



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY held on 16 April 2008 at Fire Service Headquarters, Winsford at 10.30 a.m.

PRESENT: Councillors A W Hooton (in the Chair), D T Bateman, Mrs P Booher, M Byram, Mrs N M Dolphin, Mrs E Moore Dutton, R I Fletcher, D W Freear, H Grange, B Jones, J Joyce, H Mundry, S Nelson, C Oliver, R Polhill, Mrs M Simon, Mrs L Redhead and Mrs S Roberts.

APOLOGIES: Councillors D Andrews, E Lafferty and D Maguire,

PART 1 – MATTERS CONSIDERED IN PUBLIC

1 PROCEDURAL MATTERS

The Chairman of the Fire Authority presented Cllr Colin Oliver with a brass statue on behalf of Cllr Ted Lafferty to mark his final meeting and as a thank you for his valued and long standing service to Cheshire Fire Authority from the Members and Officers.

Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman of the Fire Authority made the following announcements:

- A new combined aerial rescue pump (CARP) has been ordered by the Fire Authority at a cost of approximately £500,000.
- Parmkit Dhanda MP invited Chairs and Chiefs to the launch of the Equality & Diversity Strategy at the Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre, London on Wednesday 28 May
- There will be a dedication of a National Monument to Fire and Rescue Services Personnel on Tuesday 20 May at The National Memorial Arboretum, Staffs.
- On March 28 the final Thorn Cross YOI Cadets held their passing out parade at the end of a successful 12 week course.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the approval to submit the Authority response to the Creating Safer, Stronger and Prosperous Communities Consultation be confirmed.
- [2] the approval of the decisions of the Members of the Chief Fire Officer's Appraisal Group, which met on 31 January 2008, regarding the Chief Fire Officer's pay be confirmed.
- [3] the Minutes of the Fire Authority meeting held on Wednesday 13 February, 2008 be received

- [4] the Minutes of the Policy Committee meeting held on Wednesday 19 March, 2008 be received
- [5] the minutes of the Standards Committee meeting held on Wednesday 2 April, 2008 be received; and
- [6] the minutes of the Performance and Overview Committee held on Wednesday 9 April, 2008 be received.

2 COMMUNITY SAFETY REVIEW

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Community Risk Reduction presented a report which outlined proposals to restructure the community safety function. A number of factors had required a review of the way the Fire and Rescue Service delivered community safety. These included the continuing modernisation of the Fire and Rescue Service, proposals to recognise Local Government in Cheshire (LGR) and the Authority's recent decision to re-structure its Performance Delivery Groups, in-line with the new unitaries in Cheshire and the existing unitaries of Halton and Warrington.

The review proposed a restructure of management functions within Community Safety by creating Unitary Delivery Managers responsible for managing front line service delivery, building relationships and creating partnerships within each unitary area. In addition, releasing resources would permit further Advocate roles to be created and maximise the delivery of community safety on the ground. Members noted that the measures would improve employment opportunities for minority groups, young parents, the older workforce and young people within our community.

The report focused on building capacity across all areas of the department, in a cost effective way, through the creation of a new career structure and removing geographical and cultural barriers that currently segregate elements of Community Safety delivery and Youth Engagement.

The proposals had previously been considered by Senior managers and Members of the Policy Committee, and had been discussed with the Representative Bodies. There had also been extensive staff engagement throughout the development of the proposals.

Members noted that the addition of two Rural Advocate positions provided an excellent opportunity to target vulnerable people in isolated rural communities. Overall, Members welcomed the Review and its potential to have a positive impact on the wider community, they also expressed their thanks to the authors for undertaking such a thorough job in producing the report.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the contents of the Community Safety Department Review 2007/08 Executive Summary be considered; and

- [2] the proposed restructure and delegates implementation of the review to the Deputy Chief Officer - Head of Community Risk & Reduction be agreed.

3 COMMUNITY FIRE PROTECTION REVIEW

The Deputy Chief Fire Office, Community Risk Reduction presented a report outlining proposals to restructure the Community Fire Protection Department. Members noted that the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, which was introduced in October 2006, had resulted in fundamental changes to the way the Service delivered its regulatory role. These changes, coupled with a number of other expected changes such as the reorganisation of local government in Cheshire and the expectations within the Fire Service National Framework document, had prompted a review of the Community Fire Protection (CFP) department.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Community Risk Reduction stressed that the Review was an opportunity to build upon work already delivered in embedding the Fire Safety Order across the non-domestic premises sector. It would also ensure that the Service is delivering an excellent quality of Service to local communities across its other responsibilities such as unwanted fire signal reduction.

A number of key drivers for change were considered in the review and recommendations to improve the future operation of the department were outlined and approved by Members.

Members commented that on the number of proposals within the Review and expressed their view about the potential positive impact that the measures would present.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] The Community Fire Protection Department Review 2007/08 Executive Summary be noted and the recommendations approved; and
- [2] the Authority delegate implementation of the review to the Deputy Chief Officer, Community Risk & Reduction.

4 MEMBERS ALLOWANCE SCHEME 2008-09

This paper detailed the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Members Allowances with regard to the scheme of allowances for the year commencing 1 April 2008.

The Authority received and agreed the recommendations of the Panel, forming the final year of a three-year program of allowances, set by the Panel, and originally agreed with Members, in 2006.

Members were also asked to note that the Remuneration Panel would consult Authority Members later in 2008 to set the parameters for the Review that would inform the remuneration scheme for 2009/10 and beyond.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel for Members' Allowances as confirmed in the report, be noted; and
- [2] the proposals to undertake a further review of Members' Allowances in order to develop a new Scheme for 2009/10 and beyond, be agreed.

5 LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION-POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Corporate Services presented a report which detailed the political implications of changes brought about by the re-organisation of local government arrangements in Cheshire. In December 2007, the Government indicated that it intended to move ahead with the reorganisation of local government (LGR) by supporting proposals to replace the County Council and the six districts councils in Cheshire with two unitary authorities; East Cheshire and West Cheshire and Chester.

The report considered the impact of the proposals on the constitutional framework of the Fire Authority, particularly during the transitional year of 2008-09 and after the 1 April 2009 commencement date for the new councils. The report also outlined a number of other issues affecting the Authority.

The Chairman proposed that the item be moved to the end of the meeting to enable each of the proposals to be considered and to allow Members to appraise the options available. The Chairman took each of the issues in turn and the Members considered the proposals and agreed a way forward.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the issues identified for the 2008-09 transitional year and after the 1 April 2009 implementation date be noted and considered; and
- [2] a way forward on each of the issues, identified below, be agreed.

That

- [a] the Authority engage with new councillors and Senior management teams from the new councils to promote the work of the Fire Authority

- [b] after 1 May elections the following options be incorporated in any draft submitted; that
- when invited by The Secretary of State to consider an amended Combination Order
 - the total number of Members on the Authority to be set at 23
 - the arrangements for appointing the Chair and Vice-Chair positions be amended to require Members at their AGM to appoint a Chair and a single Vice Chair
 - the name of the Authority in the revised order be set as Cheshire Fire and Rescue Authority.
 - the Authority place on record their intention to lobby further for the power of well-being to be granted to combined Fire Authorities.
- [c] Members indicate their intention to support the shared services agenda in Cheshire and note its implications for front and back office service delivery across all local authorities
- [d] Member engagement in PDGs be maintained and redefined under the new structure, with at least two Members appointed to each of the four PDGs but encouraging all Members to attend.
- [e] Members and officers continue to engage with new Members and shadows in developing new contacts to ensure full Fire Authority involvement in the process.

6 ATTENDANCE MANAGEMENT REVIEW

The Head of Human Resources presented a revised attendance management policy, which picked up the findings of a formal review that had been undertaken by and reported to Members of the Performance and Overview Committee. The review was initiated in January 2006 as part of the Authority's ongoing aspiration to foster a culture of attendance within the Service.

During the review, a critical evaluation of current performance against that of peers had been undertaken which indicated the need for further improvement. Members of the Performance and Overview Committee noted at their meeting that a revision to the current policy should form the next phase of the review.

The revised attendance management policy outlined in this report, incorporated best practice from academic and empirical research together with shared experiences from senior officers and high performing peers.

Members welcomed the policy and stressed the need for attendance within the Service to be driven and supported by effective line management. Members commented that each employee should be dealt with on an individual basis, using the flexible elements incorporated into the revised policy, to ensure a robust and proportionate management response.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the contents of this report be noted; and
- [2] the revised Attendance Management policy be approved.

7 REVISED TRADE UNION PROTOCOL

The Head of Human Resources presented a report which set out a revised Trade Union (TU) Protocol. The framework had been the main vehicle for consultation and negotiation between management and staff representatives in Cheshire Fire & Rescue Service since January 2005.

Members had previously considered a number of proposed revisions to the Protocol and they noted that it was an appropriate time to undertake a comprehensive review of the Protocol. There were a number of key drivers for the review, including recent National Joint Committee (NJC) circulars which outlined a Joint Protocol for good industrial relations in the Service.

Several key areas for review had been identified through consultation with the trade unions and management discussions. There had also been some discussion at a recent joint management/union Away Day, held on 24 January 2008, at which areas to be reviewed were discussed and mutual agreement reached.

Members noted that the Protocol was also the mechanism by which the Authority fulfilled its statutory obligation in determining reasonable time-off for TU activities. This particular issue had been discussed by the Authority at its meeting on 5 December 2007 and at the meeting of the Policy Committee on 30 January 2008.

Members expressed the view that having contributed to, and taken part in the production of the Protocol, the revised document presented an opportunity to re-launch Trade Union relations. To that end it was agreed that the Chair write to all the recognised Trade Unions welcoming the revised Protocol asking them to sign and support it.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the report and attached draft revised TU Protocol be approved; and
- [2] the Chair write to all recognised Trade Unions.

8 INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT) STRATEGY

The Head of Asset Management presented a comprehensive strategy setting out the vision for the development of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and a recommended approach which the Authority might take.

This report revised and combined a number of ad hoc ICT strategies and Members noted that the development of this area had in the past been piecemeal and somewhat disjointed from other service activities.

The revised strategy was designed to support the delivery of the Authority's Integrated Risk Management Plans (IRMPs) in the context of modernisation and future challenges.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the Strategy be approved; and
- [2] the establishment of a mixed Member and Officer ICT Steering Group, reporting to Members through the Performance and Overview Committee be approved.

9 AMENDMENT OF PROCUREMENT RULES

The Head of Asset Management presented a report, which sought Member approval to make a number of amendments to the Procurement Rules, as set out within the Authority's Financial Regulations. The amendments updated the regulations to take account of new legal requirements as well as developments in technology such as electronically enabled purchasing (e-procurement).

Members raised a number of issues, particularly in relation to the level of security given to proposed tenders and they were advised that the recommended software would have security processes. Members added that the new rules would make procurement quick and more simple and made the potential for savings more identifiable.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the report be considered;
- [2] a new clause, to encourage evaluation of quotations and tenders on a best value basis, be added and replace the existing clause in the Award of Contract section of the Financial Regulations, be agreed;
- [3] a new clause, to permit electronic procurement, to be added and replace the existing clause in the Purchasing section of the Financial Regulations be agreed; and
- [4] a new clause, to enable the use of electronic tendering within EU procurement regulations, be added and replace the existing clause in the Purchasing section of the Financial Regulations, be agreed.

10 TARGETED RESPONSE VEHICLE (TRV) UPDATE

At the Authority meeting on 3 October 2007, Members approved a number of modified proposals for the deployment of TRV's / Midi fire appliances.

The Head of Emergency Response presented a further report which updated Members on progress made with the roll-out and deployment of these appliances. The report also sought an amendment to the proposals presented at the Authority meeting on the 3 October 2007, in terms of changes to the order at roll-out location.

Members welcomed the progress made and noted the positive media coverage of the most recent launch, which took place at Nantwich Fire Station on Wednesday 9 April.

RESOLVED:

- [1] the progress made to the modified proposals presented noted;
- [2] a revision to the modified proposals be approved, to bring forward the replacement of Stockton Heath's second appliance with a TRV instead of replacing the existing fire appliance at Frodsham with two TRVs; and
- [3] a further update be brought to a meeting of the Authority outlining the progress of the project.

11 CENTRAL-LOCAL CONCORDAT

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Corporate Services presented a report to Members informing them of an authorising the development of the Central Local Concordat. The Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) and the Local Government Association (LGA) had worked together to establish a concordat that governs the relations between central and local levels of government, in working together to serve the public.

Members noted that the Concordat would progress further constitutional reform, as it established for the first time, a framework of principles setting out the rights and responsibilities of local government, including responsibilities to provide effective leadership of the local area and empowerment of local communities where possible.

RESOLVED:

That Cheshire Fire & Rescue Service endorse the principles embedded in the Central-Local Concordat and commit to upholding these principles through out all operations;

12 URGENT BUSINESS AND EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Standing Order 3.31 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] Urgent Business

There were no issues to be considered under urgent business.

[2] Exclusion of press and public

RESOLVED:

That under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the 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 12 A to the Act in the paragraphs indicated:

Item		Paragraph
Termination of employment of an individual	(1)	Information relating to a named individual
Chief Fire Officers Pay	(1)	Information relating to a named individual

PART 2 – BUSINESS TO BE DISCUSSED IN PRIVATE

13 PROCEDURAL MATTERS

Urgent Approvals (Section 3.80-82) – Chairman’s Action

RESOLVED:

That the Urgent Approval for the authority to terminate the employment of an individual member of staff be approved.

14 CHIEF FIRE OFFICERS APPRAISAL GROUP-DEPUTY CHIEF OFFICERS PAY

The Members of the Chief Fire Officers Appraisal Group met on 31 March 2008 to review the level of Deputy Chief Officers’ pay.

RESOLVED:

That the decisions of the Members of the Chief Fire Officers Appraisal Group taken at its meeting on 31 March 2008 be approved.