



Minutes

Members

Mr A I Hardman, (Chairman), Mr K Taylor (Vice-Chairman),
Mrs P Andrews, Mr T Bean, Mrs M Bunker, Mr J Campion,
Mr J Goodwin, Mrs L Hodgson, Brigadier P Jones CBE,
Mrs J Potter, Mr D Taylor, Mr R Udall and Mr G Yarranton.

No Item

1. Apologies for Absence

Mr J Cairns and Mr S Clee

2. Named Substitutes

None

3. Declaration of Interests (if any)

The Chairman invited Members to declare any personal or prejudicial interests against any of the Agenda items; Brigadier P Jones CBE declared his interest in re Bromsgrove Fire Station as his step-son was employed at that station.

4. Confirmation of Minutes

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee held on 26 January 2011 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

5. Authority Plan 2010-2011 Third Quarter Performance Analysis

The Committee was provided with a summary of the third quarter performance against the 2010-11 Authority Plan. The Committee considered the analysis and the following points were noted:

- The increase in the overall number of incidents in the third quarter was caused by the severe weather of December 2010, reflected in the increase in chimney fires, automatic false alarms and special services incidents.
- The increased number of chimney fires over the quarter was also due to the growing use of wood-burning stoves. The Service had extensive campaigns advising the community how to reduce these incidents.
- The increase in the number of special services incidents resulted from flooding to premises caused by burst water pipes. The Committee heard that the Service will have a community safety campaign in the Autumn to address chimney fires and burst water pipes.
- Despite a reduction in the number of dwelling fires, there was an increase in the number of persons injured at such incidents which might be partly explained by the way these incidents are now recorded. The Service would continue to review this matter.

- A Member requested that social housing providers in Hereford be reminded of fire safety requirements and maintenance of fire alarms.
- The Committee considered the performance for the quarter in relation to attendance standards; it was noted that the standard was being considered for review and that this indicator is largely determined by the distance between the stations and the incidents.
- The consideration for review was in consultation with Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service.

RESOLVED *that the report be noted.*

6. Update on the 'Total Place' initiative

The Chief Fire Officer informed the Committee of the change in title of the Total Place initiative to the Capital and Asset Pathfinder and updated the meeting on the Service's involvement in Partnership working.

The meeting heard that Herefordshire and Worcestershire were at the forefront of the Capital and Asset Pathfinder initiative, which was supported by Government and CLG. The CFO informed the Committee that the initiative proposed more efficient methods of working on a collaborative basis. Specifically, that more collaboration with West Mercia Police would ensure better use of Fire Station assets, improving efficiency for public assets in both Herefordshire and Worcestershire as well as potential income for H&WFRS.

RESOLVED *that:*

- i) the Policy & Resources Committee notes the change in name from Total Place and supports the contribution being made to the newly titled Capital and Asset Pathfinder (CAP) initiative.*
- ii) the Policy & Resources Committee supports the initiative to collaborate with strategic partners with regard to building usage and sharing resources and supports ongoing work with the CAP Steering Group.*

7. Fire Control Consultation Response

The Chief Fire Officer told the Committee that following the demise of the Regional Control project that the Local Authority Company established to operate the RCC for this region was being dissolved.

Following the decision to terminate the project, The Government published a consultation document: *'The future of Fire and Rescue Control Services in England'* on 13 January 2011, with consultation responses due by 8 April 2011. The CFO said that the consultation document asks Fire and Rescue Authorities to consider a range of issues emerging from the termination of the national project including:

- The legacy assets from the FiReControl project and how they might best be used;
- The lessons learnt from the FiReControl project;
- Whether the aims of the project – improving national resilience, efficiency and the technology available to the Fire and Rescue Services – are still valid and how these might be achieved; and
- The principles for allocating any funding available.

The CFO told the Committee that the draft response circulated for consideration informed DCLG of HWFRA's collaboration with Shropshire and Wrekin's FRA and that there may be funding available for this work. The Committee welcomed the proposals to co-ordinate fire control services for the West Mercia region, which would mirror the region covered by West Mercia Police.

The CFO said that if the Committee approved the draft response it would be submitted to the Department for Communities and Local Government on behalf of the Fire and Rescue Authority before the deadline of 8 April 2011.

RESOLVED that the Policy and Resources Committee:

- i. note the contents of this report, and***
- ii. approve the proposed consultation response attached at Appendix 1***

8. Community Right to Challenge Consultation

The Chief Fire Officer told the Committee that the Localism Bill set a framework for the introduction of a Community Right to Challenge, which would allow voluntary and community groups, employees of relevant authorities and parish councils to challenge and deliver local public services on behalf of the authority that they feel could be better delivered by the community. Relevant authorities would have a duty to consider any such expressions of interest. Although combined Fire and Rescue Authorities were not specifically included as 'relevant authorities' in the Bill, the provision stated that the Secretary of State may specify by regulation the inclusion of "such other person or body carrying on functions of a public nature."

Further to that provision, the Committee heard that the Government published a consultation document on 4 February 2011 to assist in developing the detail of how the regulations would apply. The consultation stated that the Government was "minded to extend the Community Right to Challenge to make all Fire and Rescue Authorities relevant authorities in regulations, whilst excluding certain core services." (*Consultation paper – para. 3.9*)

The CFO told the meeting that responses to the consultation were required by 3 May 2011, and, subject to Parliamentary approval, it was expected that the provisions would commence from either April or October 2011.

He pointed out that there were two main implications of note for the Fire and Rescue Authority:

- i) the proposal to make all Fire and Rescue Authorities subject to the Community Right to Challenge (*Consultation paper – Section 3*); and
- ii) The proposal to exempt certain services from challenge under the Community Right to Challenge.

Fire and Rescue Authorities were invited to give their views on these proposals. At the February meeting of the FRA a member expressed interest in this consultation and recommended that a draft response be prepared for consideration by the Policy and Resources Committee. It was felt that Members would wish to give their views on the proposals set out in the consultation and, in particular, to consider the potential implications of which services were effected by the Community Right to Challenge.

The Committee considered the draft response and

RESOLVED to

- i) note the report on the Community Right to Challenge consultation; and*
- ii) agree to the proposed response to the consultation being submitted on its behalf.*

9. Budget Monitoring Report

The Treasurer informed the Committee of the position on Budgets for 2010-11 at the end of February 2011.

On the revenue side, he told the meeting that the anticipated surplus of £560,000 reported to the FRA in December had been revised to £495,000 mainly due to one potential non-compliance on a technical matter of calculation of employer's NI contributions, estimated to cost around £70,000.

85% of the £2.916M allocated to the capital budget had been spent or committed.

RESOLVED that the budget monitoring report be noted.

10. Exclusion of Public and Press

The Clerk told the Committee that in her opinion the meeting should not be open to the public and press at the time item 11 was considered, as it disclosed information relating to the financial or business affairs of the authority. The meeting was attended by Mr Chris Chapman, Assistant Director Law and Governance of Herefordshire Council, and with that exception, it was

RESOLVED that the public and the press be excluded from the Meeting for the consideration of Item number 11: Approval of Asset Management Strategy

11. Approval of Asset Management Strategy

The Chief Fire Officer presented the Asset Management Strategy for consideration by the Committee.

He told the meeting that the fire station condition surveys highlighted as a priority for replacement: Bromsgrove, Hereford, Redditch, Worcester and Malvern. In addition there was a need to provide four Strategic Training Facilities across Herefordshire and Worcestershire, which he regarded as urgent and of vital importance.

The CFO asked the Committee to approve an indicative allocation of a budget for schemes to allow officers to carry out options appraisals within specified financial parameters. This process would not remove the need for the Chief Fire Officer and Treasurer to formally seek approval from the Committee for scheme approval, including land acquisition and disposal, once investigations have been completed. Agreeing the concept of the approval of indicative budgets for each building scheme would enable H&WFRS officers to negotiate more effectively and secure opportunities as they arise which would maximise efficiencies for the FRA. When officers were in a position to provide specific options for each scheme the approval of the Policy and Resources Committee would be sought prior to land acquisition and/or building refurbishment.

(Mr J Campion left the meeting at 11.30 am)

RESOLVED that the Policy & Resources Committee agree:

- i) the indicative budget allocations for each of the capital building schemes, including five fire stations and four strategic training facilities, as presented; and***
- ii) that the Chief Fire Officer and Treasurer seek this Committee's approval for specific scheme allocations once all investigative work and analysis had been completed.***

12. Cllr. John Goodwin

The Chairman told the Meeting that Herefordshire Council elections were due to take place on 5 May and, as Cllr John Goodwin was not standing for re-election that this was the last Authority meeting he would attend. The Chairman, the Chief Fire Officer and all of the Members present thanked Cllr Goodwin for his service to the Authority and his contribution to the communities of Herefordshire and Worcestershire.

The meeting concluded at 11.40 am.

Signed: _____
Chairman.

Date: _____