

Dorset Fire Authority

Minutes of meeting held at Dorset Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters, Poundbury, Dorchester on 10 February 2015.

Present:

Mrs Rebecca Knox (Chairman)

Mrs Ann Stribley (Vice-Chairman)

Mr Mike Byatt, Mr Ronald Coatsworth, Mrs Beverley Dunlop, Mr Philip Eades, Mr Barry Goldbart, Mr Colin Jamieson, Mrs Susan Jefferies, Mr Trevor Jones, Miss Sue Levell and Mr John Wilson.

Officers present:

Mr Darran Gunter (Chief Fire Officer), Mr Richard Bates (Treasurer), Mr Jonathan Mair (Clerk) and Mrs Helen Whitby (Principal Democratic Services Officer).

Officers attending for items as appropriate:

Colin Chapman (Assistant Chief Officer Service Support), Ian Cotter (Head of Financial Services), Ben Ansell (Assistant Chief Fire Officer – Service Delivery), Ms Jane Staffiere (Temporary Director of Human Resources), Mr Derek James (Assistant Chief Officer), Mr Terence Clark (Apprentice Manager).

Also in attendance:- Mr Keller Holland, Mr Adam Laskey, Mr Matthew Tidman and Mr Anthony Gawler (Fire Cadet Apprentices).

(Note: These minutes have been prepared by officers as a record of the meeting and of any decisions reached. They are to be considered and confirmed at the next meeting of the Authority to be held on **16 June 2015**.)

Apology for Absence

1. An apology for absence was received from Mr Les Burden.

Code of Conduct

2. No declarations were made by any members of any disclosable pecuniary interests under the Code of Conduct.

Minutes

3. The minutes of the meeting held on 5 December 2014 were confirmed and signed.

Matters Arising

Minute 103.1 - Matters Arising

4.1 The Chief Fire Officer updated the Authority on the latest position with regard to the Fire Brigade Union (FBU) dispute about proposed changes to the Firefighters' Pension Scheme. The matter had been debated in the House of Commons and he had received a significant amount of correspondence from the General Secretary, the FBU and staff. The National Employers had indicated that ill-health pensions could not be guaranteed, but could be dealt with on a case by case basis. Legal advice was to be sought prior to any response being sent to the General Secretary.

Minute 104.3 – Audit and Scrutiny Committee

4.2 The Authority noted that the meeting between the Dorset Fire Authority, the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Chief Constable would take place the following day.

Audit and Scrutiny Committee

5. The Authority received the minutes of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 6 January 2015.

Noted**DFRS Princes Trust Celebrating Success Finalists**

6. The Chief Fire Officer reported that, unfortunately, Mr Kennedy Coombs, Dorset Fire Cadet, was unable to attend the meeting. He reported that Mr Coombs would be attending the Princes Trust national finals in mid-March 2015 and he wished him well. The Authority noted that three Teams were being run currently and further funding was being sought to support additional courses. An update would be provided at the appropriate time.

Noted**DFRS Operational Apprentices' Update**

7.1 The Chief Fire Officer reminded the Authority that the apprenticeship scheme ran over a 24 month period and provided apprentices with two qualifications – a BTEC and an NVQ 3. The apprentices were assigned to watches and rotated every four or five months to give them experience of different specialist appliances. Only four of the five apprentices were able to attend the meeting as the other one was undertaking a breathing apparatus course that day.

7.2 The Authority heard from each of the apprentices in turn on their experience of the programme so far. This included information about how they had applied, courses they had taken part in, skills they were acquiring, their involvement in the firefighter development programme and the benefit they had found in being part of watches at different fire stations across the County. They had benefited from working as part of watches as other staff were keen to help them and this boosted their confidence and increased their knowledge. The Authority noted that they had all completed their compulsory courses.

7.3 The Chairman offered congratulations at how competent the cadets had become in a relatively short period and was delighted that they were doing so well. She hoped that the Authority could publicise their success. The Chief Officer added that the apprentices would be demonstrating their skills at the DFA meeting on 16 June 2015.

Noted**Budget 2015/16**

8.1 In order to consider the budget and precept, the Authority considered reports by the Chief Fire Officer and the Treasurer to the Fire Authority on the 'Budget for 2015/16 and the Medium Term Finance Plan' and the 'Precept Implications 2015/16' together as detailed below:

Budget for 2015/16 and Medium Term Finance Plan**Do we need a reference to dispensations?**

8.2 The Authority considered a report by the Chief Fire Officer on the Dorset Fire and Rescue Service final position on the revenue and capital budget requirements for 2015/16.

8.2 The Head of Financial Services presented the report in detail. The Final Local Government Finance Settlement was £10.5m, which comprised the Revenue Support Grant and receipt of business rates from Dorset billing authorities. Although the income from business rates was less than the amount the Department for Communities and Local

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Government had anticipated, the final figures received from the billing authorities was £94 more than the Authority had planned for. For the next four years an annual grant cut of 5.5% was assumed and a spending review was expected following the General Election in May 2015.

8.3 The Authority noted that the Council Tax Freeze Grant was available for 2015/16, that a referendum would be required should Council Tax increase by more than 2% and how the rate of Council Tax would affect harmonisation with Wiltshire and Swindon Fire Authority. With regard to the budget requirement for 2015/16, attention was drawn to the need for the Authority to pay modified employer contributions for the 2015 Firefighters' Pension Scheme from 1 April 2015 and the allocation of £50k made for this, that steps had been taken to identify staff wishing to join the Pension Scheme but the impact of this on the budget was difficult to assess.

8.4 Taking this into account, the Authority was asked to consider two options for Council Tax for 2015/16; one provided for an increase which would balance the budget; the other for a Council Tax freeze which would require a £149k transfer from balances to balance the budget.

Precept Implications 2015/16

9.1 The Authority considered a report by the Treasurer which set out the precept implications for the 2015/16 budget requirement.

9.2 The Treasurer presented the report in detail, looking at future funding cuts, savings the Authority needed to make, the effects any Council Tax increases would have, and their effect on equalisation with the Wiltshire and Swindon Fire Authority, should the combination proceed. In summary, he explained that the Authority should keep its options open whilst acting in its and the public's best interest and recommended an increase of 1.89% in the precept.

9.3 Members then debated the budget and precept implications, seeking clarification where necessary. Whilst the majority of members recognised that the future held a degree of uncertainty, they supported Option 1 as being best for the Authority as it would provide some degree of flexibility. This equated to an increase in Council Tax of 2p a week for a Band D property and would mean that the current quality and resilience of the service could be maintained. Other members, given the budgetary information, considered that an increase was unnecessary.

9.4 One member stated that it was difficult to consider Dorset's budget position without reference to Wiltshire and Swindon Fire Authority's budget situation, which added to the uncertainty. The Chairman reminded the Authority that they had previously considered the combination business case which had included financial information about both Authorities. She agreed that the Fire Authority was facing an uncertain period and emphasised the need to ensure that it had the necessary resilience to go forward.

9.5 The Chief Fire Officer advised that as the combination situation was uncertain, and there was no indication from the Department for Communities and Local Government as to whether they would agree an Alternative Notional Amount regarding the Council Tax equalisation, it was best to assume the worst case scenario.

9.6 The Treasurer agreed that there was uncertainty over the future, but thought the situation would be much clearer after the next Spending Review when the combination situation would also have been determined. The Medium Term Financial Plan could be reviewed then so that it was appropriate going forward.

9.7 Members voted on the recommendations contained within the two reports en bloc. The votes were:-

For

Mike Byatt	Trevor Jones
Ronald Coatsworth	Rebecca Knox
Spencer Flower	Sue Levell
Barry Goldbart	Ann Stribley
Colin Jamieson	John Wilson
Susan Jefferies	
Total: 11	

Against

Beverley Dunlop	Philip Eades
Christopher Rochester	
Total: 3	

Resolved

10.1 That the basic amount of precept for fire purposes in Dorset for 2015/16 be set in accordance with the recommendation of the Budget Working Group and as set out in the Appendix to the Treasurer's report.

10.2 That the Clerk be authorised to issue precepts on the Dorset collection authorities accordingly.

10.3 That the capital programme of £2.965m for 2015/16 as shown in Section 6 of the Treasurer's report be approved.

Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Prudential Indicators for 2015/16

11.1 The Authority considered a report by the Treasurer on the Treasury Management Statement and Prudential Indicators for 2014/15.

11.2 The report included the Treasury Management Strategy Statement, borrowing and lending cost balances and Prudential Indicators for 2015/16. It also took account of changes to counterparty ratings.

11.3 In response to a question, the Treasurer confirmed that in relation to the recovery of funds from Icelandic Banks, 94% of investments in Heritable had been received, and although more was expected, this had not been budgeted for.

Resolved

12.1 That the Prudential Indicators and Limits for 2015/16 to 2017/18 be approved.

12.2 That the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Statement be approved.

12.3 That the Treasury Management Strategy be approved.

12.4 That the Investment Strategy be approved.

12.5 That the Treasurer determine the most appropriate means of funding the Capital Programme.

Third Quarter Financial Performance Report

13.1 The Authority considered a report by the Chief Fire Officer which provided an analysis of the financial position up to 31 December 2014.

13.2 The Head of Financial Services presented the report in detail confirming that revised budgets had been implemented, that £200k had been earmarked for the establishment of the RoadWise Project in Weymouth with delegated authority required to enable the final details of the transaction to be agreed, and the revised capital programme

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budget of £1,957K for 2014/15. It was likely that the £300K earmarked for aerial replacement would be rolled forward to the next financial year.

13.3 Members questioned figures shown as zero within the summary revenue budget table for 2014/15 as it was unclear as to whether there was an over or underspend on budgets. It was suggested that future reports include budget variances and the Chairman of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee asked that a report on the presentation of financial information be provided for the Committee's next meeting.

13.4 With regard to monies for the RoadWise Project, it was explained that this comprised money from the Olympics and a donation from the Police and Crime Commissioner for the establishment of the charity. It would be subject of a financial business case and a service level agreement would be in place prior to it starting.

13.5 In response to what steps had been taken to ensure that there would be no overlap in the capital programme following the combination, the Chief Fire Officer explained that the business case had included some initial work on consolidation of the capital programme but discussions were on-going with regard to areas where economies of scale could be achieved.

13.6 Reference was also made to virements previously agreed by the Authority. Members were reminded that these were reported on a quarterly basis and the Chief Fire Officer agreed to reissue these figures.

13.7 It was agreed that the delegated authority requested be extended to include the Chairman.

Resolved

14.1 That the report be noted.

14.2 That delegated authority be granted to the Chief Fire Officer, Clerk and Treasurer, after consultation with the Chairman of the Authority, to finalise details of grant funding for the RoadWise project.

Pay Policy Statement 2015/16

15.1 The Authority considered a report by the Chief Fire Officer on the annual pay policy statement which was a requirement under the Localism Act 2011. This set out the Authority's policies on remuneration of their chief officers and lowest paid employees and the relationship between the remuneration of its chief officers and non chief officers.

15.2 The Temporary Director of Human Resources explained that a pay policy statement was a legal requirement under the Localism Act 2011. One new area had been added to the previous statement in relation to Trade Union Facilities Time.

15.3 It was noted that the Authority always took external professional advice when considering the remuneration of its Chief Fire Officer and would continue to do so when the combination was achieved.

Resolved

16. That the Pay Policy Statement for the financial year 2015/16 be approved.

Review of the Working Time Directive

17.1 The Authority considered a report by the Chief Fire Officer on the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) recent consultation document titled “Review of the Working Time Directive” on behalf of the European Commission. The report set out the reasons for the review and the proposed draft response for approval. The closing date for submissions was 15 March 2015.

17.2 The Temporary Director of Human Resources highlighted that any change to the working time directive could have a significant impact on staff and their working arrangements. Information about the consultation was awaited from Chief Fire Officers’ Association and the Local Government Association and these would be considered prior to the final response being submitted.

17.3 In order to give members more time to consider the proposed response, the Temporary Director of Human Resources would email members for comments following the meeting.

Resolved

18.1 That the draft consultation response be noted and the general principles agreed.

18.2 That the Temporary Director of Human Resources email members for their comments on the draft response following the meeting.

18.3 That delegated authority be granted to the Chief Fire Officer and Clerk, after consultation with the Chairman of the Authority, to agree the final response.

Firefighter Fitness Standards and Assessment – Consultation Response and Amendment of the Fire and Rescue National Framework

19.1 The Authority considered a report by the Chief Fire Officer which provided the finalised wording of the Authority’s response to the Department for Communities and Local Government’s consultation on the Fire and Rescue National Framework regarding Firefighter Fitness Standards and Assessment.

19.2 The Temporary Director of Human Resources presented the report highlighted the response to the Department for Communities and Local Government consultation which had been submitted in December 2014 and the revised fitness standards for operational personnel, which the Authority already followed.

19.3 In response to a question about how ill health was assessed, the Chief Fire Officer explained that there was a robust tiered approach in place, which included specialists, occupational health and medical practitioners. It was noted that the Audit and Scrutiny Committee would be considering a report on firefighter fitness and occupational health at its March 2015 meeting.

Noted

Combination Update

20.1 The Authority considered a report by Chief Fire Officer which provided an overview of progress made towards achieving combination by 1 April 2016. It outlined at a strategic level the governance arrangements of the programme and provided an update on the latest position with regards to the Combination Order.

20.2 The Chief Fire Officer reminded the Authority that the Department for Communities and Local Government had initiated statutory consultation about the combination which ended on 28 January 2015. The Secretary of State was currently awaiting clarification on the consultation before deciding whether an inquiry was necessary and whether the Combination Order could proceed. If the Combination Order was not signed before 25 March 2015, then this was unlikely to be resolved prior to the General Election.

20.3 The Authority noted that the Joint Committee/Shadow Board had met in January 2015 and would meet regularly to focus on delivery of the combination programme, through six identified workstreams, and that some amendments to its Terms of Reference had been made. It was also noted that the Joint/Senior Leadership Team was meeting regularly and individuals had been seconded from both Authorities to sit on the Programme Team. The Joint Selection Committee had met to agree arrangements for the appointment of a Chief Fire Officer and the senior team.

20.4 As to how members would be updated on progress with the combination and the six workstreams, the Chief Fire Officer explained that members would be provided with a monthly update. The Chairman added she had updated members following the last meeting of the Joint Committee. She hoped to continue doing this.

20.5 With regard to the Shadow Board's responsibilities, the Clerk explained that these were set out in its Terms of Reference and it would do everything necessary to ensure that the combined Authority was ready to operate from 1 April 2016. In the meantime, the Dorset Fire Authority would retain responsibility for ongoing service delivery.

20.6 The Authority noted that the membership of the combined authority was specified within the Combination Order and comprised, 10 members from Wiltshire, 5 from Swindon, 8 from Dorset, 4 from Bournemouth and 3 from Poole. These arrangements would be reviewed by 2018.

20.7 Attention was drawn to the tight timetable for the Combination Order to progress to the signing stage and, if this was not achieved by the end of March 2015, an additional meeting of the Dorset Fire Authority might be required.

Noted

Dorset FRS and Wiltshire FRS Joint Command and Control Centre

21.1 The Authority considered a report by the Chief Fire Officer which provided an update on the setting up of the Joint Command and Control Centre (JCCC) in Potterne, Wiltshire and progress of the Networked Fire Control Services Partnership (NFCSP).

21.2 The Assistant Chief Officer Service Support presented the report and highlighted the area to be covered by the Joint Command and Control Centre, progress with its delivery, progress with the Networked Fire Control Services Partnership, their implementation timescales and challenges to their successful delivery.

21.3 With regard to concerns about using a third party network provider and the Authority's resilience, it was explained that under the Networked Fire Control Services Partnership, calls could be picked up across the whole network and then re-routed for appropriate action, thus providing greater resilience.

Noted

Pension Board – Firefighters' Pension Scheme

22.1 The Authority considered a report by the Chief Fire Officer which set out preferences to consider whether the Dorset Fire Authority was able to defer the setting up of a local pension board (Wiltshire and Swindon Fire Authority were making a similar request) until after Combination. The Authority had previously agreed that a regional board would be the most preferable option.

22.2 The Temporary Director of Human Resources explained that further clarification was awaited about the Terms of Reference and membership of the Pension

Board which would need to be established by 1 April 2015. She drew attention to the options available to the Authority to the need to nominate two members to sit on the Pension Board.

22.3 Mr Mike Byatt volunteered to sit on the Local Pension Board but, as no other nominations were received, the Chairman would provide further information for members to consider and seek an additional nomination outside of the meeting.

22.4 A further report would be provided for the Authority's meeting on 16 June 2015 when further details about the Pension Board would be available.

Noted

23.1 That the report be noted

23.2 That Mr Mike Byatt be appointed to sit on the Pension Board.

23.3 That a further report be provided for the Authority's meeting on 16 June 2015.

Enhanced Redundancy – Review of Multiplier

24.1 The Authority considered a report by the Chief Fire Officer which reviewed the current arrangements for the redundancy multiplier. Information was also provided about Wiltshire and Swindon Fire Services' redundancy multiplier.

24.2 The Temporary Director of Human Resources explained that the report sought the Authority's agreement to the current redundancy multiplier arrangements continuing until the combination with the Wiltshire and Swindon Fire Service. At that point a joint policy would be established. Members supported this approach.

Resolved

25.1 That the 1.75 redundancy multiplier be maintained for both compulsory and voluntary arrangements until a new combined policy superseded it.

25.2 That the policy that redundancy payments should be calculated on the basis of "actual" salary be maintained.

25.3 That the policy that compensation payments should not generally be made to employees who are allowed to retire on the grounds of efficiency, but that in exceptional circumstances a one-off payment may be paid where this has been approved by the DFA.

25.4 That a further report in respect of a joint discretion on enhanced redundancy is developed as part of the Dorset and Wiltshire combination process.

Surveillance and Access to Communications and Inspections

26.1 The Authority considered a report by the Chief Fire Officer which provided an update on recent inspections by two Commissioners in relation to the Authority's compliance with the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act.

26.2 The Assistant Chief Officer presented the report highlighting that all the recommendations arising from the two inspections were either discharged or programmed in.

Noted

Exempt Business

Exclusion of the Public

Resolved

27. That under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for minute numbers 28 and 29 because it was likely that if members of the public were present, there would be a disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in the paragraphs indicated of Part 1 of Schedule 12A and the

public interest in withholding the information outweighed the public interest in disclosing that information.

Update on Workforce and Succession Planning Arrangements (Paragraph 2)

32.1 The Authority considered an exempt report by the Chief Fire Officer which provided an update on workforce and succession planning arrangements. The report had been deferred at the Authority's meeting on 5 December 2014.

32.2 The Chief Fire Officer presented the report in detail and highlighted the main issues facing the Dorset Fire Authority with regard to recruitment, retention and succession planning and the effects the forthcoming combination with Wiltshire and Swindon Fire Authority might have. He outlined his views on any future recruitment and explained that, following a decision on the the combination it would the be possible to determine if we recruit and if so the process and numbers to be trained.

Resolved

33. That the report be noted and the Authority receive regular updates from the Chief Fire Officer in respect of establishment levels and any decision to recruit wholetime firefighters.

Meeting duration: 10.00am – 1.45pm