



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY held on  
Wednesday 1 October, 2008 at Fire Service Headquarters, Winsford at 10.30 a.m.**

**PRESENT** : Councillors A W Hooton, D T Bateman, Mrs P M Booher, M Byram, Mrs N M Dolphin, R I Fletcher, B Jones, J Joyce, H Mundry, C Oliver, R Polhill, D Andrews, S Nelson, P Byrne, Mrs M Simon, Mrs L Redhead and Mrs S Roberts

**APOLOGIES** : Councillors S Mosley, Mrs E Moore Dutton and D W Freear

**PART 1 – MATTERS CONSIDERED IN PUBLIC**

**1 PROCEDURAL MATTERS**

**Chair's Announcements**

As this was the first meeting of the full Authority since the death of Councillor Bert Grange on 12 June 2008, Members and Officers wished to remember him and his long contribution to the Authority and the Service. An official minutes silence was held.

Councillor Stef Nelson was welcomed back to the Authority after his period of ill-health

Members welcomed Cllr Peter Byrne to the Authority, replacing Cllr D Maguire – his appointment was covered under an additional recommendation in Procedural Matters

Members received a framed copy of the tenth anniversary photograph of the Authority and a copy of the Authority's Annual Report for 2007-08

Members were informed that Cheshire West and Chester had provisionally appointed eight new Members who would be invited to engage with the Authority as it developed its corporate plan, IRMP and budget for 2009-10 and Members will be invited to attend the forthcoming Member Away Day on 29 October 2008.

Members were informed that the Authority was still awaiting notification of Cheshire East appointments which had been agreed as 6 Conservatives, 1 Labour and 1 Lib Dem.

Members were informed of the following events:-

- the Combined Fire and Police Fun Day had taken place on 21 September and was a great success, with large numbers of visitors and a number of stands and attractions setting out key safety messages and promoting the work of the Service and recruitment.
- Warrington Fire Station Open Day had taken place on Sunday 28 September and again was visited by large numbers of local people and also with major coverage on Wire FM
- Joint presentations for three teams involved in the Princes Trust Project are due to be held on 11 December at the Cottons Hotel, Knutsford. This is a new way of recognising

the efforts of the PTT participants and all Members will receive invitations by the end of October.

- The annual Members' Christmas Lunch will take place on the rise of the Fire Authority Meeting on 10 December 2008. A full and traditional festive will be provided by the staff in the Service restaurant.
- The annual joint Fire, Police and Ambulance Service Carol Concert will take place in Chester Cathedral on Tuesday 2 December at 7.00pm and all Members are invited to attend.

**RESOLVED:** That

- [1] the Minutes of the meeting of the Authority held on 11 June 2008 be confirmed as a correct record;
- [2] the Minutes of the meeting of the P&O Committee held on 3 September 2008 be received;
- [3] the Minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on 9 July 2008 be received;
- [4] the Minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on 10 September 2008 be received;
- [5] the Minutes of the meeting of the Policy Committee on 16 July 2008 be received;
- [6] the Minutes of the meeting of the Policy Committee on 17 September 2008 be received;
- [7] the programme of meetings for the Municipal year 2009/10 be approved; and
- [8] Members note the appointment of the new Independent Member, Mr David Morris, as a Member of the Standards Committee.
- [9] Members note the appointment of Councillor Peter Byrne from Cheshire County Council to replace Councillor Danny Maguire as a Member of Cheshire Fire Authority.

## **2 FIRE CONTROL COST APPORTIONMENT**

The Treasurer presented a report to Members, the purpose of which was to advise Members of a consultation published by the Department for Communities and Local Government, detailing the proposed FiReControl cost apportionment methodology and seeking approval for the draft Authority response.

Members were updated on progress in relation to establishing the nine new networked Regional Control Centres (RCCs) that will be phased into operation over the next 4/5 years, to replace the 46 stand alone Fire and Rescue Service control rooms. Members noted that the costs associated with the RCC would either be charged directly to the Local Authority Control Company (LACC) or apportioned to

each RCC by CLG, (90% of which relates to IT infrastructure costs). Members were informed that CLG expected local Council tax payers to meet proposed ICT costs of £2.4m.

Members raised a number of issues, particularly with regard to the proposed cost contribution from Local Government. Members noted that the redistribution and collection from constituent Authorities with regard to airwave costs would be the decision of the LACC director.

**RESOLVED:** That

- [1] Members approve the draft response to the CLG consultation; and
- [2] The Treasurer submits this response to the RMB in order that the Authority's views are considered when the RMB response is formulated.

### **3 AUDIT COMMISSION COMPREHENSIVE AREA ASSESSMENT (CAA) – CONSULTATION DRAFT RESPONSE**

The Treasurer presented a report to Members which advised them of a consultation from the Department for Communications and Local Government (CLG) concerning Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA), the new assessment framework for local public bodies in England. The consultation sets out further details of the new regime and the paper included a number of principles upon which an Authority response would be based.

CAA will replace the existing Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) as the tool used to assess the performance of local public bodies in England with effect from April 2009. Members noted the intention of CLG that CAA will be an ongoing process rather than a short intensive period of inspection, and that the first public reports would be published in November 2009.

Members raised a number of queries particularly with regard to the value added by CAA. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Corporate Services, informed Members that CAA was one of the measures used by Management to consider performance, and that CAA was but one tool used as part of the Authority's plans for continuing improvement and that the resources invested in processes such as CAA were appropriate and relevant to the benefits realised by the Service.

**RESOLVED:**

That the principles upon which the Authority's response will be drafted be agreed.

#### **4 EQUALITIES PROJECT FUNDING**

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Corporate Services, presented a report which informed Members of a successful bid by the Authority to secure funding from the Cheshire and Warrington Improvement and Efficiency Partnership (CWIEP) to run an equality and diversity development project, for up to three years.

Approval for the Authority to take the lead on this sub-regional project recognised major progress made by the organisation recently in all aspects of equality and diversity particularly achievement of Level 3 of the Equality Standard for Local Government. The Service will clearly benefit from the additional resource as it works towards achieving the next level of the Standard and raising awareness of Equality and Diversity across partner organisations in the sub-regional area.

#### **RESOLVED:**

That the success of the bid be noted and that further reports on progress be brought to future meetings of the Authority.

#### **5 2008 COMPREHENSIVE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT**

The Treasurer gave a verbal report which gave Members initial feedback from the Audit Commission on the Authority's performance in the 2008 CPA exercise, and included provisional feedback on scores for both use of Research and Directions of travel. The final outcome will be reported to Members when it is received formally from the Audit Commission.

#### **RESOLVED:**

That Members noted the report.

#### **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.

#### **Urgent Business**

#### **6a FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY – RECRUITMENT TARGETS**

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Corporate Services presented a report to Members which advised them of the new workforce diversity targets, included within the Fire and Rescue Service National Equality and Diversity Strategy and a recent proposal to "stretch" these targets.

The Fire and Rescue Service National Equality and Diversity Strategy, published in May 2008, set out the measures by which every Fire and Rescue Authority's performance on equality and diversity would be assessed, and one of the measures is an assessment of progress against workforce diversity targets.

Members expressed concern in relation to the measures being misconstrued as 'positive discrimination' and were assured that every new recruit would have to meet the same fixed recruitment criteria to allow them to progress within the process. Members noted that although a National Recruitment drive would be preferable, in the absence of such a Scheme, the Service would continue its recruitment drive and campaign locally. Members made a minor amendment to the draft response, which was attached to the report and approved it for submission to the Government.

**RESOLVED:**

That the expression of concern of the Principal Officers, Chair of the Fire Authority and its Members be submitted to the Fire Minister and the relevant senior officials at the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG).

**6b CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL: DEVELOPING A MODEL FOR LOCAL WORKING**

The Corporate & Democratic Support Manager presented a report to Members on proposals put forward to Cheshire East Council to shape local area working.

At the last meeting of the Policy Committee on 17 September 2008, Members had considered a proposed model for local and neighbourhood working put forward by the new unitary council of Cheshire West and Chester for consultation. This report presented an overview of similar proposals from Cheshire East.

Although not presented for formal consultation at this time, Cheshire East had instead sought to establish a number of key principles to shape the structure and operation of its local mechanisms, which, it was envisaged that once these had been established they would form the basis of dialogue with Key partners such as the Fire and Rescue Service. Members noted the proposals.

**RESOLVED:**

That the report be considered and the proposals set out in the report be noted.

**[2] Exclusion of press and public**

The Chair requested that in future meetings key officers be able to stay for Part 2 of the meeting where applicable.

**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**

Industrial Relations

**(4)**

Information relating to industrial relations

## **PART 2 – BUSINESS TO BE DISCUSSED IN PRIVATE**

### **7 INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS UPDATE**

The Chief Fire Officer presented a report updating the Members on a number of key industrial relations issues arising from the implementation of the IRMP/Corporate Plan and associated issues. Members noted that dialogue with the representative bodies was dynamic and the report presented the most up-to-date position, as well as highlighting a number of current national issues regarding Firefighter pensions.

Members also sought further information on a number of issues, particularly with regard to the Nine day fortnight, which had been referred to the Technical Advisory Panel (TAP) for review as FBU representatives and management were unable to progress the negotiation and reach agreement.

#### **RESOLVED**

That the report be received and the highlighted issues be considered.