



MINUTES OF THE CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY held on Wednesday 17 June, 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, J Joyce, B Livesley, G Merry, K Musgrave, A Needham, S Nelson, C Oliver, R K Polhill, L Redhead, G Smith, C Thorley, D Topping, J Weatherill and N Wright.

Also in attendance H Norris (Monitoring Officer) and Ged Small (Audit Manager)

APOLOGIES: Councillors D Bateman, H Mundry and M Simon

PART 1 – MATTERS CONSIDERED IN PUBLIC

1 PROCEDURAL MATTERS

A CHAIRS ANNOUNCEMENTS

Road Safety Grant

At the Fire Authority Meeting held on 10 June 2009 Members discussed the road safety grant and how the funding was split between the constituent Authorities. The Chair advised Members that the funding was based on the number of safety camera sites in each area. The actual percentage divide was advised as 45% Cheshire West and Chester and 55% Cheshire East.

Incident Report

Members were presented with an Incident report giving details of recent major incidents. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Emergency Response outlined the key points of the report to Members.

Peer Review Feedback

The Chair provided a brief overview of the outcome of the Peer Review and it was noted that Members had received a briefing note the previous week.

B DECLARATION OF MEMBERS INTEREST

There were no declarations of Members Interests.

C FORMATION OF A STAFFING SUB-COMMITTEE

The formation of a staffing sub-committee was agreed, deriving from the membership of the Brigade Managers Pay and Performance Committee.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the formation of a Staffing Sub-committee derived from the membership of the Brigade Managers Pay & Performance Committee be approved; and
- [2] the Brigade Managers Pay & Performance Committee appoint four members to the Staffing Sub-Committee at its next meeting.

2 CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY 2009-2012

The Head of Corporate Communications presented Members with the Corporate Communications Strategy 2009-2012. The report identified the importance of internal and external communications, particularly in the public service. The Authority's commitment to this was set out in the key corporate objectives.

The new draft strategy had been developed to set out the principles the organisation would follow to improve both its internal and external communications over the next three years. Additionally, it reflected the service's corporate aims and objectives and the importance of delivering such objectives to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the organisation.

Members discussed the levels of both internal and external communication. The various methods of interaction with all staff were noted through the Chiefs breakfast, an opportunity for staff to raise issues and concerns. Additionally the usage of the blog was mentioned; this had been a very successful communication method and received a high number of responses.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the Corporate Communications Strategy 2009-2012 be approved.

3 COMMUNITY FIRE PROTECTION STRATEGY

The Area Manager, Community Fire Protection presented Members with the draft Community Fire Protection Strategy. Members were advised that the strategy was a key element in the Service's aim to benefit communities in Cheshire West and Cheshire, Cheshire East, Halton and Warrington by risk based delivery of service.

The strategy introduced the Fire Protection Framework, departmental work streams and key responsibilities for implementation.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the report be received; and

[2] the draft Community Fire Protection Strategy be approved.

4 EXTERNAL AUDIT REPORTS

The Area Manager, Finance and Governance introduced the Audit Manager who presented the External Audit reports to Members. It was advised that the report summarised two letters that had been received from the Audit Commission relating to a 'Supplementary Opinion Plan 2008-09' and the Annual Audit fee for 2009-10.

The report detailed the high level risks and identified the risk prevention methods. The risks included the formation of the newly structured Fire Authority following the Local Government Review in Cheshire with significant number of new members on key Committees. It was noted that the work of members would be monitored through the Auditors attendance at selected committees and Authority meetings.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the financial implications of the correspondence be noted.

5 MEMBERS ALLOWANCES 2009-10

The Area Manager, Finance and Governance presented Members with a report on Members Allowances for 2009-10. The paper detailed the recommendations for Members Allowances with regard to the scheme of allowances for the year commencing 1 April 2009.

The report also asked Members to consider the recommendation for the Independent Remuneration Panel to carry out a comprehensive review of Members Allowances.

Members discussed travel expenses, it was suggested that the amount payable be brought below the taxable figure. However it was advised by Officers that tax was dependant on individual circumstances of Councillors and making this change may be of detriment to some Members whilst not to others.

Members also raised the issue of pensions. This issue would be explored further once the review of Members Allowances commenced.

Members requested that the members on the Independent Remuneration Panel be distributed for information once they had been confirmed.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the current rates for basic and special responsibility allowances be increased by the RPI (X) at its rate at the end of March 2009 (2.2%) for 2009/10 and applied retrospectively from 1st April 2009;

- [2] the proposals for the Independent Review Panel to undertake a comprehensive review of Members' Allowances be agreed;
- [3] the review will also include setting an allowance for those Members appointed to support Unitary Performance Areas; and
- [4] the Independent Remuneration Panel review Members eligibility to join the CFRS pension scheme.

6 MEMBERS TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME 2009-10

The Chief Fire Officer presented Members with a report on the Member Training and Development Programme for 2009-10. The report outlined a proposal for the Member Development Training Group to develop, monitor and evaluate the programme during the year and to progress work towards the attainment of the NW Charter for Elected Members.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the Member Training & Development Programme for 2009-10, attached as annex 1 of the report be approved; and
- [2] the work programme for the Member Training & Development group for 2009-10 be noted.

7 REGULATION OF INVESTIGATORY POWERS ACT 2000: CONSULTATION

The Monitoring Officer presented Members with a report on the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA). The paper requested that Fire Authorities confirmed if they considered that they should maintain their current status listed under RIPA and if so, to give robust evidence of how such Authorities use or would use this.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the responses to the consultation as detailed in the report be approved; and
- [2] a response to the Department of Communities and Local Government (CLG) in terms outlined in the responses from the Fire Authority be approved.

8 CONSULTATION ON CHANGES TO DELIVERY OF FREEDOMS AND FLEXIBILITIES AFTER THE INTRODUCTION OF CAA

The Government Liaison Officer presented Members with a paper on the consultation on changes to delivery of freedoms and flexibilities after the introduction of the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA).

The Comprehensive Area Assessment replaced the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) on 1 April 2009.

Under the old regime CPA, had a number of freedoms and flexibilities, including the power to charge and trade. These would be granted to authorities who scored the maximum four stars, or excellent.

Unlike CPA, the new framework did not grant an overall performance rating to pin additional freedoms. Therefore the Department of Communities and Local Government (CLG) issued a consultation, which sought the views on proposals for the way freedoms were dispersed under CAA. The report provided an overview of the issues surrounding the proposals in the consultation.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the issues raised in the consultation be noted; and
- [2] the outline response on bespoke freedoms (set out in paragraphs 9 - 11) be approved; and
- [3] option C on charging and trading powers (paragraph 16) be supported as the view of the Authority.

9 NORTH WEST FIRE AND RESCUE MANAGEMENT BOARD – BUSINESS PLAN 2008-2011

The Chief Fire Officer presented Members with the North West Fire and Rescue Management Board (NWFRMB) Business Plan, for information. The aim of the Business Plan was to set out how the NWFRMB was meeting the expectations of the government over the period 2008-2011.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the North West Fire and Rescue Management Board Business Plan be noted.

10 SAFEGUARDING ADULTS POLICY AND PROCEDURAL GUIDANCE

The Area Manager, Community Safety presented Members with the Safeguarding Adults Policy and Procedural Guidance. The paper provided Members with a summary of the main points of the Safeguarding Policy. The report also considered the background to the need for the policy in light of the work of many of the Cheshire Fire Authority's frontline staff.

The purpose of the policy was to ensure that Cheshire Fire and Rescue complies with its responsibilities as a partner agency for the four Unitary Authorities in Cheshire to protect vulnerable adults in its work within local communities. The policy would sit and work alongside the Safeguarding Children's policy.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the report be received;
- [2] the Policy and Procedure be adopted; and
- [3] Safeguarding Adults be included in the 09/10 Member Training Programme.