



MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY held on Wednesday 11 June, 2008 at Fire Service Headquarters, Winsford at 10.30 a.m.

PRESENT : Councillors A W Hooton, D T Bateman, Mrs P M Booher, M Byram, Mrs N M Dolphin, Mrs E Moore Dutton, R I Fletcher, D W Freear, B Jones, J Joyce, H Mundry, C Oliver, R Polhill, Mrs M Simon, Mrs L Redhead and Mrs S Roberts

APOLOGIES : Councillors H Grange, S Nelson and D Andrews

PART 1 – MATTERS CONSIDERED IN PUBLIC

1 PROCEDURAL MATTERS

Chairs and PDGs Announcements

Having been re-elected, the Chair of the Fire Authority made the following announcements:

Chair's Announcements

One minute silence for Ted Lafferty

- With respect to Cllr Lafferty who died on 16 April 2008 the Members held one minutes silence. The Chair wished to remember Ted Lafferty's continual loyalty and commitment to the Fire Authority before and throughout his illness and all Members acknowledged that he would be greatly missed.

Best wishes to Councillor Stef Nelson and Councillor Bert Grange

- The Members passed on their best wishes to Councillor Stef Nelson and Bert Grange who were both recovering from recent illness.

Tenth anniversary of the Fire Authority

- To mark the tenth anniversary of the creation of the combined Cheshire Fire Authority in 1998 a group photograph was taken on the rise of the meeting and Members received a commemorative Fire Authority lapel badge.

Cheshire Show

- Members were briefed on the annual event which took place on 17 and 18 June at the Tabley Showground, near Knutsford. The Authority's presence would be built around a recruitment theme, with demonstrations from Smoke Busters, Chip Pan Demo, Smoke Tent, The Old Steamer, a fully equipped TRV from Nantwich and the mobile display unit.

Pass out parade

- The latest recruits Passing Out Parade took place on 29 May at Wychwood Park, near Crewe
- 10 students were presented with their certificates by the Chief Fire Officer
- The Instructors Merit Award was presented to Will Cowell, who will be posted to White Watch, Widnes

RTC reduction initiative display

- Members were advised about the Road Traffic Collision reduction initiative display located in Fire Service Headquarters reception for the day
- Linked to this was a 'Cheers' (alcohol reduction) bar in which Members could visit to learn more about the RTC reduction initiative. Members were asked to go along and show their support.

Youth Engagement Awards

- These awards would take place on 3 July at Crewe Alexandra Football Club
- The awards would be held to recognise the contribution and hard work of the Cadet Units, RESPECT program staff and Princes Trust volunteers.

Performance Delivery Groups (PDG) Announcements

Vale Royal PDG to hold an Open Day

- The event would be held on 5 July at Winsford Fire Station to provide an opportunity for the PDG and its partners to highlight key safety messages to the Vale Royal Community

Crewe & Nantwich PDG Open Day

- Members noted the recent and successful Crewe and Nantwich PDG open day. Funds were raised for the Fire Fighter's Charity. Cllr Mrs M Simon wished the Fire Authority to recognise the work and effort put in by staff, volunteers, advocates, cadets and watches.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] Cllr A W Hooton be elected as Chair of the Fire Authority until 31 March 2009;
- [2] Cllrs J Joyce and R Polhill be elected as Vice-Chairs of the Fire Authority until 31 March 2009;
- [3] the appointment of Cllrs M Byram and L Redhead as Party Spokespersons for the Conservative and Liberal Democrat Groups respectively, be noted;

- [4] the membership of the Fire Authority, Committees, Sub-Committees and other bodies for 2008/09, as confirmed in the membership list (attached) be agreed
- [5] the election of a chair for each of the Committees and Sub-Committees, as set out in the attached list be agreed.
- [6] the appointment of Members to each of the Committees be agreed and the eight Members appointed as the lead for each of the PDG areas be noted as Cllr J Joyce for Warrington, Cllr S Nelson for Halton, Cllr E Moore Dutton for Chester, Cllr B Jones for Ellesmere Port and Neston, Cllr P Booher for Vale Royal, Cllr M Simon for Crewe and Nantwich, Cllrs D Freear and B Grange for Macclesfield and Cllr R Fletcher for Congleton;
- [7] Cllrs A W Hooton, J Joyce and M Byram be appointed to represent the Authority on the North West Fire and Rescue Management Board for 2008/09;
- [8] Cllrs J Joyce and M Byram formally be appointed as directors to represent the Authority on the Local Authority Control Company (LACC) for the North West Regional Control Centre project, be noted;
- [9] the Minutes of the meeting of the Authority held on 16 April 2008 be confirmed as a correct record;
- [10] the Minutes of the meeting of the Local Authority Controlled Company (LACC) Board meeting held on Tuesday 15 April 2008 be received;
- [11] Cllr H Mundry be appointed to represent the Authority on the Urban Commission and Cllr Mrs E Moore Dutton be appointed to represent the Authority on the Rural Commission in 2008/09;
- [12] The Chair and a Member of the opposition be accepted to represent the Fire Service Forum for 2008/09. The Member would attend with the Chair but without decision making powers. A Member from the Labour Group to be nominated to also attend in the Chairs absence; and
- [13] the continuation of the buddying arrangements (between Members and Senior Officers), based on the pairings attached to the agenda, be approved.

2 ENVIRONMENTAL STRATEGY

The Head of Asset Management presented an Environmental Strategy which outlined Cheshire Fire Authority's strong understanding of its role in the context of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Members' obligations in delivering greater sustainability. Members noted that a key element of the Service approach to CSR was the commitment to the environment, as evidenced by the Statement of Intent.

The Authority's Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) also included commitments to the environment under the Key Proposals for 2008/2009.

In order to achieve its objectives, the Corporate Environmental Strategy set out the main principles, proposals and actions required. The Strategy covered roles and responsibilities, performance management, links to other strategies, the legal framework and an Environmental Action Plan. Members were satisfied with the approach of the Strategy and re-stated their commitment to provide leadership on this important issue.

Members considered the proposed costings and were informed that the Authority had appropriate resources in place but were also looking for match funding, which would ensure officers would not be required to source further funding and resources in the future. Members would be kept informed quarterly of expenditure.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] that the Corporate Environmental Strategy be considered and approved; and
- [2] Cllr S Nelson's nomination as the lead Member for the Environment, as agreed Under Item 1 - Procedural Matters, be approved.

3 THE REGIONAL CONTROL CENTRE NETWORK

The Chief Fire Officer presented a paper that outlined current progress in moving the Service's control operations from Headquarters in Winsford to the Regional Control Centre (RCC) in Warrington, as part of the National Fire Control Project. The report also included an update on the RCC Project at the regional and national level and in addition, detailed the Authority's role in the newly created Local Authority Controlled Company (LACC).

The report outlined the implications and timelines associated with the project, and the activity necessary to ensure that the transition to new control arrangements be safe, smooth and cause minimal disruption to day-to-day service delivery.

Members were advised of a proposal to put a paper forward to the next meeting of the LACC in respect of HR and staffing issues. Members noted that the business case was yet to be published, as it was dependent upon Government funding and where savings could be made to release other funds. The Chief Fire Officer confirmed that Members would receive further information when any progress was made.

A number of issues were raised, particularly with regard to the transition period and the associated issue of local knowledge. The Members were assured that this area had been addressed and there would be a handover period allowing calls to be controlled by another region, while staff in another area received relevant training.

The build schedule was addressed and the Members were informed that this was dependent upon the programmed timetable for installing the infrastructure and resilience needed to support the London Olympics and the wider RCC Network.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the report be received and progress noted; and
- [2] the key considerations for implementing the transition, including risks, costs and governance, be noted.

4 OLDER PEOPLE'S STRATEGY

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Community Risk Reduction presented a Risk Reduction Strategy for Older People. The Strategy set out to demonstrate the impact of the changing demographic in the older population in Cheshire, Halton and Warrington. The report emphasised the changing needs both physically and socially of the older population and illustrated how aging may have an impact upon fire risk. The Strategy highlighted the need for a multidisciplinary approach to addressing the factors that contribute to an older person suffering a fire death or fire related injury.

A range of stakeholders were consulted in developing the Risk Reduction Strategy for Older People, resulting in its approval by Better Government for Older People, Age Concern Cheshire and The Older Persons Network. Members noted the report and were pleased that the Strategy set out clearly where the Service brought a number of key partners' together to tackle such a key priority for the Authority.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the Risk Reduction Strategy for Older People be adopted;
- [2] the concerns identified within this Strategy, relating to vulnerable older people be factored into the future long term strategic planning process; and
- [3] the significance and strength of partnership working and data sharing be acknowledged as an integral part of future working.

5 LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION IN CHESHIRE

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Corporate Services presented an update to the Authority on the implications of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) particularly in relation to the Fire Authority. This included an update on the revised Combination Order, formal and informal consultation with, and working alongside, the shadow authorities of Cheshire East and Cheshire West and Chester and the internal restructuring of the Service to accommodate the necessary changes to Performance Delivery Group (PDG) units.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Corporate Services highlighted the expectations of the Department for Community and Local Government (CLG), in relation to the new Combination Order, that local provisions and internal protocols could be made provided that they fall within the Combination Order framework.

Necessary changes made between now and April 2009 would fully prepare the Fire Authority for new local government structure being established. Members were reminded that the draft Regulations required formal consultations with the Shadow Authorities in relation to the budget and Corporate IRMP for 2009/10.

A number of issues were raised by the Members, in particular, the requirement to fully induct potential new Fire Authority Members from November 2008, and the need to engage the new Authority through a number of key interventions such as, presentations to potential new Members to encourage an interest in the work of the Service and Members to put themselves forward for Fire Authority membership.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Corporate Services reflected that PDG Member representation might change as the result of the development of local neighbourhood delivery at Canal Land the Service's changes to PDGs. Members noted that this issue was currently being addressed.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the report be received;
- [2] the proposed amendments to the Combination Order be agreed;
- [3] the progress in implementing the changes to reflect the revisions to the PDG Structure be noted; and
- [4] the response to the Communities and Local Government (CLG) consultation and formal and informal working with the Shadow Authorities, be agreed.

6 CORPORATE PLAN, INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN AND BUDGET PLANNING TIMETABLE

The Head of Finance and Governance presented a report to the Members which established a timetable for setting of the Authority's Corporate Plan, Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) and budget planning processes for 2009/10. The Head of Finance and Governance highlighted dates for the upcoming away days of 29 October 2008 and 14 January 2009.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the integrated nature of the planning and budget setting processes be noted; and
- [2] the 2009/10 planning and budget-setting timetable be approved.

7 BEST VALUE PERFORMANCE PLAN

The Head of Finance and Governance informed Members that the Authority continued to have a statutory responsibility to publish an annual Best Value Performance Plan (BVPP) before 30 June each year. The Plan was presented and Members were advised that the document would be made publicly available via the Service website, www.cheshirefire.gov.uk.

Key elements of the Plan, together with the Authority's audited Statement of Accounts for 2007/08, would be published in a newspaper-style annual report, which will be circulated to all households and businesses in Cheshire, Halton and Warrington in late September / early October.

Members were also informed that this would be the last year that an annual BVPP will be required, following the changes to performance reporting, as outlined in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.

RESOLVED:

That the Best Value Performance Plan be approved for publication.

8 URGENT BUSINESS AND EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Standing Order 3.31 provides that no matter shall be considered at a meeting of the Fire Authority if it is not specified in the Agenda for the meeting unless the Chairman rules that in his opinion the item should be considered as a matter of urgency and specifies the reasons why it is urgent. The ruling, including the reasons for urgency, must be recorded in the Minutes of the meeting.

Any matters brought forward under this item which involve the disclosure of exempt information will be considered in Part 2 of the meeting at the end of the business to be transacted.

[1] Urgent Business

There were no issues to be considered under urgent business.

[2] 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 items of business listed below on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as

defined in Schedule 12 A to the Act in the paragraphs indicated:

Item		Paragraph
Pay and Recognition Policy	(4)	Information relating to consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations
Debt Write-off	(1)	Information relating to an individual

PART 2 – BUSINESS TO BE DISCUSSED IN PRIVATE

9 PAY AND RECOGNITION POLICY

The Head of Human Resources presented a report seeking Member approval for the draft Pay and Recognition Policy to be released for formal consultation/negotiation, as appropriate, with the representative bodies.

The report also outlined a number of changes to the terms of reference of the committee established to consider the pay and performance of the Brigade Managers.

RESOLVED: that

- [1] the draft Pay and Recognition Policy be approved for formal consultation / negotiation with the representative bodies;and
- [2] the associated changes to the standing orders and terms of reference of the Staffing Sub-Committee and the Chief Fire Officer's Appraisal Group, to form the Brigade Managers Pay and Performance Sub-Committee be approved.

10 DEBT WRITE OFF

The Head of Human Resources presented a report which considered a number of issues in relation to an Officer who had since left the employment of Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service. The Authority was requested to approve the recommendation of the Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Corporate Services as detailed in the report.

RESOLVED:

That the recommendation as detailed in the report be approved.