

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 Thursday 17 January 2008.

Present: Councillors Carden, Elkin, Freeman, Gadd, Mrs. Healy, Howson, Kemble, Livings, Murphy, Pidgeon, Scott, Skilton, Simpson, Sparks, Theobald and Wilson.

188. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 188.1 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. No other Member wished to make any declarations of personal or prejudicial interest under Part 2 of the Code.

189. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- 189.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Rufus and Thomas.
- 189.2 Councillor David Elkin was welcomed to his first meeting of the Fire Authority, having been appointed following the resignation of Councillor Dyason.

190. URGENT ITEMS AND CHAIRMAN'S BUSINESS

- 190.1 There were none.

191. TO CONSIDER PUBLIC QUESTIONS, IF ANY

- 191.1 There were none.

192. MINUTES

- 192.1 **RESOLVED** – That the non-confidential Minutes of the meeting held on 10 December 2007 be approved and signed by the Chairman.

193. CALLOVER

- 193.1 The Chairman proposed that the callover of items be suspended as all items listed on the Agenda were to be discussed.

- 193.2 **RESOLVED** – That callover be suspended.

194. **NOTE OF POLICY & RESOURCES and SCRUTINY & AUDIT PANEL MEETINGS HELD SINCE THE LAST MEETING OF THE FIRE AUTHORITY**

194.1 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).

194.2 **RESOLVED** – That

- 1) the report be noted;

Policy & Resources Panel (10 January 2008)

- 2) the detailed consultation outcomes that have been considered by the Way Forward Working Group (See Agenda Item 195 on the agenda) be noted and the associated recommendations considered as part of the next item on the agenda;
- 3) the draft responses to three consultation papers issued by the Communities and Local Government be approved (Appendices A, B and C to the report); and

Scrutiny & Audit Panel (10 January 2008)

- 4) the draft 2008/09 Best Value Review and Business Audit programme attached as Appendix D to the report be approved.

195. **CONSULTATION OUTCOMES REPORT ON THE DRAFT 2008/09 INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN AND 5-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN**

195.1 The Fire Authority considered a report of the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive that advised of the results of the 2008/09 IRMP Consultation Process. (Copy in Minute Book).

195.2 Members also considered the deliberations of the Way Forward Working Group and Policy & Resources Panel, which had met on 10 January 2008.

195.3 The survey incorporated the results from:

- the distribution of the consultation draft plan to all ESFRS employees;
- the distribution of the consultation draft plan to over 400 LSP partners and other stakeholders;
- a postal survey of 5,000 homes within Brighton & Hove and East Sussex;
- a series of staff meetings and focus groups in Brighton, Eastbourne and Hastings; and
- public focus groups in Brighton & Hastings.

- 195.4 The results produced over 100 pages of comments. Generally, the public and business community supported the idea of change in the interest of providing a more efficient service. The staff groups were firmly against the variable crewing, annualised hours duty system and the option to combine all proposals and their preferred option was to continue to operate the current duty system. However, staff were accepting that changes could be made in order for the current system to work more efficiently.
- 195.5 The Fire Authority recognised that changes were needed to ensure that the Authority continued to move forward service improvements to enhance community safety whilst making efficiency gains and improving organisational effectiveness. Whilst it was agreed that the alternative duty systems proposed (variable crewing and annualised hours) have some merit, it was agreed that taking local circumstances into account, none of the alternative options appeared viable at this current time. It was agreed that, whilst maintaining the principle of the current system, modifications and amendments should be introduced to improve efficiency and effectiveness, e.g. introducing programmed annual leave and training alongside a change to the working routine to maximise the opportunities for operational training and community safety in each 24 hour period, alongside the introduction of a minimum 11 hour break between night shifts.
- 195.6 **RESOLVED** – That the recommendations of the Policy & Resources Panel (paragraph 194.2 above) be approved as follows:

the Fire Authority **BE RECOMMENDED** to adopt the following in relation to the IRMP for 2008/09:

- a) Whilst it is recognised that variable crewing does have merit and that such a system has been introduced into some other Fire & Rescue Services, it is not considered viable to introduce variable crewing into East Sussex taking into account the potential risks, although the Authority recognises the importance of properly matching resources to workload demand; this matter to be kept under review.
- b) Whilst recognising the additional associated costs, the Authority would wish to explore the feasibility of introducing retained appliances onto wholetime stations, particularly in Eastbourne and the city of Brighton and Hove.
- c) Whilst recognising that there is a potential to introduce annualised hours to have a more effective spread of personnel to ensure resilience and operational effectiveness and to assist forward planning of training and annual leave, the Authority recognises there are a number of risks in maintaining organisational resilience and, therefore, does not intend to introduce an annualised hours system at this time.
- d) As programmed annual leave and training would have the benefit of more effectively planning resource requirements, improve organisational resilience and Service training, the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive is to consult on the introduction of programmed annual leave and training.

- e) That the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive is to implement amendments to the station working routines to ensure the majority of the 24 hour period is given over to operational training and community safety activities, that other station work routines are kept to the minimum necessary and that stand-down time is only available after all other tasks are completed. The introduction of such changes is a matter for the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive to consult with the recognised representative bodies. The outcome is to be reported back to the Scrutiny & Audit Panel.
- f) The Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive is to move forward the introduction of a shift pattern that provides a minimum of an 11-hour break between night shifts.
- g) The measures mentioned in items e) and f) are to be introduced during the year 2008/09.

196. **FIRE AUTHORITY SERVICE PLANNING PROCESSES FOR 2008/09 AND BEYOND - DRAFT REVENUE BUDGET 2008/09 AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2008/09 TO 2012/13**

- 196.1 The Fire Authority considered a report of the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive that presented the draft 2008/09 Fire Authority Service Planning issues for formal consideration. (Copy in Minute Book).
- 196.2 Members also considered the deliberations of the Policy & Resources Panel, which had met on 10 January 2008 including an amended priority order for the service investment proposals.
- 196.3 Following the realisation of the tight financial regime imposed by the Government, the main issues for the Authority were the continued implementation of existing service commitments in addition to the approved Improvement Agenda.
- 196.4 The Deputy Treasurer advised Members that no major changes had been made to the proposed budget since the last meeting of the Fire Authority and that the Council Tax would not be set until the February meeting once final information was received regarding the council tax base and collection fund deficits. The Deputy Treasurer also advised Members that the committed budget included proper provision for pay and prices and also the revenue implications of the proposed capital programme. As currently modelled, the net budget requirement for 2008/09 was £36.892m, including service investment proposals of £0.605m and savings of £0.152m already identified. The increase in formula grant was 2% for 2008/09. It was anticipated that balances would remain steady and appropriate during 2008/09 at 7.2% of net budget. Members noted that public consultation indicated support for a council tax increase above 4%, but that the Government had stated that council tax increases should be substantially below 5%.

- 196.5 Circulated at the meeting was the outcome of Consultation exercises on Service Planning issues and an amended list of recommendations. The results showed that the public were generally supportive of the service provided and a possible Council Tax increase of between 4% - 5%. Results also showed that a large percentage of the public agreed it would be reasonable to charge for effecting an entry/lock out to people's homes in non-emergency circumstances and a large, although lesser percentage, supported a minimum charge for rescuing livestock/horses.
- 196.6 The Deputy Treasurer and the supporting team were thanked by Members for their excellent work on a difficult budget.
- 196.7 **RESOLVED** – That:
- 1) the revised estimate of expenditure for 2007/08 be approved (Section 2.2 of the report);
 - 2) the continued Revenue Budget consultations taking place be noted (Section 2.3.3);
 - 3) the committed budget for 2008/09 be approved, including provision for pay awards, price increases and net inescapable commitments. (Sections 2.3.4, 2.3.6 and 2.3.7);
 - 4) the fees and charges as set out in section 2.3.5 and in Appendix C, be approved subject to the outcome of the public consultation referred to in Para 2.3.3.1;
 - 5) the budget pressures identified in Section 2.3.9 be proposed for a final decision to be made at the Fire Authority's precept setting meeting on 7 February 2008;
 - 6) the amended Capital Programme for 2007/08 including schemes in progress, the amended Capital Programme for 2007/08 totalling £2.750m and Capital Programme for 2008/09 totalling £2.240m as set out in Section 3 and the related revenue consequences be approved;
 - 7) as part of the five year Capital Programme, the advance notification of intent to purchase, subject to the contractual arrangements with Firebuy, 9 appliances over 3 years (2008/09 – 2010/11) to secure build slots as referred to in Section 3.1.1. be approved;
 - 8) the savings identified in the agenda be proposed for a final decision to be made at the Fire Authority's precept setting meeting on 7 February 2008 on the precept for Council Tax purposes as referred to in Section 6 and Table 14;
 - 9) the format of the Fire Authority's Council Tax information be finalised after the decisions made at the Fire Authority meeting on 7 February 2008; and
 - 10) the detailed recommendations for setting the precept be included in the final Revenue Budget report to be presented to the Fire Authority at its 7 February 2008 meeting, using the final tax base figures yet to be published be noted.

197. **DRAFT 2008/09 SERVICE PRIORITIES FOR INCLUSION WITHIN THE AUTHORITY'S 2008/09 IMPROVEMENT PLAN AND BEST VALUE PERFORMANCE PLAN.**

197.1 The Fire Authority considered a revised report of the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive that sought approval of the proposed Service Priority Areas which will form the Authority's 2008/09 Improvement Plan, and to seek their advice on which, if any, additional Service Priority Areas should be considered for actioning in 2008/09 in addition to those proposed. (Copy in Minute Book).

197.2 **RESOLVED** – That:

- 1) the Authority approve the roll forward of Service Priority Areas contained in Appendix A which will form the Authority's Draft 2008/09 Improvement Plan and Best Value Performance Plan and the four new Key Task Areas proposed in paragraph 6 and as presented in Appendix B; and
- 2) there were no additional Service Priority Areas to be considered for actioning in 2008/09 arising from the priorities identified in the draft National Framework document attached as Appendix C.

198. **FIRE AUTHORITY AND PANEL MEETINGS**

198.1 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. It was noted that the Panel meetings date for 20 November 2008 might need to be altered as it appeared to clash with other meetings at the constituent authorities.

198.2 **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:

Thursday 7 February 2008

Thursday 5 June 2008

Thursday 11 September 2008

Thursday 11 December 2008

Thursday 15 January 2009

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

22 May 2008 Scrutiny & Audit, Policy & Resources and Standards

19 June 2008 Scrutiny & Audit

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 and Standards

8 January 2009 Scrutiny & Audit, Policy & Resources and 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.

199. **EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

- 199.1 **RESOLVED** – That items 200 and 201 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 12.03 hours.

Signed

Chairman

Dated this

Day of

2008