



## **Minutes**

### **Members present:**

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

Mr T Bean, Mr J Cairns, Mr J Champion, Mrs L Eyre, Mrs L Hodgson, Mrs M Lloyd-Hayes, Mr B Matthews, Mrs F Oborski, Mrs J Potter, Mr T Spencer, Mr D Taylor, Mr K Taylor, Mr J Thomas, Mr R Udall, Mr T Wells and Mr G Yarranton.

**At the outset of the Meeting, Members observed a minute's silence in memory of Richard Clarke, from Property Services who had passed away.**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Item</b>
<b>1.</b>	<b>Apologies for Absence</b>

Apologies for absence were received from Mr B Bullock, Mrs M Bunker, Mr D Greenow, Mrs G Hopkins, Mrs M Lloyd-Hayes and Mr P Watts.

<b>2.</b>	<b>Declarations of Interest</b>
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No declarations of interest were made.

<b>3.</b>	<b>Confirmation of Minutes</b>
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***RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 21 September 2012 be agreed and signed by the Chairman.***

<b>4.</b>	<b>Chairman's Announcements</b>
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The Chairman made the following announcements:

**(a) Councillor Clive Smith**

It was announced that Councillor Clive Smith was no longer a member of the Fire Authority and the Chairman thanked him for serving as a member of the Fire Authority for 7 years.

**(b) Councillor Tom Wells**

Members were advised that Councillor Tom Wells would replace Councillor Clive Smith as a Member of the Authority and he was warmly welcomed by the Chairman to his first meeting of the Fire and Rescue Authority.

**(c) Councillor Bob Bullock**

The Chairman was sorry to announce that Councillor Bob Bullock had had a fall and had been admitted to Timberdine Nursing Home. The Chairman hoped to visit him next week and would send him best wishes from all Members of the Authority.

**(f) Councillor D Greenow**

The Chairman was sorry to report to Members that Councillor Greenow had been in an accident on his farm and had lost part of his finger.

*At 10.30 am Councillor L Eyre entered the meeting at this point.*

**(g) Budget Seminar**

Members were reminded that a Budget Seminar would be held on Wednesday 16 January 2013 at 12.30 pm and were urged to attend if they could possibly do so.

**(h) Herefordshire Medals and Awards Ceremony**

The Chairman had attended the Annual Herefordshire Medals and Awards Ceremony on 23 November 2012 where the achievements of staff and volunteers as well as members of the public were honoured. He paid tribute to the exceptional skills and commitment to duty that firefighters displayed.

**(i) Recent Flooding Events**

The Chairman paid tribute to Fire Control staff and crews who had worked tirelessly over the weekend of 24 to 26 November 2012.

**(j) Family and Friends Carol Service**

The Chairman had attended the annual Carol Service last night at Hereford Cathedral. He found it to be a splendid event which was enhanced by the Fire Choir and the Voice Squad who were led by Station Commander Neil Piggott.

**(k) Happy Christmas and New Year**

The Chairman wished all Members and Officers a very Happy Christmas and New Year.

**5. Questions from Members of the Public**

No questions had been received from members of the public.

**6. Chief Fire Officer's Service Report**

A report was considered that informed the Authority of recent key developments and activities together with performance information for the period 1 July 2012 to 30 September 2012.

The Chief Fire Officer presented the report and highlighted the following:

- The total number of incidents had reduced but this could primarily be attributed to the weather (for example the number of outdoor fires had decreased due to the amount of rain that had fallen);
- Special Services incidents had increased by 24.3%;
- A total of 56 health and safety related incidents had occurred this month but only 2 of these had the potential to be 'serious incidents;'and
- Informal findings of the Peer Review had now been received. The

final report was still awaited. A report on the Peer Review would be made to the Audit Committee.

- Staff had not been enamoured with the grey colour of their uniform. These comments had been noted and changes had been made within current costs of the contract.

Members were provided with an opportunity to see the new proposed uniform. A discussion ensued whereby some Members felt that there should be no distinction in the colour of uniform between ranks and one Member disagreed with this view.

At the end of the Chief Fire Officer's report Members were given an opportunity to see the new hand held thermal imaging cameras and also the new cable cutters that would be available for crews.

Following consideration of the Chief Fire Officer's Service Report a presentation was given by the Deputy Chief Fire Officer on an incident which had occurred during the floods on 23 November 2012 where a vehicle had got stuck in a ford at Coughton Fields Lane, Nr Alcester, Warwickshire. The incident highlighted the type of complicated water rescues that the Service undertook and members were advised of the water resources available across the two counties.

A discussion ensued on flooding where Members asked the Chief Fire Officer what measures could be taken to educate people about the risk of fords during extreme weather. The Chief Fire Officer responded that the Service had warned and informed across various media and the Environment Agency, Police and Fire Service had urged motorists not to drive through floods when water levels were higher than normal.

11.27 Councillor Cairns left the meeting at this point.

**RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted.**

## **7. Financial Prospects 2013/14**

A report was considered that provided Members with a further update on developments on the funding position for 2013/14 and beyond.

The Treasurer presented the report and advised Members that it was anticipated that details of the financial settlement would be received next week.

Members' attention was drawn to paragraph six of the report which detailed the predicted budget gap. It was noted that officers had identified savings that amounted to approximately £1 million but Members were cautioned that the goalposts had moved in that the Authority had adopted a planning assumption of a 3.5% precept increase, however the Government had announced a grant equal to 1% of precept if an authority were to freeze the precept again and the threshold for increase over and above what a referendum was required was now set at 2%. Members were advised that the change in precept increase would have a significant impact for the Authority as the precept represented two thirds of the Authority's funding. Furthermore it was noted that in order to cover the costs of a referendum and deliver an additional useable resource of £0.5m, a precept increase of 6.2%

would be required.

Members were reminded that a Budget Seminar would be held on 16 January 2013 when options to bridge the budget gap would be discussed.

**RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted.**

**8. Equality Scheme Update and Equality Objectives**

A report was considered that informed Members of progress with regard to the Service's existing Equality Scheme Action Plan and sought approval for the publication of future organisational equality objectives.

The Chief Fire Officer presented the report. Members were advised that the Equality Act 2010 placed a legal obligation on all public bodies to publish equality objectives at least every four years and to publish information demonstrating compliance with the equality duty at least annually.

The Chief Fire Officer outlined the objectives for publication and commented that they had been drawn up by the Equality and Diversity Sub Group.

**RESOLVED that the Authority notes progress with the existing Equality Scheme Action Plan and approves the following equality objectives for publication in 2013:**

- (i) To continue to embed equality and diversity within all aspects of service delivery and support functions:**
  - **Embed equality impact assessments of all relevant service policies into core business;**
  - **Appropriately target community engagement in response to our available data;**
  - **To analyse recruitment and employment data for trends and take appropriate action.**
- (ii) To develop partnerships to promote equality:**
  - **Utilize a Positive Action Sub Group made up of representatives from the local communities and other stakeholders; and**
  - **This Sub Group will recommend initiatives and actions including positive action campaigns to the Quality and Diversity Advisory Group.**

**9. Report from Policy and Resources Committee**

A report was considered that informed the Authority of the proceedings of the Policy and Resources Committee meeting held on 21 November 2012.

**RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted.**

**10. Report from Audit Committee**

A report was considered that informed the Authority of the proceedings of the Audit Committee meeting held on 28 September 2012.

**RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted.**

**11. FRA and Committee Dates for 2013/14**

A report was considered that informed the Authority Members of the meeting dates for 2013/14.

**RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted.**

The meeting finished at 11.40 am.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Chairman

Date: \_\_\_\_\_