

**Minutes of the meeting of  
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority  
held on Wednesday, 18 December 2019, at 2.00 pm  
in the Oak Room, Headquarters, Shrewsbury**

**Present**

**Members**

Councillors Adams, Blundell, Carter (Chair), Dee, Hartin, Mellings (Vice-Chair), Middleton, Milner, Pardy Phillips and Wynn

**Officers**

Rod Hammerton	Chief Fire Officer	CFO
Andy Johnson	Deputy Chief Fire Officer	DCFO
Jonathan Eatough	Clerk and Monitoring Officer	Clerk
Joanne Coadey	Head of Finance	HoF
Andrew Kelcey	Head of Resources	HoR
Germaine Worker	Head of HR and Administration	HHRA
Lynn Ince	Executive Support Officer	ESO

**External Bodies**

John Campion	Police and Crime Commissioner	PCC
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**1 Apologies for Absence**

Councillors Minnery, Price, Sahota and Thompson  
Treasurer James Walton

**2 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**

None

**3 Public Questions**

None

**4 Minutes**

**Resolved** that the minutes of the Fire Authority meeting, held on 9 October 2019, be agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

**5 Strategy and Resources Committee Minutes**

**Resolved** that the minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting, held on 18 November 2019, be noted and the recommendations at items 7 and 8, as given below, be agreed.

## **Item 7 – Financial Performance to September 2019, including Annual Treasury Review 2018/19 and Mid-Year Treasury Review 2019/20**

**Resolved** that the Fire Authority

- a) Note the position of the revenue budget;
- b) Approve virements to the revenue budget, where requested;
- c) Note the update on capital activities;
- d) Note the update on corporate risk;
- e) Note the annual review of treasury activities for 2018/19 and approve the revised indicator for 2019/20;
- f) Note performance against prudential indicators to date in 2019/20; and
- g) Note the mid-year review of treasury activities for 2019/20.

## **Item 8 – 2020/21 and Later Years Revenue and Capital Budgets**

**Resolved** that the Fire Authority

- a) Note the revisions and the committed changes to the base budget, as shown in section 4 of the report;
- b) Agree to base its pay and price contingency in the revenue budget on the calculations set out in section 5 of the report;
- c) Note the process for the approval of the capital programme; and
- d) Approve the expenditure figures associated with those approved assumptions as a basis for developing the budget at the meeting of the Fire Authority on 18 December 2019.

## **6 2020/21 and Later Years Budget Summary**

This report summarised the budgets that are proposed by the Strategy and Resources Committee. The results are put forward to the Fire Authority for approval as the basis for consultation, leading to a final decision at the Fire Authority meeting in February 2020.

The Clerk clarified which parts of Appendix B to the report were exempt and an amended non-exempt version of the document was tabled to the meeting. A copy will be placed on the signed minute file by the ESO.

The HoF talked through the information set out in the report and drew Members attention to page 4 of the report which set out the various grant assumption options for consideration. The HoF advised that officers believe that options 5 or 6 in the table are a reasonable basis for budget planning from 2020/21 onwards. The HoF also emphasised that Council Tax and Collection Fund are not included in any of the options at present.

The HoF explained that the growth items are set out on page 6 of the report and advised that the table contains sufficient information on the exempt business cases for the Authority to decide on these.

Members suggested that a 3.5% pay rise in the broader economy needs to be considered in budget planning. The HoF confirmed that this would be considered.

Members asked about the effect on options 5 and 6 if there was an increase to the maximum level of precept as set by the Government. The HoF explained that there would be a cumulative effect if the precept level was relaxed from 1.99% to 2.99% but this is not confirmed. The National Fire Chiefs Council is lobbying for the precept to be set at a £5 flat rate and the Chair reported that, after years of debate, the £5 lobby is to be presented to the Government for consideration.

Regarding the growth items at section 7 of the report, Members asked what rank the Inspecting Officers would be. The CFO confirmed that there would be one non-uniformed post and two posts at crew manager / watch manager level.

Members asked if the Protection Officers would provide resilience for the work that will emanate from the Grenfell Tower Inquiry. The CFO explained that he could not say for definite at present. The Protection Department is currently under-resourced for the Inspection Programme and it takes two to three years to 'grow' a competent Inspecting Officer. Day to day work within the Department will be covered and it will also address the impact that austerity has had on the Fire Safety Department, which was highlighted by Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI).

**Resolved** that the Fire Authority

- a) Approve the recommendations set out in section 5 of the report, using option 6 for 2020/21, and allowing officers to continue work on a range of planning scenarios for later years of the planning period;
- b) Agree the recommendations on Reserves and Provisions, set out in report 7 of Appendix A to this report;
- c) Approve the requests for growth summarised in section 7 of the report and detailed in Appendix B to the report; and
- d) Request the Strategy and Resources Committee to prepare a final budget package in January 2020, for final decision by the Fire Authority in February 2020.

## **7 Telford Central Building Programme Update**

This report updated members on the latest progress regarding the Telford Central Build Programme.

The HoR presented this report and informed the Authority that following consultation with the public, staff and Fire Authority Members, the external design for the building has been completed and submitted for planning approval. Officers anticipate that approval will be given to the design.

The HoR explained that the Procurement strategy for the project will be legally compliant and will achieve best value. Any procurement will include social value gains, such as apprenticeships and will maximise opportunities for local businesses. There are two possible procurement routes via Staffordshire or Telford & Wrekin with the decision being governed by timescales versus local contractors.

Members felt that it is very important to have consideration of local contractors and stated that it is vital that there is opportunity for them to bid. It is an absolute necessity to encourage local businesses with right skills to be involved.

With reference to the programme phasing as set out in section 4 of the report, Members queried if the invitation to tender needed to wait until planning approval is gained. The HoR explained that beginning the tendering process in April will allow time for detailed designs to be produced and will also ensure that the summer is avoided which is when many contractors are involved in works in schools.

Members asked if it was possible to see the plans for the internal layout. The CFO confirmed that plans of the layout have been drawn up but do not currently include any specifications which will be drawn up with the building's stakeholders. The CFO explained that decisions over the interior design and specification of the building are delegated to the Programme Board, but the drawings can be shared with Authority Members. The HoR confirmed this and that the drawings will be made available to the public.

Members asked what progress was being made with West Mercia Police (WMP) involvement as they had expressed an interest in being involved in the project from the start, but it had been difficult to establish details around this going forward. The HoR reported that the Service had met with WMP on 17 December 2019 and it was clear from this meeting that the capacity required by WMP could not be met on the Telford Central site, for example the provision of 60+ car parking spaces, however the Service and WMP are continuing to support each other across other sites. Members commented that it would have been helpful to know this at an earlier stage.

Members then asked if there were alternative plans for working with WMP on the Telford Central site. The HoR explained that Telford does meet some of WMP's needs but they do not need the facilities all the time so the project will go forward on a shared use basis. There are also spaces within the building that could be extended if required. The CFO confirmed that this was not the first meeting with WMP, and they have been involved in the planning process. The PCC added that there are choices going forward as WMP have a large estate with various options. The PCC further added that WMP is about to undertake its largest recruitment drive in a century, so it needs to be careful about the context of its decisions. WMP want to support the development if they can assist to meet the needs of those concerned.

The CFO explained that whilst there is an on-going state of flux, the Service has had to move forward and work with its partners to progress this project. The building is designed to be flexible in use and the designs for it have been progressed with an expansion 'gusset' to accommodate partners but there are limits to this.

**Resolved** that the Fire Authority note the report.

## **8 Strategic Fire Alliance – Projects Update**

This report updated Members on progress in preparing priority projects developed by the Strategic Fire Alliance between Shropshire and Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Services.

The CFO presented this report and highlighted the following to the Authority.

### **Fire Control**

The final report on the options appraisal will be taken to the Programme Delivery Board (PDB) and then to the Strategic Alliance Board (SAB) for viable options to be identified and approval given to exploring those issues. Any recommendations emanating from the Grenfell Tower Inquiry report will also need to be considered together with any potential command gaps within rural areas. It is, however, clear that any solution identified will not be a replacement of the existing arrangements.

### **Integrated Risk Management Planning (IRMP)**

The 'PESTLE' analysis sessions, looking at political, economic, social, technological, legal and environmental impacts across both Services have been completed. Whilst the same approach has been taken across both Services, the outcomes of the analysis will be different. The final IRMP documents will look the same however due to a common template being used. It is possible that early public consultation may be undertaken on the IRMP via social media.

### **ICT**

The Strategic ICT Change Manager will deliver his initial report to the next PDB and then to the SAB for consideration. Elements of the infrastructure that can come together have been identified and it is anticipated that this will lead to form following function.

### **Procurement**

Work is progressing on developing a joint Alliance Procurement Strategy for agreement by the PDB. This includes the development of joint specifications for procurement areas where alignment across both Services is possible.

The PCC asked that given that the Fire Authority have agreed an increase in Council Tax and has £62k remaining in its budget for judicial review costs, when the clarity of purpose and benefit to the public in terms of auditable outcomes for the Fire Alliance would be available.

The Chair responded that he perceives that the Strategic Fire Alliance is working well, and it is possibly something that could have been done before now. The Services are aligning so they can work together to achieve resilience by making changes and improvements to the Service at the same time and pace. The development of the Fire Strategic Alliance has been presented nationally and has received positive feedback.

The PCC responded that his intention was not to slight the Alliance or its work but to establish when tangible outcomes and benefits would be identified for the public. The Chair thanked the PCC for his comments and responded that the Authority believes that the Alliance is working well and would not have pursued the development of the Alliance if it were not considered to be the right for the Service. There is belief that any difficulties will be outweighed by the outcomes of the Alliance and some tangible results are already being delivered.

The CFO added that it is difficult to give an exact timeframe for when the larger scale tangible outcomes will be achieved as they are large projects, set over a four-year timescale, that are currently in the initiation stages. The CFO also reminded the meeting that the primary purpose of the alliance was to create improvements in capacity and resilience for both Services rather than to focus on financial savings. The CFO explained that all the projects carried out as part of the Fire Alliance will have a benefits analysis and a Project Initiation Document.

The PCC responded that the points made by the Chair and the CFO are interesting as it might be that the Fire Alliance creates a better Service, but this needs to be explored as, at present, it is not clear that this is the case. For example, the genesis of discussion regarding ICT can be seen but it is unclear if the developments will be at a reduced cost.

**Resolved** that the Fire Authority note the report and the progress it details.

## **9 Summary Report on Phase 1 of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry**

This report provided Members with an overview and awareness of the content of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry (GTI) Phase 1 report. This report also outlined initial areas for the Service to address to ensure the recommendations within the GTI report are addressed by the Service.

The DCFO presented this report and highlighted the summary of recommendations as set out in section 5 of the report. The DCFO also explained that the issues identified cannot be addressed at a local level and the response to them will need to be done cohesively at a national level.

The DCFO also drew the Authority's attention to section 7 of the report which sets out the impact of the recommendations for this Service. A gap analysis is required to identify affected departments and the resources that are needed to address the recommendations. It appears, initially that there will be an impact across most departments within the Service with significant amounts of work to be done at all parts of the process.

Members commented that there are serious recommendations in the report with clear concerns being raised both in the GTI report and the London Fire Brigade HMI report. They expressed concern about timescales as these are not included in report. The DCFO explained that the gap analysis should take around three months to complete. An action plan will be produced from the gap analysis and this will be brought to the Fire Authority once it has been developed. Members also expressed concern about the incident command competence issue identified within London Fire Brigade. The DCFO provided reassurance that within this Service, officers are prevented from responding if they are judged to not be competent.

The Chair commented that it was a life changing incident regarding public perception of safety and high-rise buildings. Obviously, there is not the same risk for this Service, but safety needs to be ensured and any disparities between the public and private sector addressed.

Members asked if the Service has access to data about electrical appliances, such as washing machines, and where these are. The DCFO explained that it does not, and it is doubtful that manufacturers and suppliers would hold this information either. Any recall of faulty appliances is therefore reliant on media campaigns which the Service supports via its social media output.

The DCFO explained that the concerns raised in the report are not just related to high-rise buildings and there are issues in Shropshire. The Protection Department have identified issues with compartmentalisation in two mid-rise properties. These issues have been identified in buildings that were deemed to be safe hence there is a growing level of concern

Members felt that cladding manufacturers should be investigated and asked if fire and rescue services are made aware of the materials used in construction. The CFO responded that whilst he understands Members frustrations on this issue, the inquiry is starting from the night itself and moving backwards from that point so these issues will eventually be addressed.

Members considered other ways that lives could be saved in incidents such as Grenfell and gave the example of self-contained air supplies that are used in Austria. The DCFO responded that measures such as there were considered 28 years ago and should come out of the Inquiry. The Chair undertook to raise the issue at the Fire Services Management Committee. The CFO also confirmed that the issue had been raised at the National Fire Chiefs Council and commented that whilst these measures should not be needed the painful reality is that they are needed.

Regarding recommendation 5.1 which relates to the information made available to fire and rescue services about materials and construction used, Members queried if more detailed information regarding fire safety should be made available to Planning Committees. It was confirmed that Planning Committees do consider this as part of building control regulations. The Chair suggested that he could write to the Planning Departments about this issue. The CFO asked to what end this would be as all developments are built to British standards and Phase 2 of the GTI will highlight and look at addressing issues related to this. The CFO said that whilst he would not stop the Chair from writing to the local authorities, there should be a clear rationale as to why he was writing.

**Resolved** that the Fire Authority note the contents of the report and acknowledge the capacity required across areas of the Service to ensure recommendations are considered appropriately and actioned where necessary.

## 10 Localism Act 2011: Recruitment of Deputy Chief Fire Officer

This report proposed actions for the Fire Authority following receipt of the notice of retirement from Deputy Chief Fire Officer Andy Johnson.

The HHRA presented this report and advised that the DCFO retires on 31 December 2019 and that the use of recruitment consultants is recommended for the recruitment process that arises from his retirement.

The PCC asked for clarification of the salary for the DCFO post and if any opportunities to address the vacancy within the Fire Alliance had been explored. The CFO clarified that the salary for the DCFO is circa £102k and explained that it is being considered by the Fire Authority because the Localism Act 2011 requires that any posts where remuneration exceeds £100k per annum are approved by the full Authority before being advertised. Regarding opportunities within the Fire Alliance, the CFO explained that this has formed part of the Strategic Advisory Group's (StAG) discussions about how to fill the post. The StAG Group had waited to see if there were any political developments that would affect this, but this has been superseded by the need for succession planning.

Members asked what the plans for the interregnum were. The CFO explained that Dave Myers has been appointed as the temporary DCFO with Simon Hardiman being appointed as the temporary ACFO.

**Resolved** that the Fire Authority

- a) Agree, in principle, to employ a Deputy Chief Fire Officer on a salary of over £100,000; and agree
- b) To delegate authority to the Brigade Managers' Employment Panel (the Panel) to review and amend the job description of the Deputy Chief Fire Officer;
- c) To engage recruitment advisors to assist in the recruitment process; and



- d) Direct the Panel as a matter of urgency to commence the recruitment process for a new Deputy Chief Fire Officer, reporting back to the Fire Authority with its recommendations for appointment.

## 11 Corporate Risk Management Summary

This report updated Members on the status of risks on the Corporate Risk Register.

The DCFO presented this report and advised the Authority of the following points in relation to the Authority's Corporate Risk Register

- The Emergency Services Mobile Communications Project risk has been removed from the Risk Register due to the extension of the Airwave Contract
- The risk related to the transfer of the Payroll, Human Resources, Training and Finance systems from Shropshire Council to Telford & Wrekin Council has been removed from the Risk Register as this process has now been completed
- The risk rating for the provision of performance information was raised due to capacity issues within the Business Intelligence (BI) Team. Since this was done, the Service has recruited two new members to the BI Team which should address these issues.

**Resolved** that the Fire Authority note the contents of the report.

## 12 Exclusion of Press and Public

**Resolved** that, under section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting room for the following items on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information, as defined by the provisions of Part I of Schedule 12(A) to the Act, by virtue of Paragraphs 1, 2 and 4.

## 13 Corporate Risk Management Summary (Paragraph 4)

**Resolved** that the exempt Appendix C to report 11 – Corporate Risk Management Summary be noted.

## 14 2020/21 and Later Years Budget Summary (Paragraphs 1 and 2)

**Resolved** that the exempt Appendix B to report 6 – 2020/21 and Later Years Budget Summary be noted.

The meeting closed at 3.40 pm

**Chair**

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_