



MINUTES OF THE CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY held on Wednesday 16 September, 2009 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, G Merry, H Mundry, K Musgrave, A Needham, C Oliver, L Redhead, M Simon, D Topping, J Weatherill and N Wright.

Also in attendance: Ged Small (Audit Manager) and Julian Farmer (District Auditor)

APOLOGIES: Councillors D Bateman, J Joyce, B Livesley, S Nelson, R K Polhill, G Smith and C Thorley

PART 1 – MATTERS CONSIDERED IN PUBLIC

1 PROCEDURAL MATTERS

A CHAIRS ANNOUNCEMENTS

New Fire Minister

The Chair advised Members that Shahid Malik, the new Fire Minister was appointed in June 2009.

Achievements

Members were advised that the Service's Head of Communications, Tim Bevington had been rated as one of the North West's top communicators for his dedication and drive in moving the Service forward in terms of innovation and technology.

Migrant Workers

It was noted that a joint project to improve the safety of migrant communities in Cheshire, Halton and Warrington was to be funded from a special Government fund. The bid had been submitted by Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service on behalf of the Local Strategic Partnership and would train two migrant workers to provide safety advice and support for their communities during the next 12 months.

Cadets – Ghana Trip

Members were advised that 14 Cadets and 6 staff had returned from their trip to Ghana where they had been involved in a project to build a school. The Cadets had a successful trip and established good relationships with the local politicians, villagers and the wider community of Adeklu.

Co-Responder Launch

It was reported that the Nantwich Co-Responder Scheme was launched at Nantwich Fire Station on 9 September 2009. It was noted that this was the first scheme of its type in Cheshire and it would involve highly trained firefighters responding to medical emergencies in support of the Ambulance Service.

Cheshire East – Emergency Services Fishing Competition

It was reported that 900 competitors took part in the two week event culminating in the final at Gawsorth Fisheries. The event was well supported by many external partners and the Fire Service was represented by teams of Advocates and Pump Crews. It was noted by the Chair that such events had an impact on crime reduction and during the weeks of the event crime levels dropped.

Members Visit to the Fire College

It was noted that three Members had recently visited the Fire College in Morton in the Marsh. It was reported that the trip had been an extremely informative exercise in understanding the issues and situations which were encountered everyday by firefighters. The day consisted of a tour of the College, observing Incident Commander Training and Members were given the opportunity to talk to firefighters from their local areas.

Firefighters Memorial

The Chair announced that he had attended the Firefighters Memorial in London to commemorate firefighters that had died in service. The Chair commended the Memorial and advised that a Cadet from Cheshire acted on behalf of Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service.

CFO's Final Authority Meeting

The Chair announced this would be the Chief's Fire Officers last Fire Authority meeting, he wished the Chief well for the future and advised Members of the leaving presentation that would take place on 23 September 2009.

Incident Report

Members were provided with an incident report that highlighted significant events and current projects. It was advised that future reports would be distributed the week before the meeting with the agenda packs to give Members an opportunity to read them prior to the meeting.

B DECLARATION OF MEMBERS INTEREST

Item 7: Consultation Crewe Community Governance Review

Councillor M Simon expressed a personal and prejudicial interest in Item on the basis she Chaired Cheshire East Council Meetings.

Councillors: J Crockatt
R Fletcher
G Merry
D Topping
J Weatherill

Declared a personal interest in this item as they were Cheshire East Councillors

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the minutes of the Cheshire Fire Authority meetings held on 10 and 17 June 2009 be approved;
- [2] the minutes of the following Committee meetings be received:
Closure of Accounts Committee – 24 June 2009
Standards Committee – 1 July 2009
Performance and Overview Committee – 8 July 2009
Brigade Managers Pay and Performance Committee – 9 June and 14 July 2009;
- [3] Membership of the Regional Management Board be noted; and
- [4] the decision taken in respect of a substitute Member for the Brigade Managers Pay and Performance Committee under Standing Order No 3.80 – 3.83 be noted.

2 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE REPORT

The Area Manager, Finance and Governance introduced the Auditor representatives to Members. The Auditor talked Members through the Annual Governance report and highlighted a number of key points. The first point raised noted that the Audit Opinion in paragraph one relating to an outstanding issue with regards to the treatment of pension costs that affected all Fire and Rescue Authorities had been resolved and would no longer be held. The findings showed that the risks identified had been managed and mitigated successfully. Additionally, it was advised that the Value for Money conclusion was positive, however, at present the themes could not be scored until October. 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 2009.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the content of the 2008-09 Governance Report be noted; and

- [2] no significant post balance sheet events have arisen and the accounts be approved for issue

3 2008-09 FINAL ACCOUNTS

The Area Manager, Finance and Governance presented Members with the 2008-09 Final Accounts. It was advised that the overview of the accounts needed to be considered in conjunction with the Audit Commission Governance report, also on the agenda. The draft final accounts identified an underspend on the revenue accounts of £103k. The Audit Commission had completed the external audit and intended to issue an unqualified opinion, meaning they were satisfied that the accounts reflected fairly the financial position of the Authority.

Members requested clarification on paragraph eight of the report where it was stated the service was significantly 'in the red'. The Area Manager, Finance and Governance advised Members that this was due to pension liabilities which had skewed the figures.

The report informed Members of the Performance Delivery Group Reserve of £201k which represented unspent local budgets from previous years. Additionally it was noted that the Members would have a number of options for the £201k. Various options were discussed by Members however it was felt that further background information regarding where the money would have been spent was needed and details of possible options.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the accounts be formally approve the accounts for publication;
- [2] the current balances of the Authority's reserves be noted;
- [3] the transfer of the £103k 2008-09 underspend into the Community Risk Reduction Reserve be approved; and
- [4] the agreement on how to spend the brought-forward 'PDG Reserve' balance be deferred and discussed at the away day and a report on background information and options be provided.

4 PUBLICATION OF ANNUAL REPORT 2008-09

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Community Risk Reduction presented Members with the Annual Report 2008-09. The report noted the Authority's commitment to keeping its residents, businesses and key stakeholders informed about the development of the services, policies and performance against its published plans.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the draft Annual Report 2008-09 be approved for publication.

5 CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY CONSTITUTION

The Deputy Monitoring Officer presented Members with the newly revised Constitution for Cheshire Fire Authority. The report identified the articles presently in the constitution and major amendments that had been made. It was advised that the Constitution would be reviewed annually by each Committee reviewing its own Terms of Reference enabling the Fire Authority to renew the Constitution with the information available.

The Document would be published on the internet and intranet and Members would be provided with a loose leaf format to enable any future amendments to be incorporated easily.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the draft constitution be approved;
- [2] a further paper be submitted in December 2009 identifying the revised Scheme of Delegation and Financial Regulations;
- [3] Members note the training and development plans as outlined in Paragraph 14 of the report.

6 2010-11 CORPORATE PLAN, INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN (IRMP) AND BUDGET PLANNING

The Area Manager, Finance and Governance presented Members with the 2010-2011 Corporate Plan, Integrated Risk Management Plan and the Budget Plan. The report highlighted two key dates that drove the timetable for the planning and budget setting process. Additionally the report also gave key dates leading to the production of the Corporate Plan and Integrated Risk Management Plan 7.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the integrated nature of the planning and budget setting processes be noted; and
- [2] the 2010-11 planning and budget setting timetable be approved.

7 CONSULTATION – CREWE COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW

(Councillor M Simon had declared a personal and prejudicial interest in this Item and left the room before discussions took place).

The Government Liaison Officer presented Members with the Crewe Community Governance Review Consultation report. The report advised, following a petition in Crewe, which collected over 3500 local signatures, Cheshire East Council were undertaking a Community Governance Review to

consider the most suitable parish structures for representing people in the Crewe area and to decide whether a Town Council would be the best means of doing so.

The Authority had been included in the consultation and had been asked to give a view on the most operationally practicable option for moving forward. The most effective outcome would support the Authority's efforts to engage effectively in local partnerships and support Officers in Crewe to reach out to the wider community. Members noted the draft response that had been provided with the report.

Members discussed the response to the consultation. A Member proposed an amendment to the recommendation and proposed that no response be sent and this was seconded. However, it was felt by other Members that the draft response provided was neutral and that a response should be submitted.

Following discussions the amendment to the recommendation was withdrawn and a further amendment was proposed and agreed to adjust the wording in paragraph 7.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the content of the consultation be considered; and
- [2] the draft response be approved subject to alterations of the wording in paragraph 7 of the draft response (attached as Annex 1).

8 CFOA NW PEER REVIEW HEALTH AND SAFETY AUDIT

The Chief Fire Officer presented Members with the CFOA NW Peer Review Health and Safety Audit. Members were informed that, as part of the Authority's Health and Safety Audit arrangements the service had commissioned an independent audit of its Health and Safety management, structures and policies. The review was conducted by a group of qualified H&S Auditors from Fire and Rescue Services across the North West.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the report be considered; and
- [2] the attached Action Plan be approved.

9 IDeA FINAL REPORT ON THE OPERATIONAL ASSURANCE OF CHESHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

The Chief Fire Officer presented Members with the IDeA Final Report on the Operational Assurance of Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service. The report provided an overview of the published findings from the IDeA peer review that took place in June 2009. The Operational Assessment formed part of the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) process for the fire and rescue

sector along with the Organisational and Area Assessment. It was noted that the report highlighted a significant number of key strengths and areas of good practice as well as areas for further improvement.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the report be received;
- [2] the areas of notable practice and areas for improvement be considered and noted; and
- [3] the detailed action plan to address issues for improvement be presented to the next meeting of the Performance and Overview Committee.

DRAFT