



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

PRESENT: Councillors M Biggin, P Booher, J Crockatt, B Crowe, R I Fletcher, E Johnson, J Joyce, B Livesley, G Merry, H Mundry, K Musgrave, A Needham, C Oliver, R K Polhill, L Redhead, T Sherlock, M Simon, 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 Councillor S Nelson and G Smith

B CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair provided an overview of the information included in the Chair's announcements and confirmed that a hard copy of the announcements would be made available to Members in Group rooms prior to the meeting in future.

Incident Report

Business Continuity – The Assistant Chief Fire Officer provided an update on the Audit Commission's report on Business Continuity in Fire and Rescue Services. He informed Members that Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service had been judged as satisfactory for short-term losses but, along with all Fire and Rescue Services, concerns were raised over business continuity arrangements where there were long-term loss of resources. Officers would be reviewing the findings and making improvements where necessary over the coming months.

Co-responder Update

A Member asked if figures were available on the work carried out by the co-responder and the Chief Fire Officer explained that an update report was scheduled to be submitted to the Fire Authority meeting in December. He also suggested that an update be included at the next Members Awayday.

C DECLARATION OF MEMBERS INTEREST

There were no declarations of Members interests.

D MINUTES OF THE FIRE AUTHORITY

The Monitoring Officer addressed Members when the Minutes of the meeting of Cheshire Fire Authority which took place on 16th June 2010 were under consideration. Members were informed that the Committee Membership list that was annexed to the minutes was incorrect as M D Morris was listed as an independent member of the Standards Committee. Members were asked to approve the replacement of M D Morris with Mr M McBride whose appointment to the Standards Committee had originally been endorsed at the Fire Authority meeting held on 9 December 2009.

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Cheshire Fire Authority held on 2 June 2010 be confirmed as a correct record subject to the following amendment:

That M D Morris be replaced with Mr M McBride as an Independent Member of the Authority's Standards Committee.

E MINUTES OF THE POLICY COMMITTEE

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the Policy Committee meetings held on 16 June and 1 September 2010 be received, for information.

F MINUTES OF THE BRIGADE MANAGERS PAY AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the Policy Committee meetings held on 24 June 2010 be received, for information.

G MINUTES OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the Standards Committee held on 30 June 2010 be received, for information.

H MINUTES OF THE PERFORMANCE AND OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the Performance & Overview Committee held on 7 July 2010 be received, for information.

I NOTES OF THE MEMBER TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT GROUP

RESOLVED:

That the Notes of the Member Training and Development Group held on 31 August 2010 be received, for information.

J MATTERS ARISING

Call-in Procedure

A Member queried when the review of the call-in procedure would be concluded. The Monitoring Officer informed Members that, as part of its work programme, the Standards Committee would be reviewing the processes relating to major decisions of the Fire Authority which would provide an opportunity to consider a review of the call-in procedure.

Notification of Changes to Post-Holders

A Member commented on the request from the Member Training and Development Group for arrangements to be put in place to notify Fire Authority Members of changes to Service Management Team post-holders and requested that Members received a copy of the details of current post-holders through to Station Manager levels.

2 2009-10 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE REPORT

The Director of Finance and Corporate Planning (Treasurer) introduced the report and informed Members that a revised copy of the Annual Governance Report had been distributed electronically to Members. He provided a brief explanation of the amendments made which removed the reference to an outstanding issue in respect of the Firefighter's Pension Fund as this had been resolved satisfactorily with the Auditors.

Audit Commission representatives were in attendance at the meeting to present the report to Fire Authority Members. The Auditor provided an overview of the content of the report and explained that Members were required to: consider the matters raised in the report before approving the financial statements; to note the adjustments to the financial statements set out in the report; and approve the letter of representation.

The findings of the report showed that the high level risks identified had been managed and mitigated successfully. The Audit Commission's report concluded that the Cheshire Fire and Rescue Authority had made proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources for the year ending 31 March 2010.

Fire Authority Members thanked Officers who had been involved in the production of the financial and Annual Governance Statements for their hard work in ensuring the positive outcomes to the report. The Audit Commission Representatives also expressed their thanks to the Finance team for their help during the audit process.

RESOLVED: That

the 2009-10 Annual Governance Report be noted.

3 FINAL ACCOUNTS 2009-10

The Director of Finance and Corporate Planning (Treasurer) presented the final accounts 2009-10 to Members for approval prior to publication and explained that the overview of the accounts needed to be considered in conjunction with the Audit Commission Governance report.

The final audited accounts showed an overspend on revenue of £42k against a budget of £42.066m. The Authority had adopted a financial health target that required the final outturn position to be within 1% of the mid-year review and the overspend was only 0.03% different from the mid-year forecast.

The Director of Finance and Corporate Planning also highlighted the reserves position and informed Members that there was a £6.1m balance in the General Reserve.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the 2009-10 Final Accounts be approved for publication; and

[2] the current balances of the Authority's reserves be noted.

4 PUBLICATION OF THE ANNUAL REPORT 2009-10

The Head of Corporate Communications presented the report to Members which sought approval for the publication of the Service's Annual Report for 2009-10. The draft report incorporated statutory information on the annual Statement of Accounts, together with summary information about key areas of performance during the last financial year. The Annual Report also promoted the Authority's four year strategy, as well as raising awareness of projects involving major public expenditure, such as the new training suite and investment in new fire kit and breathing apparatus sets.

Proofs of the newspaper style report had been distributed to Members with the agenda and Members were informed that there would be separate editions for each of the four unitary areas.

RESOLVED: That

the draft Annual Report 2009-10 be approved for publication.

5 CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY : DRAFT FOUR YEAR STRATEGY 2011-15

The Head of Corporate Communications introduced the report which highlighted the key themes and issues which were set out in the Fire Authority's draft four year strategy, *Planning for a Safer Cheshire 2011-2015*. The report also proposed a programme and timetable for consultation and publication of the strategy.

The Head of Corporate Communications informed Members that there would be two stages to the consultation exercises this year – one for the four year strategy and the other for the annual action plan for 2011-2012. Once the draft strategy was approved the initial consultation exercise would commence, focusing on staff, representative bodies, key partners and other stakeholders. This consultation period would run from September to December 2010 and would be followed in mid-December by the launch of the more detailed public consultation on the specific proposals set out in the annual action plan.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the draft four year strategy be approved for formal internal and external consultation; and**
- [2] the full programme and timetable for consultation, as set out in the report, be approved.**

6 STRATEGIC RISK MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET PLANNING TIMETABLE

The Head of Finance and Corporate Planning presented Members with the 2011-2012 planning and budget setting timetable for approval. The report highlighted key dates that drove the timetable for the planning and budget setting process. Members were asked to note that the proposed date for the January Members Awayday had been amended from 21st January to 20th January 2011.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the integrated nature of the planning and budget setting processes be noted; and**
- [2] the 2011-2012 planning and budget setting timetable be approved.**

7 STANDARDS COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2009-10

The Monitoring Officer introduced the report to Members and explained that the purpose of the Annual report was to inform the Fire Authority of the work of the Standards Committee and to highlight the work of the Committee in promoting high standards of ethical behaviour.

The Chair of the Standards Committee, Bill Ravenscroft attended the meeting to present the report to Members and provided an overview of the content of the Annual Report. He explained that the report was divided into three main sections: committee membership and terms of reference, annual work programme and the Annual Return submitted to Standards for England.

RESOLVED: That

the Standards Committee Annual Report 2009-10 be noted.

8 HERITAGE POLICY

The Head of Community Fire Protection attended the meeting to present the Heritage Policy to Members for approval. He informed Members that the Policy underpinned the Community Fire Protection Strategy and set out arrangements for the improved protection of the buildings, their contents and other structures that form part of the built heritage, from fire and other emergencies.

He explained that the delivery mechanisms fell within three main areas: prevention, protection and operational response and these were detailed within the Policy. The partnership working arrangements were identified as a key factor in the successful delivery of the Policy. An example of partnership working was highlighted at the meeting where the Service was working in partnership with the National Trust at Quarry Bank Mill to carry out an in-depth Fire Safety audit.

Councillor Crowe, who was also Chair of Chester Fire Board thanked the Head of Community Fire Protection and his team for driving forward the re-establishment of the Fire Board in Chester and also for their hard work in staging the recent Heritage Impact day in Chester when over 500 business consultations were carried out.

RESOLVED: That

the Heritage Policy be approved.

9 2010-11 MEMBER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services introduced the paper which provided an update on the Member Development Programme for 2010-11

which incorporated the outcomes of Members Personal Development Reviews (PDRs). The report sought Members approval for the revised programme.

It was noted that a large number of individual needs had been identified as part of the PDR process and these could not be covered in a one year programme. The style of the delivery of the training and possible delivery options had been discussed with the Member Training and Development Group. Officers would look at a variety of methods including joint training with Officers and/or constituent authorities and producing briefing papers on particular subjects.

RESOLVED: That

the revised 2010/11 Member Development Programme be approved.

PART 2 – BUSINESS TO BE DISCUSSED IN PRIVATE

NONE