



Hereford & Worcester Fire Authority

Policy and Resources Committee

Thursday, 29 November 2018, 10:30

Minutes

Members Present: Mr R C Adams, Mr T D Baker-Price, Mr B Clayton, Dr C A Hotham, Mrs F M Oborski MBE, Mrs J Potter, Mr C B Taylor, Mr P A Tuthill

134 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Eyre, Cllr Fry, Cllr Greenow, Cllr Phillips and Cllr Udall.

135 Named Substitutes

There were no named substitutes for this meeting.

136 Declarations of Interest (if any)

There were no interests declared.

137 Confirmation of Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee held on 12 September 2018 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

138 Budget Monitoring 2018/19 – Quarter 2

The Treasurer informed Members of the current position on budgets and expenditure for 2018/19.

Members were asked to note the projected year end expenditure of £32.962m and the forecast revenue small overspend of £0.013m.

With regard to the revenue budget, Members' attention was drawn to the projected annual variations, in particular the retained pay and non-pay

budget underspends. Members were also assured that there were no issues with the Place Partnership charges that showed as an overspend in Appendix 1 but which reflected expenditure on capital schemes that could not yet be capitalised.

With reference to the capital budget, a Member raised two queries with regard to the vehicle programme:

a. Smaller replacement vehicles for rural areas - the Chief Fire Officer explained that the Service was working with the crews to determine exact requirements for each station and Members would be kept up to date once the tender process had commenced.

b. Command vehicle - the Chief Fire Officer advised that the Service was working closely with Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service to provide two smaller command vehicles but this was delayed due to the preferred Mercedes chassis being currently unavailable.

[Cllr Clayton entered the meeting at 10.41am].

A Member expressed his concern with the drop in retained availability. The Assistant Chief Fire Officer explained that there was a strategy in the next financial budget to resolve this issue and a report would be presented to the Senior Management Board by the end of the year.

RESOLVED that the Committee note:

i. the forecast revenue overspend of £0.013m; and

ii. the continuing budget risk regarding the pay award.

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Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) Interim Update

The Treasurer informed Members that the Authority had recently been notified of proposed changes to the employer contribution rates for Firefighter Pension Schemes which would have a significant impact on future budgets.

The Treasurer explained in detail what the proposed changes could mean to the Authority and that it was important that all Members were fully aware of the situation. He reiterated that the estimated annual cost to the Authority was £1.550m, but this could not be confirmed until individual scheme rates were announced.

The Treasurer also confirmed that information on the grant, business rate

or tax-base would not be expected until January 2019.

A Member queried the figure in paragraph 26, third bullet point of 7.4% and the Treasurer confirmed that it was incorrect and should have read 8.4%. Members were assured that this figure would be corrected in the report.

A query was also raised with regard to the potential impact on the precept and why this was different for other Fire Authorities. It was confirmed that this was because some Fire Authorities derived a higher proportion of their income from government grant than others.

Members requested that this report be presented to the full Fire Authority at the December meeting and time be given for a full debate which was agreed by Officers. Any discussion of this Authority's potential approach towards future precept levels was deferred until then.

RESOLVED that the Committee:

- i. Note the significant potential impact of the proposed increase in Firefighter Pension Scheme employer contributions;**
- ii. Approve that the impact is included in future Budget/MTFP projections; and**
- iii. Recommend that the Fire Authority are fully briefed on the impact of the proposed increase in Firefighter Pension Scheme employer contributions.**

140 Replacement of Hereford Fire Station

Members were asked to approve the delivery of a replacement for Hereford Fire Station at an alternative location to that previously identified and for funding to allow for feasibility and detailed design of the project to be approved from the existing project budget allocation.

The Head of Legal Services clarified to Members at the start of the meeting that at the time of writing the report the Police and Crime Commissioner was negotiating the purchase of an alternative site and had hoped this would have been completed by the time of the meeting. These negotiations were still on-going.

He explained that the flood risk assessment undertaken for the Merton Meadow site highlighted the potential flooding of the area which would impact on operational response and therefore it was recommended that there was no further consideration for this site.

A Member questioned if Place Partnership Limited would be running the

project as he had concern over the length of time for the replacement of Redditch Fire Station. The Head of Legal Services assured Members that he had no concerns over the time the projects had taken and explained that an update report on Redditch Fire Station would be presented to the Committee in the New Year.

RESOLVED that Officers be authorised to proceed with a redevelopment of Hereford Fire Station subject to the new site being secured by West Mercia Police, and that:

i. interest in the Herefordshire Council owned Merton Meadow site is withdrawn;

ii. funding for feasibility and detailed design for the project to the sum of £250,000 is approved; and

iii. subject to the cost to this Authority not exceeding the provision within the existing capital programme, the Chief Fire Officer in consultation with the Treasurer, Head of Legal Services and Chairman of the Authority be authorised to enter into an agreement with the Police & Crime Commissioner for West Mercia (and/or others) to:

a. development a multi-agency facility including new Fire Station, on land at Holmer Road, Hereford;

b. the apportionment of all costs and fees; and

c. determining the future ownership structure.

141 2018-19 Performance Report: Quarters 1-2

Members were provided with a summary of the Service's Quarters 1 and 2 performance against a comprehensive set of Performance Indicators agreed by Senior Management Board.

Concern was expressed over the retained availability at Bewdley and Stourport Stations, although did note that availability had improved at Kidderminster Station. The Assistant Chief Fire Officer explained that this was due to the Watch Commanders having the ability to book themselves onto on call appliances if available.

A Member requested that when comparing sickness the statistics include other Fire Services rather than Councils as this wasn't comparative jobs. The Chief Fire Officer assured Members that Shropshire Fire and Rescue

Service would be included in future statistics.

There was concern over the recent press in the Redditch area with the Service helping patients home from hospital as Members had not been informed. The Chief Fire Officer informed Members that the Service Level Agreement was still being drawn up with the Acute Trust. He explained that the Community Risk team would assist by transporting patients home and then carrying out a Safe and Well Check to ensure their home was safe for their return.

An error was pointed out on page 52 of the agenda in table 14, the figure of 344 should have read 135. Officers assured Members that this would be corrected.

RESOLVED that Members note the following headlines drawn from Appendix 1 relating to performance in Quarters 1-2, 2018-19:

i. A total of 4,070 incidents were attended in Q1-Q2, an increase of 12.5% (453 incidents) over the same Quarters of 2017-18, and 14.5% (273 incidents) higher than the average for the last five years. However, the overall five year trend remains relatively consistent.

ii. The majority of the increase in Q1-Q2 is accounted for by a rise in the numbers of Fire and Special Service incidents, while the number of False Alarm incidents was also up but at a lower rate:

a. Fires: an increase of 19.4% was mainly accounted for by a rise in the number of Secondary Fires (27.9%).

b. Special Services: an increase of 17.9% (144 incidents) was mainly accounted for by increases in the number of Flooding (37), Other Special Services (79) and Assisting other agencies (15) incidents.

c. False Alarms: an increase of 5.5% (93 incidents), the most common automatic activations are at a number of sheltered housing, nursing homes and hospitals.

iii. Overall Staff Sickness levels for Q2 2018-19 were 1.70 days lost per head and was slightly above the 5-year average of 1.61.

iv. The Service attended 57.3% (219 incidents) of Building Fires within 10 minutes in Quarters 1-2, compared with 60.8% in the same

period in 2017-18. The average time for the first fire appliance attendance at all building fires was 10 minutes and 31 seconds.

v. The overall availability of the first On-Call (Retained) fire appliance remains high at 86.38%; however, this has decreased by 3.12% when compared to the same period in 2017-18.

142 Use of Fire Stations to support Homeless People

Members were updated on the potential use of fire stations to support homeless people during cold weather conditions.

Members were advised that after extensive research unfortunately the use of fire stations was not appropriate at this stage due to security and non trained staff. Members thanked Officers for their time in exploring the potential use.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

The Meeting ended at: 11:45

Signed:.....

Date:.....

Chairman