

Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Authority

10.30 am Friday 18 December 2009

Headquarters, 2 Kings Court, Charles Hastings Way,
Worcester, WR5 1JR



Present:

Herefordshire:

Mrs P A Andrews, Mr J H R Goodwin, Mr D Greenow,
Brigadier P Jones CBE (Chair), Mr D C Taylor, Mr P J Watts.

Worcestershire:

Mr T J Bean, Mr J Champion, Mr S J Clee (Vice Chair), Mr A Ditta,
Mrs M L Drinkwater, Mrs L Eyre, Mr A I Hardman, Mrs G Hopkins,
Mrs F Oborski, Mrs J Potter, Mr D W Prodger MBE, Mr T Spencer,
Mr J Thomas, Mr R M Udall, Mr G C Yarranton.

28. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Mrs L Duffy, Mrs L Hodgson, Mr C T Smith and Mr K Taylor.

29. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Mr T Spencer declared a personal interest in the Young Firefighters' Association and Mr P Watts advised the Authority that if the Firefighters' Pension Scheme was discussed in such detail that it affected his personal position, he would declare a personal and prejudicial interest. (That proving not to be the case, there was no need for Mr Watts to leave the room during the Meeting.)

30. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

30.1 The Chairman introduced Ms. Anne Brown to the Authority; Ms. Brown was the Interim Head of Law and Governance with Herefordshire Council and was leading for the Clerk on Authority business.

30.2 The Chairman reminded Members of the Annual Carol Service for Friends and Family of the Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service, which was to take place in Leominster Priory on Sunday 20 December 2009.

30.3 The Chairman told Members that a display of the Service's new Breathing Apparatus and the Combined Aerial Rescue Pump had been arranged for them.

30.4 The Chairman noted the changed layout of the conference suites for the Authority meeting, and said any matters concerning this would be discussed at the next Group Leaders meeting.

30.5 The Chairman told Members that the Chief Fire Officer would be retiring in 2010 and, pending the appointment of his successor, Members should ensure they observe the Authority's Code of Conduct in relation to this matter.

31. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

Resolved that the Minutes of the meeting held on 14 September 2009 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

32. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

None

33. SERVICE REPORT

The Chief Fire Officer reported on key developments and activities, together with performance information for the period 1 July 2009 to 30 September 2009.

The meeting considered the issues arising from the delays to the Regional Control Centre programme, and the CFO said there would be an update on this matter for the February Meeting of the Authority.

The CFO introduced WM Simon Cusack who made a short presentation on his experiences training firefighters in India to respond to RTC incidents. The meeting congratulated WM Cusack and it was agreed that The Department for International Development should be informed of the Authority's involvement in this International Conference and the training inputs provided by the Service.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

34. FINANCIAL PROSPECTS AND FUTURE PLANNING

The Treasurer informed Members of future financial prospects and that budget proposals would be drafted in January 2010 for the Authority to set the Council Tax Precept at its next meeting on 17 February 2010.

RESOLVED that the current revenue expenditure and resource projections be noted.

35. IRMP 2009/10 IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE

The DCFO presented a progress report on the implementation of the management efficiencies resulting from the IRMP 2009/10. She emphasised the improved business practices which had seen significant improvements in performance despite the reduction in the establishment by 12 posts from 1 April 2009.

A full year review would be provided at a future Meeting.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

36. IRMP CONSULTATION AND APPROVAL OF ANNUAL ACTION PLAN 2010/11

The DCFO outlined to the Authority details of the consultation process for the 2010/11 IRMP Action Plan and gave a summary of the key themes from feedback received. Having regard to the consultation, the draft 2010/11 IRMP Action Plan was amended following public consultation and approval was sought for the amended Plan and recommendations.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) *the consultation report be noted; and***
- (ii) *the 2010/11 IRMP Action Plan be approved, namely that:***
 - (a) *during 2010/11 we will review our revised management arrangements at our day crewed stations;***
 - (b) *further develop local risk profiles to include an assessment of high level salvage risks associated with Heritage Sites;***
 - (c) *further develop local risk profiles to include an assessment of potential risk to the environment;***
 - (d) *we will further develop interoperability arrangements with Gloucestershire, South Wales and Mid and West Wales;***
 - (e) *we will provide an optimum level of flood/water first responder cover, requiring back office efficiencies of £36,000 p.a.; and***
 - (f) *we will establish a centre based around the USAR team to co-ordinate and manage the specialist Technical Rescue functions within the Service.***

37. WARWICKSHIRE FRS IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The CFO told the meeting that the draft Warwickshire IRMP consultation document included proposals which were of concern to this Authority which included:

- The reduction in the number of stations from 19 stations to 12 stations and the number of fire appliances from 26 down to 19 with the addition of 2 small rapid response RTC units.
- The stations at Bidford and Studley, based in south west Warwickshire along the border of Hereford and Worcester, were two of the stations planned for closure with the loss of 2 appliances.

The CFO outlined the potential impact of these reductions on communities in Hereford and Worcester, and he told the Meeting that the Authority had formally responded to the Warwickshire Improvement Plan consultation and raised significant concerns about their proposals to reduce operational resources.

Members expressed concern at the failure by Warwickshire to consult with neighbouring Authorities before publishing their draft plan and the meeting agreed with the CFO's assessment of the potential impact of the Warwickshire plan on the communities of Herefordshire and Worcestershire.

RESOLVED that:

- i) the content of the report be noted;**
- ii) the Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive continues to engage with colleagues in Warwickshire to monitor progress in relation to their plans;**
- iii) the Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive and senior management team draw up contingency plans to ensure that communities in Herefordshire and Worcestershire are not adversely affected by Warwickshire's plan; and**
- iv) the Authority reviews its position once finalised proposals are made by Warwickshire.**

38. TRANSFER OF OWNERSHIP OF NEW DIMENSION ASSETS

The ACFO Service Support explained that the New Dimension project had been a collaboration between Communities and Local Government (CLG), the Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) and the Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA). The project had enhanced the ability of the FRS to respond to major disruptive events involving Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear materials, collapsed or unstable structures, and the displacement of large volumes of water.

The assets currently held by the Service referred to within this paper included the following vehicles and associated equipment:

- 2 x Mass Decontamination Vehicles (Incident Response Units at Droitwich and Hereford))
- 1 x Enhanced Briefing Facility (at Droitwich)
- 4 x Urban Search and Rescue Modules (crewed by the USAR team at Droitwich)
- 1 x Canine Search team (dog and handler)
- Associated USAR training equipment and consumables
- 2 x High Volume Pumps (crewed by firefighters at Kidderminster)
- 1 x Enhanced Command Unit (awaiting delivery – based at Leominster)

As the delivery of the project had drawn to an end, CLG had been increasingly focussed on the long-term management plans for New Dimension, to ensure the new capabilities were fully integrated into FRS core business and that standards were maintained to guarantee national interoperability over the life of the equipment.

Long term arrangements focussed on four areas:

- Physical maintenance of the vehicles and kit;
- Assurance that the capabilities continued to be fit for purpose;
- Funding for the above and the focus for the recommendation; and
- The transfer of the assets from CLG to Fire and Rescue Authorities.

RESOLVED that the Fire Authority sign-up to the agreement that will see the Authority accepting the transfer of ownership of New Dimensions Assets currently held.

39. STRATEGIC RISK REGISTER

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer informed the meeting that overall responsibility for ensuring risks were managed effectively lay with the Authority as advised by the Service. The live Strategic Risk Register outlined to Members the risk scoring for both likelihood and impact and any significant changes to the Register were brought to the attention of the Authority.

A number of changes were recommended to the document to reflect a National, Regional and Local perspective. Both Members and Officers recommended that the Register continued to be split into Strategic, Operational, Regulatory, Financial and Reputational risks. A new risk category has been added this year to take account of Environmental risk.

RESOLVED that the revised Strategic Risk Register be approved.

40. THE CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer presented the Code which had been reviewed by Senior Officers of the Authority and updated to be aligned with the latest recommendations of good practice.

RESOLVED that the updated Code of Corporate Governance be adopted.

41. PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT 2008 – 09

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer updated Members on the results of the 2008/9 Organisational Assessment for Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Authority (FRA).

The Audit Commission had reported that the FRA performed well and scored 3 out of 4 for its Organisational Assessment. The Meeting complimented the Officers and staff on the results achieved.

RESOLVED that the 2008/09 Organisational Assessment results be noted.

42. THE REVIEW OF THE WATER RESCUE STRATEGY BY THE BEST VALUE, POLICY AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE

Cllr. Mary Drinkwater, Chair of the Best Value, Policy and Performance Committee presented the Report which was the Committee's response to the Authority's request that the Water Rescue Strategy adopted by the Authority on the 26 June 2009 be reviewed.

The Committee held a number of special meetings, including a briefing from Officers, a visit to a current water rescue station to speak to front-line staff and an invitation to all representative bodies to meet with the Committee so that they could seek their views and input.

Following the initial “desk top” review of documentation, which included an evaluation of the arrangements and resources currently provided within other Authorities as declared to the DEFRA National Flood Rescue Asset Database, it was decided that there would be little value in visiting an external Service. The Committee therefore agreed to amend its initial Terms of Reference in this respect.

Having considered carefully all of the evidence available, the Committee grouped the issues into three areas of interest, roles and responsibilities:

- (i) current guidance,
- (ii) training and equipment for flood response, and
- (iii) the financial impact of a specialist flood response capability on Council tax.

The Committee Chair thanked the Chief Fire Officer and his staff, as well as the Members of the Committee for all their hard work in the Review, and recommended it to the Authority.

RESOLVED that:

- i) the Review of the Water Rescue Strategy be noted;***
- ii) a further review be conducted once the outcomes of the current National Flood Rescue Enhancement programme are known; and***
- iii) a letter be sent on behalf of the Authority to the Ministers for Communities and Local Government and for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, outlining the issues we have identified and our ongoing support for Sir Michael Pitt’s original recommendations from his review of the 2007 floods.***

43. PUBLICATION SCHEME

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer informed Members of the revised Publication Scheme for the Authority in line with the Service’s Governance arrangements.

RESOLVED that the New Publication Scheme be noted.

44. AUDIT COMMITTEE REPORT

Cllr. Derek Prodger, Chairman of the Audit Committee presented the Report.

RESOLVED that:

- i) the proceedings of the Audit Committee Meeting held on 9 October be noted; and***
- ii) the Authority amends the Terms of Reference of the Committee to include the monitoring of the Authority’s arrangements against fraud.***

45. BUDGET COMMITTEE REPORT

RESOLVED that the proceedings of the Budget Committee Meetings held on 16 October and 26 November 2009 be noted.

46. BEST VALUE, POLICY AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

Cllr. Mary Drinkwater, Chair of the Committee, presented the Report.

RESOLVED that the proceedings of the Committee Meetings held on 8 September and 30 November 2009 be noted.

The Meeting concluded at 11.42 am

Signed:
Chairman

Date:.....