

**Minutes of the Meeting of
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority
Strategy and Resources Committee
held in the Oak Room at Headquarters, Shrewsbury
on Tuesday, 18 September 2018 at 11.00 am**

Present

Members

Councillors Carter, Hartin (Vice-Chair), Murray, Pardy, Phillips and Roberts (Chair)

Officers

Rod Hammerton	Chief Fire Officer	CFO
Dave Myers	Assistant Chief Fire Officer	ACFO
Andrew Kelcey	Head of Resources	HoR
Sally Edwards	Head of ICT	HoITC
Lynn Ince	Executive Support Officer	ESO

1 Apologies for Absence

Andy Johnson (Deputy Chief Fire Officer)
James Walton (Treasurer)
Joanne Coady (Head of Finance)
Ged Edwards (Planning, Performance and Communications Manager)
Germaine Worker (Head of Human Resources and Administration)

2 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

None

3 Public Questions

None

4 Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting, held on 15 March 2018, be agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record

5 Committee Constitution and Training

This report brought the latest version of the Committee's constitution to the notice of its Members. It also asked Members to consider what training, if any, they wish to receive in order for them to fulfil their role on the Committee.

Resolved that the Committee

- a) Note the constitution of the Strategy and Resources Committee (attached as an appendix to the report); and
- b) Agree that there is no training needed in order to fulfil their role on the Strategy and Resources Committee effectively.

6 Financial Performance to July 2018

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

The CFO presented the report and talked through each of the variances outlined in the table which had contributed to the £185k underspend. The CFO explained that it was proposed to transfer this total into reserves.

The CFO advised that the amendments to the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) had been made following advice from the Service's external auditor Grant Thornton. The revised MTFP will be included in the Corporate Plan and linked with the Service's Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP).

Members praised the comprehensive MTFP but queries were raised about the sustainability of the pay award forecasts as set out on page 5 of the MTFP. There was a feeling that a more realistic budget was needed to enable the Authority to be prudent and accountable. The CFO responded that the figures are projections which are dependent on additional Government funding being available but he commented that he did understand Members' point of view in relation to this. Although Government indications are to not move beyond assumptions of 2.5% at present it is not unreasonable to model on increased percentages. Members agreed that, going forward, it would be useful to have this information included.

Overall the Committee was pleased to see how focussed the MTFP is. The consensus was that the MTFP shows that the Authority has planned well financially and is clearly sustainable into the future.

Resolved that the Committee agree to recommend that the Fire Authority

- a) Note the position of the revenue budget;
- b) Approve virements to the revenue budget, where requested;
- c) Note performance against prudential indicators to date in 2018/19;
- d) Approve changes to prudential indicators; and
- e) Approve the Medium Term Financial Plan to 20133/23, which will be appended to the Service Plan 2015-20.

7 Fire Alliance Strategic Plan

This report presented a plan to create a strategic alliance between Shropshire and Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Services.

The CFO presented this report and explained that officers will bring the Plan to the full fire Authority meeting in October for discussion and final decision. Many strands of the plan are coming together naturally at a tactical level and the Plan gives a co-ordinated strategy to bring the two Services together with collaboration happening in a more formal manner, rather than an opportunistic one. It should be noted that the Plan is not a proposal for a merger. The aim is to enable the two Services to work closely together and to build capacity and resilience as one. The change will bring economic savings but this is not the main focus of the Plan. Effectively two small organisations will get the benefits of being bigger but not the costs.

The CFO explained that a strategic fit can be difficult to find with two different authorities but common ground will be found regarding, for example infrastructure. The Guiding Principles as set out on page 6 of the Appendix are the check and balance which will enable the Alliance to be held to account.

Referring to the development strands on page 7 of the Appendix, the CFO explained that these pick up on the West Mercia Police Alliance Plan and the language used within it, as there is the potential that the Fire Alliance could become more harmonised with the Police in future. The priorities for each development strand which are outlined on the following pages of the Appendix will give the most benefit from the two Services working together. The CFO informed Members that there had been questions about why this was a fire alliance plan. The simple answer is that the Plan focuses on a fire alliance as it concerns two fire authorities working together. The Service will continue to collaborate in other areas as well and other strategic partners are identified in documents such as the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP).

The CFO then referred to the diagram at section 8 of the Appendix which sets out the Governance and Planning Model for the Alliance. The CFO advised that both Services are conscious of the Judicial Review and its potential outcomes but there is a need to move forward with alternative plans. The CFO also advised that the Strategic Alliance Board will need to determine representation on the Board but as it not a statutory body, Officers will be able to sit on it. The Programme Delivery Board, as detailed on page 15 of the Appendix is a 'doing' board. The CFO also explained that each of the Project Working Groups, detailed on page 16 of the Appendix, will have an Executive lead but this would be across both Services, rather than one from each Service to avoid duplication of work.

The CFO advised that both Services have recognised their key stakeholders with regard to the Plan but the only response has been from the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC). The CFO acknowledged that it is an ambitious plan and that it needs to be done with staff and not to them. There is a need to establish energy and enthusiasm with regard to the Alliance at the bottom of the Service which will then move up. This will force management to change and adapt to meet the needs of the staff.

Members expressed sympathy with officers for the difficulty in pulling together the Alliance Plan. It was also suggested that the Guiding Principles be used to establish key performance metrics for the Plan and also that the Guiding Principles should be more high level than those set out at present. Members acknowledged that it was sensible to include key deliverables throughout the document but expressed concern that these appeared to be outputs rather than outcomes.

The CFO responded that the Guiding Principles are the keys that help people think in relation to supporting the 'doers'. The CFO also commented that it is difficult to identify outcomes at present but performance metrics would be established in the Plan early on. Members suggested that any performance metrics should be tied to the Development Strands (diagram on page 7 of the Appendix) to aid public understanding. Members agreed that the Guiding Principles are there to help the 'doers' but for staff to take ownership of these, they need to get them into their heads and 10, as set out in the Plan, may be too much for this. The CFO undertook to review this.

The Chair of the Authority stated that he was unhappy with some of the PCC's feedback which was set out in the letter at Appendix B to the report. In particular, it was felt that the PCC had been very presumptive with regard to the transfer of governance (second paragraph on page 1 of letter) and that the third paragraph from the end of the letter should refer to 'if and when' with regard to PCC representation on the Alliance Boards. Members also expressed concern that the PCC had made assumptions about the financial plans not being sustainable and that he had failed to realise that each Service has, and will maintain, individual IRMPS

The Chair of the Authority stated that he will respond to the PCC's letter as, if the Authority does not respond, it is likely that the PCC will assume that it agrees with his comments. Members felt that it would be helpful to liaise with Hereford & Worcester Fire about any response they may be looking to send. The CFO advised that one of the key points of the letter should be that the PCC understands that the Service has enthusiasm for collaboration with the Police and that there needs to be clarity about governance arrangements.

It was proposed by Councillor Roberts and seconded by Councillor Hartin that the Chair should respond to the PCC on behalf of the Authority after consultation with Hereford & Worcester Fire Authority.

Resolved that the Committee

- a) note the report;
- b) approve the plan to create a strategic alliance between Shropshire and Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Services;
- c) recommend that the Fire Authority agree the adoption of the Fire Alliance Strategic Plan 2018 – 2022; and
- d) Agree that the Chair of the Fire Authority should respond to the Police and Crime Commissioner's feedback, in conjunction with the Chair of Hereford & Worcester Fire Authority.

8 Capital Update on Activity and Finance

This report provided an overview of all of the capital schemes within the Service and their current status. .

The HoR presented this report and provided updates on the schemes set out in the appendix to the report. Under the Buildings Schemes, the Retained Station Works, were of particular note, with Clun being handed back to the Service next week and work commencing at Much Wenlock.

With regard to the Vehicles and Equipment Schemes, the HoR advised that some of the vehicle purchases and replacements had been brought forward. The chassis for the replacement appliances are due to be with the builders next month and the appliances should be with the Service in January / February time next year. The officers command response vehicles have been purchased and the scheme to trial electric vehicles is moving forward.

The HoITC advised that the fireground radios scheme is progressing well and the IT Infrastructure upgrading scheme is moving forward.

Members were particularly pleased to see the improvements to the station at Clun which has generated renewed community interest in the station. Members asked if there were any plans to hold an open day at the station. The CFO advised that the Service's Communications Officer is currently planning an event which will have a community focus.

Resolved that the Committee note the progress so far on current schemes.

9 Exclusion of Press and Public

Resolved that the Committee being satisfied in all the circumstances of the case that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing this information, formally resolve that the press and public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information, as defined in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

10 Capital Update on Activity and Finance (Paragraph 3)

The Committee received Appendix B to report 8 – Capital Update on Activity and Finance, which was to be considered in closed session, as it contained exempt information.

Resolved that the Committee note exempt Appendix B to report 8

The meeting closed at 11.55 am.

These minutes were agreed by the Strategy and Resources Committee and signed as a correct record by the:

Chair.....

on

Date.....