



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE POLICY COMMITTEE held on  
16 July 2008 at Fire Service Headquarters, Winsford at 10.00 a.m.**

**PRESENT:** Councillors J Joyce, (in the Chair), Mrs P Booher, R K Polhill, Mrs S Roberts, D Andrews and M Byram

**APOLOGIES:** Councillors A W Hooton, Mrs L Redhead and Mrs M Simon

**PART 1 – MATTERS DISCUSSED IN PUBLIC**

**1 PROCEDURAL MATTERS**

Chair's Announcements

The Chair welcomed Cllr David Andrews back to the committee after a period of illness. The wishes of the Chair to remember Cllr Bert Grange and his continual loyalty and commitment to the Fire Authority, before and throughout his illness, were acknowledged by the Members.

**RESOLVED:** That

- [1] the Membership of the Committee to serve until 31 March 2009, as agreed by the Fire Authority at their annual general meeting (AGM) on 11 June 2008 as listed below:

A W Hooton – Chair  
Mrs P Booher  
J Joyce  
R Polhill  
D Andrews  
M Byram  
Mrs M Simon  
Mrs L Redhead  
Mrs S Roberts

- [2] the Minutes of the meeting of the Policy Committee held on 12 March 2008, be confirmed as a correct record.

**2 PROPERTY REVIEW, CAPITAL NEW BUILDS AND TRAINING FACILITIES**

The report was presented by the Head of Business Improvement informing the Members of the inevitability of the apparent wider opportunities, threats and obstacles as the roll out of the rebuild/refurbishment programme of stations and other facilities progresses. Many of these had been set out in the Authority's Corporate Plan and Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) 2008/09. This report considers the response to these opportunities and threats, and a proposed re-alignment of a number of elements of the property programme.

**RESOLVED:** That

- [1] the update on the community fire station refurbishment and improvement programme be noted;
- [2] the update on the Wilmslow Community Fire Station project be noted;
- [3] the marketing of the existing site in Runcorn be pursued with a view to the development of a new Community Fire Station on land currently owned by the Authority, adjacent to Halton General Hospital;
- [4] the toilet and shower facilities at Chester Community Fire Station be refurbished, in the short term, using the Best Value Review (Accommodation) budget and that long term funding for future refurbishment is explored by market testing the potential for a commercial let of the second floor accommodation; and
- [5] the revised proposal for an extension to Headquarters be approved and the funding shortfall be funded as detailed in the report.

**3 GHANA 2009**

The Youth Support Officer informed the Members of the opportunity available to the Authority to take place in a third project for a team of cadets and their leaders to assist in building a new school in Ghana. Similar projects had successfully taken place in 2005 and 2007.

The project provides cadets with an opportunity to see first hand how people in a third world country live and enables them to make comparisons to their own lives and develop themselves from the experience. They would share this experience with other cadets who were not able to attend. Many of the cadets who attended in 2005 have now become cadet leaders.

The amount of funds needed to be raised by the cadets would be £42,000 and although this was not envisaged to be a problem, Members were asked to give their full support to the aims of the project.

**RESOLVED:** That

[1] the report be noted; and

[2] Members approve the proposals for the Ghana Project 2009.

#### **4 ANNUAL EXTERNAL AUDIT PLAN 2008/09**

This report was presented to the Members of the Committee by the Audit Commission, the Service's external auditors.

The Plan was due to be considered by Members of the Performance and Overview Committee at their meeting on 3 July 2008. This meeting was inquorate and did not take place.

Members raised an issue with regard to the increase in fee but accepted the reasoning behind this increase being in light of additional work needed with regard to data quality

**RESOLVED:**

That the Members received the report.

#### **5 INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN FOR 2008-09**

The Internal Audit Plan for 2008-09, produced by our new internal auditors, Bentley Jennison was presented to Members.

The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Code of Practice for Internal Audit 2006 requires Internal Audit plans to be devised on a regular basis and be risk based. The audit plan has been drawn up taking into account outcomes arising from audit work undertaken in 2007-08 and liaison with the Treasurer (Head of Finance and Governance), Brigade Managers and the external auditors.

As in previous years the core element of the internal audit plan will be to review the Authority's main financial systems to provide assurance on the robustness of the internal control framework. This is particularly true of 2008-09 as Bentley Jennison develop their understanding of the business.

The Treasurer (Head of Finance and Governance) informed the Members that the Performance and Overview Committee would report regularly on service progress against internal audit recommendations during 2008-09.

**RESOLVED:**

That the Members approved the Internal Audit Plan for 2008-09.

**6 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

**RESOLVED:**

That a formal agreement with the Members be made in respect of substitute Members attending the Regional Management Board to allow the allocated number of votes to be used if required.

[2] Exclusion of press and public

There were no issues to be considered under exclusion of press and public