schemes within the Brigade and their current status.

Councillor Box asked why the Retained Duty Service Availability System was on hold. The Programme Manager explained that this scheme was on hold because of links to the Regional Control Centre which may have the potential to provide RDS monitoring. Therefore it has been decided that the best approach would be to keep the scheme on hold and monitor the situation. The CFO explained that there may also be a capacity issue when the system is introduced as it may highlight further issues that will need to be addressed.

Councillor Minnery referred to schemes 6, 13 and 15 and requested that the wording in the update column be clarified as the current wording of 'following approval by the CFA, this scheme has been cancelled' is unclear. The Programme Manager undertook to do this.

Resolved that the Committee

- a) Note the progress on Capital Schemes (including those continuing into 2009/10); and
- b) Note the reviewed 2009/10 and 2010/11 schemes and any comment, if added.

10 Corporate Risk Management Summary

This was the latest of the regular Risk Summary Reports to the Strategy and Resources Committee. As previously, these reports are intended to enable Members to meet the requirements of this Committee's Terms of Reference as they relate to the Fire Authority's management of corporate risk. The progress reported relates to that achieved since the last Summary Report, received by this Committee at its meeting in January 2009.

The Treasurer drew Members' attention to Risk ID 74 on page of the report which is a new addition to the Risk Register.

Councillor Box referred to Risk ID 72 which has a risk score of 9 with all controls in place. Councillor Box expressed surprise that this was still a risk. Councillor West thought that this may be because of issues with contractors etc. The Treasurer also thought that it might be a cost issue and that the risk

factor will drop once the exact details of the project have been specified. The meeting felt that leaving the risk score at 9 kept the focus on the risk.

Councillor Minnery referred to Risk ID 66 and which relates to the FireLink / FiReControl project and asked what effect a change of regime at Government level would have. Councillor Box explained that the Conservatives had included reference to Regional Control Centres in a half page on the back of a recently published Green Paper although there had been no consultation with Conservative fire representatives. At the recent Fire Services Management Committee this issue was passed back to the Local Government Association. Councillor West confirmed that this issue has also been brought up with the Minister at the Fire Forum meeting.

Resolved that the Committee note the contents of the report.

11 Local Government Act 1972

Resolved that in accordance with section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information, as defined by the provisions of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Act, by virtue of paragraph 4.

12 Corporate Risk Management Summary – Exempted Information

The Committee had received an open session report, at Agenda Item 10, which summarised its current exposure to corporate risk. This report supplemented that one, as it contained information that is exempt from publication by virtue of the Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A.

Resolved that the Committee note the contents of the report, in conjunction with the Corporate Risk Management Summary discussed in open session.

The meeting closed at 2.55 pm.

Chair.....

Date.....