

**Non-exempt Minutes of the Meeting of  
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority  
Strategy and Resources Committee  
held at Headquarters, Shrewsbury  
on Thursday, 19 May 2011 at 2.00 pm**

**Present**

**Members**

Councillors Hartin (Chair), Hurst-Knight, Picken and Roberts

**Officers**

Chief Fire Officer, Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Corporate, Performance and Operations), Treasurer, Principal Accountant, Planning and Performance Manager and Management Support Officer

**1 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Mrs Barrow, Minnery and West.

**2 Declarations of Interest**

The Chair reminded Members that they should declare any personal and/or prejudicial interests at this point and that they should leave the meeting room before any item, in which they had a prejudicial interest, was discussed.

Councillors Hartin, Hurst-Knight and Roberts declared a personal interest in Item 10 – Information and Communications Technology Strategy Update, as it referred to a contract with Shropshire Council, of which they are Members.

**3 Minutes**

Members received the minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting, held on 17 March 2011.

It was proposed by Councillor Picken, seconded by Councillor Hurst-Knight, and

**Resolved** that the minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting, held on 17 March 2011, be agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record

## 4 Public Questions

No questions, statements or petitions had been received from members of the public.

## 5 Strategy and Resources Committee Terms of Reference

This report proposed amendments to the Terms of Reference of the Strategy and Resources Committee, following the annual review conducted by officers.

It was proposed by Councillor Hurst-Knight, seconded by Councillor Roberts, and

**Resolved** that the Committee agree the amendments to its Terms of Reference set out at section 4 of the report, and recommend these changes to the Fire Authority for agreement

## 6 Role Descriptions

This report asked Members to review the existing Role Descriptions for the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Strategy and Resources Committee and to make recommendations regarding any amendments required to the Fire Authority.

Members having reviewed the role description for the Chair of the Strategy and Resources Committee, attached at Appendix A to the report; and that for the Vice-Chair of the Committee, attached at Appendix B,

it was proposed by Councillor Roberts, seconded by Councillor Hurst-Knight, and

**Resolved** that the Committee recommend the amendments set out in section 4 of the report to the Fire Authority for agreement

## 7 Integrated Strategic Planning Process 2012/13 and the Medium Term Corporate Plan

This report outlined how the Service will continue to align service, financial and improvement planning, the result of which will culminate in the 2012/13 budget, Medium Term Corporate Plan (MTCP) and the publication, in April 2012, of the 2012/13 annual one-year Service Plan.

The Treasurer drew the Committee's attention to paragraph 5 of the report, which sets out the key issues facing the Fire Authority that may affect the budget and which should be considered prior to beginning the budget setting process for 2012/13.

The Treasurer also referred the Committee to the section of Appendix A to the report, which detailed budgeted income. The Treasurer explained that the figures for Grant and Council Tax income are assumptions and that there is scope to adjust these figures.

Councillor Hartin asked if there had been any indication from Government regarding possible pay increases. The Chief Fire Officer (CFO) explained that the Local Government Employers (LGE) had been in contact with Services to initiate discussions regarding these. The discussions currently centre on possible pay rises in 2013/14 and related changes to terms and conditions.

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

**Resolved** that the Committee:

- a) Task the Strategic Risk and Planning Working Group to review the key issues for the 2012/13 planning process; and
- b) Recommend the Strategic Planning timetable, set out in Appendix B to the report, to the Fire Authority

## **8 Proposed Integrated Risk Management Plan / Public Value Staff Consultation Programme 2011**

This report set out proposals for a Member-led staff consultation programme during 2011, intended to address a review of the current Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) together with an update on the Public Value Review 2010.

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO) drew the Committee's attention to paragraph 4 of the report, which set out the aims of the consultation and the proposed consultation programme. The ACFO then ran through the draft consultation presentation. A brief summary of the more significant points raised by Members in relation to this is given below.

Councillor Hartin asked who would present the introductory section of the presentation, which sets out the current national economic situation. The ACFO explained that it is intended that each consultation session will be facilitated by a Member, an executive officer and a middle manager. The introduction will be presented by the executive officer to try to avoid political bias. The Member will present the section on Public Value. The section relating to budget will be presented by the executive officer and the IRMP section will be presented by the middle manager. It is estimated that the first three sections of the presentation should take 30 – 40 minutes to present and that the IRMP section should take 30 minutes.

Councillor Roberts referred to the point in the presentation that mentioned the creation of a 'specialist station' and asked for an explanation of this. The ACFO explained that during the 2010 Public Value Review staff had suggested a number of options to crew the Service's Aerial Ladder Platforms (ALPs). One proposal involved pooling all of the Service's specialist appliances (e.g. boat, rescue tender, ALPs etc) at one fire station and creating a station of 'specialist technicians', as opposed to 'firefighters'. There are advantages and disadvantages to this proposal but it is worthy of examination hence why it has been included in the presentation.

Councillor Picken asked about the equipment provided under New Dimensions, which the Government would now like to pass over to fire and rescue services. The CFO explained that the intention is still for these to be passed over to the Service but the proposed agreements for this still do not allow the fire and rescue service to opt out of the contract, if it wished to do so. The issue is, therefore, in abeyance for the time being with six other fire and rescue services maintaining the same position.

With regard to the IRMP section of the presentation, the ACFO explained that stations will be asked, in advance, to look at their identified 7(ii)d risks and review and / update them as appropriate and identify any emerging risks within their areas. The station / department will then be asked to present details on how it meets each of the four aims on the Service Plan.

Councillor Hartin asked about partner agency involvement in the process, as had happened in previous years. The ACFO explained that no public consultation sessions were, at this stage, planned as there are currently no proposed changes to the IRMP. Councillor Hartin expressed concern about this, especially with regard to keeping the public informed of changes. The CFO explained that if there is an impact on a particular area, then the Service will talk to those concerned.

The CFO also explained that he is to write to local Members of Parliament and local authorities to set out what Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service is currently doing and also to indicate that the CFO is available to speak to Local Joint Committees (LJCs), if necessary. The LJCs have been informed of the Public Value outcomes over the last six months, so this would be an appropriate method of updating on any changes. It is possible that a wide scale public consultation will be undertaken next year, if significant changes to the Service are proposed due to budget cuts.

The ACFO drew the Committee's attention to the legal comment contained in the report, which sets out possible future changes to IRMPs as a result of a new National Framework, which it is anticipated will be issued in 2012. The ACFO also said that the presentation, which the Committee had received that day, was currently draft and would be brought to the STRaP meeting in early June for further consideration.

The Committee having received a presentation intended to give structure to the recommended consultation sessions,

it was proposed by Councillor Roberts, seconded by Councillor Hartin, and

**Resolved** that the Committee agree the proposed approach to the Member led IRMP / Public Value staff consultation programme for 2011, as set out in the report

## 9 Exemption from Standing Orders

Standing Orders relating to contracts require that exemptions granted from the requirement to obtain tenders for contracts must be reported to a meeting of the Authority or relevant committee.

After consulting the Chair of the Authority and the Treasurer, the Chief Fire Officer has agreed a request for an exemption to the requirement to obtain competitive tenders for the replacement of three, four-wheel-drive incident support vehicles, as provided in the capital programme, plus an additional fourth vehicle to provide poor weather resilience and reserve and additional boat-towing capability.

The request was considered reasonable, as the required specifications meant that the Brigade was unable to identify sufficient suppliers to carry out a full tender exercise. However, competitive quotations have been obtained and the award will be to the lowest cost provider.

Four vehicles are being purchased, although the capital budget provided for three. The additional cost of £2,900 is being met from under-spending on other capital schemes

Councillor Hartin asked for confirmation that the Service was still to purchase Toyota Hilux vehicles. The CFO confirmed that this was correct and that these vehicles had been chosen for their durability and functionality. There was also the added benefit that one supplier would be able to provide and maintain all of the additional equipment needed for the vehicles.

**Resolved** that the Committee note the contents of the verbal update

## **10 Information and Communications Technology Strategy Update**

Following Fire Authority approval to the establishment of an Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Improvements reserve budget, officers, with Member endorsement, are to commence formal dialogue with Shropshire Council to explore a shared-services arrangement for the provision of certain elements of the Service's ICT network / infrastructure.

To date, this has involved commissioning an improved data link between Shirehall and the new Fire Station / Headquarters building and undertaking on-site ICT infrastructure surveys at the existing Headquarters to scope out areas of opportunity for shared services. The results of the surveys will be incorporated within the ICT Business Case to be brought before the Authority in June 2011 for consideration.

The ACFO reported that the Business Case may be brought to the July, rather than the June, meeting of the Fire Authority.

**Resolved** that the Committee note the contents of the verbal update

## **11 Capital Update on Activity and Finance**

This report provided an overview of all the capital schemes within the Brigade and their current status. The report also showed which schemes are to be carried over from 2010/11 into 2011/12, and listed the schemes planned for 2011/12.

The Planning and Performance Manager reported that with regard to the Minsterley refurbishment scheme, the fire station is due to be accepted this week.

The Principal Accountant reported that the figure for the 2010/11 spend on Building Improvements was actually £31,000, not £18,629, as detailed in the appendix to the report. The discrepancy was due to a large payment being identified after the appendix was compiled. This will result in a corresponding reduction in estimated spend in the current financial year.

Certain elements of the appendix to this report were considered in the closed part of the meeting, as they were exempt from publication under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

**Resolved** that the Committee note the progress so far on current schemes

## 12 Corporate Risk Management Summary

This was the latest of the regular Risk Summary Reports to the Strategy and Resources Committee. As previously, these reports are intended to enable Members to meet the requirements of this Committee's Terms of Reference as they relate to the Fire Authority's management of corporate risk. The progress reported relates to that achieved since the last Summary Report, received by this Committee at its meeting on 20 January 2011.

The Treasurer highlighted the significant risks as set out on pages 7 – 11 of the report. With regard to Risk ID 17 on page 7 of the report, the Treasurer explained that the issue of Part-time Workers Regulations in relation to pension is still outstanding but there should be sufficient funds in the reserve to cover any costs.

Councillor Hartin asked whose responsibility it is to inform the Authority of the decision regarding this. The Treasurer explained that negotiations are currently ongoing between the Unions, the Treasury and Communities and Local Government and that the Government will advise of the outcomes of these negotiations. This Authority is deemed to be vulnerable, because of the high proportion of eligible staff that it has. The CFO further explained that all but two fire and rescue services are affected by this issue. Concern about it has been raised through various forums. It should be noted, however, that the fire and rescue service representatives in the negotiations have been selected from the Fire Forum and are not necessarily the Services, which would be worst affected by the outcome.

With regard to Risk ID 66, the CFO reported that there are significant risks related to the running costs of the contracts that were established by the FireLink project. The Airwave contract, which charges for radio usage, is of particular concern, as a dry summer could have serious implications with regard to radio usage. The CFO is currently pushing for the contract to be renegotiated but there appears to be no pressure from other fire and rescue authorities. Councillor Hartin asked that Members be kept updated on this issue. The CFO undertook to do this via exception reporting to the Fire Authority.

The Treasurer reported that Risk ID 78 has been partly addressed through the establishment of the ICT Reserve.

**Resolved** that the Committee note the contents of the report

**13 Local Government Act 1972**

**Resolved** that, under section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting 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 3 and 4

**14 Capital Update on Activity and Finance (Paragraph 3)**

The Committee received the second part of the Appendix to Report 11 – Capital Update on Activity and Finance, which contained exempt information.

**Resolved** that the Committee note the Appendix to Report 11 – Capital Update on Activity and Finance

**15 Corporate Risk Management Summary – Exempt Information (Paragraphs 3 and 4)**

The Committee had received an open session report, which summarised its current exposure to corporate risk. This report supplemented that one, as it contained information that is exempt from publication by virtue of the Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A.

**Resolved** that the Committee note the contents of this report, in conjunction with the Corporate Risk Management Summary discussed in open session (Item 10)

The meeting closed at 3.10 pm.

**Chair**.....

**Date**.....