



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE POLICY COMMITTEE held on 11 March 2009 at Fire Service Headquarters, Winsford at 10.00 a.m.

PRESENT: Councillors J Joyce (in the Chair), D Andrews, Mrs P Booher, Mrs L Redhead, Mrs M Simon and Mrs S Roberts

APOLOGIES: Councillors A W Hooton, M Byram and R K Polhill

PART 1 – MATTERS DISCUSSED IN PUBLIC

1 PROCEDURAL MATTERS

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Policy Committee held on Wednesday 28 January 2009 be confirmed as a correct record.

2 PUBLICATION OF INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN (IRMP6) / CORPORATE PLAN 2009-10

This report sought Member approval to publish the Authority's combined IRMP/Corporate Plan 2009-10 (the Plan). The final draft had been updated to include responses and amendments following the 12-week consultation period. Members noted that the formal consultation period had closed, but that there would be ongoing discussions with both local communities and trade unions over the implementation of a number of specific projects within the Plan.

A summary of key issues and a full consultation report, including a comprehensive overview of all responses received from individuals and stakeholders, was presented to the Committee. The Chief Fire Officer highlighted a number of areas of the Plan, which had been amended following the outcome of the consultation, most notably a commitment to ensure a minimum attendance time of 11 minutes for road traffic collisions (RTCs).

Members noted that on 11 February 2009, the Fire Authority had delegated authority to the Policy Committee to approve the final document for publication. Copies of the final IRMP6 consultation report were made available at the meeting and Members noted that following the Plan's sign-off, the document would also be placed on the Service's website and Intranet.

Members formally received a petition from representatives of the Fire Brigade's Union (FBU), which contained the signatures of 1772 people. The petition set out the opposition of the Union to the proposals to alter the duty system in Wilmslow, as set out in IRMP6. The Chair invited the Brigade Secretary of the FBU to address the meeting and a number of issues were raised. Members considered a letter sent on behalf of the Union to a number of local parish councils and asked officers to write back and respond to the FBU's position.

Members noted that the consultation had been thorough and positive overall, and they were satisfied that the proposals set out in the Plan would ensure a safer Cheshire while providing good value for money.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the IRMP 6 consultation report be considered and the consequential amendments to the plan be approved;
- [2] the specific responses to the FBU's comments on the Draft IRMP be considered;
- [3] subject to any further Member comments, approval is given to publish the IRMP/Corporate Plan 2009-10 by 31 March 2009 subject to the Road Traffic Collision Standard proposed in the draft IRMP being modified, in light of the consultation feedback;
- [4] the need for continued negotiation and consultation with relevant trade unions on specific issues within the Plan, using the Authority's trade union protocol and relevant industrial relations agreements be noted, with particular reference to move to a twelve hour shifts; and
- [5] the communication of change proposals to key stakeholders – especially in the Wilmslow area, be continued.

3 CONSULTATION ON THE CODE OF RECOMMENDED PRACTICE ON LOCAL AUTHORITY PUBLICITY

The Head of Corporate Communications presented a report, which gave details of a consultation on the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity (the 'Publicity Code'). Members noted that the Code aims to ensure the proper use of public funds for publicity. It had been in existence for over 20 years and following a consultation in January 2007, the Government had launched a further consultation exercise to see if the Code remained fit for purpose in light of some of the issues and expectations set out in its recent white paper "Communities in Control".

The report summarised some of the key issues from the consultation report and included a proposed response, which recommended the replacement of the current Code with more appropriate guidance. Members are asked to approve the response for submission to the Government. Members were satisfied that the main elements of the Code were picked up elsewhere, for example, in the Code of Conduct and guidance on the conduct of elections and approved the response for submission to Communities and local Government (CLG).

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the content of the report be noted; and
- [2] the draft response to the consultation be approved for submission.

4 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 12A to the Act in the paragraphs indicated:

Item	Paragraph		
5 Appliance Replacement Programme	(2)	<i>information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Authority holding that information)</i>	
6 Re-alignment of References	(1)	Information relating to individuals	

PART 2 – BUSINESS TO BE DISCUSSED IN PRIVATE

5 APPLIANCE REPLACEMENT PROGRAMME

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Emergency Response presented a report, which updated Members on the effects of the current economic climate on fire appliance manufacturers. Members were advised that previous decisions taken by the Authority had ensured that Cheshire was well-placed to weather any consequences of the financial climate on the replacement and procurement of vehicles.

The Chair asked that a further substantive report be presented to the Authority on 15 April 2009, to provide all Members with an overview of the situation and to take any necessary decisions.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the report be received; and
- [2] a further report be brought to the meeting of the Fire Authority on 15 April 2009.

6 RE-ALIGNMENT OF REFERENCES

The Chief Fire Officer outlined a number of short-term changes in relation to the references of the Deputy Chief Fire Officers, to support work being undertake in advance of the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) process.

RESOLVED:

That the verbal report be noted.