

## Minutes



### **Members present:**

Brigadier P Jones CBE (Chair),  
Mrs. P Andrews, Mr. T Bean, Mrs. M Bunker, Mr. J Campion, Mr. J Cairns,  
Mr. S Clee (Vice Chair), Mrs. L Duffy, Mrs. L Eyre, Mr. J Goodwin, Mr. A  
Hardman, Mrs. L Hodgson, Mrs. G Hopkins, Mrs. F Oborski, Mrs. J Potter, Mr. D  
Prodger MBE, Mr. C Smith, Mr. T Spencer, Mr. D Taylor, Mr. K Taylor, Mr. J  
Thomas, Mr. R Udall, Mr. P Watts and Mr. G Yarranton.

### **No. Item**

#### **1. Apologies for Absence**

The meeting noted the apology from Mr. D Greenow.

#### **2. Declaration of Interests (if any)**

The Chairman invited any Member or Officer to declare an interest in any of the items on this Agenda. The Clerk, Mrs. Anne Brown, and the Treasurer, Mr. Tony Wood, declared a personal and prejudicial interest in item 7 - **Review of the Roles of the Treasurer and the Clerk/Monitoring Officer.**

#### **3. Chairman's Announcements**

##### **3.1 Staff Suggestion Scheme Awards**

The Chairman told the meeting that the Service operated a Staff Suggestion Scheme and presented certificates from the Scheme to Nigel Allbutt and Julia Moore. He said that Certificates would also be presented to Stuart Crebbin and Katherine Baer, who were unable to attend. Mr. Allbutt was also presented with a cheque for £50 for his idea for Improved Scene Lighting for the High Volume Pump Unit.

##### **3.2 Herefordshire Council Elections**

The Chairman told the meeting that elections to Herefordshire Council were scheduled for 5 May 2011 and that following the election the Council would nominate 6 Members to this Authority. The meeting noted that Mr. John Goodwin would not be standing for election and thanked him for all the service he had given to the Authority since his appointment in 2000.

##### **3.3 Members' Bulletin**

A new monthly Members' Bulletin has just started and all Members should have received the February Bulletin.

##### **3.4 Herefordshire Volunteer Launch**

The meeting noted that the launch was scheduled for 6pm at Hereford Fire Station on 16 February 2011.

### **3.5 Agenda item 13 – Budget and Precept**

The Chairman told Members that an additional appendix, 7b, showing potential future precept increases at 3.5%, had been distributed and would be presented by the Treasurer when this Item is considered.

### **3.6 Agenda Item 15 not open to Public or Press**

The Chair told the meeting that the Clerk deemed the report for Agenda item no. 15 to be exempt as it was likely to disclose information relating to the financial or business affairs of the Authority.

## **4 Confirmation of Minutes**

**RESOLVED: *That the minutes of the meeting of the Fire and Rescue Authority held on 17 December 2010 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.

## **6 The Chief Fire Officer's Service Report**

The Chief Fire Officer updated the Authority on recent key developments and activities together with performance information for the period 1 October 2010 to 31 December 2010. He drew Members' attention to the following:

- 6.1** The performance data for quarter 3 2010/11 reflected the exceptionally cold weather experienced in December 2010. The meeting heard that during the period 19 – 31 December the Service responded to 463 incidents compared with 275 and 264 during the same period in 2009 and 2008 respectively. The Service instigated the Severe Weather Protocol on 19 December as attendances at incidents were effected by the dangerous conditions. The Authority agreed to record its thanks to the firefighters for their work on behalf of the community during the spell of severe weather conditions.
- 6.2** There was a 3% decrease in the total number of fires in the Quarter compared with Q3 last year (516 this quarter, compared to 532), despite a 28% increase in the number of chimney fires. The CFO told the meeting that the increase in chimney fires was thought to be weather-related and arising from the type of burners, the materials being burnt and the rural nature of the area covered by the Service.
- 6.3** There was a 24% drop in the number of Road Traffic Collisions attended by the Service compared to Q3 09/10, down to 178 incidents from 234.
- 6.4** The meeting noted the health and safety incidents and injuries recorded for the quarter and the CFO pointed out that most of these incidents occurred during non-operational activity.

**6.5** The CFO pointed out that his Service Report was now shorter as some of the information it formerly contained is now referred to the Policy and Resources Committee, while the incident information was included in the monthly Members' Bulletin. In response to a request from one of the Worcestershire Members it was agreed to examine the possibility of publishing the Bulletin on the Council's Members' portal.

**6.6** A Member raised the proposed Community Right to Challenge contained in the Localism Bill and suggested that the Authority should respond to the CLG consultation in this matter. It was agreed to refer to Group Leaders and consider the Authority's response at the Policy and Resources committee meeting on 24 March 2011.

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

**7 Review of the Roles of the Treasurer and the Clerk/Monitoring Officer**

Mrs Anne Brown, Clerk/Monitoring Officer to the Authority, and Mr. Tony Wood, Treasurer, having both declared a personal and prejudicial interest in this item, left the meeting.

The Chief Fire Officer referred to the interim arrangements agreed by the Authority for Treasurer and Clerk/Monitoring Officer which were due to expire on 31 March 2011. The review of these roles was awaiting the outcome of the Audit Commission's report which was expected earlier but was still outstanding. In these circumstances the CFO recommended to the Authority that their appointments be extended.

**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 30 September 2011 or until the completion of the review and finalisation of permanent arrangements, whichever is the earlier.**

**8 Proposed minor amendments to Constitutional Arrangements**

The Clerk told the meeting that the review of Committee structures and terms of reference agreed by the Authority in September 2010 were in place and working well. However, a number of minor amendments were required to improve the Authority's constitutional arrangements. She explained the issues, which concerned the Urgent Decisions process and the Terms of Reference of the Policy and Resources Committee regarding audit matters.

**RESOLVED:**

- i) That the use of the Urgent Decision process be reported back to the actual decision-making committee or to the FRA.**
- ii) That paragraph 2 in the Terms of Reference of the Policy and Resources Committee, regarding Audit matters, be deleted.**

**9 The Independent Members of the Standards Committee**

The Clerk told the meeting that the term of appointment of the Independent Members of the Standards Committee was due to expire by the date of the Authority's AGM (22 June).

Given the Government's stated intention to abolish the Standards regime, she recommended that the term of appointment be extended, rather than incurring the costs involved in making new appointments to the Standards Committee. She further told the meeting that in recognition of the uncertain future, Standards for England had issued guidance permitting such extensions.

**RESOLVED that the Authority extends the term of appointment of the Independent Members of the Standards Committee until 30 June 2012 or until the Standards Committee is disbanded, whichever is the sooner.**

**10 Audit Committee Report**

Mr. Derek Prodger, Chairman of the Audit Committee, presented the report to the Authority of the proceedings of the Audit Committee Meeting held on 26 January and requested Members to note the Annual Audit letter.

**RESOLVED that the report be noted.**

**11 Policy and Resources Committee Report**

Mr. Adrian Hardman, Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee, presented the report to the Authority of the proceedings of the Committee Meeting held on 28 January 2011.

**RESOLVED that the report be noted.**

**12 Urgent Decision No. 01/10**

The Chief Fire Officer informed the Authority that following the Government's statement that the Regional Control Centre would not proceed any further. The Urgent Decision procedure was used on 16 December 2010 to permit the Service to go to tender for a replacement mobilising system.

**RESOLVED that the report be noted.**

**13 Budget and Precept 2011/12 and Medium Term Financial Plan**

The Treasurer detailed to Members the Revenue and Capital Budgets for 2011/12 and the consequential Council Tax Precept. He also presented the Prudential Indicators and the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) policy for 2011/12.

The Treasurer told the Meeting that in December 2010 the FRA considered the 2011/12 budget based on the provisional grant settlement, in conjunction with the Service need. The Policy and Resources Committee considered further progress at its meeting in January 2011 and in addition, a workshop was held for all Members in that month to ensure the widest and most up-to-date information was given to Members.

The budget and medium term financial strategy outlined in this report was based on the paper received and discussion at the Policy and Resources Committee meeting in January 2011. However, since the papers for this meeting had been issued the Secretary for State had set the Council Tax “capping” limit at an increase of 3.5%. As this was higher than the 2.5% limit anticipated by the Authority when preparing the budget the Treasurer tabled an additional Appendix (7b) detailing the option of future precept increases at 3.5%.

It was proposed, seconded and **RESOLVED that the Authority:**

- **Approve the Capital Budget and Programme of £4.42m, as set out at Appendix 5;**
- **Approve the Statement of Prudential Code Indicators set out in Appendix 8;**
- **Approve the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) policy for 2011-12 as set out in Appendix 9;**
- **Approve the Revenue Budget, with a Net Budget Requirement of £31.195m and consequential Net Precept Requirement of 20,757,487.07, as set out in Appendix 6; and**
- **Approve the MTFs as set out in appendix 7b with no increase in council tax precept for 2011/12 and increases for the next 3 years at 3.5%.**

(The Authority voted on the above proposals, with 23 Members in favour and one abstaining.)

The Members thanked the Treasurer and other officers of the Authority for the work in preparing the budget and the presentations to the Authority, the Policy and Resources Committee and the Members’ Seminar in January.

- 14 In the opinion of the Clerk to the Authority, the meeting will not be, or is likely not to be, open to the public and press at the time item 15 is considered, for the reason stated:**

The Clerk told the Authority that in her opinion the meeting should not be open to the public and press at the time item 15 was considered, as it disclosed information relating to the financial or business affairs of the authority.

**RESOLVED that the public and the press be excluded from the Meeting for the consideration of Item number 15: Fire Control Project Update.**

- 15 Fire Control Project Update**

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer informed Members of the Government’s decision on 16 December 2010 to terminate the national FiReControl Project and updated the Authority on key issues which had to be addressed following this announcement.

The DCFO's report to the meeting addressed the following matters:

- Proposals for replacement control systems and the business case for same;
- Proposals for enhanced collaborative arrangements with Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service;
- The Impact upon West Midlands Regional Fire Control Local Authority Controlled Company; and
- The CLG consultation document: 'The future of Fire and Rescue Control Services in England'.

In response to queries the DCFO told the meeting:

- That the proposed collaboration with Shropshire FRS was coterminous with West Mercia Police and the Local Resilience Forum;
- That the Service's current control system was already well beyond the replacement date (in use 5 years longer than originally programmed);
- That the Authority's draft response to the CLG consultation document: '*The future of Fire and Rescue Control Services in England*' would be considered by the Policy and Resources Committee; and
- That the proposals in the report would be implemented in 2 phases:
  1. Replacement control and mobilise system for HWFRS (by January 2012).
  2. Collaboration to move to a single Control Resilience infrastructure with Shropshire FRS.

**RESOLVED that the Authority:**

- i. Note the contents of this report;***
- ii. Approve the allocation of a budget in line with the attached business case to support the early procurement of a new Command and Control system;***
- iii. Support proposals for enhanced collaborative arrangements with Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service, and authorise the Chief Fire Officer and Authority Chairman to sign a formal memorandum of understanding to support this commitment;;***
- iv. Note the contents of this report concerning the impact of the termination of the Fire Control Project on the future of the West Midlands Regional Fire Control Local Authority Controlled Company;***
- v. Endorse the decision of the Board of Directors on 28 January 2011 that the RCC Local Authority Company should close down all of its activities and become dormant for a short period of time; and***

- vi. Authorise the Chairman, in consultation with the Chief Fire Officer, to determine whether to support the dissolution of the Company once satisfactory agreement has been reached with the Government and the other Fire and Rescue Authorities in the region on the use of uncommitted regional Fire Control grant and other assets.***

The meeting finished at 12.06 pm

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

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