



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FIRE AUTHORITY held on Wednesday, 12 December 2018 at Lecture Theatre - Sadler Road, Winsford, Cheshire at 10.30 am

PRESENT: Councillors B Rudd, D Bailey, D Beckett, M Biggin, B Dooley, D Flude, P Harris, G Hayes, E Johnson, N Jones, D Mahon, J Mercer, G Merry, K Mundry, S Nelson, S Parker, R Polhill, T Sherlock, M Simon, M Tarr, J Weatherill 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 for absence were received from Councillor M Barker and Police and Crime Commissioner, David Keane.

C Chair's Announcements

The Chair advised that former firefighter John Pugh had sadly passed away on 6th October 2018, aged 68. John joined the Fire Service in August 1978, serving at Ellesmere Port and Stockton Heath Fire Stations before becoming a Targeted Youth Support Leader. He was most recently an Early Intervention Advocate on secondment to Cheshire West and Chester Council.

A minute's silence was observed at the meeting.

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

Members were shown a DVD which provided a review of this year's major events and achievements.

D Declaration of Members' Interests

There were no declarations of Members' interest.

E Minutes of Fire Authority

RESOLVED: That

the minutes of the Fire Authority meeting held on Wednesday 19th September 2018 be approved as a correct record.

F Minutes Brigade Managers' Pay and Performance Committee

RESOLVED: That

the minutes of the Brigade Managers' Pay and Performance Committee held on Wednesday 31st October 2018 be confirmed as a correct record.

G Minutes Staffing Committee

RESOLVED: That

the minutes of the Staffing Committee held on Wednesday 31st October 2018 be confirmed as a correct record.

H Minutes Governance and Constitution Committee

RESOLVED: That

the minutes of the Governance and Constitution Committee held on Wednesday 14th November 2018 be confirmed as a correct record.

I Minutes Performance and Overview Committee

RESOLVED: That

the minutes of the Performance and Overview Committee held on Wednesday 28th November 2018 be confirmed as a correct record.

J Notes Risk Management Board

RESOLVED: That

the notes of the Risk Management Board held on Tuesday 16th October 2018 be confirmed as a correct record.

K Notes Member Training and Development Group

RESOLVED: That

the notes of the Member Training and Development Group held on Wednesday 17th October 2018 be confirmed as a correct record.

L Notes Local Pension Board - Firefighters Pension Scheme

RESOLVED: That

the notes of the Local Pension Board held on Thursday 22nd November 2018 be confirmed as a correct record.

2 2019-20 DRAFT BUDGET AND MEDIUM FINANCIAL PLAN

Consideration was given to a report of the Treasurer which detailed the progress made in preparing a draft revenue budget for 2019-20.

The Authority was required to approve an annual budget and set a council tax precept at its meeting on 13th February 2019. In order to make those decisions the Authority would consider a report that contained all relevant factors including the likely impact of policy options, the level of resources available, the financial pressures and the demands on the service. At the present time there were still a number of uncertainties particularly in respect of funding. The Local Government Finance Settlement was due to be announced on 6th December but had been delayed and was now expected during week commencing 10th December 2018. In the period to February 2019 the funding position would be finalised upon receipt of:

- Confirmation of the Local Government Finance Settlement, including the Council Tax Increase Referendum Principles;
- Determination of council tax bases by District/Unitary Councils;
- Determination of business rates income position and the share attributable to the Authority, by District/Unitary Councils;
- Notification of Collection Fund surplus/deficit position and the share attributable to the Authority.

Members were advised that the revenue budget for 2019-20 would need to include sufficient amounts to meet the costs of pay awards and price inflation.

There was considerable uncertainty about the funding position for the period from April 2020 and this would only become clearer once the Government had completed the 2019 Spending Review and published the results in the autumn of 2019. At the present time, for the purposes of planning for the four year period from April 2020, assumptions had been made about the level of funding and about the potential costs increases that may be faced by the Authority.

Based on the broad assumptions detailed with the report, the current forecasts suggested that the Authority would need to make cumulative savings of about £3.3m between April 2020 and March 2024. Notwithstanding the uncertainties, the Authority was likely to be required to make significant reductions in expenditure for the foreseeable future. The Whole Service Review and other work that was being led by the Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive would be fundamental to matching service requirements with resources.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the report and information relating to the 2019-20 revenue budget process be noted.

3 TREASURY MANAGEMENT - MID YEAR REPORT 2018-19

Consideration was given to a report of the Head of Finance which provided an update on performance against the Authority's Treasury Management Strategy.

Members were advised that the Authority continued to maintain high levels of cash at 31st October 2018 due partly to the temporary positive cash flow implications of receiving annual Firefighters Pension Government Grant in July each year and also ahead of delivery of the currently approved building projects. The Authority continued with a cautious approach to its choice of counterparties, the Authority's investments were with Aberdeen Standard Liquidity Money Market Fund, Bank of Scotland, Santander, Goldman Sachs and Barclays.

The Authority had a loan portfolio of £1.892m at 31st October 2018 and there was currently a further requirement to borrow to finance the capital programme from 2018-19 onwards. The table detailed at paragraph 15 of the report forecasted an initial borrowing requirement of around £11m between now and 2020-21 to fund the Training Centre project. The timing of the borrowing needed to be balanced carefully between capital expenditure timescales and prevailing and forecast market rates that would be kept under close review throughout the remainder of 2018-19 and 2019-20.

RESOLVED: That:

- [1] the Treasury Management – Mid Year Report 2018-19 be noted; and**
- [2] the requirement to borrow in line with the previous approval for the Training Centre be noted.**

4 AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT AND SECTOR UPDATE

Ged Small, Engagement Manager for Grant Thornton (the External Auditor) introduced the report which included a summary of emerging national issues and developments that may be relevant to the Fire Authority. The report also included the proposed Audit deliverable dates for 2018-19.

A Member made reference to the challenges which the Adult Social Care Sector faced and how the fire service worked closely with the four local authorities to support Adult Social Care.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the Audit Progress Report and Sector update for the year ended 31st March 2019 be noted.**

5 MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES SCHEME 2019-20

Consideration was given to a report of the Director of Governance and Commissioning which enabled Members to determine the Members' Allowance Scheme for 2019-20 and whether to apply an increase to the Members' Allowances in line with any National Joint Council for Local Government Services (NJC) pay award.

The Authority agreed not to apply the uplift for 2019-20.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the Members' Allowance Scheme for 2019-20, as detailed at Appendix 1 of the report, be approved with the uplift at paragraph 11 of the Scheme removed.**

6 DRAFT INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN 2019-20 (IRMP 16) - INITIAL FEEDBACK

Consideration was given to a report of the Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive which provided Members with the initial feedback on the consultation programme that was being carried out into 'Making Cheshire Safer' – the Authority's draft annual action plan for 2019-20 (IRMP 16). The consultation programme was due to conclude on 4th January 2019 and the information contained within the report was based on views and comments received up to 30th November 2018.

The consultation programme involved holding a number of public roadshow style events, directly contacting a range of local partner organisations and stakeholders and conducting a programme of internal consultation events for staff. Taking into account the programme of roadshows and other methods of consultation, it was expected that the final response level would be sufficient to provide a significant degree of confidence in the results of around +/- 5%.

The Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive advised that this year as part of the consultation process the Service Management Team had, between them, visited each team across the Service. The meetings had been well received by staff and it was the intention to follow a similar process each year.

The report highlighted the progress of the consultation and some of the themes from the feedback so far, with the final consultation report containing full details of responses due to be presented to the Fire Authority meeting on 13th February 2019.

Members welcomed the report and the success of the consultation process to date.

A Member made reference to the comments raised during the consultation about the planned joint fire and police facility on the Crewe Fire Station site, specifically the congestion on the road network, provision of staffing parking and adequacy of access to and egress from the facility. In response, the Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive confirmed that these issues would need to be resolved during the planning process. The proposed plans would be discussed in further detail at a future Member Planning Session prior to planning permission being sought.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the interim feedback on the consultation programme for the draft 2019-2020 Integrated Risk Management Plan be noted.**

7 MEMBER DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2018-19

Consideration was given to a report of the Director of Governance and Commissioning which sought approval of the draft Member Development Strategy for 2018-19.

The Member Development Strategy sets out how the Fire Authority aims to develop its elected Members to ensure that they are effective in fulfilling their roles and responsibilities. It provides a structured framework for the delivery of the Member Development and Induction Programme, future Member support and development and promotes continuous improvement.

RESOLVED: That:

[1] the Member Development Strategy 2018-19 be approved.

8 MEMBER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to a report of the Director of Governance and Commissioning which updated Members about the Member Development Programme.

The report contained a review of the Member development activities for 2018-19 which included a summary of the delivery of the Member Development Programme to date. It was the intention to refresh the Member Development Programme for 2019-20 to include more interactive training and development sessions as requested by Members.

Cllr Flude, Chair of the Member Training and Development Group thanked all Members of the Fire Authority for their attendance and contributions to the Authority's Member Development Programme throughout the year.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the 2018-19 Member Development Programme (attached as Appendix 1 to the report) be noted; and

[2] the review of Member Development activities for 2019-20 be noted.

9 PROGRAMME OF MEMBER MEETINGS 2019-20

Consideration was given to a report of the Director of Governance and Commissioning which included the proposed programme of Member meetings for 2018-19 for approval.

Meetings involved the same frequency as the current municipal year and included meetings scheduled to tie in with the relevant dates for budgetary and other key decisions. Most meetings were scheduled to be held on Wednesday mornings.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] the programme of meetings for 2019-20 (attached at Appendix 1 to the report) be approved.**