



Hereford & Worcester Fire Authority

Full Authority

Wednesday, 15 February 2017, 10:30

Minutes

Members Present: Mr R C Adams, Mr A Amos, Mr B A Baker, Ms L R Duffy, Mr A Fry, Ms K S Guthrie, Mr Al Hardman, Ms R E Jenkins, Mr J L V Kenyon, Mr R I Matthews, Mrs F M Oborski MBE, Mr R J Phillips, Mr D W Prodger MBE, Professor J W Raine, Mr C B Taylor, Mr J W R Thomas, Mr P A Tuthill, Mr G J Vickery, Mr S D Williams

Substitutes:

Absent:

Apologies for Absence: Ms P Agar, Mr S C Cross, Mrs E Eyre BEM, Mrs A T Hingley, Mr R M Udall

Councillor Mr Roger Phillips - Non-Pecuniary

118 Declarations of Interest (if any)

In relation to agenda item 8 (Minute 123 - Pay Policy Statement) Mr R J Phillips declared he was the Chairman of the Local Government Pension Scheme Advisory Board and the Vice-Chairman of the Local Government NJC Employers.

119 Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman welcomed Chief Fire Officer Rod Hammerton and Councillor Stuart West, Chairman of Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service and announced that himself and the Chief Fire Officer would be attending Shropshire's Authority meeting on 22 February 2017.

The Chairman also welcomed the Police and Crime Commissioner John Campion to the meeting.

He then informed the Authority of the following events:

- The official opening of Evesham Fire Station taking place on

Thursday 16 March 2017. All Members are invited to attend.

- Further meeting with John Campion confirmed that the PCC is commencing work on the preparation of a business case with reference to the future governance of the fire and rescue service. The PCC has appointed consultants to work on the business case and we will be imputing into that process.
- This was his last Authority meeting as Chairman before he retires in May and closing remarks would be at the end of the meeting.

120 Confirmation of Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Fire Authority held on 15 December 2016 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

121 Budget and Precept 2017/18 and Medium Term Financial Plan

The Treasurer presented a report that informed Members of the current position in relation to budgets for 2017/18 and beyond.

Following consideration by the Policy and Resources Committee on 25 January 2017, it was recommended that:

- a. the 2017/18 precept increase is set at £1.53 per year at Band D;
- b. future years' planning should assume an annual precept increase of 1.96%.; and
- c. the Budget Reduction Reserve is used to smooth the budget gap in transition to planned efficiency savings.

Members were informed that the Home Office had accepted the Efficiency Plan submitted by the Authority, without any questions or required amendment, and therefore future grant can be relied upon.

The Treasurer informed the meeting that the Government had not yet formally approved the settlement grant, therefore the 2016 position had been maintained.

Members were reminded that the Policy and Resources Committee had yet to recommend how to deploy the managed in-year underspending.

The Treasurer highlighted the budget risks and drew Members' attention to his Personal Assurance Statement.

[Councillor Jenkins entered the meeting at 10.45am].

Members requested an update on the new Hereford Fire Station and were grateful to hear the project was on track.

Members expressed their concern over the Government's reform of business rates and the impact it would have on the financial structure.

The Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee reminded Members that the Medium Term Financial Plan had been considered at their meeting in January and the sensible approach was to increase the annual precept by 1.96%.

RESOLVED that:

i) the Capital Budget and Programme (Appendix 1 of the report) be approved;

ii) the Revenue Budget (Appendix 4 of the report) be approved;

iii) the Authority calculates that in relation to the year 2017/18:

a) the aggregate expenditure it will incur will be £32,965,000.00;

b) the aggregate income it will receive will be £10,187,950.00;

c) the net amount transferred from financial reserves will be £903,278.00;

d) the net collection fund surplus is £237,704.00;

e) the net amount of its Council Tax Requirement will be £21,636,068.00;

f) the basic amount of Council Tax will be £79.53 (Band D);

g) the precept demands on the individual Billing Authorities are:

- Bromsgrove £2,867,585.35**
- Herefordshire £5,376,085.62**
- Malvern Hills £2,386,370.81**
- Redditch £2,028,739.51**
- Worcester £2,476,643.72**
- Wychavon £3,873,448.98**
- Wyre Forest £2,627,194.01**

iv) the Medium Term Financial Plan (Appendix 5 of the report) and Reserves strategy be approved; and

v) the Statement of Prudential Indicators and Minimum Revenue Provision Policy (Appendix 8 of the report) be approved.

Review of Crewing Levels

Members were informed of the outcome of a review of crewing levels undertaken following the previous decision made by the Authority that standard crewing for all fire engines be 4 firefighters.

The Authority had allocated £0.8m to temporarily maintain a crew of 5 on wholetime based fire engines. This temporary arrangement had now come to an end and the Service was now able to confidently revert to the previously agreed crewing level of 4 on wholetime appliances.

Members were also advised that a review of crewing systems was underway with the objective of increasing resilience across the Service and providing crewing models that that could provide for a crew of 5 on the first appliance at Kidderminster, Redditch, Bromsgrove, Malvern, Evesham and Droitwich on as many occasions as possible at no additional cost to the Service and with no change to service provision.

[Councillor Raine entered the meeting at 11:09am].

Members asked if the review could be undertaken quickly and were advised that it was dependent on the liaising of staff and representative bodies, but all efforts would be made to complete the review at the earliest possible time.

Members queried the crewing levels of other Fire Authorities and were informed that it varied considerably. Members were reminded that the decision had been made by the Authority based on the Service's Community Risk Management Plan.

At the end of the discussions, Members approved the recommendation with a slight amendment to add clarity.

RESOLVED

1. It be noted that:

- i. the temporary period of enhanced standard crewing levels of 5 on all first fire engines whenever possible has now come to an end;**
- ii. the £0.8m provided for the 2 year period to support this initiative is now exhausted;**
- iii. a review of crewing systems is underway with the objective of**

increasing resilience across the Service and providing crewing models that can provide for a crew of 5 on the first appliance at Kidderminster, Redditch, Bromsgrove, Malvern, Evesham and Droitwich on as many occasions as possible at no additional cost to the Service and with no change to service provision; and

2. All efforts be made to complete the above review at the earliest possible time.

123 Pay Policy Statement

Members were advised of the requirement for the Service to publish its annual Pay Policy Statement for the year 2017/18.

Members were informed that it was a requirement that the Authority's approach to pay, as set out in the Pay Policy Statement, was accessible for citizens and enables local taxpayers to take an informed view of whether local decisions on all aspects of remuneration are fair and make best use of public funds.

RESOLVED that the Pay Policy Statement and supporting information be approved for publication.

124 Members' Allowances Scheme 2017/18

Members were asked to consider whether to make any alterations to the Members' Allowances Scheme for 2017/18 in light of the small change in the Consumer Price Index to December 2016.

The Office of National Statistics reported that the CPI rose by 1.6% in the year to December 2016, however Members proposed there be no change to the level of Members' Allowances for 2017/18.

RESOLVED that there be no change to the level of Members' Allowances for 2017/18.

125 Update on Collaborative Working

Members were provided with an update on the existing, and developing, collaborative work being undertaken by the Service with other organisations.

Members were advised that the Service would continue to seek out effective opportunities with partners that provide increased public value, for example, by enhancing resilience of a function/service or increasing

value for money.

Members expressed their wish to receive details of the savings and benefits identified.

Members queried partnership working with West Midlands Ambulance Service and were pleased that the Service was continuing to engage with them.

Members also expressed their concern over the mobile phone signal in certain areas of the two counties, particularly as the Joint Operations and Communications Centre at Hindlip Park would be relying on this. Officers advised that there was a national programme underway to enhance coverage.

RESOLVED that the following, in particular, be noted:

- i. The Service has a history of effective collaboration and partnership working and is engaged in a wide range and variety of collaborative opportunities.**
- ii. The Service is continuing to seek out effective opportunities with partners that provide increased public value.**
- iii. Continued close working with police colleagues and partners may provide additional and currently unidentified longer-term efficiency benefits for both organisations.**
- iv. The existing governance arrangements within the Service support both the development and evaluation of collaborative opportunities and enable the prioritisation of work and the allocation of appropriate resources.**

126 Chief Fire Officer's Service Report

The Chief Fire Officer informed the Authority of recent key developments and activities, which included:

- New Evesham Fire Station
- The New Policing and Crime Act 2017
- Home Safety Checks for Syrian Refugees

Members queried the use of interpreters for the Home Safety Checks of the Syrian refugees and Officers confirmed that they were made available

through Refugee Action. Members thanked the Service for helping the refugees.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

127 Minutes of the Audit and Standards Committee

The Chairman of the Committee reported the proceedings of the Audit and Standards Committee meeting held on 18 January 2017. Members were advised that the Authority had four full assurances from Internal Audit and this was extremely positive. The Annual Audit Letter was attached to the minutes for Members' information.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Audit and Standards Committee meeting held on 18 January 2017 be received and noted.

128 Minutes of the Policy and Resources Committee

The Chairman of the Committee reported the proceedings of the Policy and Resources Committee meeting held on 25 January 2017 and thanked Councillor Prodger MBE for having him as Chairman of the Committee.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Policy and Resources Committee meeting held on 25 January 2017 be received and noted.

129 Chairman's Closing Remarks

This was the Chairman's last meeting before he retires in May.

He informed Members that he had enjoyed his time as Chairman for the past 6 years, had served on the Fire Authority since 1997 and had served on the Fire and Public Protection Committee prior to this. He thanked Members, Officers and Committee Services for their support during his time as Chairman.

Members thanked him for his excellent work as Chairman, his leadership and strong ethics and informed him that he was leaving the Authority extremely well managed.

The Chairman is officially opening the new Evesham Fire Station on 16 March 2017 and invited all Members to attend.

The Meeting ended at: 12:31

Signed:.....

Date:.....

Chairman