



MINUTES OF THE POLICY COMMITTEE held on Wednesday 16th December 2015 at Fire Service Headquarters, Winsford at 1 pm.

PRESENT: Councillors J Joyce (Chair), M Biggin, P Booher, P Carey, S Edgar, S Nelson, S Parker, T Sherlock and J Weatherill.

PART 1 – MATTERS CONSIDERED IN PUBLIC

1 PROCEDURAL MATTERS

A RECORDING OF MEETING

Members were reminded that the meeting would be audio-recorded.

B REVISED COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Members noted the revised Policy Committee membership for the rest of 2015/16, as notified to the Fire Authority on 9th December 2015.

C APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Rudd.

C DECLARATION OF MEMBERS INTERESTS

There were no declarations of Members interests.

D MINUTES OF THE POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING

RESOLVED: That

The Minutes of the meeting of the Policy Committee held on 8th October 2015 be confirmed as a correct record.

E NOTES OF THE RISK MANAGEMENT BOARD

RESOLVED: That

The notes of the Risk Management Board meeting held on 22nd October 2015 be received, for information.

2 ANNUAL REFRESH OF CORPORATE RISK MANAGEMENT POLICY 2015

The Head of Planning, Performance and Communications introduced this report which highlighted the proposed changes to the Corporate Risk Management Policy for approval by Members. He advised that the Risk Management Framework was reviewed and updated on an annual basis to ensure it remained current and reflected internal and external changes.

The Head of Planning, Performance and Communications explained that a comprehensive refresh of the Corporate Risk Management Framework had been undertaken by the Corporate Programme Office and a key area of improvement identified was to separate the policy document from the practitioners guide. This resulted in the production of two separate documents which the external Risk Management training provider reviewed as a 'critical friend' and the feedback received from them was very positive. The documents were presented to Risk Management Board in October which agreed that the Policy should be submitted to Policy Committee for approval.

The key changes to the document were summarised in the report and the Head of Planning, Performance and Communications outlined these changes. He drew Members attention to the Risk on a Page chart and the glossary which had both been added following feedback from Risk Champions.

A Member queried how lessons learned from the recent major incidents that the Service had dealt with were fed into the process going forward. The Head of Planning, Performance and Communications explained that the need to consider resilience when planning for the future had been highlighted. The ability to respond to major incidents both locally and nationally would need to be considered carefully by officers and Members when developing Phase 2 of the Emergency Response Programme by getting the right balance between having the capacity to deal with day-to-day responses to risk and major local and national incidents.

Members discussed the recent flooding in Cumbria and Lancashire and the fire and rescue services response to this across the country and noted the work done by NW Fire Control Ltd in co-ordinating the response to calls. The Chair commented that there had been a presentation at the Fire Control's Board of Directors the day before the meeting which had highlighted the work done by the control centre and fire and rescue services across the country to assist in Cumbria and Lancashire and also the resilience that would be required going forward. Members requested that a letter of thanks be sent to NW Fire Control Ltd for all the hard work carried out by its staff during the recent events.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the proposed changes to the Corporate Risk Management Policy 2015 be approved.**

3 TREASURY MANAGEMENT – MID YEAR REPORT

The Head of Finance introduced this report which updated Members on the Authority's performance against its Treasury Management Strategy, which had been approved by the Fire Authority at its meeting on 11th February 2015.

The report provided information on the current position in respect of the Authority's treasury portfolio which included long term borrowing and investments. The Head of Finance explained that the Authority continued to maintain high levels of cash that were suitably invested and the Authority's strategy in recent years had been to fund the capital (and revenue) costs of the Emergency Response Programme (ERP) and other Integrated Risk Management Plan related programmes from reserves and capital grant rather than from borrowing. He added that the latest estimate in relation to the remaining cost for the ERP capital programme was £15m and going forward the strategy would be to fund capital from revenue, in the likely absence of capital grants.

The Authority's overall long term borrowing position at 30th September 2015 was £2,247, consisting of Public Works Loan Board loans of £2,214k and an interest-free loan with Salix of £44k. The Head of Finance explained that the Authority was reviewing its long-term borrowing as part of the budget process for 2016-17 and a review of the feasibility of premature debt repayment would be undertaken as part of this process.

The Head of Finance drew Members attention to the information in the report in relation to the Authority's estimated performance in relation to existing Prudential Indicators.

The Chair informed Members that the Authority's Treasury Management was carried out in partnership with Warrington Borough Council and Members were assured that, if Warrington Borough Council were in financial difficulties, the Authority's funds would not be impacted.

The Finance Member Champion commented that once the ERP capital programme was complete the level of reserves would drop by around two thirds and a strategy to become debt free may be considered dependent on the terms of the loans. The Head of Finance responded that the terms for paying back Public Works loans early were not favourable at the present time but, as discussed, the Authority would be keeping the situation under review.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the mid year Treasury Management report be noted.

4 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED:

That under Section 100(A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) Order 2006, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the item of business listed below on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Schedule 12A to the Act in the paragraph indicated:

Paragraph

(3) Information relating to the financial or the business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)

PART 2 – BUSINESS DISCUSSED IN PRIVATE

5 CONSTRUCTION OF LYMM FIRE STATION AND SAFETY CENTRE

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO) introduced the report which provided information about the outcomes from the detailed pre-construction work that had been carried out by the Authority's agents and ISG Construction Limited (ISG). Members' approval was sought to enter into a design and build contract with ISG and complete any associated documentation in relation to the construction of a fire station and safety centre at Lymm. Approval was also sought for additional capital funding and agreement in respect of the approach to contingencies associated with the Lymm build and fit out and the building programme generally.

The ACFO presented Members with a visual overview of the site and explained the pre-construction process that had taken place.

The Head of Finance provided a summary of the financial implications detailing the costs and contingencies and risks associated with Lymm, and the overall costs and contingencies and risks for the ERP building programme.

Members discussed the details contained in the report and were satisfied with the recommendations proposed.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the report be noted;**
- [2] further capital funding of £635k be approved;**
- [3] the approach to and intention with regard to contingencies (as outlined in the report) be approved; and**
- [4] officers be authorised to enter into a design and build contract with ISG Construction Limited and complete any associated documentation for the construction of a new fire station and safety centre at Lymm.**