

**Minutes of the Meeting of
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority
held at 2.00 pm on Wednesday, 10 February 2010
at Shropshire Education and Conference Centre, Shrewsbury**

Present

Members

Councillors Adams, Mrs Barrow, Davies, Mrs Greenaway, Groom, Hartin, Dr Jones, Kiernan, Mason, Mellings, Minnery (Vice-Chair), Picken, Price, Roberts, West (Chair), Williams and Winchester

Officers

Chief Fire Officer, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Head of Resources, Treasurer, Principal Accountant, Corporate Services Manager, Management Support Officer and Clerk

At the start of the meeting the Chair welcomed and introduced Mr John Redmond, who had recently taken up his appointment as Deputy Chief Fire Officer of the Service.

1 Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

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 have 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 16 December 2009, and of the Fire Authority Extraordinary Meeting, held on 21 December 2009.

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

Resolved that the non-exempt minutes of the Fire Authority meeting, held on 16 December 2009, be agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record

It was proposed by Councillor Minnery, seconded by Councillor Dr Jones and

Resolved that the non-exempt minutes of the Fire Authority Extraordinary meeting, held on 21 December 2009, 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 Human Resources Committee

Members received the minutes of the Human Resources Committee meeting, held on 14 January 2010, and considered the recommendations at items 7 and 10.

It was proposed by Councillor Adams, seconded by Councillor Hartin and

Resolved that the Fire Authority agree:

- a) The full adoption of the Capability Policy, dealing with any disputes raised by unions, if and when they arose; and
- b) The Single Equality Scheme and Action Plan

6 Strategy and Resources Committee

Members received the minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting, held on 22 January 2010, and considered the recommendations at item 5. The recommendations at items 7 and 8 of those minutes were to be considered as part of item 7 on the agenda for this meeting.

It was noted that there was an error at the penultimate bullet point on page 7: the figure, given as £6.836, should have been £6.836m.

Members discussed the decision at item 12 of the minutes regarding the funding for a consultant to carry out research into the possible disparity in Brigade Managers' pay. It was noted that such funding would be found from within existing budgets. The Chair explained the difficulty in obtaining comparative information and the need to establish a baseline, which would then be used in future pay negotiations.

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

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 the capital scheme for workshops equipment;

- e) Approve the creation of a Revenue Reserve for the Headquarters Project;
- f) Note performance against prudential indicators;
- g) Note performance in Treasury Management to date in 2009/10;
- h) Note the information provided on balance sheet items; and
- i) Approve the write off of a problematic debt owed to the Fire Authority

Members noted that reports 7 and 8 would be considered together. The Treasurer would present report 7 and then move on to report 8, before Members would be asked to agree each set of recommendations.

7 Revenue Budget, Capital Programme and Medium Term Financial Planning

This report incorporated the recommendations made by the Strategy and Resources Committee on 22 January 2010 for the Authority's 2010/11 budget, updating the figures for changes since then, and outlined the consequences for Medium Term Financial Planning.

The Treasurer tabled an updated version of Appendix C1 to report 7, showing the latest position with regard to fire authority precept and budget increases nationally (a copy of which is attached to the signed minutes). He advised that events had moved on since the first deliberations of the Strategy and Resources Committee, when a 3.9% increase in the precept had been proposed. Although the Fire Authority's proposed budget increase of 3.7% was still one of the highest, the 2.9% precept increase, now recommended by the Committee, was closer to the average increase for all fire authorities.

The Treasurer advised that the reduced precept increase would weaken the Fire Authority's financial position going forward, in that £130k would be lost year on year, thus impacting on future deficits. There might, however, be an equivalent amount in underspends in future years. The £130k reduction would not, however, have any effect on service delivery, as a corresponding reduction was proposed in the unearmarked capital reserve for the financial year 2010/11.

Members discussed the risk of capping and its impact. The Treasurer pointed out that the financial cost to a fire authority, which had been capped several years earlier, had been £450k, a very heavy, disproportionate penalty for a small fire authority, such as Shropshire and Wrekin. In addition there were the service and reputational effects of capping. With a proposed budget increase of 3.7% there was still a risk of capping but the Fire Authority could put forward a robust defence, in that it was ensuring that the Service was protected going forward into a very difficult financial position. The problem was in achieving a balance between the 2010/11 financial year and the prospects for later years.

8 Revenue Budget: 2010/11 Precept

This report sought Fire Authority approval to a budget for 2010/11; Council Tax levels for 2010/11; and precepts on billing authorities and related matters.

Councillor Minnery, as Chair of the Strategy and Resources Committee, advised that the Committee had spent a considerable amount of time discussing the percentage increase, which it should recommend to the Fire Authority. He, therefore, proposed, and Councillor Hartin seconded, the recommendations, set out in reports 7 and 8.

On a vote, with all Members voting in favour, it was

Resolved that the Fire Authority agree (report 7):

- i) Its capital programme, set out in Appendix A;
- ii) The provisions and reserves, set out in Appendix B;
- iii) The revenue budgets, set out in paragraph 8 of the report; and
- iv) The key financial principles to be incorporated in its Medium Term Financial Plan, set out in paragraph 9 of the report

and

Resolved that the Fire Authority agree (report 8) to:

- a) Approve that a net budget requirement is set at £21,618,039 (calculated in accordance with the provisions of Section 43(4) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992);
- b) Approve a total precept of £13,322,832 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 £83.81;
- d) Approve, under Section 40(2) of the 1992 Act:
 - a. The amount of Council Tax, calculated for each category of dwelling in each billing authority's area, as follows:

Band	2010/11 Council Tax	
	£	p
A	55.87	
B	65.19	
C	74.50	
D	83.81	
E	102.43	
F	121.06	
G	139.68	
H	167.62	

- b. The amount, calculated (in accordance with Section 48 of the 1992 Act) as payable by billing authorities for 2010/11, as follows:

Council	Precept £
Shropshire Council	9,081,694
Borough of Telford & Wrekin Council	4,241,138
	<u>13,322,832</u>

- 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 Appendices A1 and A2, 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

Councillor Minnery asked for his thanks to be placed on record, and those of the Strategy and Resources Committee, for the excellent advice and guidance received from officers. The Chair and all Members supported this request.

9 Annual Review of Charges - Special Services

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

Members noted that Fire Control staff did advise members of the public of any special service charges, which were likely to be made, in order to discourage inappropriate use of the Brigade's services. Where special services were rendered, each case was considered individually after the event in order to ascertain whether or not a charge should be levied.

It was proposed by Councillor Mrs Greenaway, seconded by Councillor Mrs Barrow and

Resolved that the Fire Authority approve the proposed charges for special services be applied from 1 April 2010

10 Selection of Contractor for Shrewsbury Build

At its meeting on 3 July 2009 the Fire Authority had approved the use of Telford & Wrekin Borough Council's Contract Procedure Rules in the procurement of a contractor to carry out the refurbishment of Shrewsbury Station. Since then the Council's officers had managed the tender process in accordance with those Rules on behalf of the Fire Authority.

Under the Rules, tenders over £500,000, which are covered by an approved capital budget, may be accepted by the appropriate Head of Service, following consultation with the Leader/Deputy Leader (Cabinet), or Chairman/Vice-Chairman (Board/Committee) and the acceptance must be reported to the next meeting of the appropriate Cabinet, Committee or Board for information. The Rules also state that the tender accepted should be in the Council's best interests.

In order to comply as far as is possible with the above rules it was proposed by Councillor Price, seconded by Councillor Mason and, on a vote, with all in favour

Resolved that the Fire Authority agree to delegate authority to the Chief Fire Officer and Treasurer, to accept the tender, which is in the Authority's best interests, in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Authority

Once the decision had been made it would be reported to the next meeting of the full Authority.

Members then went on to discuss the risk of contractors becoming insolvent, whilst engaged in the work, and the measures put in place to protect the Fire Authority in such an event. Officers outlined the various steps, which had been taken to minimise those risks.

11 Fire Authority Corporate Plan 2010/11

This report sought Member approval of the proposed contents of the Fire Authority's 2010/11 Corporate Plan. The Corporate Plan would be supplemented by an Annual Report 2009/10, which would be brought before Members in June 2010 for consideration and approval.

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

Resolved that the Fire Authority agree:

- a) The contents of the Corporate Plan;
- b) To delegate authority to the Strategy and Resources Committee to consider and agree, the Performance Targets for 2010/11 and the final layout, and publication of the Corporate Plan; and
- c) To receive, in June 2010, the proposed Annual Report 2009/10

12 Update on New Dimension Transfer of Assets Agreement

The Chief Fire Officer advised that, in accordance with the decision made by the Strategy and Resources Committee at its meeting on 22 January 2010, he had written to Communities and Local Government, setting out the Fire Authority's continuing concerns regarding the Transfer of Assets Agreement but to date he had not received a response.

Resolved that the agenda information item and verbal report of the Chief Fire Officer be noted

13 Member Champion Presentations

Before the presentations were given the Chair asked Members for their views on whether there should be a formal reporting schedule for Member Champions.

As Members had varying views on the issue, a consensus could not be reached. The Chief Fire Officer, therefore, suggested that officers take a report to the Audit and Performance Management Committee, setting out a number of options, for consideration by Members.

It was proposed by Councillor Dr Winchester, seconded by Councillor Mrs Barrow, and

Resolved that officers take a report to the Audit and Performance Management Committee, setting out a number of options regarding the timing of Member Champion presentations, for consideration by Members

- 13a** Councillor Dr Jones, Risk Management and Audit Champion, gave a presentation of her work throughout the year.

Councillors Mason and Picken left the meeting at this point (3.30 pm).

- 13b** Councillor Minnery, Asset Management and Procurement Champion, gave a presentation on the Shrewsbury Redevelopment Programme.

It was noted that visuals of the latest plans were not yet available but, when they were, they would be placed on the Service's website.

Copies of both sets of presentation slides are attached to the signed minutes.

Resolved that the Member Champion presentations be noted

14 European Commission Road Safety Award

Highlighting the role of partners, the Chair stated that it was an accolade for the Brigade to have achieved this award. Councillor Hartin asked that the Fire Authority's thanks to officers and partners be formally recorded.

Resolved that the agenda information item be noted

15 Local Government Act 1972

It was proposed by Councillor Dr Winchester, seconded by Councillor Minnery and

Resolved that, under section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for items 16 and 17, on the grounds that they 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 Paragraphs 1, 2, and 3.

16 Exempt Minutes

Members received the exempt minutes of the Fire Authority Meeting, held on 16 December 2009, and the Fire Authority Extraordinary meeting, held on 21 December 2009.

Subject to the amendment that Cllr Barrow should have been included in the list of those present at the 16 December meeting,

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

Resolved that the exempt minutes of the Fire Authority meeting, held on 16 December 2009, and of the Fire Authority Extraordinary meeting, held on 21 December 2009, be agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record

17 Update on Voice/Data Communications, Command and Control Systems Refresh

The Chief Fire Officer gave a verbal update on the consultation process with staff regarding the location of the Interim Control Room and confirmed that an interim solution should be in place by summer 2010.

Resolved that the agenda information item and verbal update of the Chief Fire Officer be noted

The meeting closed at 3.55 pm.

Chair.....

Date.....