



MINUTES OF THE CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY held on Wednesday 15 December, 2010 at Fire Service Headquarters, Winsford at 10.30 a.m.

PRESENT: Councillors P Booher, J Crockatt, B Crowe, R I Fletcher, E Johnson, G Merry, H Mundry, K Musgrave, A Needham, S Nelson, C Oliver, R K Polhill, L Redhead, T Sherlock, M Simon, G Smith, C Thorley, D Topping, J Weatherill and N Wright.

Also in attendance: Julian Farmer and Alan Rawlings (Audit Commission)

PART 1 – MATTERS CONSIDERED IN PUBLIC

1 PROCEDURAL MATTERS

A APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors M Biggin, J Joyce and B Livesley.

B CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Copies of the Chair's announcements had been distributed to Members prior to the meeting and the Chair highlighted the following:

Incident Report

Members were provided with the latest incident report. The Chair made particular reference to the recent fire in Chester and informed Members that all the business affected had been re-located. He also commended the Service on this year's work during the bonfire period.

External Meetings

The Chair gave feedback on external meetings that he had attended which included a series of meetings regarding the Fire Futures Review. The CFO added that more information on the future of FireControl was anticipated within the next few weeks and that Members would be kept informed of any developments.

C DECLARATION OF MEMBERS INTERESTS

There were no declarations of Members interests.

D MINUTES

Members were asked to confirm the minutes of the Fire Authority meeting held on 15 September 2010 and receive, for information, minutes of the Policy Committee, Brigade Managers Pay & Performance Committee, Standards Committee and Performance and Overview Committee.

MATTERS ARISING

The Monitoring Officer referred to proposals in the Localism Bill and provided a copy of a briefing paper issued in respect of the abolition of the Standards Board regime by Communities and Local Government to ensure Members were kept informed about the future of Standards. He also informed Members that he would liaise with the Monitoring Officers from the four constituent authorities to seek to secure a consistent message as the changes were considered.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the Minutes of the meeting of the Cheshire Fire Authority held on 15 September 2010 be confirmed as a correct record; and**
- [2] the Minutes of the following Committee meetings be received:
Policy Committee – 17 November 2010
Brigade Managers Pay & Performance Committee – 20 October and 4 November 2010
Standards Committee – 29 September and 24 November 2010
Performance and Overview Committee – 6 October and 1 December 2010**

2 2011-12 DRAFT BUDGET, COUNCIL TAX AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN

The Treasurer presented the report to Members which was the first of three budget reports to be presented to Members and provided information relevant to the setting of the 2011-12 budget and precept. Members had also received a briefing paper from the Treasurer which provided the headlines from the Local Government Grant Settlement which had been published on Monday 13 December 2010. Members were informed that the figures quoted in the settlement were published for consultation.

Members discussed the information provided and also the options for setting the precept. The Treasurer explained that a number of options would be explored further at the Members Awayday on 20 January 2011.

A Member asked for clarification on the Authority's ability to maintain the current level of reserves over the next two years (2011/12 and 2012/13). The Treasurer confirmed that the current levels should be maintained over the next two financial years but also asked Members to note that this may not be the case in future years due to lack of clarity about grant settlements in 2013-14 and 2014-15.

RESOLVED: That

the report and information relevant to the setting of the 2011-12 budget and precept be noted.

3 ANNUAL AUDIT LETTER 2009-10

Representatives from the Audit Commission, the Authority's External Auditors, attended the meeting to present the Annual Audit Letter to Members. The Annual Audit Letter provided an overall summary of the Audit Commission's assessment of Cheshire Fire Authority for 2009-10.

The Auditor provided a brief summary of the key messages in the Annual Audit Letter and concluded that the Authority was financially sound and had plans in place to make the savings required as a result of the comprehensive spending review.

Members thanked the Director of Finance and Corporate Planning and the Finance Team for the work they had completed which contributed to the positive statement from the Audit Commission. Councillor Merry, Finance Member Champion and the Audit Commission were also thanked for their contributions.

RESOLVED: That

the 2009-10 Annual Audit Letter be noted.

4 CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY FOUR YEAR STRATEGY 2011-2015

The Head of Corporate Communications presented the report which summarised the feedback and comments received as a result of the 12 week consultation programme in respect of the Fire Authority's draft four year strategy, *Planning for a Safer Cheshire 2011-2015*.

The report detailed the key findings from the consultation feedback and it was noted that copies of the full consultation report had been made available for Members in Group rooms prior to the meeting.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the outcomes of the consultation, as set out in the report, be noted; and

[2] a final draft of *Planning for a Safer Cheshire 2011-2015* is presented to the Fire Authority meeting on 9 February 2011 for formal sign-off.

5 ANNUAL ACTION PLAN – INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN 2011-12 (IRMP 8)

The Head of Corporate Communications presented the report which highlighted the key themes and issues that were set out in the draft Annual Action Plan (IRMP 8). Copies of the draft plan had been distributed with the agenda.

The report also outlined a programme of consultation and publication which would meet the statutory requirements. It was proposed to use the Service's Community Roadshow Vehicle and hold dual purpose events which would engage with members of the public on IRMP proposals and also actively promote the Home Safety Assessment Direct initiative.

Members were asked to contact the Head of Corporate Communications directly with any comments or suggestions for additions or amendments to the proposed programme of roadshow events which were listed in the report. Copies of the finalised programme would be provided for Members who would be invited to attend their local event.

RESOLVED: That

the draft Annual Action Plan (IRMP 8) 2011-12 be approved for formal internal and external consultation.

6 TRANSFER OF OWNERSHIP OF NEW DIMENSIONS ASSETS

The Head of Policy, Planning and Resilience provided an overview of the report which contained details of the Government's intention to transfer the ownership of the New Dimensions Assets to Fire and Rescue Authorities and sought approval for the transfer of assets. The report also provided an overview of the current position and identified the legal and financial implications.

The Policy Committee had received this report at its meeting held on 17th November 2010. The Committee resolved to make a recommendation to the Fire Authority to support, in principle, the proposal to progress the transfer of ownership of the New Dimensions Assets and to authorise Officers to conclude the agreement governing the transfer of the New Dimensions Assets.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the latest position, in particular Communities and Local Government's firm intention to conclude the transfer of ownership of New Dimensions Assets to host Fire & Rescue Authorities be noted;**
- [2] agreement be given, in principal, to take ownership of those New Dimensions Assets hosted by the Service; and**
- [3] Officers be authorised to conclude a satisfactory agreement governing the transfer of the New Dimensions Assets.**

7 CALL-IN PROCEDURE

The Monitoring Officer introduced this report which asked Members to consider the revised call-in arrangements detailed in the report and to agree a final version for insertion into the Fire Authority's Constitution.

At its meeting on 29th September 2010 Standards Committee considered a report titled 'Review of Processes relating to Major Decisions of the Fire Authority' and recommended that a further paper on the call-in procedure be presented to the next Fire Authority meeting. Members discussed this issue at the recent Members' Awayday and the feedback received from Members had been considered when the revised call-in arrangements had been drafted.

Members discussed the proposed revisions and concerns were raised about power of veto. The Monitoring Officer provided an example of when this power might be used and his role in the process.

RESOLVED: That

the revised Call-In Procedure, set out in Appendix 1 of the report, be approved and substituted for the current version in the Authority's Constitution.

8 PROPOSED ADDITION TO CONSTITUTION – MEMBER AND OFFICER PROTOCOL

The Monitoring Officer presented the report in respect of a proposed addition to the Constitution. As part of its work programme the Standards Committee reviewed the Protocol at its meeting on 29th September 2010 and recommended that, subject to minor amendments, the Protocol be included in the Constitution.

RESOLVED: That

The Protocol on Member and Officer Relations be added to the Fire Authority's Constitution.

9 PROPOSED CHANGES TO TERMS OF REFERENCE OF STANDARDS COMMITTEE

The Monitoring Officer introduced this report which asked Members to approve the changes to the terms of reference (ToR) for the Standards Committee.

As part of its work programme Standards Committee reviewed its ToR on 24 November 2010 and the report provided details of the recommended changes that had been agreed at the Standards Committee meeting. The following changes were recommended:

- (i) an additional function, "determining questions relating to the designation of politically restricted posts";
- (ii) an additional function, "commenting upon the Authority's Constitution from an ethical viewpoint"; and
- (iii) an amendment to Article 6 at 6.13 (n) by the addition of the following words to the end of the sub-paragraph, "e.g. the use of Access to Information provisions to exempt the publication of reports".

RESOLVED: That

the changes recommended by Standards Committee, as outlined in paragraph 4 of the report and set out above, be approved.

10 PROPOSED ADDITION TO TERMS OF REFERENCE OF STAFFING SUB-COMMITTEE

The Monitoring Officer presented the report which asked Members to approve an addition to the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the Staffing Sub-Committee. He informed Members that the additional function related to decisions about Pensions would address a gap in the current ToR and would allow any matters that must be considered by Members to be dealt with quickly.

Members were also asked to consider an additional point in respect of a change to the arrangements for appointments to the Staffing Sub-Committee. In previous years the Brigade Managers' Pay & Performance Committee had appointed four (named) Members to the Staffing Sub-Committee, drawn from its membership. This had not happened this year. The Monitoring Officer suggested that, instead of making specific appointments, an additional paragraph be added to the Constitution allowing the Sub-Committee to be convened using any four Members of the Brigade Managers' Pay &

Performance Committee. This would provide more flexibility and obviate the need for specific appointments in future. Whenever possible the Sub-Committee would be convened in political proportion. The additional wording would be added to paragraph 7.28 of the constitution, where it describes the membership of the Staffing Sub-Committee.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the following function be added to the terms of reference of the Staffing Sub-Committee:**

‘The Committee shall determine matters related to pensions where Members are required to make a decision’; and

- [2] the Constitution be amended at 7.28 by adding the following words after ‘There shall be four Members of Staffing Sub-Committee’:**

‘drawn from the membership of the Brigade Managers Pay and Performance Committee and wherever possible the Sub-Committee must be convened in political proportion’.

11 PROGRAMME OF MEMBER MEETINGS 2011/12

In accordance with the Authority’s Constitution the programme of meetings for the Fire Authority and all other bodies within the political structure, for the following municipal year should be agreed by the Authority no later than its last meeting (December) in each Calendar Year. The report provided details of the proposed programme of meetings for 2011-12 for approval.

RESOLVED: That

the programme of Member meetings for 2011-12, set out in Appendix 1 of the report, be approved.

12 CO-RESPONDER SCHEME UPDATE

The Head of Policy, Planning and Resilience presented Members with an update on the pilot Co-responder Scheme taking place at Nantwich Fire Station. The report also provided an overview of discussions being held between Officers from the Service and North West Ambulance Service (NWAS) in pursuance of a potential expansion of the scheme into other key locations within the area.

The report provided details of how the scheme operated and the number and types of incidents attended. Dr Mark Forrest, the Service's Medical Director was in attendance at the meeting and provided details of his role and examples of incidents attended where in his opinion lives had been saved as a result of the intervention of the co-responder.

Members congratulated the Service on the success of the pilot scheme at Nantwich and welcomed proposals to expand the scheme into other parts of the County. However the introduction of the scheme in other parts of the County would be dependant on support from NWAS and further discussions were taking place within NWAS to determine their position and whether they would support future provision for the scheme.

It was noted that the options for expansion of the Scheme would be explored further at the Members Awayday on 20th January 2011.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the update on the Co-responder Scheme be noted; and**
- [2] further development of the scheme at other locations be authorised subject to the continued support from North West Ambulance Service.**

13 INTERVENTIONS MENU

The Head of Community Safety presented the report to Members which provided details of an 'Interventions Menu' that had been developed by the Community Safety Department to catalogue all the community safety activities delivered by the Service in order to reduce risk within the community.

Members commended the document but felt that the title of the document should be amended as it was felt that it was not descriptive of the document content and could be perceived negatively. A Member also suggested that an explanatory paragraph should be added to the document to provide clarity on its purpose.

RESOLVED: That

the document be endorsed as a way of promoting and improving recognition of the broader role and impact Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service has in making communities safer.

PART 2 – BUSINESS TO BE DISCUSSED IN PRIVATE

NONE