



MINUTES OF THE POLICY COMMITTEE held on Wednesday 25 January 2012 at Fire Service Headquarters, Winsford at 10 a.m.

PRESENT: Councillors D Topping(Chair), B Crowe, J Leather, G Merry, R Polhill, L Redhead, T Sherlock and C Thorley

PART 1 – MATTERS CONSIDERED IN PUBLIC

1 PROCEDURAL MATTERS

A MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE

The following changes to the membership of the Policy Committee for 2011/12, as agreed at the Fire Authority meeting on 14 September 2011, were noted:

Councillor Rod Fletcher removed;
Councillor David Brickhill appointed; and
Councillor Jacque Weatherill replaced by Councillor John Leather.

B APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Brickhill and Joyce.

C DECLARATION OF MEMBERS INTERESTS

There were no declarations of Members interests.

D MINUTES OF THE POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 7 SEPTEMBER 2011

RESOLVED: That

the Minutes of the meeting of the Policy Committee held on 7 September 2011 be confirmed as a correct record.

E MATTERS ARISING

Sprinkler Exercise

A Member queried whether a date had been agreed for the exercise to demonstrate the effectiveness of sprinklers in properties in conjunction with Wulvern Housing. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer explained that the exercise was likely to be held in March and would include a demonstration wheelie bin burn. Once the date was confirmed Members would receive an invitation to attend.

A Member commented that the Service would need to be careful how they publicised the event to ensure that it did not provide information that offenders could use. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer explained that the exercise was not intended for the public. However the Service planned to film the event and would review how this would be publicised.

Members also discussed the problems in the various constituent authorities with wheelie bin fires and the effectiveness of preventative measures such as lockable bins and charging for replacements.

F NOTES OF THE RISK MANAGEMENT BOARD

RESOLVED: That

the notes of the meetings of the Risk Management Board held on 9 September and 2 December 2011 be received, for information.

2 2012-13 DRAFT BUDGET, COUNCIL TAX AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN

The Head of Finance introduced the report which was the second of three budget reports to be presented to Members for consideration. It was noted that Members had already met to develop the Authority's financial plans at a series of planning days throughout 2011/12 and were fully briefed on the budget proposals.

The report provided background on the financial position of the Authority, referred to the grant settlement and to the national context. The report also provided information on the Medium Term Financial Plan, efficiencies and savings, the capital programme, reserves and the overall effects on Council Tax.

The Head of Finance provided an update on the outcomes of the planning day which was held on 20 January 2012. In respect of the Council Tax grant Members had indicated a preference for accepting the Government grant of 3% for 2012/13 and not increasing the precept and the option to use the additional grant to plan for expenditure which would be incurred as part of future IRMPs.

Members were also informed that Finance were developing a business case to repay some of the Authority's outstanding debt by using cash from investments. This proposal would be included in the report to the Fire Authority on 8 February 2012.

Members discussed the budget proposals and the introduction of community budgets and their impact on the Authority's budget. The Chief Fire Officer commented that the Service had made it clear to partners when discussing community budgets that CFRS could provide resources but that other partners would need to provide the funding.

The Chief Fire Officer highlighted the changes to the distribution of National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR) which would be distributed to Fire Authorities from Local Authorities, rather than Government, from 2014. The impact of this change on the Authority's budget was not yet known.

Members concluded that the budget position was positive in the current climate and demonstrated that the finances were being well managed.

RESOLVED: That

the report and information relevant to the setting of the 2012-13 budget and precept be noted.

3 REFRESHED CORPORATE RISK MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK 2011

One of the functions of Policy Committee was to ensure that the Authority's policies and procedures in respect of risk management were adequate and appropriate. In light of this responsibility the Corporate Risk Management Framework was now presented to Policy Committee for approval.

The Corporate Intelligence Manager presented the paper to Members which provided details of the updated Corporate Risk Management Framework 2011. The Framework set out Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service's principles and provided a systematic approach to identifying, assessing, responding to and controlling the risks that may have an impact on the achievement of organisational objectives. The report provided details of the development of the framework and how it was applied within the Service. It was noted that a draft of the refreshed framework had been reviewed at the Officer/Member meeting of the Risk Management Board in September 2011.

A Member queried who took the responsibility for risk management on Fire Stations. The Chief Fire Officer explained the line of responsibility which went down to Station Managers and Watch Managers and informed Members that each Station had its own risk register.

The Chair noted the overarching aim of the framework to encourage a culture where risk management was integral to the business and policy making processes of the Authority and asked where the Authority was in terms of developing this culture. The Corporate Intelligence Manager explained that the Service was involved in a benchmarking club (ALARM) and had carried out a self-assessment exercise against its Maturity Model. The results of the 2011 ALARM benchmarking self-assessment exercise had shown that the culture was 'embedded'. The Service aimed to achieve the highest level where culture was 'driving' within the next two years and had developed an action plan to support this aim.

Members thanked the Corporate Intelligence Unit Manager and her team for developing a Risk Management Framework process that was clear and easy to understand.

RESOLVED: That

the updated Corporate Risk Management Framework 2011 be approved for use at all levels of Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service.

PART 2 – BUSINESS TO BE DISCUSSED IN PRIVATE

NONE