



MINUTES OF THE POLICY COMMITTEE held on Wednesday 19 June 2013 at Fire Service Headquarters, Winsford at 10 a.m.

PRESENT: Councillors J Joyce (Chair), D Brickhill, P Carey, L Jones, J Leather, G Merry, S Nelson and D Topping.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Shauna Mallinson, representative from RSM Tenon

PART 1 – MATTERS CONSIDERED IN PUBLIC

1 PROCEDURAL MATTERS

A MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEE

Members were asked to note the appointment of a Chair, Deputy Chair and membership of the Committee for 2013/2014, as agreed by the Fire Authority at its annual general meeting on 12 June 2013 and listed below:

Councillors: J Joyce – Chair
S Nelson – Deputy Chair
D Brickhill
P Carey
L Jones
J Leather
G Merry
B Rudd
C Thorley
D Topping

B APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor B Rudd and Councillor C Thorley.

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 30 January 2013 be confirmed as a correct record.

E NOTES OF THE RISK MANAGEMENT BOARD

RESOLVED: That

the notes of the meeting of the Risk Management Board held on 12 March 2013 be received, for information.

2 INTERNAL AUDIT ANNUAL REPORT 2012-13

The Corporate Intelligence Unit Manager provided a brief overview of the report and introduced the Internal Audit representative, Shauna Mallinson from RSM Tenon, who was in attendance at the meeting to present the report.

The Internal Auditor explained that the report provided a summary of work undertaken over the last 12 months and the Internal Auditors' opinion to assist the Authority in preparing its Annual Governance Statement.

The Internal Auditor outlined the Internal Audit Assurance Statement for 2012-13 which provided a positive opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of Cheshire Fire Authority's arrangements for governance, risk management and control. She commented that both governance and risk management arrangements continued to be robust and that the work carried out for 2012/13 had not given rise to any limited assurance opinions.

Members discussed the report and were pleased that the Internal Auditor had issued a positive opinion. A Member commented that the terminology used in the Internal Audit Opinion statement which stated that the Fire Authority's arrangements for governance, risk management and control was 'adequate' did not really reflect the positive report on the arrangements. The Internal Audit representative explained that this was the terminology used by the firm's technical team. In this instance 'adequate' was the highest measure available and she would feedback these comments to the technical team.

The CIU Manager together with her team were thanked for their input into the process to ensure that a positive report was issued.

RESOLVED: That

the content of the Internal Audit Annual Report 2012-13 be noted.

3 RISK MANAGEMENT BOARD ANNUAL REPORT

The Corporate Intelligence Unit Manager presented this report to Members. She explained that the responsibility for Risk Management at Member level had been delegated to the Policy Committee. The Authority also appointed two Risk Management Champions who attended meetings of the Risk Management Board twice a year. The annual Risk Management Board (RMB) report was presented to Policy Committee for review and assurance and provided a summary of the key activities and decisions of RMB during 2012-13.

The Corporate Intelligence Unit Manager highlighted the key areas of the report and also provided an update for Members on the outcomes of the 2012 ALARM Benchmarking Club self-assessment. The Service had achieved an overall performance level of 'driving' which was the highest level that could be awarded and the report included a summary of the Service's results highlighted on the maturity model against the seven strands.

It was also noted that the Service had been shortlisted in this year's ALARM awards which were being held in Manchester on 24th June. The award was in the Strategic Risk category for the design, implementation and embedding of the new Project Management Framework which would enable the organisation to manage change effectively with appropriate controls to mitigate organisational risk.

Members discussed the report and a Member queried the processes used to monitor and update departmental level Risk Registers. The CIU Manager explained that there were comprehensive arrangements in place that included: presentation of registers at departmental management and team meetings; regular reports submitted to the monthly Heads of Department meetings; the audit of the risk registers included departmental level risks; and Risk Management Board reviewing departmental risks that were just below the threshold for the Corporate Risk Register.

A Member requested that all Members be offered the opportunity to have Risk Management training and this request was noted.

The Chair commented that this was a comprehensive report and thanked the staff and Risk Management Member Champions for their work on risk management.

RESOLVED: That

the content of the report be noted.

4 TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REPORT 2012-13

The Head of Finance introduced this report which provided a review of the Authority's treasury management activities during 2012-13. The report also provided information about compliance with the Authority's Treasury Management Practice Statements as well as seeking Members approval to repay part of the Authority's debt.

The Head of Finance highlighted the key areas of the report and provided details on the following:

- a) the Authority's loans portfolio position at 31 March 2013;
- b) the Authority's investment portfolio position at 31 March 2013;
- c) a summary of treasury management performance for the year 2012/13;
- d) the Authority's performance in 2012-13 against the key Prudential Indicators; and
- e) a proposal to repay part of the Authority's outstanding debt.

The Head of Finance explained that the Authority continued to find it difficult to generate significant levels of investment income because of the difficult market conditions. In 2012-13 the Authority repaid £2,068k in Public Works Loan Board debt prematurely, with a further £437k having matured and been repaid. The report contained an appraisal (Appendix 1) to support the recommendation to repay further debt during 2013-14.

The appraisal detailed the proposal to repay two further long term debts prematurely which would save the Authority approximately £111k over the next 14 years. The total principal repaid would be £1,120k.

Members discussed the report and the proposal to repay the two long term debts. The Finance Member Champions made statements supporting the proposal and Members agreed that this was an appropriate course of action to take.

The Chair informed Members that this was one of the key reports for the Authority and thanked the Head of Finance together with his team for pulling the report together. He also thanked the Finance Member Champions for their input.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the Treasury Management Annual Report 2012-13 be noted; and

[2] the repayment of debt in accordance with Appendix 1 of the report be approved.

5 ASSET MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2013-17

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer presented this report to Members which sought Members approval for the updated Asset Management Strategy for the Authority for 2013 to 2017. He provided an overview of the Asset Management Strategy and explained that it set out the Authority's overall approach to asset management going forward.

The Strategy was underpinned by detailed Asset Management Plans for each asset group (Land and Property, Transport, Operational Equipment and ICT hardware and software). Since last year the existing plans for the individual asset groups had been refreshed to help with future planning and further work was being undertaken to link these plans with future capital and revenue spend. The Research and Development Manager gave a presentation to Members on the detail of the Operational Equipment Asset Management Plan.

Members thanked Officers for the comprehensive presentation and the progress made in respect of the Service's Asset Management was noted.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the revised Asset Management Strategy 2013-17 be approved.

6 PARTNERSHIP POLICY

The Business Development Manager presented this report which sought Members approval for the revised Partnership Policy. The Policy set out the process to be adopted by Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service when dealing with Partnerships.

The existing Partnership Policy was designed to ensure that all partnerships within Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service were managed and maintained using a common approach with guidance taken from the Audit Commission in 2009-10. The revised policy had been developed with cross-departmental input to achieve an efficient working process. The Policy would position the Service to consider all partnership working opportunities where the objectives and aims of the partnership could be clearly linked to the strategic aims of the Authority and its vision.

A Member commented that there was no specific mention of a cost/benefit analysis and it was acknowledged that an additional question would be added to the Partnership Review Document to cover this. A Member also requested a copy of the list of the Service's current partnerships and it was agreed that a presentation be made to Members on partnerships at the Members Planning Days in July 2013.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the revised Partnership Policy be approved.

PART 2 – BUSINESS TO BE DISCUSSED IN PRIVATE

NONE