

EAST SUSSEX FIRE AUTHORITY

Minutes of the meeting of the East Sussex Fire Authority held at East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service Headquarters, 20 Upperton Road, Eastbourne at 10.30 hours on Monday 10 December 2007.

Present: Councillors Carden, Gadd, Mrs. Healy, Howson, Kemble, Livings, Murphy (Chairman), Rufus, Scott, Skilton, Sparks, Theobald, Thomas and Wilson.

Following the deaths of four firefighters who tragically lost their lives in a warehouse blaze in Atherstone on Stour on 2 November 2007, Members, officers and members of the public stood in silence for one minute as a mark of respect.

Members were also reminded that it was one year since the deaths of Brian Wembridge and Geoff Wicker, and mention was made of the memorial activities which had taken place throughout East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service on 3 December 2007.

169. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 169.1 a. It was noted that all participating Members had undertaken to observe the Authority's Code of Conduct.
- b. It was noted that no Member wished to amend their written declarations of interests under Part 3 of the Code.
- c. It was noted that, in relation to matters on the agenda, Councillor Scott declared a personal interest as his brother-in-law worked for the Fire & Rescue Service; he also declared a personal interest in relation to agenda item number 183, as his brother-in-law was mentioned in para 3.2.1 as a recipient of a medal – a close relative was also a management employee of the Co-op, mentioned in para 5.2.1. Councillors Carden and Rufus also declared personal interests in agenda item 183, as members of the Co-op. No other Member wished to make any declarations of personal or prejudicial interest under Part 2 of the Code.

170. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- 170.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Dyason, Freeman, Pidgeon and Simpson and Mrs Redman, Chair of the Standards Panel.

171. URGENT ITEMS AND CHAIRMAN'S BUSINESS

- 171.1 The Chairman welcomed Kirsty Ward to her first Fire Authority meeting as Clerk to the Fire Authority.

172. TO CONSIDER PUBLIC QUESTIONS, IF ANY

- 172.1 There were none.

173. **MINUTES**

173.1 **RESOLVED** – That the non-confidential Minutes of the meeting held on 13 September 2007 be approved and signed by the Chairman.

174. **CALLOVER**

174.1 Members reserved the following items for debate:

- 175. Note of Panel meetings held since the last meeting of the Fire Authority
- 176. Regional Management Board Issues
- 177. South East Fire & Rescue Control Centre Limited
- 179. Fire Authority Service Planning Processes 2008/09 and Beyond
- 183. Fire Authority Quarterly Report (July to September 2007)
- 186. Confidential minutes of the meeting held on 13 September 2007
- 187. Lewes Fire Station – proposed relocation and renewal update

174.2 **RESOLVED** – That all other reports be resolved in accordance with the recommendations as detailed below.

175. **NOTE OF SCRUTINY & AUDIT, POLICY & RESOURCES and STANDARDS PANELS MEETINGS HELD SINCE THE LAST MEETING OF THE FIRE AUTHORITY**

175.1 The Fire Authority considered a report of the Clerk that set out the reports of the Chairmen of the Panels that had met since the last meeting of the Fire Authority. (Copy in Minute Book).

175.2 **RESOLVED** – That

- a) the report be noted; and

Scrutiny & Audit Panel (27 September 2007)

- b) the outcome of the Best Value Review on Hydrant Management be approved;
- c) the outcome of the Business Audit IRMP 2004/05 RTC Standards be approved;

Standards Panel (27 September 2007)

- d) the revisions to sub-sections 1 and 3 of Section F of the Fire Authority's Members Handbook as shown in Appendix A to the report, and as amended in para 1.3 of the report, be approved;

Scrutiny & Audit Panel (22 November 2007)

- e) the recommendations in Section 2.2 regarding the re-positioning of some risks in the Register be approved; and

- f) the recommendation in Section 2.5 – 2.7 regarding the possible removal of some risks from the Register be approved.

Scrutiny & Audit Panel (22 November 2007) and Standards Panel (22 November 2007)

- g) the new Contract Standing Orders at Appendix B of the report be adopted;
- h) the transfer of the new Contract Standing Orders to Part 4 of Section C of the Member's Handbook, to be numbered separately from the other parts of Section C, be approved;
- i) officers be authorised to make consequential layout and numbering amendments, as appropriate, to the other parts of Section C of the Members Handbook;
- j) the revisions to sub-section 2 of Section F (Anti-Fraud and Corruption) of the fire Authority's Members Handbook as shown in Appendices C and D of the report be approved.

176. REGIONAL MANAGEMENT BOARD ISSUES

- 176.1 The Fire Authority considered a report of the Chairman which provided the latest minutes from the Regional Management Board (RMB). (Copy in Minute Book).
- 176.2 The Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive brought Members up to date on issues surrounding the costs of the Regional Control Centre (RCC), TUPE and the transfer of staff to the RCC, and the sprinkler campaign.
- 176.3 The Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive gave a résumé of the history of the RMB and its costs, and sought to re-assure Members that it remained involved and engaged with the National Framework Document through its workstreams, and that the views of East Sussex Fire Authority were fully recognised. Funds had been drawn down from the South East Fire Improvement Partnership (SEFIP) to support Member Development, and working towards achieving Level 3 of the Equality Standard for Local Government.
- 176.4 Members were apprised of the need for a Regional Financial Adviser but assured that a Treasurer was not required at this stage.
- 176.5 The Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive reminded Members that they could attend meetings of the RMB as observers. It was noted that Parmjit Dhanda, the Minister for Fire, would not now attend the January meeting of the RMB, but it was hoped that he would be able to attend in April 2008.
- 176.6 **RESOLVED** – That the report be noted.

177. SOUTH EAST FIRE AND RESCUE CONTROL CENTRE LIMITED

- 177.1 The Fire Authority considered a report of the Vice-Chairman, in his role as the representative of the Authority as director of the South East Fire & Rescue Control Centre Limited, of the first meeting, held on 8 November 2007. (Copy in Minute Book).

177.2 It was noted that West Sussex (represented by Councillor Peter Jones) had been appointed Chairman of the Company and Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes (represented by Councillor Andy Dransfield) had been appointed Vice-Chairman. The Regional Control Centre Director had been appointed on 19 November 2007 and was Matthew Goodwin, previously General Manager of Royal Bournemouth & Christchurch Acute Trust. Before this, he had been Corporate Business Planning Manager for the Central Police Training & Development Agency.

177.3 **RESOLVED** – That the report be noted.

178. **MEMBERS' SEMINAR 26 OCTOBER 2007 – SUMMARY OF ISSUES**

178.1 The Fire Authority considered a report of the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive that informed Members of the details of the Seminar held on 26 October 2007 and sought their approval of dates for future Members Seminar to be held. (Copy in Minute Book).

178.2 **RESOLVED** – That the report and dates of future Members' Seminars be noted: **Thursday 20 March, Friday 11 July** and Friday 24 October 2008 and **Fridays 6 March, 3 July** and 23 October 2009.

NB – Please note the changes of dates for seminars to be held in March and June/July 2008 and June/July 2009.

179. **FIRE AUTHORITY SERVICE PLANNING PROCESSES FOR 2008/09 AND BEYOND**

179.1 The Fire Authority considered a joint report of the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive and Treasurer that presented the draft 2008/09 Fire Authority Service Planning Issues for initial consideration prior to more detailed consideration by the Policy and Resources Panel and the Fire Authority at the January cycle of meetings. (Copy in Minute Book).

179.2 Following notification of the Formula Grant for the period 2008/09 to 2010/11, an updated indicative revenue budget summary was tabled. It was noted that the Settlement – of 2% for 2008/09, 1.7% for 2009/10 and 2.3% for 2010/11 – was in the lower half of settlements for the 24 Shire Fire Authorities, and was less than the increases in prices and costs. Subject to final confirmation by the DCLG, the 2% grant increase for 2008/09 will provide additional funding of £271,000 compared to 2007/08. The indicative revenue budget summary identified the impact of meeting the Authority's standstill commitments i.e. maintaining current services and proposed service investment proposals along with the level of savings required to deliver a balanced budget. For planning purposes, the impact of increasing the Council Tax Band D equivalent by 4.3% and 4.9% was also shown. Members were reminded that the Council Tax level would not be set until the February meeting of the Fire Authority and that certain key information still had to be confirmed including the council taxbase, the council tax collection fund deficit and any changes to the draft Settlement or other grant funding. Central Government's position on capping remains that it expects increases in council tax to be below 5%.

179.3 The Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive updated Members on the bids for a Strategic Finance Manager and Strategic Management Capacity and ACO Cheryl Rolph left the room during discussion thereof.

179.4 Members thanked the officers for their continuing work on the budget and urged them to ensure that information was presented to the public in lay terms that were easily understood. Members also urged officers to lobby the government for an increase in the Settlement which was still at the consultation stage, although it was accepted that the chances of an increase were remote.

179.5 **RESOLVED** – That the report be noted.

180. **MEMBERS ALLOWANCES – ANNUAL REVIEW**

180.1 The Fire Authority considered a report of the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive that sought the approval of the annual review of allowances within the terms of the approved Fire Authority Member Allowance Scheme. (Copy in Minute Book).

180.2 **RESOLVED** – That

- a) the amended Member Allowance Rates be approved;
 - b) the increased travel and subsistence allowances be noted; and
 - c) it be noted that there is sufficient provision within the draft 2008/09 revenue budget to accommodate the proposed increase;
- for implementation with effect from 1 April 2008.

181. **NEW DIMENSIONS TRANSFER OF ASSET AGREEMENT**

181.1 The Fire Authority considered a report of the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive that advised the Authority of the Communities and Local Government proposals within the draft Transfer of Ownership Agreement to transfer ownership of New Dimension assets to individual Fire & Rescue Authorities on 1 April 2008. (Copy in Minute Book).

181.2 Members considered a draft response prepared by the Assistant Chief Fire Officer which had been circulated prior to the meeting.

181.3 **RESOLVED** – That

- a) the intention of the Communities and Local Government to transfer ownership of New Dimension assets to the Fire Authorities on 1 April 2008 and the proposed conditions of the transfer be noted; and
- b) the proposed response to the draft Transfer of Ownership Agreement be approved.

182. **PROGRESS UPDATE ON CURRENT FIRE AUTHORITY BUSINESS ISSUES**

182.1 The Fire Authority considered a report of the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive which updated them on any business issues that were impacting upon the Fire & Rescue Service generally and also those relating to the Authority specifically. (Copy in Minute Book).

182.2 **RESOLVED** – That the report be noted.

183. **QUARTERLY REPORT FOR JULY TO SEPTEMBER 2007**

183.1 The Fire Authority considered a report of the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive that presented the quarterly results for the period July to September 2007. (Copy in Minute Book).

183.2 The Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive agreed to look into providing details of length of service with details of resignations in future quarterly reports.

183.3 The Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive informed Members that the fine of £250,000 imposed on the Co-op for serious fire offences under the Fire Precautions (Workplace) Regulations 1997, was one of the largest ever imposed. A fine of £7,500 imposed on the Chequers Inn Hotel for safety failures under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 was the largest imposed by Lewes Magistrates' Court to date under the new regulations.

183.4 The Vice-Chairman thanked staff for their hard work and professionalism during the Sussex Skills Festival, where they had worked in partnership with West Sussex FRS. Staff were also thanked for their excellent work in dealing with a recent planning application for a firework site at Wartling.

183.5 **RESOLVED** –That the report be noted.

Councillors Carden and Rufus declared personal interests in this item, as members of the Co-op, and Councillor Rufus left the room during discussion thereof. Councillor Carden had already left the meeting at 11.50 hours.

Councillor Scott declared a personal interest in this item as his brother-in-law was mentioned in para 3.2.1 as a recipient of a medal; a close relative was also a management employee of the Co-op, mentioned in para 5.2.1. Councillor Scott was advised that, in the circumstances of the report, he did not appear to have a prejudicial interest and he could remain in the room and take part in the discussions.

184. FIRE AUTHORITY AND PANEL MEETINGS

184.1 The Fire Authority considered a report of the Clerk to the Fire Authority setting out dates for future meetings of the Authority and its Panels.

184.2 **RESOLVED** – That the following dates be approved:

- 1) Fire Authority meetings be held on the following Thursdays, at 10.30 hours (unless otherwise stated) at East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service Headquarters, Eastbourne:

17 January 2008 – special meeting for consideration of IRMP

07 February 2008

05 June 2008

11 September 2008

11 December 2008

- 2) Panel meetings be held on the following Thursdays at East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service Headquarters, Eastbourne:

10 January 2008
and

Way Forward Working Group, Scrutiny & Audit
Policy & Resources

NB Standards Panel meeting to be re-arranged

22 May 2008

Scrutiny & Audit, Policy & Resources and
Standards

12 June 2008

Scrutiny & Audit Panel

10 July 2008

Policy & Resources and Standards

04 September 2008

Policy & Resources and Standards

25 September 2008

Scrutiny & Audit

20 November 2008

Scrutiny & Audit, Policy & Resources, Standards

Commencement times for these Panels, to be notified in advance of the meetings, are generally likely to be: Scrutiny & Audit 10.00 hours; Policy & Resources 11.00 hours; and Standards 14.00 hours. Members to note there may be some delay in start times if earlier meetings over-run.

185. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC.

185.1 **RESOLVED** – That items 175B, 186 and 187 be exempt under paragraphs 1, 3 and 4 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006 and accordingly are not open for public inspection on the grounds that they include information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information); information relating to any consultations or negotiations or contemplated consultations or negotiations in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the Authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holders under, the Authority; and information relating to any individual.

The meeting concluded at 12.35 hours.

Signed

Dated this

day of

Chairman

2008.