

**Non-Exempt Minutes of the Meeting of
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority
held in the Oak Room, Headquarters, Shrewsbury
on Wednesday, 4 October 2017, at 2.00 pm**

Present

Members

Councillors Adams, Carter (Chair), Dee, Hartin, Hosken, Jones, Mellings, Milner, Murray, Pardy, Phillips, Pinter, Price, Roberts (Vice-Chair), Sahota and Wynn

Officers

Rod Hammerton	Chief Fire Officer	CFO
Andy Johnson	Deputy Chief Fire Officer	DCFO
Louise McKenzie	Assistant Chief Fire Officer	ACFO
Jonathan Eatough	Clerk and Monitoring Officer	Clerk
James Walton	Treasurer	
Germaine Worker	Head of Human Resources and Administration	HHRA
Lynn Ince	Executive Support Officer	ESO

External Bodies

John Campion	West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner	PCC
--------------	-------------------------------------------	-----

Before business commenced, the Chair gave a short speech in recognition of Councillor Stuart West's service to the Fire Authority as both a Member and Chair of the Authority. Councillor West was unable to attend the meeting.

A presentation was also made to Assistant Chief Fire Officer Louise McKenzie, who was leaving the Service today to take up a new role.

1 Apologies for Absence

None. Councillor Minnery did not attend the meeting.

2 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

Councillors Hartin, Hosken, Mellings and Roberts declared Disclosable Pecuniary Interests in item 11 as Directors of Shropshire Fire Risk Management Services Ltd.

A query was raised as to whether the members concerned did have Disclosable Pecuniary Interests. The Clerk advised that as Directors of the Shropshire Fire Risk Management Services Ltd they cannot take part in discussion regarding its future. The Directors do have a dispensation but its scope is limited.

Members then queried who could respond if the Fire Authority requested information that was not included in the report. The Clerk advised that the Directors could be invited back in to answer questions but the advice for them to be ultra-safe regarding interests is for the members concerned, and the DCFO (who is also a Director) to leave the meeting for this item.

3 Public Questions

None

4 Minutes

4a 14 June 2017

Resolved that the minutes of the Fire Authority Annual Meeting, held on 14 June 2017, be agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

4b 1 August 2017

Resolved that the minutes of the Extraordinary Fire Authority Meeting, held on 1 August 2017 be agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record, subject to the inclusion of the following amendments:

- On page 2 remove 'decide whether to...' from the last two bullet points
- On page 5, change the last sentence of the second bullet point to read '...Members sought to identify what the benefits of collaboration would be in this regard

5 Brigade Managers' Employment Panel Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the Brigade Managers' Employment Panel meeting, held on 1 August 2017, be noted.

6 Audit and Performance Management Committee Minutes

6a 19 July 2017

Resolved that the minutes of the Audit and Performance Management Committee meeting, held on 19 July 2017, be noted.

6b 14 September 2017

Resolved that the minutes of the Audit and Performance Management Committee meeting, held on 14 September 2017, be noted and that the recommendations at items 8 and 9, as given below, be agreed.

Item 8 – Review of Whistleblowing Policy

Resolved that the Fire Authority agree, without amendment, the Whistleblowing Policy, as recommended by the Committee.

Item 9 – Annual Review 2016/17

Resolved that the Fire Authority approve the draft Annual Review 2016/17.

7 Strategy and Resources Committee Minutes

With reference to the query on page 3, regarding the difference in interest rates achieved by the Fire Authority and Shropshire Council, Members confirmed that they had received a written explanation of the reasons for the variation. The Treasurer undertook to include interest rate information in future reports to both provide transparency and aid benchmarking. The Treasurer also advised the Authority and the Council have a slightly different remit and approach to investments due to the amounts of money involved.

Members asked if the Authority adopted a similar investment policy to that of the Council, which may be 'risky', could more income be generated. The Treasurer advised that Treasury Management look to invest in very similar institutions for both organisations but due to the difference in amounts for investment and the length of investments there were difference in the rates of return that were achieved.

Resolved that the minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting, held on 7 September 2017, be noted and the recommendations at item 6, as given below, be agreed.

Item 6 – Financial Performance to July 2017

Resolved that the Fire Authority

- a) Note the position of the revenue budget;
- b) Approve virements to the revenue budget, where requested; and
- c) Note performance against prudential indicators to date in 2017/18.

8 Review of Financial Regulations

This report reviewed the Fire Authority's Financial Regulations and asked Members to consider the proposed amended version.

The Treasurer presented this report and advised that the last full review of the Financial Regulations had been undertaken in 2015. There were no major amendments to the document but it is considered best practice for the Fire Authority to approve the document even if there are only minimal changes.

Resolved that the Fire Authority approve the amended Financial Regulations.

9 Integrated Risk Management Plan Update

This report updated Members on the three Integrated Risk Management Planning (IRMP) Projects, currently being implemented, and asked for approval from the Authority for a modification to the current Fire Control Project.

The DCFO presented the report and specifically drew Members' attention to the options regarding IRMP 2 – Fire Control Projects, which were set out on page 7 of the report.

The DCFO advised that the Strategy and Planning Working Group had considered the options at its recent meeting and recommends that the Fire Authority give outline approval to option 2 with the caveat regarding collaboration, as set out in the report.

The CFO commented that it was challenging to decide against the workforce. Self rostering does work and is a resilient and effective system which relies on the co-operation of those concerned to act as one group. Members asked if the Union members agreed with the proposal. The CFO advised that the FBU supported the trial of the system.

Members then queried what the difference was with flexible rostering. The DCFO explained that self rostering is done 3 – 6 months ahead. Fire Control employees have a blank sheet and must ensure that there are 3 individuals on duty at any time. The person at the bottom of the list gets the shifts that are left but the order of the list does rotate to ensure fairness. Self Rostering is done as a whole watch. Flexible Rostering is based on 4 watches with individuals knowing exactly when they are on duty. Cover can then be worked out within the Watch with individuals rostering off if they are not needed. These shifts are banked and the individual can roster back on when required. Agreement is still needed as to how many times an individual can roster off during year.

Members asked if it was better for Control staff to act as one body. The DCFO explained that this was the aim of self rostering which would break up the watches and encourage them to think as one. The CFO added that with such small groups this helps to overcome fragility and removes microcultures which contribute to differences in performance.

Members expressed support for Option 2 provided the Service is taking the workforce along with it. Flexible Rostering is in place for wholetime watches with the majority being happy with it, but almost inevitably some are not. Members asked what happens if employees cannot use the shifts that they have banked. The DCFO advised that in the final quarter of the year if individuals have days banked but no opportunity for IRMP work then overtime is paid to them for those days.

Some Members also expressed concerns that the recommendations were confusing. It appeared that the options being offered were either the best system, self rostering, which was not working or a lesser system, flexible rostering, which may not work either. Some Members were of the opinion that they do not like either option but are not sure what else to suggest at present.

With regard to staffing levels, the DCFO explained that having 4 on a watch and 3 on duty provides a 9% resilience in staffing. There have been high sickness levels, which increased in the first quarter and did improve in the second quarter.

At the peak of the long term sickness, the 9% resilience in staffing was used up quickly. Under the old 2/2/4 system, having 5 people off would have decimated several Watches and would have resulted in more occasions where Control was not fully staffed. Under the Self rostering system, when there are gaps in cover, there is the ability to provide service through flexible staffing. Under Flexible rostering, the 9% resilience can also be used flexibly and the trial will show how that flexibility compares to the current Self-Rostering option. The DCFO reported that negotiations with staff and employees are positive at the moment, but staff are very clear that they need to come along with the proposed system or the trial cannot go ahead.

Members asked if the physical working environment in Fire Control has any impact on sickness levels. The HHRA explained that sickness within Fire Control had mainly been due to work related stress. All Control staff have completed a stress risk assessment which showed that levels of stress are mainly related to shift patterns.

The DCFO advised Members that it should be noted that the current Control suite is not purpose built. At the time of designing the refurbished Headquarters building, Fire Control was due to move to the Regional Control Centre. When this fell through, Control were accommodated in what was intended to be the ICT suite. Historically, sickness levels in Control have been high and time has been invested over a number of years to attempt to identify causes for this. The future plan is to move Fire Control into the redeveloped Telford Central site with staff, and partner agencies, being involved in the user specification for the facility.

Members commented that they had been presented with the only real options to try to take staff along with the Service's plans. Members are also mindful of the need to continue delivering the service. Undertaking a trial of flexible rostering, enables an assessment of both options to be undertaken, in order to find a clear way forward.

The Chair commented that the StraP Working Group considered it right and proper to give opportunity to look at both systems of rostering in order to aid decision making.

Resolved unanimously that the Fire Authority

- a) Note the progress being made with the three Integrated Risk Management Planning Projects; and
- b) With regard to Fire Control (IRMP 2), agree that the 12 month Self Rostering Pilot should continue until it concludes at the end of December 2017 and a new 12 month trial of a Flexible Rostering Duty System should be undertaken with the caveats set out in the report.

10 Exclusion of Press and Public

Resolved that, under section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting room for the following items on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information, as defined by the provisions of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Act, by virtue of Paragraph 3.

3.15 pm Councillors Hartin, Hosken, Mellings and Roberts and the DCFO left the meeting at this point.

11 Shropshire Fire Risk Management Services Ltd. Report of Board of Directors (Paragraph 3)

This paper gave a performance update for Shropshire Fire Risk Management Services Ltd (SFRMS) and asked the Fire Authority to consider and decide upon a recommendation from the SFRMS' Board of Directors.

Resolved that the Fire Authority

- a) note the performance update given;
- b) and agree that the decision regarding the future of Shropshire Fire Risk Management Services Ltd. be deferred to the next meeting of the Fire Authority; and
- c) Task Officers to undertake further research regarding the issues raised by Members

3.40 pm Councillors Hartin, Hosken, Mellings and Roberts and the DCFO returned to the meeting at this point.

12 Assistant Chief Fire Officer Recruitment (Paragraph 3)

This report asked the Fire Authority to ratify the decision of its Brigade Managers' Employment Panel on the appointment of a new Assistant Chief Fire Officer.

Resolved that the Fire Authority ratify the recommendation of the Brigade Managers' Employment Panel that Mr David Myers, currently Area Manager at Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service, should be appointed to the post of Assistant Chief Fire Officer, subject to the usual employment checks.

The meeting closed at 3.50 pm.

Chair.....

Date.....