

**Minutes of the Meeting of  
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority  
held in the Oak Room, Headquarters, Shrewsbury  
on Wednesday, 12 February 2020, at 2.00 pm**

## **Present**

### **Members**

Councillors Adams, Blundell, Dee, Mellings (Vice-Chair), Middleton, Milner, Minnery, Pardy, Price, Roberts, Sahota, Thompson and Wynn

### **Officers**

Rod Hammerton	Chief Fire Officer	CFO
Simon Hardiman	Temporary Assistant Chief Fire Officer	ACFO
Jonathan Eatough	Clerk to the Fire Authority	Clerk
Joanne Coadey	Head of Finance	HoF
Ged Edwards	Planning and Performance Manager	PPM
Germaine Worker	Head of Human Resources and Administration	HHRA
Lynn Ince	Executive Support Officer	ESO

### **External Bodies**

Tracy Onslow	West Mercia Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner	DPCC
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Before the meeting began, the Chair gave a vote of thanks to Councillor Alex Phillips, who left the Authority in December 2019. The Chair welcomed Councillor Keith Roberts back to the Fire Authority.

The Chair also welcomed Simon Hardiman to his first Fire Authority meeting in the role of Temporary Assistant Chief Fire Officer.

## **1 Apologies for Absence**

Councillors Carter and Hartin  
Dave Myers, Deputy Chief Fire Officer  
James Walton, Treasurer

As the Chair had given his apologies for the meeting, the Vice-Chair chaired the meeting.

## **2 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**

None

### 3 Public Questions

None

### 4 Minutes

**Resolved** that the minutes of the Fire Authority meeting, held on 18 December 2019, be agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

### 5 Standards, Audit and Performance Committee Minutes

**Resolved** that the minutes of the Standards, Audit and Performance Committee meeting, held on 5 December 2019, be noted and the recommendations at item 11, as given below, be agreed.

#### Item 11– Ethical Framework Matters

**Resolved** that the Fire Authority approve the proposed amendments to the following documents:

- Member Code of Conduct
- Code of Conduct Complaints Procedure
- Code of Conduct Complaints Form
- Disclosable Pecuniary Interests Form
- Dispensation Procedure

### 6 Strategy and Resources Committee Minutes

**Resolved** that the minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting, held on 30 January 2020, be noted and the recommendations at items 5, 7 and 8, as given below, be agreed.

#### Item 5 – Financial Performance to December 2019

**Resolved** that the Fire Authority

- a) Note the position of the revenue budget;
- b) Approve virements to the revenue budget, where requested;
- c) Approve proposed changes to the current capital programme; and
- d) Note performance against prudential indicators to date in 2019/20.

#### Item 7 – Capital Programmes 2020/21 to 2024/25, Treasury Management Statement and Capital Strategy

**Resolved** that the Fire Authority:

- a) Approve the Capital Strategy for 2020/21 – 2024/25, as set out in Appendix A to the report;
- b) *Recommendation considered in exempt session*; and
- c) Approve the Treasury Strategy Statement for 2020/21.

## **Item 8 - Adequacy of Reserves and Robustness of Budget**

**Resolved** that the Fire Authority agree:

- a) The reserves as set out in the appendix to the report; and
- b) The Treasurer's assurances covering the robustness of the 2020/21 budget and adequacy of its reserves.

## **7 Exclusion of Press and Public**

**Resolved** that the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

## **8 Capital Programme from 2020/21 (Paragraph 3)**

The Fire Authority received the paper on Capital Programmes from 2020/21 (the appendix to paper 6b on this agenda).

**Resolved** that the Fire Authority agree the recommendation of its Strategy and Resources Committee to:

- b) Confirm the 2020/21 onward programmes, set out in exempt Appendix B, and the associated revenue costs, set out in exempt Appendix C, as part of its final precept deliberations.

## **9 Brigade Manager's Employment Panel Exempt Minutes**

**Resolved** that the Fire Authority note the exempt minutes of the Brigade Managers Employment Panel meeting, held on 23 January 2020.

The meeting reverted to open session at this point (2.20 pm)

## **10 Fire Authority Work Plan 2020/21**

This report reviewed progress against the Fire Authority's 2019/20 Work Plan and put forward a 2020/21 Work Plan for consideration and approval by Members.

**Resolved** that the Fire Authority

- a) Note progress made against the Fire Authority 2019/20 Work Plan, as detailed at paragraph 4 of the report; and
- b) Approve the 2020/21 Work Plan, attached at the appendix to the report, without amendment.

## 11 Revenue Budget 2020/21

This report incorporated the recommendations made by the Strategy and Resources Committee on 30 January 2020, in relation to the revenue budget for 2020/21. The report also confirmed the use of assumptions for medium-term financial planning.

The HoF presented this report and advised Members that it contains up to date information and that it should be considered and agreed together with Agenda Item 12 – Revenue Budget: 2020/21 Precept.

The HoF then highlighted the following in relation to the information set out in the report:

- It has been confirmed that there has been a rollover of the Grant settlement for one year which is in line with the planning assumptions used
- The Precept levy threshold has been held to 2% - the Authority has planned a 1.99% precept increase
- Council Tax levels have been confirmed and are more than the planning assumptions used
- Debt charges have been added into the budget planning
- The Authority's medium term financial planning shows the impact of potential worst-case scenarios but there remain uncertainties around issues such as the revenue support grant, pensions and the Comprehensive Spending and Fair Funding Reviews
- The Authority's capital programme is due for review, which may reduce anticipated costs
- Business rates income from the constituent authorities is £35k more than originally estimated
- The Collection Fund figures are similar to previous years
- A one-off Section 31 rates related grant of £344K is included in the budget planning.

The HoF confirmed that the final finance settlement appears to be as anticipated in planning. The Parliamentary debate on the finance settlement has been delayed and is still to take place but it is not anticipated that there will be any changes that will affect the Authority's budget as a result of this debate. However, Members are asked to delegate authority to the Treasurer, in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Authority, to make amendments to revenue budget if necessary.

The HoF then confirmed that the proposed final budget package is as set out at paragraph 6 on page 3 of the report.

Referring to the table on page 2 of the report, which shows the Authority as being in deficit from 2021/22 onwards, Members asked how long that deficit could be sustained for. The HoF explained that the situation may not be as bad as predicted because of one-off grants and other budget amendments.

The Authority's reserves can be used to cover budgetary deficits in the short term but there will be a £10 million reduction in reserves because of the Telford Central redevelopment project. The Income Volatility reserve could potentially be used to cover deficits, but it would be more prudent to plan how to cover deficits and reduce budgets going forward.

The Chair recommended that Authority should continue its cautious and prudent approach to budget planning, in order to avoid a false sense of security. It appears that there will be challenging times ahead, however, the Authority is in a good position to deal with these challenges.

The CFO advised that the proposed 2021/22 budget package does not include any pension grant. A one-off grant related to pensions is to be considered in the Comprehensive Spending Review, but it is not clear what this will actually mean for the Authority.

Members asked if it was acceptable for the Authority to agree the budget and precept if there is the possibility that the final finance settlement will not be agreed by Parliament. The HoF advised that the Authority was in an identical position last year. A written settlement has been received but the Authority does have scope to amend its revenue budget if necessary, hence the request in the report, for the delegation to the Treasurer.

Thanked HoF and Finance Team for their work on the budget.

**Resolved unanimously** that the Fire Authority

- a) approve a revenue budget for 2020/21, and a forward financial projection to 2022/23, as set out in section 6 of the report; and
- b) delegate any necessary amendments to the revenue budget to the Treasurer, in consultation with the Chair and the Vice-Chair of the Authority.

## 12 Revenue Budget: 2020/21 Precept

This report sought Fire Authority approval to a budget for 2020/21; Council Tax levels for 2020/21; and precepts on billing authorities and related matters.

**Resolved unanimously** that the Fire Authority approve:

- a) That a net budget requirement be set at £23,221,499 (calculated in accordance with the provisions of Section 42a of the Local Government Finance Act 1992);
- b) A total precept of £16,915,395 to be levied on the billing authorities;
- c) A Council Tax resulting in a basic amount of Council Tax at Band D calculated in accordance with the provisions of the 1992 Act (Section 42b) of £102.25;

- d) Under Section 47 of the 1992 Act:
- i) The amount of Council Tax calculated for each category of dwelling in each billing authority's area, as follows:

Band	2020/21 Council Tax £ p
A	68.17
B	79.53
C	90.89
D	102.25
E	124.97
F	147.69
G	170.42
H	204.50

- ii) The amount calculated (in accordance with Section 48 of the 1992 Act) as payable by billing authorities for 2020/21, as follows:

Council	Precept £
Shropshire Council	11,611,248
Borough of Telford & Wrekin Council	5,304,147
	<u>16,915,395</u>

- e) That the Treasurer:
- i) Issue the necessary precepts and information to the billing authorities in accordance with the provisions of Chapter IV of Part 1 of the 1992 Act and be authorised to make any amendment to the above to reflect the final approved budget, after consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Fire Authority; and
- ii) Is authorised to make payments required from, and to, reserves and provisions within the approved budget strategy and within the Authority's Financial Rules, in conjunction with the Chair and the Vice-Chair;
- f) Approve the revenue budget and pensions account, illustrated in Appendix A, for budgetary control in accordance with approved standing orders; and
- g) Approve the schedule of reserves and provisions at Appendix B.

### 13 Annual Plan 2020/21

This report set out proposals for the Service's Annual Plan 2020/21.

**Resolved** that the Fire Authority:

- a) Agree the proposed format of the Annual Plan 2020/21;

- b) Delegate authority to the Chief Fire Officer, in consultation with the Chair of the Fire Authority, to agree the final wording and layout of the Plan; and
- c) Delegate the setting of the Service Targets to its Strategy and Resources Committee in March.

## **14 Annual Review of Charges for Special Services 2020/21**

This report presented proposed increases in charges made for special services.

The HoF presented this report and advised that the increase to the special service charges is in line with the pay increase awarded to firefighters in 2019/20.

**Resolved** that the Fire Authority agree the proposed charges for special services to be applied from 1 April 2020.

## **15 Proposed Amendments to the Pay Policy Statement 2020/21**

This report set out proposed amendments to the Pay Policy Statement for consideration by the full Authority, as required under the Localism Act 2011 and in accordance with the process agreed by the Fire Authority in February 2012.

The HHRA presented this report and advised the Authority that the Pay Policy Statement is amended on an annual basis and published on 31 March each year. The HHRA also provided assurance, following a query from Members, that the Authority's pay levels are in line with national agreements.

**Resolved** that the Fire Authority agree the proposed amendments to the Pay Policy Statement.

## **16 The Scheme for the Payment of Members' Allowances 2020/21**

This report asked the Fire Authority to consider and agree its 2020/21 Scheme for the Payment of Members' Allowances.

The Chair advised the Authority that clarification had been sought on an issue raised in the Independent Remuneration Panel's report. The information relating to this has not yet been received so it was suggested that consideration of this report be deferred to the Fire Authority meeting in June 2020. This will enable officers to ensure they have the relevant information and allow the Fire Authority to discuss the issue fully.

It was proposed by Councillor Wynn, seconded by Councillor Roberts, and

**Resolved** that the Fire Authority agree that consideration of this report be deferred to the next meeting of the Fire Authority in June 2020.

Before the meeting closed, Councillor Dee presented a certificate of appreciation from the Katoomba / Luera Rural Volunteer Fire Brigade, Australia to the Chief Fire Officer. Councillor Dee had recently returned from a visit to Australia where she visited the Fire Brigade concerned.

The meeting closed at 2.45 pm.

**Chair**.....

**Date**.....