

**Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Authority
Policy and Resources Committee
25 January 2012**



Minutes

Members Present

Mr K Taylor (Chairman),
Mr T Bean, Mrs M Bunker, Mrs L Eyre, Mr A Hardman, Brigadier P Jones CBE, Mrs M Lloyd-Hayes, Mrs J Potter, Mr D Prodger MBE, Mr D Taylor, Mr R Udall and Mr G Yarranton (Vice-Chairman).

No	Item
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1.	Apologies for Absence
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Apologies were noted from: Mr B Bullock and Mr C Smith.

2.	Named Substitutes
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None.

3.	Declaration of Interests (if any)
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The Chairman invited Members to declare any personal or prejudicial interests against any of the Agenda items. Councillor D Prodger, MBE, declared a personal interest in agenda item number 16 relating to Asset Management Strategy: Worcester Fire Station as he is a member of Worcester City Council's Planning Committee.

4.	Confirmation of Minutes
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RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee held on 23 November 2011 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

5.	Budget 2012/13 and Review of Medium Term Financial Plan
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A report was considered that outlined the current position in relation to budgets for 2012/13 and beyond.

Members were reminded that a Medium Term Financial Plan had been agreed for 2010/11 – 2013/14 which was based on a set of assumptions about the future.

(Mr Hardman and Mrs Eyre entered the meeting at 10.45 am)

The Treasurer presented the report and drew Members' attention to the consequences of accepting the Council Tax Freeze Grant and talked through the possible budget gap and how it could be addressed.

A discussion ensued about the merits of taking the Council Tax Freeze Grant and

some Members commented that they perceived the budget assumptions to be somewhat cautious.

RESOLVED the Policy and Resources Committee:

- (i) recommends to the Authority to accept the Council Tax Freeze Grant for 2012/13;***
- (ii) agrees the budget assumptions to be recommended to the Authority;***
- (iii) approves the recommendation to be made to the Authority of the consequential budgets and precept requirements for 2012/13;***
- (iv) recommends to the Authority the Precept Policy for the Medium Term Financial Plan period; and***
- (v) notes the consequential budget gaps arising.***

6. West Midlands Contractor Framework

A report was considered that informed Members of the formation of the West Midlands Contractor Framework and the Authority's involvement in the consequent Partnering Agreement involving Worcestershire County Council, Herefordshire Council, West Mercia Police and the Fire and Rescue Authority.

The Clerk advised Members that the purpose of the Framework was to drive down costs and to speed up the tendering process.

Three local firms had been appointed by Worcestershire County Council to the Framework and the contracts would be awarded to them on a rotational basis on most occasions rather than for them to compete.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) the contents of the report be noted; and***
- (ii) the use of Standing Order 5.1.f (Regulation of Contracts) in awarding contracts under the framework agreement be approved.***

7. Retaining Staff with Specialist Skills

A report was considered that brought to the attention of the Policy and Resources Committee issues relating to potential skills gaps in the Service as a result of the possible changes to pension provision and sought agreement to a policy that mitigated the potential for this to happen.

The Chief Fire Officer presented the report and advised Members that currently 15 members of uniformed staff were eligible for retirement from the Service and could receive their full pension entitlement. Amongst these staff included those who had acquired specialist skills which had taken a number of years to develop. The proposed Policy allowed the Service to retain key skills as staff would be able

to retire, access pension benefits, including a lump sum, and subsequently be re-employed with the pension being subject to abatement.

RESOLVED:

(i) that the contents of the report be noted; and

(ii) that the Policy and Resources Committee agree to the Service adopting the Policy relating to the retirement and re-employment of personnel.

8. Updates to Work Programme 2011/12

A report was considered regarding amendments to the Work Programme of the Policy and Resources Committee for the remainder of 2011/12.

RESOLVED: that the Policy and Resources Committee approves the Work Programme as amended for 2011/12.

9. Budget Monitoring 2011/12

A report was considered that informed the Policy and Resources Committee of the current position on budgets and expenditure for 2011/12.

RESOLVED: that the report be noted.

10. Fees and Charges

Members were advised that in December 2010 the Authority had agreed a policy for charging for lift rescues and assistance to the Environment Agency. A report was considered that updated the Committee on progress in implementing the Fire and Rescue Authority's decision on charging.

It was noted that since the Authority had started to charge for lift rescues there had been a reduction in the number that had been carried out. In the period July – December 2011, ten lift rescues had been carried out at £238 per rescue which had generated income of £2,380 for the Authority. Furthermore, it was reported that there had been no problems with payment of the invoices that had been sent for these rescues.

With regard to assistance for the Environment Agency there had been a significant event in 2010 which had generated an income of £12,600. However, Members were advised that such events were somewhat sporadic.

RESOLVED: that the report be noted.

11a Draft Integrated Risk Management Plan – Action Plan

The Chairman agreed to the consideration of a late item being tabled. The report was included on the agenda in order to give the Committee the opportunity to consider the results of the consultation exercise before it was approved by the

Authority. The report was late due to the consultation timetable.

The Committee briefly adjourned at 11.40 am to provide Members with an opportunity to read the papers that had been tabled. The report provided the Committee with details of the outcomes of the consultation process for the 2012/13 Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) Action plan which had ended on 22 December 2011.

Members were advised that the Service had received 13 formal responses and a number of written responses which were generally favourable. The Trade Unions had also submitted a detailed response.

The current IRMP process had followed a three year cycle and had been based on the National Framework. However it was noted that a new National Framework was currently being consulted on and would be considered at the Committee's next meeting in March 2012. The Service wished to have an appropriate IRMP in place and in the absence of the new National Framework a further one year IRMP Action Plan had been developed for 2012/13/ After that the new National Framework would provide Fire and Rescue Authorities with clear guidance on future IRMPs.

RESOLVED that:

- (i) the IRMP Action Plan consultation process and consultation feedback received be noted; and***
- (ii) the following recommendations be approved by the Authority as contained in the proposed 2012/13 Action Plan:***
 - (a) During 2012/13 the outcomes of the 2011/12 review of community safety will be delivered which sought to identify methods for targeting the Service's resources more effectively in this area.***
 - (b) During 2012/13 the agreed changes that result from the review of the current operational training strategy and provision will be implemented.***
 - (c) The 2011/12 IRMP Action Plan which included specific elements of fire cover within the Service, including resources, will be reviewed in 2011/12. In 2012/13 fire cover across the remainder of the Service will be reviewed.***
 - (d) Further opportunities to consolidate our collaboration with Shropshire and Wrekin Fire & Rescue Authority will continue to be developed.***
 - (e) A review of the provision of road traffic collision equipment across the service will take place and any appropriate changes in order to improve the Service provided to the community will be implemented.***

11. IRMP 2011/12 Update – Review of the Provision of Operational Training and Development

A report was considered that informed the Policy and Resources Committee of the outcomes of the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) 2011/12 Objective No. 2, the Review of the Community Safety Department. Five key areas were considered namely:

- Strategy, guidance and supporting documentation
- Competence Recording Systems (Training Records)
- Current Training Provision
- Existing Training Facilities
- Staffing and Structure of Training and Development

As part of the review consideration had been given to how the Service delivered current training provision in order to have a more centralised training regime. It was envisaged that 53% of training would be delivered centrally and the new strategic training facilities would enable training to be delivered locally.

Members were advised that the structure of the Training Department had been rationalised to improve efficiency. It was anticipated that the savings made from the review would be approximately £143,000.

With regard to firefighter development, it was envisaged that training and development would work hand in hand. The promotion process would move from being a national process to a local process which was considered to be more practical and was something which staff had supported. During the next 12 months further work would be undertaken to deliver key elements of the review.

Councillor T Bean left the meeting at 11.50 am.

RESOLVED: that the report be noted.

12. IRMP 2011/12 Update – Review of the Community Safety Department

A report was considered that informed the Policy and Resources Committee of the outcomes of the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) 2011/12 Objective No. 2, the review of the Community Safety Department.

The purpose of the review had been to consider national and local guidance in order to determine the effectiveness of the work currently carried out by the Community Safety Department and to consider how best to allocate resources in the future.

The evidence from the review was that the Community Safety Department had delivered some excellent work but it was necessary to focus on four main areas namely:

- Accidental Dwelling Fires
- Road Safety
- Arson Reduction

- Elderly and Vulnerable People

Members raised a number of points:

- A Member queried whether the Authority had a Safeguarding Policy and it was clarified that it had a policy that covered both children and adults.
- With regard to economic and social deprivation and its link to fire deaths it was queried whether work would be carried out with social landlords and owners of bedsits and student accommodation. It was clarified that social deprivation would indeed be covered and there would be stronger links forged with the Investigation and Technical Fire Safety Departments.
- In response to a query about how the impact of the review would be tracked, it was clarified that evaluation tools would be used to indicate successes.

RESOLVED: that the report be noted.

13. Fire Fighting Water Supply

A report was considered that provided a summary of the current position with respect to the provision, inspection and maintenance of water supplies and requested support with a national campaign to change legislation which would benefit the Fire and Rescue Authority.

The Chief Fire Officer advised Members that water hydrants were currently owned by individual water companies with maintenance costs being the responsibility of the Fire and Rescue Authority. There were approximately 18,000 fire hydrants within the Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Authority area and the overall cost of the current inspection regime including water company charges was £146,000.

Furthermore Members were advised that the Service had supported a national campaign by the London Fire Brigade which sought to change legislation so that the responsibility for hydrant maintenance would fall to water companies with the Authority only retaining responsibility for inspection. This proposal would have a benefit for the Authority in terms of cost savings and would facilitate the removal of unnecessary hydrants.

RESOLVED that the Policy and Resources Committee:

- (i) note the proactive steps which have been taken to secure fire fighting water supplies; and***
- (ii) endorse the Service's support of a national campaign which would result in a change in legislation around the costs for ongoing maintenance of fire hydrants.***

14. Joint Consultative Committee Update

A report was considered that informed the Policy and Resources Committee of the Joint Consultative Committee meeting held during December 2011.

RESOLVED: that the report be noted.

15. Exclusion of the Press and Public

In the opinion of the Clerk to the Authority, agenda item 16, Asset Management Strategy Worcester Fire Station, was likely to disclose information relating to the financial or business affairs of the Authority. It was therefore recommended that the meeting should not be open to the public and press at the time that agenda item 16 was considered.

RESOLVED: that the press and public be excluded because in the opinion of the Clerk to the Authority Agenda Item 16 was likely to disclose information relating to the financial or business affairs of the Authority.

16. Asset Management Strategy : Worcester Fire Station

A report was considered that requested approval from the Policy and Resources Committee to proceed with a proposal to replace Worcester Fire Station.

The Chief Fire Officer advised Members that the fire station in Worcester had reached the end of its useful life. A survey of the current fire station had revealed that a substantial amount of money would be required to be spent on it in order to maintain an adequate standard.

RESOLVED that the Policy and Resources Committee approve:

- (i) the proposal to replace the current Worcester Fire Station with a new building at a new location in Worcester City, within the budget allocation as set out in the report; and***
- (ii) an exemption to Standing Order 5.1.g (Regulation of Contracts) due to the specific circumstances relating to the opportunity for a design and build at the Service's preferred location.***

The meeting concluded at 12.35 pm.

Signed: _____
Chairman.

Date: _____