



Minutes

Members present:

Herefordshire:

Brigadier P Jones CBE, (Vice-Chair), Mrs M Lloyd-Hayes, Mr B Matthews, Mr D C Taylor and Mr P Watts.

Worcestershire:

(Chair) Mr D W Prodger MBE, Mr R Adams, Mr M Broomfield, Mr S Cross, Mrs L Duffy, Mr A Fry, Mr P Gretton, Mr P Grove, Mrs A Hingley, Mrs F M Oborski, Mr S R Peters, Prof J W Raine, Mr C Taylor, Mr K Taylor, Mr P Tuthill and Mr R Udall.

No. Item

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P Agar, A Amos, A Hardman, R Jenkins and P Sinclair-Knipe.

2. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

3. Confirmation of Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Fire and Rescue Authority held on 18 June 2013 be agreed and signed by the Chairman.

4. Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman made the following announcements:

1. Chief Fire Officer

Members were advised that the Chief Fire Officer had recently been suffering from a painful back complaint which had been diagnosed as a prolapsed disc which necessitated surgery being undertaken on 1 October 2013. The Chief Fire Officer had intended to attend the meeting today to lead on the important strategic issues being considered. It was anticipated that the Chief Fire Officer would be working from home initially and would be back at his desk in around 3

to 4 weeks. His operational role was currently being covered by the Deputy and Assistant Chief Fire Officers and the Deputy Chief Fire Officer would be deputising for the Chief Fire Officer at the meeting today.

The Chairman would convey Members' best wishes to the Chief Fire Officer.

2. Strike Action

Members were updated on the current strike action that was affecting the Fire & Rescue Service as a result of the firefighters' pension dispute between the Government and the Fire Brigades Union. Members were advised that at agenda item 10 the Deputy Chief Fire Officer would provide Members with an overview of the contingency arrangements that were in place across the two counties. The Chairman commended all members of staff for the way in which they had handled the strike.

3. Worcestershire Medals and Awards Ceremony

The Worcestershire Medals and Awards Ceremony had been held on Friday 20 September 2013 at the Guildhall in Worcester. Members were advised that it had been a very positive event where members of staff were recognized for long service and meritorious acts. The Service had also given awards to members of the public who had put others' safety ahead of their own. The event had been attended by local dignitaries including the Lord Lieutenant, High Sheriff and the Mayor of Worcester.

4 Communication – Members

Members were reminded to check emails regularly as this was the main form of communication used by the Authority. Members were also reminded that if they had changed their email address to let Committee Services know so that their records could be updated.

5 Public Participation

No applications to participate in the meeting had been received from members of the public.

6 Community Risk Management Plan 2014-2020

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer presented a report that gave details of the draft Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) 2014-2020. An addendum to Appendix 1 of the report was circulated around the table.

The report recommended that the CRMP be issued for consultation for a period of 12 weeks, subject to approval by the Fire and Rescue Authority.

An amendment to the recommendation contained within the report was proposed by Councillor R Udall, Leader of the Labour Group as follows:

“Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Authority requests the Chief Fire Officer to write to all Members of Parliament for the two counties seeking their support to urge the Secretary of State to reverse the funding cuts to the Fire Authority which are having such a harmful and damaging impact on our ability to provide operational fire cover within the two counties.”

Upon a vote the amendment was not supported.

RESOLVED that the draft Community Risk Management Plan 2014-2020 be approved for consultation.

7 Potential Combination with Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer presented a report that sought approval for the Chief Fire Officer to progress discussions with Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service regarding future options for combination.

A lengthy debate ensued on the merits of the proposal to enter into discussions with Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service. However Members perceived that they required further information before they could support Officers entering into such discussions.

RESOLVED that the matter be deferred until the next meeting of the Fire and Rescue Authority.

8 Appointment of Chair of Young Firefighters' Association (YFA) Executive Committee

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer presented a report that asked the Fire and Rescue Authority to appoint a Member of the Authority to be Chair of the Young Firefighters' Association (YFA) Executive Committee.

The Leader of the Labour Group proposed that Councillor A Fry be appointed and the Vice-Chairman of the Authority proposed that Councillor A Hingley be appointed.

Upon a vote the proposal that Councillor A Hingley be appointed as Chair of the YFA Executive Committee was supported by a majority of Members present.

RESOLVED that Councillor Anne Hingley be appointed to be the Chair of the Young Firefighters' Association Executive Committee.

9 Annual Statement of Assurance

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer presented a report that asked the Authority to adopt the draft Statement of Assurance 2013-14 and approve it for publication.

RESOLVED that the Authority adopts the draft Statement of Assurance 2013-14 and approves it for publication.

10 Chief Fire Officer's Service Report

Prior to considering the Chief Fire Officer's report the Deputy Chief Fire Officer gave members an update on the recent strike action which had taken place. Members were advised that the situation was ongoing and the dispute between the Government and the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) was continuing. It was noted that during the four hours of strike action on 25 September 2013 there were only 4 fire calls of which two calls were challenged and two were attended. Relationships with staff and the local community however remained positive.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer presented the Chief Fire Officer's Service report that informed the Authority of recent key developments and activities. The report also proposed that in the future Members be provided with more timely and appropriate Service information and that the details provided in the report should instead be provided via the Members' Bulletin with enhanced notification of any significant operational matters.

Members discussed the merits of receiving information via the Members' Bulletin and preferred instead that they continue to receive a Chief Fire Officer's Service report at meetings of the Authority.

RESOLVED that: (i) the report be noted.

(ii) Chief Fire Officer's Service Reports to continue to be reported to Authority Meetings.

11 Amendment to Scheme of Delegation to Officers

The Monitoring Officer presented a report that advised the Authority of a proposed change to the Scheme of Delegations to Officers.

A Member requested that all delegated decisions be reported back to the Authority in the Chief Fire Officer's Service Report. Following discussion on this matter it was agreed that this would be an item for discussion at a future Group Leaders' meeting.

RESOLVED that the Scheme of Delegations to Officers be amended to authorise the Chief Fire Officer to approve early retirements, in consultation with the Chairman and Treasurer in the case of employees whose salary is less than £45,000 and where the pension costs do not exceed £45,000.

12 Report from Policy and Resources Committee

The Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee presented a report that advised the Fire Authority of the proceedings of the Policy and

Resources Committee meeting held on 4 September 2013.

RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted.

13 Report from Audit and Standards Committee

The Chairman of the Audit and Standards Committee presented a report that advised the Fire Authority of the proceedings of the Audit and Standards Committee meeting held on 26 September 2013.

Members' attention was drawn to the fact that the Authority's external auditors had issued an unqualified opinion on the accounts which had been approved. The improvement made by officers in the paperwork submitted for approval of the accounts was noted and Members were advised that the Draft Annual Governance Statement 2012/13 had also been approved.

RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted.

The meeting finished at 12.45 pm

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Chairman