



MINUTES OF THE CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY held on Wednesday 9 December, 2009 at Fire Service Headquarters, Winsford at 11.00 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, 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: Ged Small (Audit Manager) and Julian Farmer (District Auditor)

APOLOGIES: None

PART 1 – MATTERS CONSIDERED IN PUBLIC

1 PROCEDURAL MATTERS

A CHAIRS ANNOUNCEMENTS

Service Update

The Chair made reference to the new Management Structure and welcomed Interim ACFO Keith Brooks into the position. Additionally the Members were given a brief overview of the recent Management Conference.

Incident Report

Members were provided with the latest incident report. The Chair thanked the Head of Communications for producing a well presented incident report.

External Meetings

The Chair gave feedback on external meetings that he had attended which included the Sub-Regional Leaders Meeting, Regional Management Board and the Fire Service Forum.

Christmas 6 sense campaign

Members were informed that the service had launched a special Christmas safety campaign based on the 6 sense campaign launched earlier this year. It was advised that the key elements of the campaign were:

- A specially designed Christmas card distributed in local communities during Home Safety Assessments, at events (local carol concerts), during school visits, etc.
- A dedicated radio advertisement on all key radio stations
- Media releases to promote different elements of the campaign
- Online campaigns through the website and Intranet and through social network websites such as Facebook
- A competition supported by Chester Zoo to help evaluate the success of the campaign

- An online colouring competition for local schoolchildren to design a Christmas poster

Achievements

Media Awards

It was announced that the Communications Team had been shortlisted for the finals of two prestigious awards and although narrowly missing out on both awards the team beat hundreds of other entries to make the finals. The awards were:

- The Kidzone section, of the Service's website was shortlisted for the Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR) Pride awards in the category of 'best microsite'.
- The whole team was also in the running for the 'Best Internal Team' category at the regional How-do awards.

E-Government National Awards

It was also noted that the Service had also been shortlisted for its work with Exeter data and Age Concern in the E-Government National Awards 2009 under the category 'Innovation in Strategy at a Local Level'. The awards would take place in London on 20 January 2010.

Events

The Chair updated Members on forthcoming events, these included Cheshire Safety Day scheduled to take place on 17 February 2010. The Chair explained the aim of Cheshire Safety Day was to complete 1000 Home Safety Assessments in 24 hours to raise awareness of HAS's and community safety across Cheshire. All Members, employees, volunteers and cadets were encouraged to take part and a briefing note providing further information was distributed to Members.

New Build

The Chair requested that an update on the progress of the new build be given to Members making reference to the quality, budget and timescale of the project. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer advised Members that the quality of the work was checked and certified before each payment is made. The official opening of the new build would be at the end of May 2010.

New Member

The Chair welcomed Councillor T Sherlock to the Fire Authority and advised that a letter had been written thanking Councillor D Bateman for his service and a gift had been presented to him at the Performance and Overview Committee meeting.

B DECLARATION OF MEMBERS INTEREST

There were no declarations of Members interests

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the Minutes of the meeting of the Cheshire Fire Authority held on 16 September 2009 be confirmed as a correct record;

- [2] the Minutes of the following Committee meetings be received:
Policy Committee – 2 September 2009
Standards Committee – 30 September 2009
Performance and Overview Committee – 7 October 2009
Brigade Managers Pay and Performance Committee – 26 October 2009
Staffing Sub-Committee – 11, 21 and 30 September 2009
Notes of the Members Training and Development Group Meeting – 19 October 2009;
- [3] the appointment of Councillor Tony Sherlock, to replace Councillor Derek Bateman, as a Fire Authority representative for Cheshire West and Chester and the appointment onto Performance and Overview and Members Training and Development Group;
- [4] the timetable of Fire Authority Meetings 2010/11 be approved;
- [5] the revised Member-Officer buddy arrangements be noted;
- [6] the appointment of Mr M McBride as a new Independent Member of the Standards Committee be noted;
- [7] the appointments of Fire Authority Members to the following outside organisations be approved:

Councillor D Topping - Cheshire and Warrington Improvement, Efficiency and Information Commission
Councillor B Crowe - Cheshire West and Chester: local Strategic Partnership;
- [8] a detailed report be presented to the Performance and Overview Committee on the progress of the New Build; and
- [9] Councillor R Polhill be appointed as the replacement IT Member Champion for Councillor Bateman.

2 2010/2011 DRAFT BUDGET, COUNCIL TAX & MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN

The Director of Finance and Corporate Planning presented Members with the 2010-11 draft budget, council tax and medium term financial plan. It was noted that the Fire Authority needed to approve the budget and set the Council Tax precept for the year commencing 1 April 2010. This was the first of three reports to be presented to the Authority. A further report would be presented to the Policy Committee on 20 January 2010 and the final report to the Fire Authority meeting on 10 February 2010.

The first part of the report provided background to the financial position of the Authority and referred to the national context and identified risks that the

Authority should take into consideration. The report also referred to the medium term financial plan, efficiencies and savings, the capital programme, reserves and the overall affects on Council Tax.

From the information provided it was felt that a Council Tax increase of 2.95% would be sufficient however, this would be discussed further at the Member away day in January.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the information relevant to the setting of the 2010-11 budget and precept be noted; and

[2] a precept increase of 2.95% be considered further.

3 MEMBERS ALLOWANCE SCHEME

The Chair of the Independent Remuneration Panel presented Members with the Members allowance scheme 2009-10 recommendations from the Remuneration panel. Members were advised that there were some adjustments to the allowances. The two main changes were to introduce a Member Champion allowance and allowances for the Group Spokesperson.

Members questioned the pension scheme allowances however, it was noted in the report that the current Members allowance regulations state that pension schemes apply only to a District Council, County Council or a London Borough Council and as there had been no change the panel could only note the comments of Members. The Monitoring Officer advised Members that the decision must remain within the regulations unless change is lobbied for. Members felt that they had insufficient time prior to the meeting to discuss the scheme in the group meetings and it was proposed that the report be deferred.

RESOLVED: That

[1] this item be deferred to the next meeting of the Fire Authority to allow for further discussion.

4 DRAFT INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN (IRMP) 7/ CORPORATE PLAN 2010/2011

The Head of Communications presented Members with the draft Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) 7 / Corporate Plan 2010/11. The report highlighted the key themes and issues which were set out in the IRMP and proposed a timetable for consultation and publication which met statutory requirements. It was noted that the Policy Committee would sign off the final version of the plan.

A Member highlighted that the Chamber of Commerce was on the external consultation programme, it was suggested that the Chamber of Trade should

also be included and that this should be listed as a separate consultation group. It was also suggested that LSP should be added to the stakeholder list.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the draft IRMP / Corporate Plan 2010/2011 be approved for formal internal and external consultation;
- [2] the Authority agrees to consult on the Service's draft budget for 2010/11, as in previous years.

5 COMMUNITY FIRE SAFETY – FIRE AND COMMUNITY STRATEGY 2009-2012

The Head of Community Fire Safety presented Members with the Community Fire Safety: Fire and Community Strategy 2009 – 2012. The strategy was one of three which supported the Community Safety Strategy. The Strategy would be a key element in the Service's aim to deliver safer and stronger communities in Cheshire West and Chester, Cheshire East, Halton and Warrington.

Additionally the strategy outlined how the Service would deliver fire safety programmes and other community safety events into the heart of communities through community engagement, intelligence gathering and partnership working.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the Community Fire Safety – Fire and Community Strategy 2009 – 2012 be approved.

6 FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE CIRCULAR 59/09 TRANSFER OF OWNERSHIP OF NEW DIMENSION ASSETS

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services presented Members with a paper on the transfer of ownership of new dimension assets. The paper informed Members of the latest Fire and Rescue Service Circular (59/2009), issued by Communities and Local Government (CLG), on the transfer of assets and presented a regional response for consideration. The regional response supported and complemented the one already submitted by the Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA).

Members felt that there could be a conflict of interests between the Audit Commission and Communities and Local Government in terms of audit. However, the biggest issue would be the cost of maintaining the appliances.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the draft response be approved.

7 MEMBER AND OFFICER PROTOCOL

The Deputy Monitoring Officer presented Members with the Member/Officer Protocol. The annual return for 2009 to the Standards Board for England identified a need to produce a Member/Officer Protocol.

The draft protocol acknowledged that good relations existed between Members and Officers of the Authority and it was not envisaged that the relationship would deteriorate. However the protocol highlighted principles and processes for these relationships so that a safe guide was provided to ensure that this continued. It further outlined the roles and responsibilities of both Members and Officers and how any possible disputes might be resolved.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the Member and Officer protocol, attached as an appendix to the report be approved.

8 ANNUAL AUDIT AND INSPECTION LETTER 2008-09

The Director of Finance and Corporate Planning introduced the external Audit Manager and District Auditor to Members. The Auditors presented Members with the Annual Audit and Inspection Letter 2008-09. It was advised that the letter was a positive endorsement of the Authority's performance and progress against the modernisation agenda. The inspection letter reviewed two elements firstly, managing performance and secondly use of resources – investigation and reviews.

The report looked at short term issues that could be resolved instantly and long term issues that would be identified on an action plan to be moved forward.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the 2008-09 Annual Audit and Inspection Letter be received; and
- [2] the Performance and Overview Committee be asked to consider and monitor the Use of Resources action plan.

9 SENIOR MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

The Chief Fire Officer presented Members with details on changes to the Senior Management Structure. The most apparent change was to adopt a model with the Chief Fire Officer supported by one Deputy Chief Fire Officer and one Assistant Chief Fire Officer instead of the current model of two Deputy Chief Fire Officers. It was thought that the new model provided greater clarity in the absence of the Chief Fire Officer and who would have responsibility for the service.

RESOLVED: That

[1] changes to the Service's Senior Management structure be noted.

10 URGENT BUSINESS AND EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Standing Order 3.69 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] Exclusion of the Press and Public

Recommended:

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 12A to the Act in the paragraphs indicated:

Item		Paragraph
11 - Industrial Relations Update	4	Information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a minister of the crown and employees of, or office holders under, the authority.

PART 2 – BUSINESS TO BE DISCUSSED IN PRIVATE

11 INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS UPDATE

The Chief Fire Officer presented Members with an update of current national and local industrial relations issues.

RESOLVED: That

[1] The update be noted.

