

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 7 February 2008.

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

Following the death of Len Richards, retired Deputy Chief Fire Officer of East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service, Members, officers and members of the public stood in silence for one minute as a mark of respect and in recognition of his contribution to the Fire and Rescue Service.

202. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 202.1 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.

203. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- 203.1 There were none.

204. URGENT ITEMS AND CHAIRMAN'S BUSINESS

- 204.1 The Chairman informed Members of Councillor Dyason's current situation and Members requested a letter be sent passing on their best wishes and hoping he makes a fully and speedy recovery.
- 204.2 The Vice-Chairman informed Members that he had attended the funeral of the Warwickshire firefighters on behalf of the Authority. Also, he would be undertaking a sponsored walk in aid of the British Heart Foundation and Fire Service Benevolent Fund. The walk would commence in Hove and finish in Rye and he invited Members to join him on the walk.

205. TO CONSIDER PUBLIC QUESTIONS, IF ANY

- 205.1 There were none.

206. MINUTES

- 206.1 **RESOLVED** – That the non-confidential Minutes of the meeting held on 17 January 2008 be approved and signed by the Chairman.

207. **CALLOVER**

207.1 Members reserved the following items for debate:

- 207.2
- 208. Regional Management Board Issues
 - 209. South East Fire and Rescue Control Centre Limited
 - 210. Note of the Standards Panel meeting held since the last meeting of the Fire Authority
 - 211. Fire Authority Service Planning Processes for 2008/09 and beyond
 - 214. Review of Fire Authority Strategies 2008/09 versions
 - 216. Recent Reports Issued Following Summer 2007 Floods
 - 217. Fire Authority Quarterly Report (October to December 2007)
 - 220. Confidential Minutes
 - 221. Marlie Farm Update

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

208. **REGIONAL MANAGEMENT BOARD ISSUES**

208.1 The Fire Authority considered a report of the Chairman which provided the latest minutes from the Regional Management Board (RMB). (Copy in Minute Book).

208.2 The Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive informed Members that the I&DeA had given a presentation on Equality & Diversity Peer Reviews. With regard to the Equality Standard for Local Government, it was envisaged that out of the nine Fire Authorities within the South East, only two were likely to reach level 3 by the target date of December 2008. It was thought that whilst this Authority was doing well, it was unlikely that it would attain level 3 by the target date and it was agreed that an improvement action plan would need to be implemented.

208.3 A Member of the Audit Commission attended the RMB meeting and the Chairman made it clear that this Fire Authority had grave concerns over the proposed increases in fees. The Audit Commission stated the increases were necessary as they now had to audit to the recently introduced International Financial Reporting Standards.

208.4 **RESOLVED** - That the report be noted.

209. **SOUTH EAST FIRE AND RESCUE CONTROL CENTRE LIMITED**

209.1 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 meeting held on 13 December 2007. (Copy in Minute Book).

209.2 The Vice-Chairman informed Members that the minutes had not been circulated due to them only becoming available that morning. He also reported that the next meeting was the following day, 8 February 2008 and that a visit to the Regional Control Centre which had been scheduled had been postponed due to health & safety reasons in relation to the work being undertaken on site.

209.3 **RESOLVED** - That the report be noted.

210. **NOTE OF THE STANDARDS PANEL MEETING HELD SINCE THE LAST MEETING OF THE FIRE AUTHORITY**

210.1 The Fire Authority considered a report of the Clerk that set out the report of the Chair of the Standards Panel that had met since the last meeting of the Fire Authority with regard to those issues of greater significance or requiring a decision from the Fire Authority. (Copy in Minute Book).

210.2 **RESOLVED** – That

- 1) the report be noted;
- 2) the appointment of a third independent person to the Standards Panel be approved;
- 3) the delegation to the Panel (as far as the legislation permits) of the following under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 be approved (a) all the arrangements to be made for the local assessment of complaints against Members and the exercise of the assessment function and (b) the powers to grant and supervise exemptions of certain local authority posts from political restrictions; and
- 4) officers take any necessary steps in connection therewith, including the amendment of the Fire Authority's constitutional documents to reflect the changes.

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

211.A **DRAFT BEST VALUE PERFORMANCE PLAN 2008/09**

211.A1 The Fire Authority considered a report of the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive that summarised the outstanding actions required to complete the Draft Best Value Performance Plan (BVPP) 2008/09 for approval and for final completion by the publication date of 30 June 2008. (Copy in Minute Book).

211.A2 **RESOLVED** – That

- 1) the roll forward of the draft Best Value Performance Plan (BVPP) be approved, in principle, for publication by 30 June 2008; and
- 2) authority for the approval of the final version of the BVPP be delegated to the Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive in consultation with the Chairman.

211.B **DRAFT REVENUE BUDGET 2008/09 AND RELATED CAPITAL PROGRAMME**

211.B1 The Fire Authority considered a joint report of the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive and the Treasurer that presented the final draft Fire Authority Revenue Budget 2008/09 and related Capital Programme. (Copy in Minute Book).

211.B2 The Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive reported that it had been a challenging year, particularly with the continuing Marlie Farm accident investigation. The Authority had to take on board the disappointing Grant provided by the Government and absorb ever increasing costs whilst ensuring the Authority continued to provide a high quality service at a price the public can afford.

211.B3 The Deputy Treasurer reported that Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 required him, in his capacity as representative of the Chief Finance Officer, to report on the robustness of the estimates made for the purposes of calculating the budget and the adequacy of the proposed financial reserves. The Authority must have regard to the Treasurer's report when making decisions about the budget calculations. He confirmed that his views and the Treasurer's remained as set out in the report, in particular paragraph 3 on page 21 of the agenda.

211.B4 The Deputy Treasurer informed Members that the position had not changed from previous meetings. In order to meet the net budget requirement, it was necessary for a rise of 4.56% (4.6%) on Council Tax. He advised that it was impossible to judge what the Government meant by "a substantially lower increase than 5%", but that the Authority had sound justification for a rise of 4.6%.

211.B5 **RESOLVED:** That

- 1) the detailed recommendations as set out in Section 1.2 of the report be approved, i.e.:
 - (a) The previously approved committed budget of £36.569m be confirmed;
 - (b) The revenue costs of the Capital Programme; one off contribution from balances to cover additional Collection Fund Deficit (£150,000); and service investment proposals (£605,000 in 2008/09; £766,000 in 2009/10 and full year effect of £569,000) and compensatory savings of £152,000 to ensure the 2008/09 Council tax increase for a Band D property is substantially below 5% be approved;
 - (c) The final budget figure of £36.892m; a 3.6% increase on the 2007/08 base budget of £35.622m be approved; and
 - (d) The Prudential Indicators set out in Appendix 2 of the report be approved.
- 2) the final tax base and Formula Grant figures announced be noted;
- 3) in accordance with the Local Government Finance Act 1992 it be agreed that:
 - (i) The amount calculated by East Sussex Fire Authority as its budget requirements for the year 2008/09 is £36.892m; an increase of 3.6% on the 2007/08 base budget of £35.622m;
 - (ii) The amount calculated by East Sussex Fire Authority as the basic amount of its council tax (i.e. for a Band D property) for the year 2008/09 is £77.06 (based on final tax base figures), a 4.56% increase on the 2007/08 figure of £73.70; and

- (iii) Brighton & Hove City Council and the Borough and District councils (the billing authorities) be advised by the Treasurer of the relevant amounts payable and the council tax in the other bands, in line with the regulations and attached table, and be instructed to issue precepts accordingly.

**COUNCIL TAX CALCULATIONS
EAST SUSSEX FIRE AUTHORITY
PRECEPT FOR 2008/09**

ref: S.43 Local Government Finance Act 1992

	£	£
Net budget requirement		36,891,900
FORMULA GRANT	14,106,200	
Previous year's surpluses (deficits(-))	-165,100	
Total council tax required		22,950,800
Tax base	297,839.57	
Basic council tax		77.06
Basic council tax as calculated above	77.06	
Band A	6/9	51.37
Band B	7/9	59.94
Band C	8/9	68.50
Band D	9/9	77.06
Band E	11/9	94.18
Band F	13/9	111.31
Band G	15/9	128.43
Band H	18/9	154.12
Basic council tax as calculated above	77.06	
Tax base Brighton & Hove	93,350.27	7,193,571
Eastbourne	36,964.00	2,848,445
Hastings	29,110.00	2,243,216
Lewes	37,747.04	2,908,786
Rother	38,608.56	2,975,175
Wealden	62,059.70	4,782,320

212. **STRATEGIC DIRECTION REVIEW – FINAL OUTCOME**

212.1 The Fire Authority considered a report of the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive that sought approval of the amended Strategic Vision and Aims.

212.2 **RESOLVED** - That the Fire Authority approve the amended Strategic Vision and Aims.

213. **REVISION OF (1) FINANCIAL REGULATIONS (2) SCHEME OF DELEGATED FUNCTIONS (3) STANDING ORDERS**

213.1 The Fire Authority considered a report of the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive that sought approval of the updated and revised Fire Authority's Financial Regulations, Scheme of Delegated Functions and Standing Orders. (Copy in Minute Book).

213.2 **RESOLVED** – That the Fire Authority approve:

- (1) The revisions to the
 - a. Financial Regulations
 - b. Scheme of Delegated Functions
 - c. Procedural and Contract Standing Orders
- (2) The Monitoring Officer, Treasurer and Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive, in consultation with one another, to make further amendments to the Regulations, Schemes and Orders as may be required for effective business needs before the next scheduled review by the Fire Authority in 2011.

214. **REVIEW OF FIRE AUTHORITY STRATEGIES 2008/09 VERSIONS**

214.1 The Fire Authority considered a report of the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive that sought approval of the updated Strategies completed to date:

- H3 Communications;
- H10 Health and Safety; and
- H12 Partnership Working. (Copy in Minute Book).

214.2 **RESOLVED** - That the Fire Authority approve the amended Strategies for application in 2008/09 and beyond and note that the remainder will be submitted to the Policy and Resources Panel in 22 May 2008 for approval on the Fire Authority's behalf.

215. **FIRE AUTHORITY TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY FOR 2008/09**

215.1 The Fire Authority considered a report of the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive to determine the Fire Authority's authorised borrowing limit, to adopt the treasury management prudential indicators and limits to approve the Minimum Revenue Provision Statement and to agree the treasury management strategy and policy statements for 2008/09. (Copy in Minute Book).

215.2 **RESOLVED** – That the Fire Authority

- a) approve for 2008/09 the authorised limit for borrowing of £14,591,000;
- b) adopt the prudential indicators and limits as reported;
- c) approve the Minimum Revenue Provision Statement for 2008/09; and
- d) agree the treasury management strategy and policy statement for 2008/09.

216. **RECENT REPORTS ISSUED FOLLOWING SUMMER 2007 FLOODS**

216.1 The Fire Authority considered a report of the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive that updated Members regarding the differing reports issued recently regarding the summer 2007 floods. (Copy in Minute Book).

216.2 The Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive reminded Members that the issue of flooding was not a new thing and recalled the experiences of East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service from the 1998 and 2000 floods. It was thought that this experience put the Authority in a position to advise on the subject.

216.3 It was noted that the Fire & Rescue Service was seen as one of the first services contacted by members of the public when a flooding situation arose, although flooding is not a statutory duty for the Fire & Rescue Service. It was determined that a clear and concise remit should be provided for the Fire & Rescue Service as inevitably, flooding was going to occur in the future together with other severe weather conditions which potentially could have serious repercussions for the Fire & Rescue Service.

216.4 Members were also informed that the Inland Water Strategy Group, a sub-group of the Chief Fire Officers' Association Operations Committee, had prepared an options paper which provided four options with regard to the future of the Fire & Rescue Service and the way in which it dealt with flooding.

216.5 **RESOLVED** - That the report be noted.

217. **QUARTERLY REPORT FOR 1 OCTOBER TO 31 DECEMBER 2007**

217.1 The Fire Authority considered a report of the Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive that presented the quarterly results for the period 1 October – 31 December 2007. (Copy in Minute Book).

217.2 Members were concerned with the continuing fall in numbers of personnel conditioned to the retained duty system and whether it would impact on service delivery. The Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive informed Members that a recruitment drive had been undertaken. This had produced 101 applications out of which 53 were considered appropriate to progress to the next stage. The present retained duty personnel continued to provide an excellent service to their local communities as well as being available to support major incidents.

217.3 Members discussed the situation with regard to the issuing of new explosives licences. Members wished it to be noted that they were disappointed that, even though the Fire Authority objected formally to the granting of a new explosives licence at Wartling due to inadequate access for firefighting appliances and inadequate water supplies, consent was still granted.

- 217.4 Members discussed the Arson Reduction Team (ART) and the 'Tackling Anti-Social Deliberate Fire Setting' strategy launches which had been held in Hastings, Brighton and Uckfield. As a result of the Uckfield launch, members of the ART had been invited to a meeting at H.M. Prison, Lewes to discuss ways of tackling fire setting within the prison. It was noted that the Service has seen continuing success in terms of the reduction of deliberate fires.
- 217.5 The team also participated in a joint operation with Sussex Police entitled 'Operation Synergy' which involved agencies conducting environmental audits in Eastbourne town centre. Several issues were identified for action and over 1,500 home safety publications had been distributed during the course of the operation.
- 217.6 Members were informed about the continuing good work of the Local Intervention Fire Education (LIFE) Project. The first sponsorship of a student on the LIFE course had been secured and it was hoped this would lead to other funding opportunities.
- 217.7 Members wished to note their appreciation and thanks for the good work being undertaken within the Boroughs and Councillor Mrs Healy made special reference to the work being undertaken in Eastbourne.
- 217.8 Within the quarterly report, Members were informed of a successful prosecution brought against an individual for starting a fire deliberately. The defendant was charged on 23 counts, 2 related to arson with intent to endanger life. Further charges were brought of which 6 were for deception for which the defendant is currently serving 3 years.
- 217.9 **RESOLVED** - That the report be noted.

218. **FIRE AUTHORITY AND PANEL MEETINGS**

- 218.1 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 meeting dates for June, November and January 2009 had been altered to avoid clashes with other meetings at the constituent authorities. (Copy in Minute Book).
- 218.2 **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 5 June 2008
Thursday 11 September 2008
Thursday 11 December 2008
Thursday 15 January 2009
Thursday 5 February 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
25 June 2008	Scrutiny & Audit – amended date
10 July 2008	Policy & Resources and Standards
04 September 2008	Policy & Resources and Standards
25 September 2008	Scrutiny & Audit
21 November 2008	Scrutiny & Audit, Policy & Resources and Standards amended date
9 January 2009	Scrutiny & Audit, Policy & Resources and Standards amended date

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.

219. **EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

- 219.1 **RESOLVED** – That items 220 and 221 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 12:50 hours.

Signed

Chairman

Dated this

Day of

2008