

Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Authority

22 September 2008, 10.30am

Brockington, Hafod Road, Hereford



Present:

Herefordshire:

Mrs P A Andrews, Mr J H R Goodwin, Brigadier P Jones (Chair), Mrs P M Morgan, Mr D C Taylor, Mr P J Watts.

Worcestershire:

Mr T J Bean, Mr S J Clee (Vice Chair), Mr A I Hardman, Mr M Hart, Mr J Holden, Mr P M McDonald, Mr W E Moore, Mr P A Mould, Mrs F Oborski, Mr C T Smith, Mr R M Udall, Mr G C Yarranton.

661. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Mrs J Brunner, Mrs M Drinkwater, Mr A Fry, Mr R J Farmer, Mr D Prodger, Mr J Webb.

662. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Mr P A Mould and Mr P Watts advised the Authority that if the Firefighters Pension Scheme was discussed in such detail that it affected their personal positions, they would each declare a personal and prejudicial interest. (That proving not to be the case, there was no need for Mr Mould or Mr Watts to leave the room during the meeting.)

663. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman announced that Mrs Juliet Brunner who won the recent by-election in Arrow Valley East (Redditch) had replaced Mrs. Betty Passingham on the Fire and Rescue Authority following a decision by Worcestershire County Council to appoint Members on the basis of political proportionality.

664. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 16 June 2008, be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

665. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

None.

666. SERVICE REPORT

The Chief Fire Officer presented a report regarding recent key developments and activities together with performance information for the period 1 April 2008 to 30 June 2008.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

667. JOINT SERVICE REVIEW

The Chief Fire Officer presented a report on the findings of the Strategic Options Appraisal conducted by the joint Hereford & Worcester/Warwickshire Review Group established to examine opportunities for closer working arrangements, and sought approval for the Group's recommendations.

In line with government guidelines, the Strategic Options Appraisal examined three possible options; maintenance of the Status Quo position, to expand collaboration or full combination into a single Combined Fire & Rescue Authority.

The Chief Fire Officer explained the review had identified significant synergies between the two authorities and that the options appraisal had identified a common range of significant financial, operational and strategic challenges that faced each authority.

RESOLVED that:

- i) it be noted that, subject to a full business case being developed by Warwickshire County Council and Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Authority, the Joint Review Group is of the view that it is in the strategic, operational and financial interests of both Authorities to initiate a period of structural collaboration, leading towards full combination in 2010;**
- ii) in the light of 667(i) above, a corporate Joint Project Board be established, consisting of Chief Officers from both Warwickshire County Council and Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Authority, to develop a single business case which provides adequate information for each of the Authorities to make an informed judgement on the benefits and disadvantages of each of the options identified in the Strategic Options Appraisal (attached at Appendix A to the report), and on appropriate timescales for any potential structural collaboration and/or combination;**
- iii) the business case addressing the options and their impact on Warwickshire, Herefordshire and Worcestershire residents and appropriate timing for any potential structural collaboration and/or combination be brought to Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Authority and Warwickshire County Council's Cabinet in December 2008; and**
- iv) the Joint Review Group be tasked to oversee the work of the Joint Project Board in developing the full business case identified in 667(ii) above, and to agree its final recommendations to go to the Authorities.**

(Cllrs McDonald, Mould and Udall abstained from the vote).

668. FIREGUARD CONTRACT

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Service Delivery) advised the Authority of the Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA) Fireguard Project which had been carried out nationally to award a contract for the provision of emergency fire cover which could be called on during scenarios such as pandemic flu, industrial action or natural disaster.

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Service Delivery) explained that the proposed contract would provide six appliances, however in times of national dispute could only provide one appliance for the two counties. Under the proposed model the cost to the Authority would be approximately £123,354 for a period of six days, with the cost being the same for six appliances as it would be for one appliance in times of national dispute. Due to the costs of the proposed Fireguard contract and the ability for the Service to provide its own minimal response capability, the Authority was recommended not to enter into the proposed Fireguard contract.

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Service Delivery) confirmed that the resilience model had been based on the current statutory responsibilities of the Service and that the model would be reviewed should statutory duties change.

RESOLVED that:

- i) the Authority does not enter into the Fireguard contract;**
- ii) the basis of resilience proposed be acknowledged as the minimum that would be considered to discharge current statutory duties under foreseeable circumstances;**
- iii) Officers be instructed to seek this same level of resilience through managerial means and at minimal “steady state” cost to the Authority; and**
- iv) Officers undertake to advise the Authority should the contract provisions be changed in such a way that Members would wish to reconsider these recommendations.**

669. WORCESTERSHIRE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY 2008-2013

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer presented the Worcestershire Sustainable Community Strategy 2008-2013 to the Authority for formal approval. The Strategy had been endorsed by the Best Value Policy and Performance Committee at its meeting on 8 September 2008.

RESOLVED that the adopted Worcestershire Sustainable Community Strategy 2008-2013 be approved.

670. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer informed the Authority of the publication of the Annual Governance Statement, which was a summary of the governance arrangements of the Authority and had been approved by the Audit Committee at its meeting on 30 June 2008.

RESOLVED that the Annual Governance Statement attached at Appendix 1 to the report be noted.

671. PROPERTY UPDATE

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Service Support) informed the Authority of property related matters and project work currently being undertaken.

RESOLVED that the current progress and future plans for the Service property portfolio be noted.

The meeting ended at 11.30am

Chairman.....