

**Non-Exempt Minutes of the Meeting of  
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority  
held in the Oak Room, Headquarters, Shrewsbury  
on Wednesday, 25 April 2018, at 2.00 pm**

**Present**

**Members**

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

**Officers**

Rod Hammerton	Chief Fire Officer	CFO
Andy Johnson	Deputy Chief Fire Officer	DCFO
Dave Myers	Assistant Chief Fire Officer	ACFO
Jonathan Eatough	Clerk to the Fire Authority	Clerk
James Walton	Treasurer	Treasurer
Joanne Coadey	Head of Finance	HoF
Germaine Worker	Head of Human Resources and Administration	HHRA
Lynn Ince	Executive Support Officer	ESO

**External Bodies**

Vicky Jenks	Senior Pensions Officer, Shropshire County Pension Fund	SPO
Tracy Onslow	West Mercia Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner	DPCC

**1 Apologies for Absence**

Councillor Murray

**2 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**

Councillors Hartin, Hosken, Mellings and Roberts declared Disclosable Pecuniary Interests in item 13 as Directors of Shropshire Fire Risk Management Services Ltd.

They had been granted a dispensation by the Fire Authority to take part in the discussion of, and voting on, certain matters which relate to Shropshire Fire Risk Management Services Ltd and were able to remain in the meeting for item 13 as it was the agreement of minutes and did not require discussion.

Councillors Dee and Pardy declared an interest in item 8 as they are members of, or are in receipt of a pension from, the Firefighters Pension Schemes. They undertook to leave the meeting for item 8.

### 3 Public Questions

None

### 4 Non-Exempt Minutes

**Resolved** that the non-exempt minutes of the Fire Authority meeting, held on 14 February 2018, be agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record

### 5 Strategy and Resources Committee Minutes

**Resolved** that the Fire Authority note the minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting, held on 15 March 2018.

### 6 Fire Authority Work Plan 2018/19

This report reviewed progress against the Fire Authority's 2017/18 Work Plan and put forward a 2018/19 Work Plan for consideration and approval by Members.

**Resolved** that Members

- a) Note progress made against the Fire Authority 2017/18 Work Plan, as detailed at paragraph 4 of the report; and
- b) Approve the 2018/19 Work Plan (attached at the appendix to the report) without amendment.

### 7 Financial Performance to March 2018 and Review of Reserves

This report provided information on the financial performance of the Service, and sought approval for action, where necessary.

The HoF presented the report and talked through the variances as set out on page 2 of the report. The total underspend is £76k for the year. Officers will continue to monitor this going forward and will bring any further variances to the Fire Authority for approval

Members queried the overspend on vehicle parts which is attributable to the trend for 'more complex but less durable' parts. Members asked for further detail on the parts which the HoF was unable to provide at the meeting but undertook to provide if necessary.

The HoF then talked through the review of the reserves and the proposed changes following this. The HoF reported that the reasons for holding the reserves are valid but the level of reserves held needed to be addressed due to the Telford Central project. The HoF outlined the following notable changes to the names and levels of reserves:

- The Unearmarked Capital Reserve will become the Major Projects Capital Reserve;

- The Service Transformation Programme (STP) Staff Reserve will become the Staff Reserve;
- The Income Volatility Reserve will be reduced by £900k, as a result of its limited use;
- The Pension Liabilities Reserve will be reduced by £700k due to low levels of ill health retirement in the Service;
- The Staff Reserve will be increased by £250k;
- The Operational Equipment Reserve will also be increased by £300k;
- £1.1million will be diverted to the Major Projects Reserve for use on the Telford Central Project; and
- Further work will be undertaken on the General Reserve in conjunction with the Authority's Risk Register to assess the levels that are held within this reserve.

The DPCC commented that the changing the name of the STP Staff Reserve may leave the Service in a vulnerable position. The CFO assured the group that the reserve is still linked to the STP Project and the HoF further explained that officers are comfortable with the changes to the reserve as officers can justify the reasoning behind them, but it was agreed there was merit in reconsidering the name.

The Chair commented that it made sense to change to the Major Projects Reserve as outlined by the HoF and highlighted the collaboration that was being undertaken with West Mercia Police in relation to the Telford Central Project.

The Chair also thanked the HoF and the Finance team for their work and for the information provided in the report.

**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 review on reserves;
- d) Approve movements between reserves where indicated; and
- e) Note performance against prudential indicators to date in 2017/18.

Councillor Dee and Pardy left the meeting at this point (2.28 pm)

## 8 Firefighters' Pension Scheme Delegations

This report resulted from a routine review of the discretionary powers of the Fire Authority under the Firefighters' Pension Scheme 2015. It put forward a recommendation to adopt a voluntary policy in relation to Scheme Pays to reflect current context and activity in this area.

The HHRA presented this report and explained that it concerns the discretionary powers of the Fire Authority and that there were no proposed changes to existing discretions. The HHRA then talked through the issues of Mandatory and Voluntary Scheme Pays (VSPs) and the proposed policy in relation to these, which was set out in Appendix B to the report.

Members asked how many employees would be affected by the introduction of VSPs. The SPO advised that it was not a great number and it would be more likely to affect members of 1992 Pension Scheme due to double accrual.

Some Members felt that they had a lack of understanding in relation to the issue and asked for further clarification. The SPO explained that Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) set a limit to the amount that can be built up in a pension scheme over a year, before the individual concerned is required to pay a tax charge. In cases where the Scheme Member is not eligible for Mandatory Scheme Pays, then the Scheme provider, in this instance the Fire Authority, can pay the tax bill under VSP. The introduction of VSPs to Fire Pension Schemes is due to firefighters being able to be members of two fire pension schemes.

**Resolved** that the Fire Authority

- a) Note the review of the Delegation of Powers under the Firefighters' Pension Scheme 2015 (as set out in Appendix A to the report) of which items 1 – 51 remain unchanged; and
- b) Approve the proposed policy at item 52 regarding Voluntary Scheme Pays as detailed within the report and summarised in Appendix B.

Councillors Dee and Pardy returned to the meeting at this point (2.42 pm)

## **9 Annual Plan 2018/19**

This report presented the new Annual Plan for 2018/19.

**Resolved** that the Fire Authority note the Annual Plan 2018/19.

## **10 Integrated Risk Management Planning**

### **10a IRMP 1 – 4 Watch Optimum Crewing System**

The purpose of this report was to provide Members with a 12 month update of the 4 Watch Optimum Crewing System (4WOCS), introduced as the new Wholetime shift system in January 2017.

The DCFO presented the report and talked through the conclusions that had been drawn from the initial 12 months of the Project. The DCFO particularly highlighted how well the staff and the Fire Brigade Union (FBU) had worked with the Service in relation to the changes. This was echoed by Members who congratulated the workforce for what they had achieved.

In relation to the development of the software to facilitate the change in shift pattern, Members asked if the Service were able to sell this to other fire and rescue services. The DCFO explained that the significant adaptations to the software to deliver 4WOCs had been done by Fire Service Rota, which is the company that own the software package. The Service, therefore, do not have the intellectual property rights.

Members sought reassurance from officers that the workforce are happy with the 4WOCs system. The DCFO explained that system refinements had been needed in the first couple of quarters with issues being fed in from staff and worked through. There have been some employee concerns over flexibility and the ability to plan work patterns but overall the staff are as happy with the 4WOCs system as the previous 2-2-4 shift system.

The CFO thanked Members for their comments regarding the co-operation of employees and the FBU. The CFO explained that this had been the biggest change to the wholetime system since 1979, when the 2-2-4 shift system was introduced. The Service opted for a 'design and build' solution to the changes, which had led to a tough, but productive, year. It had only been possible on account of having an engaged and positive workforce and effective industrial relations.

The DPCC asked if there had been any noticeable impact on sickness levels within the Wholetime crews. The DCFO responded that any patterns related to sickness will become more obvious in the next monitoring report.

The Chair commended the FBU for their co-operation which had been very helpful and commented that the report provides proof that the Service can make necessary savings, whilst protecting livelihoods and benefits for its employees. In addition, proof of the success of the change to the shift system is that other fire and rescue services have expressed an interest in its use.

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

## **10b IRMP 2 – Fire Control**

This report was provided to formally recognise the conclusion of the twelve month trial of Self-Rostering in Fire Control and provided data, commentary and conclusions on the performance of the trial.

The DCFO presented the report and talked through the findings set out in it. This system has had a 12 month pilot and, as can be seen in the Appendix to the report, performance results improved after a challenging start, particularly in Quarter 4. Following various issues with the Self-Rostering System, the Fire Authority agreed in December 2017 that a 12 month trial of a Flexible Rostering System could be undertaken from 1 January 2018. This report will act as a record for comparison of the different shift systems

Members felt that the report bore out the comments that had already been made about the Fire Authority's collaboration with FBU. The uniqueness of this fire authority does not stop there with all parts working together as one, which is something that may be lost in future.

Members requested clarification of the issues around FBU representation within Fire Control. The DCFO explained that the number of Fire Control staff not represented by the FBU had been edging to the majority but this has now changed due to staffing changes. In addition, a review of how all staff could give their representations has been undertaken.

Members also sought reassurance that the IRMP Projects will achieve the predicted £700k reduction. The DCFO explained that the Service is likely to achieve savings of £400k from IRMP 1 and congratulated officers and FBU on this. The aim of phase 1 of the Fire Control Project is to build resilience, which should allow savings to be gained from phases 2 and 3.

Several Members raised concerns about the possibility of Fire Control not being based in Shropshire and the possible loss of local knowledge. The CFO commented that it would be wrong to prejudge what changes may occur in the future. A project will be undertaken to look at mobilising over the West Mercia area. With regard to local knowledge, the CFO expressed the view that this argument can be overstated. At present, local knowledge is held by RDS staff, harvested and fed into the mobilising system. The capture of this information is, however, something that needs to be worked on in future.

The CFO also commented that there is a concern that, by allowing a further rostering system, a difficult decision with regard to Fire Control may have only been deferred. The concerns of the employees involved have been responded to but it is possible that Fire Control will continue to have the same problems as before.

The Chair thanked Members for their comments on the IRMP Projects and thanked the DCFO and the team for their work on the development and implementation of the changes.

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

## **11 Scheme for Payment of Members' Allowances**

This report was deferred.

## **12 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 3 and 5 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

The meeting took a short break at this point (3.30 pm) and reconvened at 3.40 pm.

**13 Exempt Minutes (Paragraph 3)**

**Resolved** that the exempt minutes of the Fire Authority meeting, held on 14 February 2018, be agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

**14 Home Secretary Decision on Governance Change (Paragraph 5)**

The Fire Authority was given an update on the impact of the decision made by the Home Secretary and were briefed on what preparations have been put in place for the change in governance. Members were also provided with an up-to-date understanding of mechanisms to challenge the decision.

**Resolved unanimously** that a letter be sent to the Home Secretary from the Chair of the Fire Authority, seeking an urgent response to the joint letter that was sent on 17 April 2018. The Authority agreed that the letter should include a 7 day deadline for response and an indication of what action will be taken if no response is received.

The meeting closed at 4.05 pm.

**Chair**.....

**Date**.....