



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FIRE AUTHORITY held on Wednesday, 26 April 2017 at Lecture Theatre - Fire Service Headquarters, Winsford, Cheshire at 10.30 am**

**PRESENT:** Councillors D Bailey, P Booher, A Dirir, D Flude, P Harris, E Johnson, D Mahon, D Marren, J Mercer, K Mundry, S Nelson, R Polhill, S Parker, B Rudd, J Saunders, T Sherlock, M Tarr and S Wright

**1 PROCEDURAL MATTERS**

**A Recording of Meeting**

Members were reminded that the meeting would be audio-recorded.

**B Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Councillors H Deynem, G Merry, L Morgan, M Simon, J Weatherill and the Police and Crime Commissioner for Cheshire – David Keane.

**C Chair's Announcements**

The Chair informed Members of the proposal to move the annual meeting of the Fire Authority back by one week to 21<sup>st</sup> June 2017.

The Chair asked Members to note the content of the Chair's announcements which included details of the Authority's achievements and events Members had attended since the last Fire Authority meeting in February 2017.

**RESOLVED: That**

**[1] the annual meeting of the Fire Authority be moved back by one week, from 14<sup>th</sup> June 2017 to 21<sup>st</sup> June 2017.**

**D Declaration of Members' Interests**

Item 5 – The Living Wage

Councillor Flude disclosed a Non-Statutory Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in relation to Item 5 – The Living Wage.

**E Minutes of Fire Authority**

**RESOLVED:**

**That the minutes of the meeting of the Fire Authority held on 14<sup>th</sup> February 2017 be approved as a correct record.**

**F Minutes of Performance and Overview Committee**

The meeting of the Performance and Overview Committee scheduled for 19<sup>th</sup> April 2017 was cancelled.

**G Minutes of Governance and Constitution Committee**

The meeting of the Governance and Constitution Committee scheduled for 12<sup>th</sup> April 2017 was cancelled.

**H Minutes of Brigade Managers' Pay and Performance Committee**

**RESOLVED:**

**That the minutes of the Brigade Managers' Pay and Performance Committee held on 29<sup>th</sup> March 2017 be received, for information.**

**I Minutes of Staffing Committee**

**RESOLVED:**

**That the minutes of the Staffing Committee meeting held on 29<sup>th</sup> March 2017 be received, for information.**

**J Notes of the Member Training and Development Group**

**RESOLVED:**

**That the notes of the Member Training and Development Group meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> March 2017 be received, for information.**

**K Notes of Risk Management Board**

**RESOLVED:**

**That the notes of the Risk Management Board meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> March 2017 be received, for information.**

**L Updated Scheme of Delegation**

The Director of Governance and Commissioning informed Members that, due to departures from the Service and the Blue Light Collaboration Programme, necessary changes to job roles had occurred. The Scheme of Delegation had been updated to reflect these changes and brought to Members for approval.

**RESOLVED:**

**That the changes to the Scheme of Delegation be approved.**

## **2 EXTERNAL AUDIT PLAN AND UPDATE IN RESPECT OF THE AUTHORITY'S ACCOUNTS FOR 2016-17**

The Chair introduced Perminder Sethi, the Authority's relationship manager from Grant Thornton (the External Auditor), who was in attendance at the meeting to present the External Audit Plan (the Plan) for 2016-17.

The External Auditor provided an overview of the Plan. The Plan explained the criteria used to help arrive at the Auditor's value for money conclusion and the audit fee for the work for 2016-17. It also included the results of the interim work undertaken by the Auditor and the audit timeline for 2016-17.

Members thanked the External Auditor for the report. A Member highlighted the risk of management over-riding controls and asked what was in place to ensure compliance by management with internal and EU procurement rules. The External Auditor informed Members that audits associated with compliance were risk-based considering areas of specific concern. Based on the evidence provided by the Service, the External Auditor confirmed that no concerns were currently associated with procurement.

### **RESOLVED: That**

**[1] the External Audit Plan in respect of the Authority's accounts for 2016-17 be noted; and**

**[2] the audit fee of £29,860 for 2016-17 be approved.**

## **3 INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN 2017-18**

Kevin Lloyd, the Internal Auditor from Mersey Internal Audit Agency (MIAA), presented the report to Members which contained the proposed Internal Audit Plan (the Plan) for 2017-18.

The Internal Auditor referred Members to the one page summary of the Plan which provided an overview of how it had been developed and how MIAA would deliver the Authority's internal audit services in 2017-18. He then referred Members to the section of the Plan on coverage and provided an overview of the operational plan (Appendix A to the report). He concluded by informing Members that the coverage of the plan remained flexible, accommodating for the progression of the Blue Light Collaboration Programme and any new risks arising from it.

A Member queried how the risk of management over-riding controls was monitored by Internal Audit and how the Authority could be sure that the procurement regime was working properly. The Internal Auditor informed Members that an assessment of procurement procedures had not been included in this year's plan but could be added if Members wished. The Director of Governance and Commissioning informed Members that he worked closely with the Service's Head of Procurement to ensure compliance.

The Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive referred Members to the section of the report on business continuity and informed Members that a business continuity exercise was taking place on 17<sup>th</sup> May 2017 which would be assessed by MIAA. He also referred Members to the section of the report on equality and diversity in relation to recruitment and informed Members that 25% of the latest intake of firefighters were female and that raising this percentage further remained a high priority for the Service.

**RESOLVED: That**

**[1] the Internal Audit Plan for 2017-18 be approved.**

**4 CHESHIRE AND WARRINGTON PUBLIC SERVICE REFORM STRATEGY 2017-2020**

The Head of Policy and Inclusion presented the report to Members which contained the Sub-Regional Public Service Reform Strategy 2017-2020 (the Strategy).

The Strategy had been developed collectively by the sub-regional partners and set out how the partners aimed to take action in relation to individuals with the most complex needs and how they intended to improve the wellbeing and prosperity of all of Cheshire's communities. He referred Members to the three overarching themes within the Strategy: health and wellbeing; complex dependency; and enablers. Within each of these themes were a number of sub-headings containing information on activities and projects.

A Member referred the Authority to the section of the Strategy on health and wellbeing and commented that suicide was rising within the sub-region. She highlighted that this was an important concern for the Authority as firefighters were often in attendance at the incidents involving suicide and that this may have an impact on their mental health. She also highlighted concerns for other vulnerable groups that were raised in the Strategy and welcomed the document for providing the regional position on these issues.

**RESOLVED: That**

**[1] the report be noted.**

**5 THE LIVING WAGE**

The Director of Governance and Commissioning reminded Members that Councillor Flude had declared a Non-Statutory Pecuniary Interest in the item and that normally she would be expected to leave the room for the item. As Councillor Flude's interest only extended to the question of whether the Living Wage should be paid to apprentices he suggested that provided she did not take part in the debate or vote on that issue she should be able to remain for the other aspects of the item.

The Director of Governance and Commissioning introduced the report which allowed Members to determine the Authority's policy in relation to the Living Wage. He informed Members of the current hourly rates for both operational and non-

operational staff and that no one was currently paid below the Living Wage (apart from apprentices). He also informed Members of the current rates paid to the Authority's apprentices – 26% above the National Minimum Wage for their age. The majority of apprentices were currently being paid at £4.41 (the Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service Apprentice Rate for those under 19 and in the first year of their apprenticeship).

A Member queried whether the Authority would have to reduce the intake of apprentices to cover the additional costs if they were paid the Living Wage.

The Director of Transformation informed Members that the current target for the public sector was for apprentices to make up 2.3% of the workforce, which equated to 20 apprentices a year for the Authority – a target the Service was currently working towards. She informed Members that the Service was currently looking at extending apprenticeships to Green Book (non-operational) posts.

Members discussed the options within the report and then moved to vote on the recommendations. In accordance with section 4.44 of the Authority's constitution a request was made that the voting should be recorded to show how each Member present, and voting, cast their vote or whether he/she abstained. The voting was recorded as follows:

For: Councillors Bailey, Booher, Dirir, Harris, Mercer, Mundry, Nelson, Polhill, Rudd, Sherlock, Tarr and Wright.

Against: Councillors Marren, Parker and Saunders.

Councillors Johnson and Mahon abstained.

Councillor Flude did not take part in the debate, nor vote.

**RESOLVED: That**

- [1] the Authority commit to pay staff (including apprentices) no less than the Living Wage and include apprentices within this commitment; and**
- [2] the Authority will, where appropriate, encourage other employers to pay the Living Wage. With this in mind the Authority will ensure that, wherever possible, the procurement activity that it carries out involves suitable engagement with contractors about the Living Wage.**

**6 SCOPE OF CREWE AND ELLESMERE PORT DUTY SYSTEM REVIEW**

The Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive introduced the report which allowed Members to consider and approve the scope of the review of the duty system for the second fire engine at Crewe and Ellesmere Port.

He referred Members to paragraphs 9 to 12 of the report which contained details of the review and explained that this report was the first element of that review. He informed Members that officers believed that the scope of the review should be

focused and externally validated. The following matters were suggested by officers within the report for the focus of the review:

- An assessment of the current and emerging risks;
- An analysis of current and anticipated activity levels (broken down into day and night) and set against current performance against the ten-minute response standard for life-risk incidents; and
- An analysis of the types of incident dealt with.

Appendix 2 to the report contained an extract from the Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive's correspondence to Members outlining details of the review process. He informed Members that a significant part of the Members' Planning Day scheduled for 13<sup>th</sup> July 2017 would be dedicated to this issue. Officers would present the outcomes/findings and highlight the implications of any alternative crewing arrangements to those originally envisaged in the Emergency Response Review.

A Member informed the Authority that he, alongside another Member, was in regular contact with the Head of Service Delivery to enable them to feed their expectations into the review. He queried whether a review into the duty system at Wilmslow, as mentioned at the Authority's February meeting, had been commissioned. The Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive referred Members to page 23 of the Integrated Risk Management Plan which mentioned that a review would be undertaken and brought back to Members in due course.

A Member queried what the expected procurement costs of externally validating the scope of the review were estimated to be. The Director of Governance and Commissioning informed Members that he did not expect the costs to be significant for this process notwithstanding the very limited field of experts able to carry out the review.

A Member queried whether a review would take place over the removal of the appliance at Chester. The Chair informed Members that the new station at Powey Lane, where the second appliance had been moved to, provided cover to Chester. He also informed Members that the position of the new station at Powey Lane aided the Service's ability to respond to rescue and road traffic incidents. The Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive referred Members to Item 1E of the agenda containing the minutes of the Fire Authority meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> February 2017. He referred Members to Section 4 of the minutes – the Integrated Risk Management Plan 2017-18 (IRMP 14) which indicated that a review of the arrangement would be undertaken by officers throughout the year and reported back to the Performance and Overview Committee.

Members thanked the Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive and welcomed the content of the report. A Member thanked officers for the work that had been achieved since 2013 and was pleased that the changing demographics of Crewe would be factored in to the review. She also welcomed the opportunity to work alongside the Head of Service Delivery throughout this process.

The Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive informed Members that the Authority had a duty to ensure the right level of resource was available throughout the county. He informed Members that further detail on how the Service ensured this cover could be provided at the July Planning Day. He explained that the National Framework required the Authority to hold the Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive to account for operational arrangements. He reassured Members that under no circumstances would he put options forward that would jeopardise the safety of members of the public or firefighters.

**RESOLVED: That**

- [1] the scope of the review concerned with the duty system for the second fire engine at Crewe and Ellesmere Port be approved; and**
- [2] officers should arrange for the review to be externally validated.**