



MINUTES OF THE POLICY COMMITTEE held on Wednesday 14 November 2012 at Fire Service Headquarters, Winsford at 10 a.m.

PRESENT: Councillors J Joyce (Chair), D Brickhill, L Jones, J Kerr-Brown, J Leather, G Merry, S Nelson, B Rudd, C Thorley and D Topping.

PART 1 – MATTERS CONSIDERED IN PUBLIC

1 PROCEDURAL MATTERS

A APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None.

B DECLARATION OF MEMBERS INTERESTS

There were no declarations of Members interests.

C MINUTES OF THE POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING

RESOLVED: That

the Minutes of the meeting of the Policy Committee held on 12 September 2012 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 11 September 2012 be confirmed as a correct record.

2 REFRESHED CORPORATE RISK MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK 2012

The Corporate Intelligence Unit (CIU) Manager presented this report which asked Members to approve a refreshed Corporate Risk Management Framework. She explained that one of the functions of the Policy Committee was to ensure that the Authority's policies and procedures in respect of Risk Management were adequate and appropriate. In light of this responsibility, the Corporate Risk Management Framework was now presented to Policy Committee for approval. The draft Framework had also been reviewed by the Service's Risk Management Board (RMB) at its meeting on 11th September 2012.

The Corporate Risk Management Framework document set out the Service's approach to the management of business risk and formed a key part of the organisation's system of internal control. The Authority's risk management arrangements were audited annually as part of the Internal Audit Plan and the resulting assurance opinion was reported in the Annual Governance Statement.

The Framework was updated annually and the key changes to the document were summarised. The CIU Manager explained that the following information was referenced as part of this year's refresh:

- Feedback from Zurich Insurance which undertook a desktop review of the framework document;
- Results from undertaking a risk maturity self-assessment;
- Organisational changes (structural and procedural); and
- Feedback gained from Heads of Department by means of a structured questionnaire.

The CIU Manager also drew Members attention to the training session on Risk Management arranged for middle managers which had been secured with Zurich Insurance as part of a consultancy allocation included in the Service's insurance consortium package.

A Member commented that he attended the RMB meetings as one of the Risk Management Champions for the Authority. He also commented that the RMB meetings were informative and the process was well managed. He endorsed the recommendation to approve the revised Framework.

A Member raised an issue regarding the recent incident at Widnes and the risk to the Authority in respect of the response of the Service's partners to this incident. The Chief Fire Officer explained that the Head of Service Delivery would be holding a Multi-agency debrief on the incident and the outcomes of the debrief would be presented to Members at a future meeting.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the updated Corporate Risk Management Framework 2012 be approved for use at all levels of Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service.

3 CONSULTATION: GUIDANCE ON STATEMENTS OF ASSURANCE FOR FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITIES IN ENGLAND

The Chief Fire Officer introduced the report to Members which sought Members views on the Authority's proposed response to the Department of Communities and Local Government's consultation regarding guidance on statements of assurance for Fire and Rescue Authorities in England. The Fire and Rescue National Framework for England, published in July 2012, set out the requirement for all Fire and Rescue Authorities to publish an annual statement of assurance covering financial, governance and operational matters. The consultation contained guidance on the content of statements of

assurance and the report provided an overview of the guidance and a draft response to the consultation questions.

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services informed Members that the guidance stated that the annual statement should be agreed by elected Members but did not specify at which level. Members were asked to confirm that the Fire Authority would sign off the Authority's annual statement of assurance at the appropriate time in the corporate planning timetable.

Members discussed the report and it was noted that the response was generally supportive of the statements of assurance guidance. It was also noted that the consultation document was an item for discussion at the Local Government Association's Fire Service Management Committee which both Councillor Joyce and Councillor Topping would be attending.

A Member suggested that the Authority should consider whether there was a role for the Independent Members in the assurance process in line with the recent changes to the Governance and Constitution Committee.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the Authority's response to the consultation on the guidance on statements of assurances be approved for submission to the Department of Communities and Local Government; and**
- [2] the Authority's annual statement of assurance be presented to the Fire Authority for approval at the appropriate time in the corporate and IRMP planning timetable.**

4 CONSULTATION: PROTOCOL ON GOVERNMENT INTERVENTION ACTION ON FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITIES

The Secretary of State was required to prepare a protocol about how he/she would exercise his/her power of intervention where a fire and rescue service was failing, or was likely to fail, to act in accordance with the new Fire and Rescue National Framework for England. The Department of Communities and Local Government was consulting on the (last resort) intervention arrangements which were contained in the draft protocol.

The Chief Fire Officer introduced the report to Members which sought Members views on the consultation. The scope of the consultation was limited to three questions on whether the protocol was clear in its expectations, whether anything should be changed and whether anything had been left out. The report provided an overview of the Intervention Protocol and a suggested response to the consultation questions.

Members discussed the document and were satisfied with the Authority's proposed responses. Members also discussed some of the practicalities of intervention action including timescales and the funding to cover any sanctions imposed.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the Authority's response to the consultation on the protocol on Government intervention action be approved for submission to the Department of Communities and Local Government.**

PART 2 – BUSINESS TO BE DISCUSSED IN PRIVATE

NONE