



MINUTES OF THE POLICY COMMITTEE held on 18 November 2009 at Lecture Theatre, FSHQ at 10:00.

PRESENT: Councillors David Topping (Chair), P Booher, J Crockatt, R Fletcher, J Joyce, G Merry, L Redhead, G Smith and J Weatherill

APOLOGIES: Cllr Robert Polhill

PART 1 – MATTERS CONSIDERED IN PUBLIC

1 PROCEDURAL MATTERS

A Apologies for Absence

It was noted that apologies had been received from Councillor R Polhill.

B Declaration of Members' Interests

There were no declarations of Members Interests.

RESOLVED:

[1] That the minutes of the meeting of the Policy Committee held on Wednesday 2 September 2009 be confirmed as a correct record.

MAJOR ITEMS REQUIRING DISCUSSION / DECISION

2 EARLY RETIREMENT AND SEVERANCE POLICY

The Director, People and Organisational Development presented Members with the Early Retirement and Severance Policy. The policy had been revised for non-uniformed employees and Control staff.

The report noted that Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service were committed to, wherever possible, securing the continued employment of its staff. However, it was noted that there may be occasional requirements to permanently reduce staffing levels or introduce change which may result in employees becoming displaced from their posts.

In such circumstances, Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service would support its employees in seeking alternative employment within the Fire and Rescue Service. However, where it would not be possible to identify suitable alternative employment, or provide opportunities for retraining, the contract

may need to be terminated on the grounds of redundancy. It was additionally noted that Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service has had a combined Early Retirement and Severance Policy since November 2000. The policy formed the overall approach to the management of its employees and formed part of the terms and conditions of staff.

In light of the Local Government (Early Termination of Employment) (Discretionary Compensation) (England and Wales) Regulations 2006 and the Local Government Pension Scheme (Benefits, Membership and Contributions) Regulations 2007, CFRS was required to amend its policy on discretionary payments in respect to severance and to take account of changes to the Local Government Pension Scheme. The amendments made to discretionary payments within the revised policy were highlighted to Members.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the Early Retirement and Severance Policy be adopted.

3 FIRE GATEWAY - FUTURE ARRANGEMENTS

The Director of Finance and Corporate Planning presented Members with a paper on the Fire Gateway website. The report outlined that Communities and Local Government (CLG) managed an interactive website 'Fire Gateway' on behalf of the Fire and Rescue Service. The website was established in 2006 as a joint initiative that allowed users to access and interact with an array of fire-related services online

It was noted, following a recent consultation with Fire and Rescue Services' CLG had provided notice of their intention to close the website with effect from March 2010.

RESOLVED: That

[1] Members noted the closure of the Fire Gateway website.

4 COMMUNITY FIRE PROTECTION BUSINESS LIAISON STRATEGY

The Interim Head of Community Fire Protection presented Members with the Community Fire Protection Business Liaison Strategy. The Strategy would be a key element in delivering the Services mission to create 'safer communities, to rescue people and protect, economic, environmental and community interest'. The strategy is one of a series that underpins the overarching Community Fire Protection Strategy and introduces the departmental approach to providing fire protection advice and support to businesses whilst actively promoting the economic viability of our communities.

Members discussed the provisions in place for supporting BME and smaller businesses who were harder to reach. The Interim Head of Community Fire Protection advised that the procedure was to be educational rather than one of enforcement.

Further discussion questioned the involvement of Chester Fire Board. The CFO advised Members that the purpose of the Fire Board was to protect the heritage and look into methods of prevention. It was requested by Members that details of the Fire Board and its role be provided to the Policy Committee for information.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the Business Liaison Strategy be approved.

5 Mid Year Review of Finance and Performance 2009-10 - Progress

The Director, Finance and Corporate Planning presented Members with the Mid Year Review of Finance and Performance. The report also included a risk and sensitivity analysis which identified how activity levels might affect the final outturn position. The final section of the paper presented Members with a proposal to utilise some of the forecast service underspend.

The CFO provided Members with an overview of the key issues in the review. It was highlighted that the Service needed to improve on forecasting replacement costs, appliances were renewed after 13 years however they were also rotated during this period between fire stations to balance out usage. Members questioned the procedure when appliances were damaged to an extent they could no longer be used. It was noted that the Service kept reserve appliances for unforeseen circumstances.

The CFO also advised Member that the new command centre was launched on 22 October 2009. Members were informed that this allowed the Service to analyse the data internally before the information was uploaded to the CLG website.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the performance and financial position of the Authority and Service be noted; and

[2] the proposal for the use of £60k of the forecasted underspend be noted.

PART 2 – BUSINESS TO BE DISCUSSED IN PRIVATE

None