

Please note that these minutes will remain as a draft until formally confirmed as a correct record at the next meeting and signed by the Chairman.

10.30am 18 February 2009.

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

Present:

Herefordshire:

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

Worcestershire:

Mr T J Bean, Mrs J Brunner, Mr S J Clee (Vice Chair), Mrs M L Drinkwater,
Mr R J Farmer, Mr A I Hardman, Mr M Hart, Mr P M McDonald,
Mr P T Mills, Mr W E Moore, Mrs F Oborski, Mr D W Prodger,
Mr C T Smith, Mr R M Udall, Mr J R Webb, Mr G C Yarranton.

685. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllrs. Philip Mould, John Holden and Andrew Fry.

686. NAMED SUBSTITUTES

None.

687. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

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.)

688. CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

Resolved that: the Minutes of the Meeting held on 19 December 2008 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

689. SERVICE REPORT

The Chief Fire Officer reported regarding key Service developments and activities, together with performance information for the period 1 October 2008 to 31 December 2008.

The cost of calling the service on the 0845 number from a mobile 'phone was discussed and it was reported that the Police Service had changed to a 0300 number. It was agreed that the Authority would examine the most effective and efficient telephone service to communicate with the community.

Arising out of a discussion on the Government's response to the Pitt Report, it was noted that the public was concerned about the resources available to the Fire and Rescue Service, and the ability of the Service to respond to flooding in the area.

It was agreed that the Authority would review this matter and a report would be submitted to the next Authority Meeting, which would include arrangements for working with, and co-operating with, other statutory and voluntary bodies when floods occurred.

The meeting noted that the Service had participated in a Pandemic Flu Exercise at Worcester Rugby Club on 4 February, designed to test the resilience of Herefordshire, Worcestershire and Shropshire in the event of a Flu Pandemic. It was reported that the event was successfully organised, and the results of the exercise should be available for the next Authority Meeting.

In response to a query from one of the Members, it was reported that the Service continued to inspect night clubs to ensure compliance with Fire Safety Regulations.

RESOLVED: That the Authority note the Service Report.

690. BUDGET & PRECEPT AND MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL PLAN

The Treasurer tabled the revenue and capital budgets for 2009/10, as previously circulated to Members. He reported that the Authority had been working on this budget for the past year, and that it built on the decisions made by the Authority at its Meeting on 19 December 2008.

Cllr. Hardman, the Chairman of the Budget Committee, told the Meeting that the proposals placed particular emphasis on the Medium Term Financial Plan (Appendix 7), and that while the Budget Committee regretted the proposed annual increase in the precept of 4.93%, this was a direct result of the very disappointing Grant settlement received by the Authority.

Cllr. Udall complimented the Treasurer for the budget presentation, and thanked the Budget Committee for all their work in preparing the Budget, but he regretted that the Labour Members could not support the budget as presented because of the proposed reduction of 12 operational posts.

It was proposed by Cllr. Hardman, seconded by Cllr. Clee, that the Authority approve the Budget proposals as presented by the Treasurer, and the Chairman called for a vote, which resulted in 19 votes For and 3 Against.

RESOLVED that:

- i) the Revenue Budget, Net Budget Requirement and consequential precept as set out in Appendix 6 to the report be approved;**
- ii) the Capital Budget and Programme as set out at Appendix 5 to the report including the increase in the Pebworth scheme budget be approved;**
- iii) the Medium Term Financial Strategy set out in Appendix 7 to the report be approved;**
- iv) the Statement of Prudential Code Indicators set out in Appendix 8 to the report be approved; and**
- v) the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) policy for 2008-09 and 2009-10 as set out in Appendix 9 to the report be approved.**

(Cllr. Smith left the Meeting at this stage.)

691. UPDATE ON HEREFORD & WORCESTERSHIRE/WARWICKSHIRE JOINT SERVICE REVIEW.

The Chief Fire Officer updated the Authority on the Hereford & Worcestershire/Warwickshire Joint Review, and reported that because of uncertainties which had arisen from the detailed financial analysis, and also regarding the outcomes from the Atherstone-on-Stour incident, that it was recommended that the review be put on hold. It was noted that the Authority would consider this and any other options which would be in the interests of their communities.

RESOLVED that:

- i) the business case process examining the three potential options for the future of Warwickshire and Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Authorities be put on hold for the time being; and**
- ii) this position be kept under periodic review to identify opportunities to finalise the review at some point in the future.**

692. PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT 2008

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer informed Members that the Audit Commission had published the results of the Fire and Rescue Performance Assessment 2008 on 12 February 2009. The Commission had confirmed that this Authority continued to be one of the best performing Fire Authorities in the country. It was reported that the Authority was ranked 6th out of 48 in terms of Performance Indicator improvement, and joint second overall across all areas of assessment. Hereford and Worcester was one of only five Authorities which have been classed as "Improving Strongly".

The Chairman said that this was recognition of the excellent work of all the Service employees, and congratulated all concerned.

RESOLVED that the Authority note the Audit Commission Performance Assessment 2008.

**693. HEREFORD & WORCESTER FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE:
CHARTER MARK RESULTS 2008/09**

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer informed the Meeting that the Service had successfully retained its CharterMark Standard, which was external recognition for excellence in customer service. It was noted that the Authority held an additional two examples of national best practice.

The Chairman stated that this was more good news for the Service, and congratulated all involved.

RESOLVED that the Authority note the CharterMark results 2008/09.

694. PUBLICATION SCHEME

The Authority was obliged by law to adopt a Publication Scheme by 1 January 2009, and the Deputy Chief Fire Officer presented details of the updated Scheme, which followed recommended best practice from the Information Commissioner, and which had now been launched on the Service website.

RESOLVED that the Authority note and endorse the Publication Scheme.

At the conclusion of the Meeting, the Chairman thanked all the Members for the manner in which the meeting was conducted. He noted that Local Elections were due to be held in Worcestershire on 4 June 2008, and he wished well to all those Worcestershire Members who would be seeking re-election. It was noted that Cllrs. Mould and Farmer would not be contesting the elections, and he thanked them for their services to the Authority.

The Meeting ended at 11.45 am

Chairman:.....