



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY held on Wednesday, 24 April 2019 at Lecture Theatre - Sadler Road, Winsford, Cheshire at 10.30 am

PRESENT: Councillors B Rudd (Chair), D Beckett, D Flude, P Harris, G Hayes, E Johnson, D Mahon, J Mercer, K Mundry, S Nelson, S Parker, R Polhill, T Sherlock, M Simon, M Tarr and S Wright.

The Police and Crime Commissioner for Cheshire, Mr D Keane was also present.

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 Councillors D Bailey, M Barker, M Biggin, B Dooley, N Jones, G Merry and J Weatherill.

C Chair's Announcements

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.

The Chair reported that Cheshire Fire Authority had the pleasure of announcing the appointment of two new Assistant Chief Fire Officers, Gus O'Rourke and Alex Waller who were selected to become the Service's new Assistant Chief Fire Officers after a formal interview and presentation to Members of the Authority's Staffing Committee on 2nd April 2019. Prior to this the candidates had engaged in a comprehensive assessment process comprising a technical interview, a behavioural interview and a media assessment by independent assessors. The Assistant roles have different areas of responsibility with Alex Waller taking up the role focusing on fire safety, operational policy and corporate performance and projects, and Gus O'Rourke taking up the role covering service delivery and prevention.

D Declaration of Members' Interests

There were no declarations of Members' interest.

E Questions from Members of the Public

There were no questions submitted.

F Minutes of Fire Authority

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Fire Authority meeting held on 13th February 2019 be approved as a correct record subject to Minute 6 – New Brigade Manager Structure, Paragraph 6 being amended to read as follows:-

'On being put to the vote the recommendations were carried with 20 votes in favour and 1 against'.

G Minutes of Performance and Overview Committee

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Performance and Overview Committee held on 27th February 2019 be noted.

H Minutes of Brigade Managers' Pay and Performance Committee

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Brigade Manager's Pay and Performance Committee held on 27th March and 2nd April 2019 be noted.

I Minutes of Staffing Committee

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Staffing Committee held on 27th March 2019 be noted.

J Minutes of Estates and Property Committee

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Estates and Property Committee held on 28th March 2019 be noted.

K Minutes of Governance and Constitution Committee

The Director of Governance and Commissioning made reference to 'Minute 6 – Scheme of Delegation – Assistant Chief Fire Officers and Treasurer / Head of Finance' which included a recommendation to the Fire Authority.

The recommendation requested Members to approve the revision of the Scheme of Delegation shown on pages 15 to 18 of the supplementary pack.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the minutes of the Governance and Constitution Committee held on 10th April 2019 be noted; and

[2] the revisions to the Scheme of Delegation as detailed on pages 15 to 18 of the supplementary pack be approved.

L Notes of the Risk Management Board

RESOLVED:

That the notes of the Risk Management Board held on 19th March be noted.

M Programme of Member Meetings 2019-20

RESOLVED:

That the revised programme of meetings for 2019-20 be approved.

2 EXTERNAL AUDIT PLAN FOR 2018-19

John Farrar from Grant Thornton (the External Auditor), was in attendance to present the External Audit Plan (the Plan) for 2018-19.

The External Auditor provided an overview of the Plan and made reference to the significant risks identified which included the following:-

- ISA240 revenue recognition risk
- Management over-ride of controls
- Valuation of Property, Plant and Equipment
- Valuation of pension fund net liability

The Plan explained the criteria used to help arrive at the Auditor's value for money conclusion and the audit fee for the work covering 2018-19. It stated that the External Audit Plan fee for 2018-19 would be £22,992 a reduction on the fee for last year.

The Chair took the opportunity to thank the External Auditor for the report.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the External Audit Plan for 2018-19 be noted; and

[2] the audit fee of £22,992 be approved.

3 INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN 2019-20

Anne-Marie Harrop from Mersey Internal Audit Agency (MIAA) (the Internal Auditor), was in attendance to present the Internal Audit Plan for 2019-20.

Members were advised that the new contract for Internal Audit Services had been awarded to MIAA and was based on 70 days per annum. The Plan showed how the days were allocated across the strategic risks identified. Findings from internal

audits were used by management to take action where control weaknesses were identified and also to provide the evidence upon which MIAA base a professional opinion about the effectiveness of the Authority's governance, risk management and control arrangements. MIAA had identified a number of key areas of work for 2019-20 that were included in the Plan.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the Internal Audit Plan 2019-20 be approved.

4 SERVICE HOUSING STOCK

Consideration was given to a report of the Director of Governance and Commissioning which provided an update on the development of a programme for the refurbishment of the houses owned by the Fire Authority and sought approval to sell five houses with a view to the sale proceeds being released to cover the costs of the refurbishment works.

Members were advised that the Fire Authority owned fifty-four houses in five locations namely Congleton, Knutsford, Northwich, Stockton Heath and Winsford. All of the houses were originally used by staff operating the day crewing duty system. Knutsford and Stockton Heath fire stations now operated the on-call duty system. It was reported that over the years the condition of the houses had deteriorated and officers had prepared an outline plan associated with creating a refurbishment programme for the houses.

Following an assessment carried out by Service Delivery it had been agreed that five houses were surplus to requirements. These included two in Congleton, two in Knutsford and one in Northwich. The sales would take time to achieve, however, would this be an important step in delivering the programme.

Members had a discussion about the governance arrangements and requested that the Estates and Property Committee received regular updates on the refurbishment programme and sale of the five houses. Members also requested that the capital receipt from the sale of the five houses, was ring-fenced for use in financing the refurbishment programme relating to the remaining houses.

RESOLVED: That

[1] the Director of Governance and Commissioning be authorised to arrange the sale of five of the Service houses; and

[2] the capital receipt from the sale of the five surplus Service houses be ring-fenced for use in financing the refurbishment programme relating to the remaining houses.

5 JOINT USE OF BIRCHWOOD FIRE STATION BY CHESHIRE CONSTABULARY

Consideration was given to a report of the Director of Governance and Commissioning which sought approval to the grant of a lease of part of Birchwood

Fire Station to the Police and Crime Commissioner for Cheshire (PCC). A better copy of the plan appended to the report was circulated at the meeting which highlighted the joint use areas.

Members were advised that the Police Station at Risley was under-utilised, however, a police presence needed to be maintained in the Risley/Birchwood area of Warrington. The Police Station and Birchwood Fire Station were about 0.3 miles apart and the fire station was an obvious option for joint use as there was some capacity and Cheshire Constabulary's requirements were relatively insignificant. Following public consultation the PCC had confirmed that he wished to move the police base from Risley Police Station to Birchwood Fire Station. The rationalisation of the respective estates of the Fire Authority and the PCC was part of the Blue Light Collaboration Programme.

RESOLVED: That

- [1] The grant of a lease of part of Birchwood Fire Station to the Police and Crime Commissioner for Cheshire be approved with the final terms and conditions to be finalised by the Director of Governance and Commissioning.**