

28 September 2011



Minutes

Members present:

Mr. D Prodger MBE (Chair), Brigadier P Jones CBE (Vice Chair)

Mr. T Bean, Mr. B Bullock, Mrs. M Bunker, Mr. J Cairns, Mr. J Campion, Mrs. L Duffy, Mrs. L Eyre, Mrs. L Hodgson, Mrs. G Hopkins, Mrs M Lloyd-Hayes, Mrs. F Oborski, Mrs. J Potter, Mr. T Spencer, Mr. D Taylor, Mr. K Taylor, Mr. J Thomas, Mr. P Watts and Mr. G Yarranton.

No. Item

1. Apologies for Absence

The meeting noted the apologies from Mr D Greenow, Mr. A Hardman, Mr. B Matthews, Mr. C Smith and Mr. R Udall.

2. Declaration of Interests (if any)

The Chairman invited any Member to declare an interest in any of the items on this Agenda. The following interests were declared:

- Brig. P Jones CBE - personal interest in relation to item 8 Local Government Pension Scheme Discretions - his wife's son is a firefighter at Bromsgrove Fire Station.
- Mr P Watts - personal interest in relation to item 8 Local Government Pension Scheme Discretions - in receipt of a Firefighter's pension.
- Mrs. L Hodgson - personal and prejudicial interest in relation to item 10 Internal Audit Arrangements – she is a Worcester City Councillor.
- Mr. D Prodger MBE - personal and prejudicial interest in relation to item 10 Internal Audit Arrangements – he is a Worcester City Councillor.

3. Chairman's Announcements

3.1 Firefighters' Memorial Trust Annual Remembrance and Wreath Laying Ceremony

The Chairman informed the meeting that he had attended the memorial service with the Chief Fire Officer on 11 September to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the terrorist attack in New York in 2001, in which 343 firefighters lost their lives. The Annual Service also remembered all firefighters that had lost their lives as a result of their duties since the beginning of the Second World War.

3.2 Water Rescue Equipment

The Chairman announced that there was a display of Water Rescue Equipment on display outside the Council Chamber. It was agreed to adjourn the meeting to enable members to view the equipment.

4. Confirmation of Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Fire and Rescue Authority held on 22 June 2011 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

5. Questions from Members of the Public

No questions for the Authority were received from members of the public.

The meeting was adjourned at 10.35am and resumed at 10.55am.

6. Review of Roles of the Treasurer and Clerk

[The Treasurer, Mr T Wood and Clerk, Mrs A Brown were not present during this item]

The Chief Fire Officer explained that the Clerk and Treasurer had been appointed on a temporary basis until 30 September 2011. It was intended to review the Authority's requirements for permanent appointments of Clerk and Treasurer following the receipt of the Audit Commission's report on the retirement of the previous Chief Fire Officer.

The report had not yet been received and therefore it was necessary to further extend the appointments on a temporary basis pending receipt of the report and completion of the review.

RESOLVED that the Authority continue the appointment of Mr Tony Wood and Mrs Anne Brown as an Interim Treasurer and Interim Clerk to the Authority until 31 December 2011 or until the completion of the review and finalisation of permanent arrangements, whichever is the earlier.

7. Chief Fire Officer's Service Report

The Chief Fire Officer informed the Authority of recent key developments and activities together with an overview of Service performance for the period 1 April 2011 to 30 June 2011.

During the ensuing discussions the following points were raised:

- The Service employed a full time Arson Reduction Officer to work in partnership with the Police to proactively reduce arson. The Service was still committed to working at a local level to reduce deliberate fires with local District staff working with local policing teams.
- The increase in the number of road traffic collisions (RTCs) attended could have been due to a number of factors such as increased reporting by the public. The majority of RTCs were found on A and B class roads and there was a relatively low number of incidents on local

motorways.

- The Service was involved with the Road Safety Partnership who held information such as the age profile of those involved in road traffic collisions which facilitated targeted prevention work.
- There was currently no information with regards to increases in call volume to Fire Control following recent changes in the Ambulance Service.
- The Service did not provide details of incidents to insurance companies.
- The Service had recently held its Annual Awards Ceremony at which Long Service and Good Conduct medals and other awards were given to Fire Service staff. In addition, three staff from other emergency services received commendations following their actions at specific incidents.
- Following the demise of Regional Control Centres, the Service was in the process of formulating a grant application for submission to the Department of Communities and Local Government for funding to enable improvement of control facilities at a local level.
- The elderly lady who had died following a fire in Herefordshire was known to the Service through previous incidents which had triggered extensive fire prevention activities, including a portable fire suppression system. It was confirmed that there were a number of other agencies also involved in provision of services to the victim.

The Authority congratulated ACFO Richard Lawrence on achieving his role on a substantive basis.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

8. Local Government Pension Scheme Discretions

The Acting Deputy Chief Fire Officer presented a report that had been considered by the Policy & Resources Committee. The Statement of Policy considered by the Committee mirrored best practice and included consultation from Unions.

Following a question from a Member, it was confirmed that UNISON had not submitted comments as they were satisfied with the document.

RESOLVED that:

- i) the Statement of Policy attached at Appendix 1 be approved and;***
- ii) the Policy and Resources Committee be delegated responsibility for exercising the discretionary elements of the Local Government Pension Scheme, including the authority for incurring any costs involved.***

9. Draft Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) Action Plan 2012/13

The Chief Fire Officer presented the draft IRMP Action Plan for 2012/13 and explained that a new National Framework was anticipated which would provide a different direction to Fire Services and would be less directive than the current framework.

Following a question from a Member it was confirmed that Officers were aware of the Early Help Strategy and would report to Members in due course.

RESOLVED that the draft Integrated Risk Management Plan Action Plan for 2012/13 be approved for consultation.

[Cllr Mrs L Hodgson and Cllr D Prodger MBE left the meeting]

[Vice-Chairman in the Chair]

10. Internal Audit Arrangements

The Treasurer informed the Authority that Worcestershire County Council had recently confirmed that it no longer had the capacity to provide an Internal Audit service to the Fire and Rescue Authority. The Treasurer explained there had been agreement to appoint a Consortium generated from several local district councils to provide Internal Audit services to the Authority.

Following a question from a Member, the Clerk explained that consideration was given to the Authority's Standing Orders for the Regulation of Contracts. The meeting was informed that there were certain exceptions to the tendering process set out in Standing Orders where a contract could be agreed with prior approval of the Chief Fire Officer (CFO). In this case, the Treasurer had raised two exceptions; the specialised nature of the service due to the complexity of public sector accounts and the urgency needed to approve a contract due to the short timescales involved.

Following further questions from Members it was confirmed that the contract was not an interim arrangement but was for a three year period and an Internal Audit Plan would need to be agreed within the budget set for the contract.

It was suggested by a Member that further work should be carried out over the next three years to ensure that the Authority was receiving good value for money.

Cllrs Mr J Cairns, Mrs L Eyre, Mrs Lloyd-Hayes abstained from the vote.

RESOLVED that the appointment of the Internal Audit Consortium, subject to agreeable terms and conditions being received be noted.

[Cllr Mrs L Hodgson and Cllr D Prodger MBE returned]

[Chairman took the Chair]

11. Indemnities for Members and Officers

The Clerk explained that all Members had a personal interest in this item, however there was a specific exemption within the Code of Conduct that removed the need to put forward declarations. The personal interests were not prejudicial.

The Clerk explained that Members and Officers of local authorities could incur personal civil and criminal liability as a result of their actions, both within the Authority and as an Authority representative on outside bodies. In certain circumstances a Member or Officer may be immune from such liability or may be indemnified against such liability.

The Clerk informed the meeting that the powers granted by the Local Authorities (Indemnities for Members and Officers) Order 2004 permitted local authorities to provide indemnities to Members and Officers in certain circumstances.

RESOLVED that

- i) the granting of indemnities to Members and Officers in the terms set out in Appendix 1 to the report be approved; and***
- ii) the Treasurer be authorised to take steps to secure insurance to cover the Authority's liability under this indemnity, in so far as in his opinion such insurance would be financially practicable.***

12. Report from the Audit Committee

The Audit Committee Chair informed the Authority of the proceedings of the Audit Committee meeting on 29 June 2011.

RESOLVED that the proceedings of the Audit Committee meeting on 29 June 2011 be noted.

13. Report from the Policy and Resources Committee

The Policy and Resources Committee Vice-Chair informed the Authority of the proceedings of the Policy and Resources Committee meeting on 7 September 2011.

RESOLVED that the proceedings of the Policy and Resources Committee meeting on 7 September 2011 be noted.

The meeting finished at 12.01pm

Signed: _____
Chairman

Date: _____