

Hereford & Worcester Fire Authority
10.30am, Monday 9 June 2014
County Hall, Worcester



Minutes

Members Present

Herefordshire:

Brigadier P Jones CBE (Vice-Chairman), Ms K Guthrie, Mr J Kenyon, Mr B Matthews, Mr P Sinclair-Knipe and Mr D C Taylor.

Worcestershire:

Mr R Adams, Ms P Agar, Mr C Bloore, Mr S Cross, Ms L Duffy, Mr P Gretton, Mr A Hardman, Mrs A Hingley, Ms R E Jenkins, Mr T Miller, Mrs F M Oborski, Mr S R Peters, Mr D W Prodger MBE (Chairman), Prof. J W Raine, Mr C Taylor, Mr P Tuthill, Mr R Udall, Mr G Vickery and Mr G Yarranton.

1. Election of Chairman

Resolved that Mr D W Prodger MBE be elected as Chairman of the Fire Authority for the ensuing year, to hold office until his successor becomes entitled to act.

2. Election of Vice-Chairman

Resolved that Brigadier P Jones CBE be elected as Vice-Chairman of the Fire Authority for the ensuing year, to hold office until his successor becomes entitled to act.

3. Apologies for Absence

None.

4. Declaration of Interests

None.

5. Confirmation of Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 19 February 2014, be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

6. Chairman's Announcements

A minute's silence was held as a mark of respect following the death of former Authority Member Mr Peter Watts.

Following the minute's silence, the Chairman welcomed the new Members to the Authority: Mr C Bloore, Mrs K Guthrie, Mr J Kenyon, Mr T Miller, Mr G Vickery and Mr G Yarranton.

The Chairman also thanked the outgoing Members: Mr A Fry, Mrs M Lloyd-Hayes, Mr P Grove, Mr A Amos and Mr M Broomfield, for their contribution to the Authority.

7. Public Participation

Mr Steve Price-Hunt, a resident and Chairman of the Fire Brigades Union in the West Midlands region submitted two petitions; one calling for the Authority to save the second wholetime crewed fire engine at Worcester Fire Station and the second calling for the Authority to save the wholetime crewed fire engine at Hereford Fire Station.

Mr Steve Price-Hunt then put the following question to the Authority:

Will the FRA be prepared to vote to allow a public referendum to raise the council tax precept for the Fire Service in Hereford and Worcester to protect frontline services in Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service?

The Chairman provided the following response:

Any proposal to raise the council tax above the government's threshold level and hold a referendum has to be decided as part of the budget setting process and it is therefore too late for the current financial year and could only take place in May 2015 once the budget had been set.

If Members of the Authority wish to propose a referendum next year then we will obviously have a vote. However you may wish to note the following:-

- *A referendum of this nature is controlled by very tight central government legislation.*
- *The cost of the referendum would fall on the Authority.*
- *The Authority has to set a budget at the level indicated in the referendum and only then can a referendum take place.*
- *Should the referendum be lost the Authority has to rebill the entire council tax base of both counties at its own cost and implement in year savings to reduce the budget down to the referendum limit without any lead in times.*
- *This means the Authority is taking a huge financial risk to introduce a referendum and is perhaps why no other local authority, fire and rescue authority or Police and Crime Commissioner have gone down this route.*

In response, Mr Steve Price-Hunt urged the Authority to consider a public referendum.

Cllr Marcelle Lloyd-Hayes from Herefordshire Council spoke in support of retaining the second wholetime crewed fire engine in Hereford and asked the following questions:

- *Is it the case that if an on-call fire engine is not available that a wholetime crew would fill the gap?*
- *Can on-call staff book on duty and off duty when they choose to do so?*
- *How often are on-call fire engines not available?*
- *If the second wholetime fire engine is removed from Hereford what would the impact be on the whole county?*

Cllr Lloyd-Hayes was offered a full written response within ten working days. However, Cllr Lloyd-Hayes requested a verbal response at the meeting.

On Cllr Lloyd-Hayes' request the Chief Fire Officer provided the following response:

- *Wholetime crews may be used on occasion if an on-call appliance is not available.*
- *If on-call staff have carried out their allocated hours they can book on and off duty to fit in with their employment, family and other commitments. This may render an on-call appliance unavailable.*
- *All other stations may be provided support by wholetime crews if available.*

8. Appointment of Committees

The Head of Legal Services presented a report on the allocation of Committee seats to political groups and which sought to make appointments to those committees. A slight amendment had been made to the number of seats as Mr J Kenyon was not currently aligned to any political group.

Mr B Matthews questioned whether the political proportionality among members appointed by Herefordshire Council was correct, in view of recent changes to the political balance of that Council and was advised that this was a matter for Herefordshire Council to determine.

RESOLVED that:

- the number of seats on each Committee and the allocation of those seats to political groups be as follows:***

Group	Appointments Committee	Audit & Standards Committee	Policy & Resources Committee
Conservative	4	7	7
Labour	1	2	2
Independent	1	2	2
2013	1	1	1
Non Aligned	0	1	1
(Total)	7	13	13

ii) the following members be appointed as the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the following Committees:

a. Appointments Committee

Chairman – Mr D W Prodger MBE

Vice-Chairman – Brigadier P Jones CBE

b. Audit and Standards Committee

Chairman – Ms L Duffy

Vice-Chairman – Mr G Yarranton

c. Policy and Resources Committee

Chairman – Mr C Taylor

Vice-Chairman – Mr R Adams

iii) the Head of Legal Services be authorised to make other appointments to Committees in accordance with the wishes notified by the Group Leaders;

iv) non-aligned Members Mr S Cross and Mr J Kenyon be appointed to the Audit and Standards Committee and to the Policy and Resources Committee, respectively;

v) Ms P Agar and Mrs F Oborski be appointed to the Equality and Diversity Advisory Group;

vi) the Head of Legal Services be authorised to make the appointment to the Health and Safety Committee in accordance with the wishes notified by the Group Leaders;

vii) Mrs A Hingley be appointed as Chairman to the Young Firefighters' Association Executive Committee; and

viii) the Head of Legal Services be authorised to make the appointments to the Members' Development Working Group in accordance with the wishes notified by the Group Leaders.

9. Appointments to Outside Bodies

The Head of Legal Services presented a report to consider appointments to the Local Government Association.

RESOLVED that:

- i) the previous practice for representation and voting on the Local Government Association be continued, as follows:***
 - a. that the Authority's four representatives on the Local Government Association should be the Leaders of each of the current four political groups or their nominees;***
 - b. that the 13 Service votes on the Local Government Association Assembly be allocated between its representatives on a politically proportionate basis as follows***

Conservative Group	7
Labour Group	2
Independent Group	2
2013 Group	2
 Total	 13; and
 - c. the corporate vote on the Local Government Association Assembly be exercised by the Chairman or his nominee; and***
- ii) the place and vote available to the Authority on the Local Government Association Fire Commission be exercised by the Chairman of the Authority.***

10. Community Risk Management Plan 2014-2020

Following deferral of consideration of this item at the meeting on 19 February 2014, the Chief Fire Officer presented the report regarding the response to and findings from the public consultation on the Authority's draft Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP), and to consider recommendations for the implementation of the Fire and Emergency Cover Review.

The report also sought consideration of the use of the Authority's General Reserves to defer implementation of some of the CRMP proposals and to approve the draft CRMP for publication.

The Chief Fire Officer explained that a comprehensive consultation process had been undertaken with regards to the proposals set out in the CRMP. The consultation was carried out for a period of fourteen weeks, which exceeded the best practice guideline of twelve weeks and included a media campaign, public meetings, staff meetings and Members' seminars. The Chief Fire Officer informed the meeting that a summary of issues raised during the consultation and the response from the Service were published on the website.

In the ensuing debate some Members expressed concerns about the impact of the proposed reductions in fire cover, particularly in Herefordshire and suggested there were other alternative options which should be investigated.

RESOLVED that consideration of the Community Risk Management Plan 2014-2020 be deferred to a future meeting of the Authority.

11. Provision of Payroll Services

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer informed Members of a potential collaborative partnership arrangement to provide payroll services with Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service and to seek authority for the creation of a shared service if this was shown to be beneficial.

The proposal had been considered by the Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting on 2 June 2014 where it was agreed that the proposal be referred to the Authority.

RESOLVED that the Chief Fire Officer be given delegated authority, in consultation with the Chairman of the Authority and the Treasurer, to enter into an in-house shared service with Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service and/or others for the provision of payroll services, if this is considered to be the most cost-effective approach following a detailed business case and/or competitive tender process.

12. The Fire Authority's Annual Report 2014-15

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer presented the Fire Authority's Report 2014-15 for adoption and approval for publication.

RESOLVED that the Fire Authority Annual Report 2014-15 be adopted and approved for publication subject to any final minor changes as agreed by the Chief Fire Officer in consultation with the Chairman.

13. Members' Allowances

The Head of Legal Services presented a report that required the Authority to consider whether to increase the level of Members' Allowances in line with the increase in the Consumer Price Index.

Mr J Kenyon moved that the level of Members' Allowances be reduced by 25%. The motion was not seconded and was therefore lost.

RESOLVED that there be no change to the level of Members' Allowances for 2014/15.

14. Review of the Constitution

The Head of Legal Services proposed the following amendments to the Authority's Constitution:

- to include the terms of reference for the Political Group Leaders' Meeting;

- to enable Committee Chairmen and Vice Chairmen to be appointed by Committees as well as by the Authority; and
- to enable the Monitoring Officer to make any minor amendments consequential upon legislative changes or decisions of the Authority in order to keep the Constitution up to date.

RESOLVED that the following amendments be made to the Authority's Constitution:

- i) the terms of reference for the Group Leaders' Meeting be incorporated into Part 3;***
- ii) Article 6.2 be amended to read as follows:***
 - (a) the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of:***
 - (i) Policy and Resources Committee; and***
 - (ii) Audit and Standards Committee***
 - may be appointed either by the Authority or where there is a vacancy, by the relevant committee.***
- iii) Article 11.3 be amended to read as follows:***
 - (a) the Monitoring Officer may make any necessary minor amendments to the Constitution consequential upon any legislative changes or decisions of the Authority from time to time;***
 - (b) except as mentioned in (a) above, changes to the Constitution will only be approved by the full Authority after consideration of a written report by the Monitoring Officer or a committee of the Authority.***

15. Chief Fire Officer's Service Report

The Chief Fire Officer informed the Authority of recent key developments and activities. Members took particular note of the work undertaken by the Young Firefighters' Association and of the exceptional sporting achievements of the following members of staff:

- Crew Commander Stephen King;
- Crew Commander Paul Bailey;
- Firefighter Phil Blacker;
- Watch Commander Keith Peters; and
- Firefighter Dave Fenton

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

16. Minutes of Audit and Standards Committee

The Chairman of the Committee reported the proceedings of the Audit Committee meeting held on 16 April 2014.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Audit and Standards Committee meeting held on 16 April 2014 be received and noted.

17. Minutes of the Policy and Resources Committee

The Chairman of the Committee reported the proceedings of the Policy and Resources Committee meeting held on 26 March 2014.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Policy and Resources Committee meeting held on 26 March 2014 be received and noted.

The meeting ended at 12:27pm

Signed:.....
Chairman

Date:.....