

**Minutes of the Meeting of
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority
Strategy and Resources Committee
held at Brigade Headquarters, Shrewsbury,
on Thursday, 25 May 2006 at 2.00 pm**

PRESENT: Councillors Box, Hartin (Chair), Holyoak, Morgan (Vice-Chair) and West.

Councillor Morgan took the chair for items 1 to 5.

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Hussey and Minnery.

2 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3 Minutes

Resolved: *that the minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting, held on 13 March 2006, 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 Service and Budget Planning 2007/08 – 2009/10

The Committee had before them a report bringing together the issues, which needed to be addressed in order to produce a recommended service and budget planning process to the Fire Authority at its meeting on 19 July. A revised Appendix to the report was circulated to Members at the meeting (a copy of which is attached to the signed minutes).

Members were informed that it was important to demonstrate that there were established links with the Fire Authority's strategy and that financial considerations were being taken into account in all aspects of the Authority's work. Attention was drawn to the procedures for the budget process set out in paragraph 4 of the report.

In response to questions from Members, it was reported that an assumption was being made that the Key Lines of Enquiry would remain as set out in the Audit Commission's consultation. There may, however, be changes relating to value for money issues.

With regard to capital projects, Members had not formally considered individually full details of the project appraisals for all of the schemes in the capital programme.



The level of provision for pay and price increases over the next three years was based on a consensus identified with a number of other authorities. It was necessary for Members to judge what level of inflation should be incorporated into the budget, taking into account the implications for reserves and balances.

Resolved: *that approval be given to the budget and service plan process, as outlined in paragraph 4 of the report, and integrating the budget timetable, as shown in the revised Appendix circulated at the meeting.*

Councillor Hartin took the chair for the remainder of the meeting.

6 Medium Term Financial Plan 2006/07 – 2008/09

This report informed the Committee of the latest developments in producing the Medium Term Financial Plan and on examining available financial benchmarking information.

The Chief Fire Officer and Treasurer gave a presentation on the progress made in developing the Medium Term Financial Plan and a copy of their presentation slides is attached to the signed minutes.

The Strategic Aims and Objectives would form the basis of the Authority's expenditure.

Members were reminded of the effects of the Finance Settlements for 2006/07 and 2007/08, and were shown how grants and expenditure compared with other authorities in the country.

It was reported that any underspendings were transferred into capital reserves. This enabled small schemes in the three-year capital programme to be financed without recourse to borrowing. There was also a need to take into account the costs, which would be incurred, if it was decided that the Fire Authority's headquarters should be relocated, and if it was determined that any fire stations should be transferred to a more appropriate location. The development of an indicative ten-year capital programme would bring large-scale projects into consideration and would assist in making an assessment of whether the level of capital reserves was appropriate.

Members were informed that a Value for Money Strategy was being prepared, and they were reminded that the Strategy and Resources Committee had been requested to follow up any potential opportunities for service improvement.

In comparison with other authorities employee costs were low, but training, transport, services and other expenses were high, because a relatively large number of stations and appliances were required to cover a large, sparsely populated area. Costs would need to be examined in detail and best practice elsewhere taken into account in an attempt to seek efficiency savings. Consideration would also need to be given as to where fire stations should be located.

Resolved: *that*

- a) *The current background to, and purpose of, the Medium Term Financial Plan be noted;*
- b) *The approach to examining the comparative statistics for expenditure be noted;*
and



- c) *The CIPFA benchmarking and consideration of best practice be highlighted in the Medium Term Financial Plan, but that more detailed analysis be reported separately to the Fire Authority and Strategy and Resources Committee.*

7 Performance Plan 2006-08

Members had before them a report advising of the progress made on the Performance Plan 2006-08 and were reminded that the Strategy and Resources Committee had been given delegated responsibility to oversee the Plan's development. Appendix D had been amended after the Plan had been posted to Members and the revised version was circulated at the meeting (a copy of which is attached to the signed minutes).

It was recommended that an amendment be made to Strategic Aim 1, Corporate Objective 2, as the Fire Brigade, acting on its own, could not reduce the incidence of road traffic collisions. The amendment should reflect the Fire Service's contribution to achieving this national priority.

The elements of the Direction of Travel, as set out in Appendix B, were endorsed by Members.

Members were of the view that realistic targets should be set, as failure to achieve targets may adversely affect funding available. BVPI 143 set a target of no deaths arising from accidental fires, but there had already been one death in the current year. The average number of deaths in accidental deaths over the last five years had been two. The Fire Authority should be recommended to consider this issue when it received the Plan at its next meeting.

The Authority should also be recommended to change the target for ill-health retirements (BVPI 15) to reflect that provision had been made in the budget for such retirements.

Concern was expressed that the target for paying undisputed invoices was very tight, as it would only need three invoices to be late to miss the target. It was suggested that consideration be given as to whether there was scope for some small payments to be made electronically.

Members were of the view that a higher target should be set for the percentage of the top 5% of earners that were women (BVPI 11). It was reported that achieving this would be dependent on staff turnover. It was agreed that the Fire Authority be recommended to revise the target for 2007/08 and 2008/09 from 5.5% to 11%.

In relation to BVPI 210 it was reported that the Brigade was seeking to recruit women as part of the ongoing review of the Retained Service.

Resolved: that

- a) *The draft targets set out in the revised Appendix D circulated at the meeting be approved subject to:*
- *A realistic target being set for the number of deaths from accidental fires in dwellings - BVPI 143 (i)*
 - *The target for ill-health retirements being revised to reflect the provision made in the budget for such retirements - BVPI 15 (ii).*



- *The target for the percentage of the top 5% of earners that are women being increased from 5.5% to 11% in 2007/08 and 2008/09 - BVPI 11(i).*
- b) *The elements of the proposed Direction of Travel set out in Appendix B be endorsed.*
- c) *It be recommended to the Fire Authority that Strategic Aim 1, Corporate Objective 2 be amended to read:*

“Contribute to the reduction of Road Traffic Collisions”.

8 Response to Audit Commission Performance Framework 2006/07

This report outlined Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority’s proposed response to the Audit Commission’s consultation questions contained within the Fire and Rescue Performance Framework 2006/07 consultation document.

Resolved: *that approval be given to the response on behalf of the Fire Authority to the consultation questions.*

9 Statement on Internal Control

The Committee had before them a report setting out the draft Statement on Internal Control to be included in the Fire Authority’s Final Accounts for 2005/06.

Members were informed that:

In Paragraph 1 “2004/05” should be amended to “2005/06”;
 In Appendix A under The Purpose of the System of Internal Control “31 March 2005” should be amended to “31 March 2006”;
 In Appendix A under “Audits completed by Internal Audit during 2005/06 related to:” “Formula Spending Spare...” should be amended to “Formula Spending Share...”.

Members discussed whether the consultations with stakeholders on the Corporate Aims and Objectives should ask specifically whether stakeholders were satisfied with the overall Aims and Objectives. It was agreed that this question should not be included, as it was covered by other elements of the consultation process.

Resolved: *that approval be given for the draft Statement on Internal Control 2005/06 and SIC Improvement Plan 2006/07 to be forwarded for agreement and signature at the meeting of the Fire Authority in June.*

10 Corporate Risk Management Summary

Members received a report in accordance with the requirements of the Committee’s Terms of Reference as they related to the Fire Authority’s management of corporate risk.

Resolved: *that*

- a) *The contents of the report be noted;*
- b) *The requirement for limited information to be exempted from publication be noted;*



- c) *The content and format of future versions of the report be based on the report presented to the meeting;*
- d) *A risk score of 1 be used for the Fire Authority’s “Risk Acceptance Level”;*
- e) *A risk score of 5 be used for the Fire Authority’s “Risk Tolerance Level”;*
- f) *Brief information be provided for Members on low level risks and that detailed reports be provided on risks assessed to be in the upper quartile; and*
- g) *An annual report be presented to the Fire Authority in July, setting out information on entries in the Corporate Risk Register, as set out in the Appendix.*

11 Local Government Act 1972

Resolved: *that in accordance with section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act the public be excluded from the meeting for the consideration of item 12 on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by the provisions of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Act, by virtue of paragraphs 3 and 4.*

**12 Corporate Risk Management – Exempted Information
(Paragraphs 3 and 4)**

Members had before them a report supplementing the Corporate Risk Management Summary, which summarised the Fire Authority’s exposure to corporate risk.

Resolved: *that the contents of the report be noted in conjunction with the report on the Corporate Risk Management Summary.*

The meeting closed at 4.20 pm.

CHAIR:.....

DATE:.....

