

Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Authority

19 December 2008, 10.30am

County Hall, Worcester.



Present: **Herefordshire:**
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, Mrs J Brunner, Mr S J Clee (Vice Chair), Mrs M Drinkwater, Mr A Fry, Mr A I Hardman, Mr M Hart, Mr J Holden, Mr P M McDonald, Mr P Mills, Mr W E Moore, Mr P A Mould, Mrs F Oborski, Mr D Prodger, Mr C T Smith, Mr R M Udall, Mr J Webb, Mr G C Yarranton.

672. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Mrs P A Andrews, Mr R J Farmer

673. 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.)

674. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 22 September 2008, be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

675. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

None.

676. SERVICE REPORT

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

The responses to Members' questions arising on various items on the Reports were as follows:

- 5.16 The CFO told the meeting that the new Specialist Investigation Officers comprised existing Service staff, who had received extra specialist training for this role, and did not involve the recruitment of additional staff;

- 5.19 It was pointed out that the telephone number for complaints, compliments and concerns on the Service website was a 0845 number, and it was questioned if this was the most effective way to provide such a service. It was agreed to report on this matter at the next Authority meeting;
- 5.25 It was reported that the Malvern branch of the Young Firefighters' Association had been suspended due to a lack of suitably qualified and experienced volunteer instructors to sustain it; the future of the branch would be reconsidered if suitable personnel become available;
- 5.40 The Chairman praised the efficient response of the Service to the fire at the garage workshop in Leominster Town centre on Tuesday 30 September.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

676. 2009/10 BUDGET PREPARATION

The Treasurer provided an update on the 2009/10 budget preparation process, which had to be finalised at the Authority meeting scheduled for 18 February 2009.

The Report included the following factors which impacted on the Budget preparation:

- The provisional 2009/10 grant figures were identical to the provisional figures announced in 2007 as part of the three year settlement;
- The level of grant per citizen remained one of the lowest of all Combined Fire Authorities at 74% of the average, and the grant increase (although slightly above the floor) at 0.7%, was half of the average increase;
- Rather than the anticipated increase, the Council Tax Base was now expected to be flat for the foreseeable future;
- Anticipated pay rises had risen from 2% to 2.5%;
- The impact of falling interest rates on income and expenditure, and
- Government policy on Council Tax capping.

The Treasurer reported that there would be a workshop/seminar for all Members, at which budget issues could be discussed, and there was a further meeting of the Budget Committee prior to the FRA Budget and Precept meeting in February.

The following dates were given to Members:

12th Jan 2009 -	Members' Budget Seminar
28 th Jan 2009 -	Budget Committee
18 th Feb 2009 -	Fire and Rescue Authority – Precept Setting

RESOLVED that:

- i) the position with respect to 2009/10 budget be noted; and**
- ii) the Budget Committee be asked to consider and recommend appropriate pay award assumptions to be included in the final budget proposal**

677. HEREFORD AND WORCESTER/WARWICKSHIRE JOINT REVIEW

The Chief Fire Officer reported that although a great deal of work had been undertaken to finalise the business case, Officers had not been able to conclude all aspects of the review in order to report to the Authority.

Cllr. Clee proposed, and Cllr. Brunner seconded, that the Report, as presented, be noted by the Authority.

Cllr. Udall proposed, and Cllr. Mills seconded, that:

- i. Given the current uncertainties that impact financial modelling, work on the joint business case should be suspended;*
- ii. It will be a matter for each Authority to consider whether it would be possible to recommence work to finalise the business case at some point in the future once current uncertainties are resolved. However, at this point in time it is not possible to speculate when this might be;*
- iii. That the Chief Executive communicates this decision formally with the Chief Executive of Warwickshire County Council.*

Cllr. Bean proposed, seconded by Cllr. Clee, that the last sentence of the Report, which read: "*However, it is anticipated that matters will be concluded in time to bring final recommendations to the next Authority Meeting*" should be deleted from the Report, and the report, as amended, be noted by the Authority.

The Authority voted on Cllr. Bean's amendment, as follows:

For the amendment: 17; Against: 6.

The meeting then voted on Cllr. Udall's motion, and the result was as follows:

For the motion: 6; Against: 17.

RESOLVED that the Report on the Hereford and Worcester/Warwickshire Joint Review, as amended, be noted.

(Cllr. Smith left the Meeting at this point.)

678. INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN 2009-12 2009-10 ACTION PLAN- CONSULTATION FEEDBACK.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer provided the Authority with details of the consultation process for the IRMP 2009/12 and the 2009/10 IRMP Action Plan, and a summary of the feedback received together with the Service's response to this feedback. In response to a query the DCFO replied that neighbouring Fire and Rescue Authorities had been consulted, but no comments had been received from them.

RESOLVED that the Consultation Feedback on the Integrated Risk Management Plan 2009-12, 2009-10 Action Plan be noted.

**679. INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN 2009-12
2009/10 ACTION PLAN- RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AMENDMENTS.**

The Chief Fire Officer presented the revised Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) 2009-12 and the recommendations, following Public Consultation, for amendments to the 2009/10 Action Plan. The 2009/10 Action Plan proposed six amendments.

The Meeting considered the various proposed amendments, and there was extensive discussion, particularly regarding the proposal to reduce the Firefighter establishment by 12 posts ie one post from each watch at Redditch, Bromsgrove and Kidderminster .

The Chief Fire Officer agreed with the meeting that public safety was paramount. He pointed out that all other options and alternatives had been considered, but given the financial limits and the timescale involved that this proposal was the optimal solution.

Improved management of sicknesses and absences would be required to offset the proposed reduction in staff numbers. With the implementation of planned changes to management systems and increased investment there would be sufficient resources available per shift to provide cover for unplanned absences over and above anticipated leave and training.

In addition, the proposal to employ seven people on a watch to guarantee the availability of five crew members would bring the Service in line with the majority of other Services who operated this system. It was also noted that this would be further supported by management changes and flexible working arrangements.

The Chief Fire Officer referred to the external pressures for efficiencies, including the recent Audit Commission Report which instanced six persons to each watch. The meeting agreed to consider each of the six proposals individually, and voted as follows:

- 1 Adopt the new proposed response standard for fires in buildings. Maintain current standards for Road Traffic Collisions, but continue to monitor and report against the draft standard introduced last year. Review this standard again in 2010/11 in light of emerging evidence from the Road Safety Partnership work.
(Supported unanimously.)
- 2 Reduce the Firefighter establishment by 12 posts that is a reduction of 1 post from each watch at Redditch, Bromsgrove and Kidderminster, resulting in efficiencies of approximately £420k.
(For: 15 Against 7)
- 3 Streamline back-office services to achieve efficiencies of approximately £200k.
(Supported unanimously.)
- 4 Review the implementation of arrangements for the management of attendance to support the reduction of operational posts.
(Supported unanimously.)
- 5 Make an investment of £100k to support the cost of cover arrangements to enable the release of staff for risk critical training.
(Supported unanimously.)

- 6 Continue to examine further opportunities to deliver efficiency savings and service improvements, including collaboration/combination with another Fire and Rescue Authority.
(Supported unanimously.)

The first target under paragraph. 6.1 in the IRMP 2009/12 was amended to read:

“We will reduce the target for the number of primary fires by 10% averaged over the Plan period compared with the average recorded in the five year period to 31 march 2008.”

**RESOLVED that: i) the Authority approve the IRMP Action Plan 2009/10, and
ii) the Authority approve the IRMP Strategy 2009/12.**

680. REGIONAL FIRE CONTROL

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer updated Members on the Fire Control Project, its key anticipated benefits, the current risks facing the Authority during the Project's implementation phase and assurance of the work ongoing to mitigate these risks.

RESOLVED that the Authority note the risk update regarding the Regional Fire Control project and the ongoing work locally, regionally and nationally to mitigate the risks.

682. STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER- ANNUAL UPDATE

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer told the meeting that the annual review of the live Strategic Risk Register took place 1 December 2008 with Group Leaders advised by Principal Officers.

The overall responsibility for ensuring risks were managed effectively lay with the Authority as advised by the Service. The Register outlined to Members risk scoring for both likelihood and impact. A number of changes were made to the document to reflect a National, Regional and local perspective. Proposed 2008 changes were highlighted in the revised Register circulated to Members.

RESOLVED that the Authority approve the revised Strategic Risk Register.

683. REVIEW OF THE CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer told the meeting that the Code, which was first adopted by the Authority in 2003, was subject to ongoing review to ensure that the highest standards of governance were maintained. A number of updates were made, as highlighted in the copy of the revised Code of Corporate Governance which was circulated to Members.

The Standards Committee would meet to consider and approve that part of the report on Code of Conduct.

RESOLVED that the updates to the Code of Corporate Governance be noted and endorsed.

684. THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION (LGA) FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY EQUALITY & DIVERSITY CHARTER

Authority Members noted the five point Charter for Equality & Diversity for Fire and Rescue Authority members produced by the LGA, in its role in providing political leadership on the issue of Equality and Diversity.

Members had already received a copy of the Charter and would be asked to demonstrate their personal commitment to Equality and Diversity in the Fire and Rescue Service by signing up.

RESOLVED that as part of the Authority’s commitment to Equality and Diversity, and its own role in demonstrating leadership on this issue that Members should individually sign up to The Charter.

The meeting ended at 12.10pm

Chairman.....