



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY held on Friday 21 October, 2011 at Fire Service Headquarters, Winsford at 10.30 a.m.

PRESENT: Councillors M Biggin, D Brickhill, P Campbell, B Crowe, D Flude, J Joyce, E Johnson, J Leather, B Livesley, K Musgrave, S Nelson, R K Polhill, L Redhead, B Rudd, T Sherlock, M Simon, , C Thorley, D Topping and J Weatherill.

PART 1 – MATTERS CONSIDERED IN PUBLIC

1 PROCEDURAL MATTERS

A APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors J Kerr-Brown, G Merry, H Mundry and A Tate.

B CHAIR’S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair commented that the Service continued to receive awards which recognised the high standards of service being provided. In particular he drew Members attention to the achievement of the Service in being short-listed for the prestigious Guardian Public Services Awards.

C DECLARATION OF MEMBERS’ INTERESTS

Councillor J Joyce and Councillor E Johnson declared a personal interest in Item 2 – North West Fire Control in respect of their appointments as Directors of North West Fire Control Ltd.

Upon the commencement of Item 4 - Contingency Planning for Industrial Action Councillor D Flude declared a personal interest, being an active member of UNISON.

D MINUTES OF THE FIRE AUTHORITY

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Cheshire Fire Authority held on 14 September 2011 be confirmed as a correct record.

E MINUTES OF THE STAFFING SUB- COMMITTEE

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Staffing Sub-Committee held on 14 September 2011 be received, for information.

F NOTES OF THE MEMBER TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT GROUP

RESOLVED:

That the notes of the meeting of the Member Training and Development Group held on 21 September 2011 be received, for information.

2 NORTH WEST FIRE CONTROL

The Chair introduced this item and noted the content of a letter received from the FBU representing its members' views in respect of North West Fire Control. He acknowledged that this had been a difficult time for Control staff over a 10 year period and noted that the Control staff had managed to maintain high standards of performance over this prolonged period of uncertainty. He explained that, should the decision be made to move forward with the North West Fire Control project, a commitment would be made to ensure that the Service provided employees with the help and support they required.

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer presented the report which set out the changes to Government funding and the outline business case as a result of Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority's withdrawal from the project and sought Members continuing support for a North West Fire Control.

A Member asked for clarification about the process for the transfer of Control staff and was reassured that there would be equal treatment of staff irrespective of the timing of the switchover of respective control provisions.

A Member made a statement opposing the recommendations in the report. He stated that the most immediate issue was the loss of local control and he also felt that this would be the first step towards a regional fire service which would lead to a further loss of control. He referred to Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority's decision to withdraw. He also drew Members' attention to the concerns raised by the FBU and his own concerns with regard to Government funding.

Members also discussed the Authority's commitment to ensuring there were no compulsory redundancies and the Chief Fire Officer drew Members attention to a paragraph in the Service's Four Year Strategy which stated the Service's commitment to work to avoid compulsory redundancies. A query was also raised on the transfer of current Terms and Conditions (including pension benefits). Officers confirmed that TUPE principles would be applied to the transfer. Staff would still have access to the Local Government Pension Scheme.

Members also wished to place a note of thanks on record to the Control staff for their continued provision of a high performing service.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] support for the delivery of a North West Fire Control be confirmed, subject to the following:
- i) the outcome of the IRMP9 consultation which refers to the proposal;
 - ii) the development of a robust final Business Case, following a procurement exercise; and
 - iii) the support of the three other North West Fire and Rescue Services that wish to participate in the project.
- [2] it was noted that a final decision about whether to proceed (when the final Business Case had been developed) is reserved to the respective Fire Authorities; and
- [3] Officers be authorised to take all steps necessary to proceed with the project up to the conclusion of the final Business Case (including any matters related, or ancillary to, North West Fire Control Limited arising from Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority's withdrawal from the project).

3 Exclusion of the Press and Public

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 12A to the Act in the paragraphs indicated.

Item 4

Contingency Planning
For Industrial Action

Paragraph

(3) Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding the information

PART 2 MATTERS TO BE DISCUSSED IN PRIVATE

4 CONTINGENCY PLANNING FOR INDUSTRIAL ACTION

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer introduced this report which presented Members with the Authority's Contingency Planning for Industrial Action Plan. The plan had been developed as part of the Fire Authority's commitment to business continuity. He also provided an update on the position in respect of

the current negotiations with the Trade Unions in respect of the Public Sector Pension Reform.

A presentation introducing the plan to Members had been received at the Members Awayday in August and copies of the plan were made available for Members in the Group rooms prior to the meeting.

Members discussed the content of the plan and a number of queries were raised. Concerns were also raised over the level of access to the document that had been afforded to Members. It was acknowledged that the level of engagement with Fire Authority Members as any industrial action progressed would be crucial in the development of the plan. It was agreed that Business Continuity leads could progress this in the first instance.

RESOLVED: That

the contents of the Contingency Planning for Industrial Action Plan be noted and the Plan be approved, in principle.
