



Minutes

Members present:

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

Mr B Bullock, Mrs M Bunker, Mr D Greenow, Mrs L Duffy, Mrs L Eyre, Mr A Hardman, Mrs L Hodgson, Mr B Matthews, Mrs F Oborski, Mrs J Potter, Mr T Spencer, Mr D Taylor, Mr R Udall, and Mr G Yarranton.

No. Item

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Mr T Bean, Mr J Campion, Mr J Cairns, Mrs G Hopkins, Mrs M Lloyd-Hayes, Mr C Smith, Mr K Taylor, Mr J Thomas and Mr P Watts.

2. Declarations of Interest

Mr T Spencer declared an interest in agenda item 7 relating to Members' Allowances Scheme – Carers and Dependents Allowance regarding his wife's medical status.

3. Confirmation of Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 20 June 2012 and the minutes of the Special Meeting held 19 July 2012 be agreed and signed by the Chairman.

4. Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman made the following announcements:

(a) Medals and Awards Ceremonies

The Worcestershire Medals and Awards Ceremony would be held at Worcester Guild Hall at 6 pm on Friday 28 September 2012. Herefordshire Members would be sent an invitation to the Hereford Medals and Awards Ceremony which would be held on Friday 23 November 2012 at 6 pm in Hereford Town Hall.

(b) New Fire Minister for England

A new Fire Minister had been appointed, Brandon Lewis, MP, who replaced Bob Neil as Fire Minister for England as part of the recent coalition government reshuffle. Brandon Lewis was elected as a Conservative MP for Great Yarmouth in 2010 after a career in law and business.

(c) Thank you to Outgoing Members of the Standards Committee

A big thank you was given to the outgoing Chairman, Mr Gething and Vice Chairman, Dr Mylechreest who had loyally served the Fire Authority on the Standards Committee for the last few years. Thanks were also given to the independent members Mr Emeny, Mr Rogers and Mr Stevens. The Chairman told Members that a letter of thanks would be sent by him on behalf of the Authority to each of the above members of the Standards Committee.

5. Questions from Members of the Public

No questions had been received from members of the public.

6. Appointment of Deputy Chief Fire Officer

A report was considered that requested the Authority to ratify the appointment to the post of Deputy Chief Fire Officer, as recommended by the Appointments Committee.

The Chief Fire Officer advised Members that the merits of advertising the Deputy Chief Fire Officer's post had been discussed by the Appointments Committee but it was considered that the Authority already had an excellent and ideally suited candidate and that an external advertisement and process would be unnecessary in terms of expense and managerial and Member time.

Upon the ratification of the appointment Richard Lawrence joined the meeting and Members applauded him on his appointment as the new Deputy Chief Fire Officer. Richard Lawrence thanked Members and commented that he looked forward to working with the Chief and the Authority.

RESOLVED that the Authority appoints Temporary Deputy Chief Fire Officer Richard Lawrence to the substantive post of Deputy Chief Fire Officer.

7. Members' Allowances Scheme – Carers and Dependents Allowance

A report was considered that asked the Authority to consider an additional provision to the existing Members' Allowances Scheme to cover expenditure incurred by Members for the care of their dependents whilst undertaking particular approved duties in line with the Schemes set out by Worcestershire County Council and Herefordshire Council.

The Head of Legal Services presented the report and commented that there appeared to be an oversight in the Fire Authority's current scheme in that it did not include an allowance for carers as was the case for Herefordshire and Worcestershire Councils. Furthermore, he stated that the Authority's Members' Allowances Scheme would be fully reviewed in due course but until this was undertaken it was prudent to include provision for carers and dependents.

RESOLVED that the scheme of Members allowances be amended to include an additional allowance to cover expenditure incurred for the care of dependents as follows:

- i) £6.09 per hour (same rate as Worcestershire County Council);*
- ii) Payable in respect of attendance at meetings of the Authority, its committees and Member training events; and*
- iii) Claims to be made only in respect of care provided by persons other than family members resident in the household and all claims to be evidenced by receipts.*

8. Standards Committee Appointments

A report was considered that requested the Authority to:

1. Appoint a Chairman and Vice-Chairman to the new Standards Committee;
2. Approve amendments to the Terms of Reference for the new Standards Committee;
3. Appoint a panel of 'Independent Persons'; and
4. Delegate authority for granting dispensations.

The Head of Legal Services presented the report and advised Members that whilst the Authority had agreed to retain a Standards Committee at its last meeting there were some items of unfinished business which needed to be resolved.

The appointment of a Chairman and Vice-Chairman was required and the Chairman of the Authority had nominated Mr T Spencer for Chairman and Mrs G Hopkins as Vice-Chairman.

Members were advised that the new Standards Committee would be required to be politically balanced under the Localism Act and to this end Members had before them a list of nominated members from Group Leaders. Also Members' attention was drawn to the fact that whilst the Terms of Reference had previously been agreed, they had been further revised to reflect best practice.

At the last Authority meeting Members had been advised that the Authority would wish to join the Worcestershire Pool of Independent Persons. It was noted that the recruitment process for Independent Persons had been completed and that six persons had been recommended for appointment to the Pool. However, after deliberation, it was considered that if at all possible it would be pertinent to recruit an Independent Person from Herefordshire to add to the list of Independent Persons available to the Authority.

10.45 am Mrs L Eyre entered the meeting at this point.

It was noted that the Localism Act had expanded the criteria for the granting of dispensations. Previously there had been a delegation in place for the Standards Committee to grant dispensations but invariably when a dispensation was required it was too late to convene a meeting of the Standards Committee. It therefore seemed more prudent to change the delegation to the Monitoring Officer for S31(4)a and for S31(4)b c and e of the Localism Act to the Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Independent Person provided that where the Monitoring Officer considers it appropriate to do so he may refer the request to the Standards Committee.

RESOLVED:

- i) The Authority appoints Mr T Spencer as Chairman and Mrs G Hopkins as Vice-Chairman of the Standards Committee.***
- ii) The following Members be appointed to serve on the Standards Committee: Mr T Spencer, Mrs G Hopkins, Mr D Greenow, Mr J Thomas and Mr C Smith.***
- iii) The appointment of two co-opted, non-voting, non-councillor Members of the Standards Committee be delegated to the Head of Legal Services in consultation with the Chairman of the Standards Committee and the Chairman of the Authority.***
- iv) The amended Terms of Reference of the Standards Committee, as attached at Appendix 1 to the report be approved.***
- v) The following individuals be appointed as Independent Persons for the purposes of the members' standards and ethics regime:***
 - David Coulson***
 - James Hipkiss***
 - Catherine Mangan***
 - Raymond Needham***
 - Fred Noble and***
 - David Warner***

And that the Head of Legal Services be given delegated authority to appoint a further Independent Person from Herefordshire.

- vi) The granting of dispensations under Section 33 of the Localism Act 2011 in relation to Members who would otherwise be prevented from participating in matters due to disclosable pecuniary or other interests under the Code of Conduct:***

(a) On the ground (a) Section 33(2) be delegated to the Monitoring Officer.

(b) On all other grounds be delegated to the Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Chairman of Standards Committee and after consultation with the Independent Person PROVIDED that where the Monitoring Officer considers it appropriate to do so he may refer the request to the Standards Committee; and

- vii) The outgoing Standards Committee Chairman and Members be thanked for their Service.***

9. 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 April to 30 June 2012.

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

- During this quarter the Service had attended the lowest number of incidents during the last five years.***
- There had been a 61.9% reduction in the number of secondary fires***

- attended.
- There had been a small increase in the number of chimney fires.
 - There had been a 170% change in the number of flooding incidents attended.
 - With regard to retained availability, 90.5% availability had been achieved during the quarter which was considered to be a very good level of availability.
 - With regard to items of special interest it was noted that the Service had donated one of its former rescue boats to the Young Firefighters' Association. Also it was noted how well the Service's teams had performed in the National Extrication and Trauma Challenge 2012.

RESOLVED that the Chief Fire Officer's Service report be noted.

11.05 am Mr B Bullock entered the meeting at this point.

10. Report from Audit Committee

A report was considered that informed the Authority of the proceedings of the Audit Committee meeting held on 29 June 2012.

RESOLVED that the Authority notes the proceedings of the Audit Committee meeting held on 29 June 2012.

11. 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 5 September 2012.

RESOLVED that the Authority note the proceedings of the Policy and Resources Committee meeting held on 5 September 2012.

The meeting finished at 11.15 am.

Signed: _____
Chairman

Date: _____