



**MINUTES OF THE CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY held on Wednesday 13 April, 2011 at Fire Service Headquarters, Winsford at 10.30 a.m.**

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

**PART 1 – MATTERS CONSIDERED IN PUBLIC**

**1 PROCEDURAL MATTERS**

**A APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillor T Sherlock.

**B CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Copies of the Chair's announcements had been distributed to Members prior to the meeting and the Chair highlighted the following:

Organisational Changes

Members noted the changes to the Organisational structure and wished Mark Abram and John Salt well in their retirement.

Emergency Services Award

The Service won 'Fire Service of the Year' at the inaugural Emergency Services Awards held at the Emirates Stadium on 7 April 2011. Members joined the Chair in congratulating the Service on this fantastic achievement.

Cheshire Safety Day

Cheshire Safety Day would be held on 1 June this year and the Chair encouraged all Members to take part in this event. The target for this year's event was 1000 Home Safety Assessments (HSAs) and one Road Safety event per unitary area with partners being invited to set similar targets.

Member Development

Councillor Livesley expressed his thanks to all Members for the high level of participation in the Service's Member Development Programme and Officers for supporting this programme.

**C DECLARATION OF MEMBERS INTERESTS**

There were no declarations of Members interests.

## **D MINUTES**

Members were asked to confirm the minutes of the Fire Authority meeting held on 16 March 2011 and receive, for information, minutes of the Standards Committee, Performance and Overview Committee and notes of the Member Training and Development Group.

### **RESOLVED: That**

**[1] the Minutes of the meeting of the Cheshire Fire Authority held on 16 March 2011 be confirmed as a correct record; and**

**[2] the Minutes of the following Committee meetings be received:  
Standards Committee – 30 March 2011  
Performance and Overview Committee – 6 April 2011  
Notes of the Member Training and Development Group – 15 March 2011.**

## **2 AUDIT PLAN - CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY AUDIT 2010-11**

The Authority's External Auditors, the Audit Commission, produce an Audit Plan ('the plan') which sets out the work proposed for an audit of the last years (2010-2011) financial statements as well as a fee proposal.

Representatives from the Audit Commission attended the meeting to present the plan to Members. The Auditor highlighted the key points in the report and informed Members that the Audit fee for the Authority had been reduced.

Member's attention was also drawn to the Opinion risk which was set out in the document. The Auditor explained that none of the risks were substantial and that the Auditors would be working with Officers to deal with these risks. He concluded that the Audit was on course and he was confident that he would be able to provide a positive opinion.

### **RESOLVED: That**

**the Audit Plan for 2010-11 be received and the fees associated with the audit be approved.**

## **3 CONSULTATION ON THE FUTURE OF FIRE AND RESCUE CONTROL SERVICES IN ENGLAND**

The Chief Fire Officer introduced the report which asked Members to consider and approve the Authority's response to the consultation on the future of fire and rescue control services in England. The consultation had been issued by the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) and posed a number of questions following the announcement by the Fire Minister terminating the FiReControl Project.

### **RESOLVED: That**

**the response to the consultation as detailed in annex 1 of the report be approved and submitted to CLG.**

#### **4 THE LOCALISM BILL**

The Chief Fire Officer introduced this report which provided an overview of the Localism Bill, which was currently progressing through its various legislative stages in Parliament. The paper highlighted the key provisions within the Bill which would potentially impact upon the Fire Authority and local partners, based around a number of key themes.

The Chief Fire Officer explained that the Bill included provisions that would enable Fire Authorities to charge for undertaking certain actions in certain circumstances, subject to restrictions which were outlined in Annex 1 of the report. He commented that further clarification was required from the Government regarding income and charging for Fire Authorities and any proposals would be fully debated with Members at their Away Day in October.

**RESOLVED: That**

**the contents of the report and the provisions of the Bill be noted.**

#### **5 SHARED SERVICES**

The Authority's Integrated Risk Management Plans for 2010/11 and 2011/12 identified the need to explore options to share costs and services with local partners through collaboration.

The Chief Fire Officer introduced the report which provided an overview of activities and discussions being pursued by the Service and partners to take the agenda forward. The report also sought to obtain Member support for the areas being explored.

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer provided an update on discussions that had been taking place with Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service regarding potential arrangements to allow it to benefit from the use of Cheshire's Control and informed Members that a further report would be presented to them before the proposal was actioned.

He also informed Members of on-going discussions that were taking place regarding the potential for co-location at a number of fire and rescue service premises with both the Police and Ambulance Services. Members discussed the pros and cons of co-location and the need to be mindful of reputational issues. It was noted that a further report would be presented to Members highlighting the benefits and risks of co-location in order that Members could take an informed decision about each proposal.

The Chief Fire Officer concluded by confirming that further reports would be presented to Members as the shared services agenda progressed. He also suggested that as the momentum for shared services increased there may be occasions where Policy Committee or the Business Continuity leads would be required to make a more expedient decision.

**RESOLVED: That**

- [1] progress on the range of shared services issues be noted;**
- [2] the range of opportunities for future collaboration be considered and noted; and**
- [3] the Service approach to co-location be noted and supported.**

**6 RECTIFICATION OF LAND OWNERSHIP AT ST ANNE STREET AND TRAFFORD STREET, CHESTER, ADJACENT TO CHESTER FIRE STATION**

The Monitoring Officer introduced this report which sought approval to the rectification of a land ownership error by the Land Registry. The Registry had incorrectly registered one piece of land at Chester Fire Station to Cheshire Fire Authority (CFA) which should have been registered to Cheshire West and Chester Council (CWAC) and a second piece of land at Chester Fire Station to CWAC when it should have been registered to CFA.

**RESOLVED: That**

**the rectification of land ownership as described in the report be approved.**

**7 CONSULTATIONS ON COMMUNITY RIGHT TO BUY AND COMMUNITY RIGHT TO CHALLENGE**

Following publication of the Localism Bill the Government had launched consultations dealing with 'The Community Right to Buy' and 'The Community Right to Challenge' aimed at assisting it to develop the scope and operation of the new rights.

The Monitoring Officer presented the report which provided an outline of the two consultation documents and sought views on aspects of the consultations which were directly relevant to fire and rescue services. Members were also asked to authorise the Chief Fire Officer to prepare a response on the Authority's behalf.

The Monitoring Officer explained that there were a number of areas where Members were asked to provide their views.

**RESOLVED: That**

- [1] the view expressed in paragraph 10 of the report be accepted; accordingly no response would be required to the consultation paper concerned with the 'Community Right to Buy';**
- [2] the statements expressed in paragraphs 15,16 and 17 of the report be accepted so that Officers could prepare a response dealing with Questions 1, 2 and 3 of the consultation paper concerned with the 'Community Right to Challenge'; and**

- [3] the Chief Fire Officer be authorised to draft a response on behalf of the Fire Authority taking account of the views expressed by Members.**

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

**NONE**

### **CHAIR'S CLOSING REMARKS**

At the conclusion of the meeting the Chair wished to place on record his thanks to all Members and staff for their input to the Fire Authority during 2010/11 which had culminated in the Service being awarded 'Fire Service of the Year. Members also expressed their thanks to the Chair for his fair and even-handed approach in his role as Chair of the Fire Authority.

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