



MINUTES OF THE CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY held on Wednesday 16 March, 2011 at Fire Service Headquarters, Winsford at 10.30 a.m.

PRESENT: Councillors M Biggin, P Booher, B Crowe, R I Fletcher, E Johnson, J Joyce, B Livesley, G Merry, K Musgrave, A Needham, S Nelson, C Oliver, R K Polhill, T Sherlock, M Simon, G Smith, D Topping, J Weatherill and N Wright.

PART 1 – MATTERS CONSIDERED IN PUBLIC

1 PROCEDURAL MATTERS

A APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors J Crockatt, H Mundry, L Redhead and C Thorley.

B CHAIR’S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair welcomed members of Cheshire’s ISAR team to the meeting and Mark Coleman, team leader gave a presentation to Members on the recent Search and Rescue mission to New Zealand. He also provided an update on more recent events in Japan as Cheshire’s Search and Rescue dog and his handler were part of the UK’s Search and Rescue team for this mission.

Members expressed their gratitude to the team for their endeavours and the Chair thanked the team for all their efforts on behalf of Cheshire Fire Authority.

C DECLARATION OF MEMBERS INTERESTS

There were no declarations of Members interests.

D MINUTES

RESOLVED: That

the Minutes of the meeting of the Cheshire Fire Authority held on 9 February 2011 be confirmed as a correct record.

2 INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN 2011-12 (IRMP 8)

The Head of Corporate Communications introduced this item and provided a brief overview of the report. He explained that the full consultation report which contained all comments received during the consultation had been sent to Members and had also been published on the Service's website and Intranet.

The consultation programme had three key elements comprising of:

- Public Consultation- which focused on a series of 14 roadshows and extensive use of the Service's website;
- Stakeholder Engagement – direct mail to partners and personal briefings to key groups and individuals on specific proposals; and
- Staff Consultation – via the intranet, use of traditional communication channels and team briefings including Leadership Team roadshows.

The Communications Manager presented a series of slides to Members which provided further details of the consultation programme and a summary of the headline results and key issues to emerge from the consultation. The three key issues identified were Home Safety Assessment (HSA) targeting, Road Safety and Macclesfield day-crewing plus.

HSA Targeting

The Authority's proposal to remove the 60,000 annual HSA target and concentrate on completing 20,000 HSAs to specific at risk groups had prompted a number of questions and comments at the Community Roadshows. Following the consultation the final draft of IRMP8 had been updated to highlight the new risk targeting methodology that would ensure that the Service could prioritise its HSAs at those most at risk. The Risk Analysis & Intelligence Manager attended the meeting and presented an overview of the Service's HSA targeting methodology which provided Members with further details on this approach.

Road Safety

There was support both internally and externally for the Service's proposal to have an increased focus on road safety. However there were some concerns raised about the risks of taking on other organisations responsibilities and of losing focus on community fire safety. The final draft IRMP had been updated to clarify that the Service would only consider taking on additional road safety responsibilities if it received appropriate funding.

Macclesfield day-crewing plus

It was reported at the meeting, using the revised figures shown in the full consultation report, that the overall responses to the public survey showed 61% in support of the day-crewing plus proposal, 27% responded that they were unsure and 11% were opposed to this proposal. Further analysis showed that of the 161 responses from Cheshire East, 60% supported or strongly supported the proposal, 23% were unsure and 17% opposed it.

176 staff responses were received with 55% opposing or strongly opposing day-crewing plus at Macclesfield, 15% were unsure and 31% supported or strongly supported this proposal. A number of those who responded also

provided additional comments in respect of opposition to day-crewing plus which were included in the full consultation report.

The consultation report included a full copy of the FBU's response to the IRMP8 proposals and the Chair invited the Branch Secretary to speak to summarise the union's key concerns to Members.

The Branch Secretary thanked the Chair for the opportunity to speak and informed Members that a number of FBU representatives were also in attendance at the meeting to highlight the overall opposition from the FBU to the day-crewing plus proposals. He informed Members that all 32 firefighters who currently worked at Macclesfield were opposed to the proposal.

The Branch Secretary summarised the main issues and views of the FBU as follows:

- Proposed Duty System was not family friendly;
- Location – Macclesfield was isolated geographically and firefighters who did not wish to work the new system would have to travel long distances to work at another whole-time fire station;
- Proposed system did not meet with the principles of the National Conditions of Service (Grey Book) in respect of compliance with the working time regulations and the FBU had commenced work on preparing a legal challenge;
- Consultation
 - The number of responses represented less than 0.03% of the population of Cheshire and there were no comments specifically supporting the proposal;
 - Staff Consultation should have been prioritised and the FBU requested further information on the figures to see how many of the responses were from staff who would be directly affected by the proposal;
 - Information available was not a true reflection of the figures for incidents at Macclesfield and 3 years of historical data should have been provided;
- Salary/working hours – the hourly rate for working the proposed system would be less than the minimum wage and there would be less hours available for firefighters to carry out Community Safety work.

A Member queried the disparity between the FBU's figures on activity levels at Macclesfield and the official figures provided. The FBU representative commented that Fire Authority Members could review the figures that they had compiled if they wished.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer gave a further presentation to Members on the Macclesfield Day Crewing Plus proposal which provided details of risk profiles, incident volumes and activity levels to clarify the points raised.

Members wanted reassurance that the day-crewing proposal would be achievable given the concerns expressed about technical legal issues.

The Monitoring Officer explained that whilst it was difficult to give definitive answers on some of the points raised, these would be considered as the project was progressed. Although he could not give a categorical assurance, it was his view, given the information available at the time, that the proposal should not be frustrated by the legal issues that had been raised.

By way of an example he explained that compliance with the Working Time Regulations was not necessarily critical as there was a mechanism for securing individual agreement to 'opt out'. He further stated that significant points could be brought back to Members for decision once the project had been scoped in detail.

IRMP Document

A Member queried whether the 20,000 figure for HSA's was a minimum target and suggested that, if this was the case, it would provide more clarity to include the word 'minimum' in the IRMP8 document. Officers concurred with this view and it was noted that the document would be amended accordingly.

The Chair concluded the discussion and explained that the IRMP proposals were part of a well planned four-year strategy and would assist in ensuring that the Service reduced the risk of compulsory redundancies and that Service levels were maintained. He stated that the Authority wished to work closely with the unions and staff over the coming years to implement the four year strategy.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the feedback received from the consultation on the Integrated Risk Management Plan 2011-12 (IRMP8) be noted;**
- [2] the specific proposals set out in IRMP8 be approved;**
- [3] the publication of IRMP8 by 31st March 2011 be approved; and**
- [4] the Chief Fire Officer be authorised to make any final drafting changes to IRMP8 prior to its publication.**

PART 2 – BUSINESS TO BE DISCUSSED IN PRIVATE

NONE