

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 10 September 2015.

Present: Councillors Buchanan, Butler, Deane, Earl, Galley, Howson (Chairman), Lambert (Vice-Chair), Morris, O'Quinn, Peltzer Dunn, Pragnell, Scott, Sheppard, Taylor, Theobald and Wincott.

Also present:

Mr. D. Prichard (Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive), Mr. G. Walsh (Deputy Chief Fire Officer), Mr. D. Savage (Treasurer), Miss. E Woodley (Deputy Monitoring Officer), Mr. W. Tricker (Head of Finance and Procurement) and Mrs. S. Klein (Clerk).

861. DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

861.1 It was noted that, in relation to matters on the agenda, no participating Member had any disclosable pecuniary interest under Section 30 of the Localism Act 2011.

862. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

862.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Barnes and Penn, Mr. G. Ferrand (Assistant Chief Fire Officer) and Mrs C. Rolph (Assistant Chief Officer).

863. URGENT ITEMS AND CHAIRMAN'S BUSINESS

863.1 There were no urgent items for consideration.

863.2 Firefighter Paul Keenor

The Fire Authority recorded its sincere condolences to the family and friends of firefighter Paul Keenor, who had tragically died following an accident on his way to a call-out in early August, and stood in silence in respect of his memory.

863.3 Former Councillor Bob Carden

The Chairman welcomed Bob Carden to the meeting and presented him with a rose bowl as a memento of his service on the Fire Authority. Members thanked Bob for his contributions to the Fire Authority's work during the past fourteen years and congratulated him on his admission as an Honorary Alderman of Brighton & Hove; they wished him well for the future.

863.4 DCFO Gary Walsh

The Fire Authority congratulated DCFO Gary Walsh on his appointment as Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive, to take effect from 1 October 2015.

863.5 CFO&CE Des Prichard

This was Des Prichard's last meeting as Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive and a presentation was made to him by Members at the conclusion of the meeting, during which Group Leaders said a few words and thanked him, on behalf of their Groups, for his commitment to the Fire Authority.

864. **TO CONSIDER PUBLIC QUESTIONS, IF ANY**

864.1 There were none.

865. **TO CONSIDER PUBLIC PETITIONS, IF ANY**

865.1 There were none.

866. **NON-CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 18 JUNE 2015**

866.1 **RESOLVED** – That the non-confidential Minutes of the meeting held on 18 June 2015 be approved and signed by the Chairman. (Copy in Minute Book).

867. **CALLOVER**

867.1 Members reserved the following items for debate:

- 868. Strategic Service Planning and Medium Term Financial Plan 2016/17 –
- 869. Revenue Budget and Capital Programme Monitoring 2015/
- 870. Revision to Contract Standing Orders
- 871. Annual Performance Outcome report 2014/15

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

868. **STRATEGIC SERVICE PLANNING AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2016/17**

868.1 The Fire Authority considered a joint report of the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive and Treasurer that set out the Fire Authority's medium term service planning strategy and medium term financial plan for 2016/17-2020/21. (Copy in Minute Book).

868.2 The Treasurer clarified a number of points regarding business rates and confirmed that, if the small business rate relief was renewed after March 2016, it was expected that compensation would still be paid to local authorities through a Section 31 grant.

868.3 The CFO&CE explained that the government's £75m fire transformation fund for 2015/16 had all been allocated, with ESFRS being part of a collective bid for transforming the transport functions of Surrey and Sussex emergency services – to be successful, bids had to be for transformation work, not just buildings, and had to be delivered during 2015/16. There was no information as to whether further transformation funding would be made available for future years.

868.4 **RESOLVED** that:

- i) the updated Medium Term Financial Plan for 2016/17 – 2020/21 and its underlying assumptions be approved; and
- ii) the continuing work under the Changing the Service, Shaping our Future programme to identify savings options to meet required savings targets set out in the report be noted.

869. **REVENUE BUDGET AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING 2015/16**

869.1 The Fire Authority considered a joint report of the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive and Treasurer that reported on issues arising from the monitoring of the 2015/16 Revenue Budget and Capital Programme as at 31 July 2015. (Copy in Minute Book).

869.2 Councillor Theobald asked how officers would deal with the forecast shortfall in planned savings. The Treasurer confirmed that the current year's shortfall was being managed by making savings elsewhere, e.g. in the IMD budget as a result of decisions to postpone or reduce spending on certain items pending the outcome of the IMD Transformation Programme, and from some 'fortuitous' savings. The Treasurer explained that the savings approved in the Medium Term Financial Plan reflected both revised values and phasing of approved savings and would be reviewed in 2016/17. The savings in the MTFP included the implementation of Day Crewed Plus but from 1 April 2017, a year later than originally planned. A further report on Day Crewed Plus would be brought to the next meeting of the Policy & Resources Panel in November 2015. The CFO&CE updated Members on progress with the implementation of Day Crewed Plus and the prospect of an alternative proposal coming before the Authority. It was also noted that not all the savings from the Sussex Control Centre had yet been delivered, but there were robust balances which would offset any delays in the delivery of these savings beyond 1 April 2016.

869.3 DFCO Walsh gave details of the changes made to the system operating at Day Crewed Stations, and explained that, following consultation with staff, an amended two-watch system rather than a one-watch, self-rostered duty system was implemented. This was being kept under review.

869.4 **RESOLVED** – That the following be noted:

- i) the projected 2015/16 Revenue Budget outturn;
- ii) the projected Capital Programme outturn;
- iii) the current use of reserves;
- iv) the monitoring of savings taken in 2015/16; and
- v) the current year investments.

870. **REVISION TO CONTRACT STANDING ORDERS**

870.1 The Fire Authority considered a report of the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive that updated the Authority's Contract Standing Orders, in particular the financial thresholds that dictate the required procurement process and officer authorisation. (Copy in Minute Book).

- 870.2 Councillor Wincott agreed with most of the recommendations in the report but voiced concerns about past problems with procurement, and the importance of having democratic accountability. He therefore proposed that, in Contract Standing Orders, Section C, Part B para 7.2 'and the relevant Member of the Authority' should **not** be deleted. This would also protect officers when waiving any provisions in Contract Standing Orders. Councillor Galley seconded the proposal and, following Members' agreement, it was agreed that it was also necessary to retain para 1.26 in Appendix 1 to Section C, Part B, which defined 'Relevant Member of the Authority'.
- 870.3 Councillor Galley also suggested that under para 13.6 (c) (where ... there is only one contractor who can properly provide the Supplies, Services or Works required ...) there should be a provision to protect the officer taking the decision by, either having a Member authorise the decision, or bringing a report to the next meeting of the Scrutiny & Audit Panel.
- 870.4 The Treasurer agreed with Councillor Galley's proposal to bring a report to the next meeting of the Scrutiny & Audit Panel, following such a decision being taken. The Treasurer also explained that the officers' thresholds were set in line with EU legislation and confirmed that these were reviewed on 1 January each year, in line with the euro exchange rate.
- 870.5 **RESOLVED** – That a revision of the current Contract Standing Order thresholds and authorisations, as set out in the report and its appendices and as amended in para 870.2 and 870.3 above, be approved, to take effect from 1 February 2016.
871. **ANNUAL PERFORMANCE OUTCOME REPORT 2014-15**
- 871.1 The Fire Authority considered a report of the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive that presented the annual performance results for 2014/15. (Copy in Minute Book).
- 871.2 Councillor Theobald was concerned that the direction of travel for performance at Life Threatening Incidents was declining, although the CFO&CE confirmed that the targets were still being met. As each Service set out its own attendance standards it was not possible to make any national comparisons, although Members could make the targets more sophisticated if they so wished.
- 871.3 Councillor Theobald was also concerned at the high number of injuries and incidents being reported, compared to other Services. The CFO&CE explained that employees were being encouraged to report all accidents, however minor. A further report would be brought to a future meeting of the Scrutiny & Audit Panel which would include benchmarking data.

871.4 Councillor Scott asked about the decline in the number of Home Safety Visits being carried out and the inspections of high risk premises completed. The CFO&CE put some of this decline down to a reduction of Community Safety staff, but reassured Members that he was looking to see how these services could be delivered better or differently in the future, including making more use of Health & Well-being visits carried out by volunteers through 3VA; all staff who carry out these visits are trained in who to report any concerns to. The DCFO explained, that while the number of Community Safety Advisers had been reduced, they had been brought into a central control, from where they could be deployed more effectively to any particular incident in any area. Councillor Scott commended officers carrying out this work and noted that ESFRS was the only agency to attend a recent community event in Hastings, with staff working effectively with local residents.

871.5 Councillor Galley was concerned about the increase in primary fires in Rother and Wealden, while there were decreases in the urban areas, together with a decrease in Home Safety Visits, and he sought assurances that the rural areas were not being neglected. The CFO&CE reminded Members that no fire stations had been closed and that RDS recruitment was a key priority and was being actively pursued. The DCFO explained that it would always be harder to achieve reductions in accidental dwelling fires in isolated areas due to the very low numbers of incidents, but there had been considerable success in reducing deliberate fires in a number of areas. Borough Commanders were now tasked with examining risks in their areas and targeting their resources to the areas needing most support, with accidental dwelling fires high on the list.

871.6 Councillor Deane asked about the gender differences for injuries sustained in primary fires, and it was noted that a report giving more detail was going to the next meeting of the Scrutiny & Audit Panel on 17 September 2015. The DCFO also pointed to the differences in living habits, such as smoking, drinking and health issues, and the work being undertaken with health providers. Councillor Deane noted that the majority of accidental dwelling fires occurred in the early evening, during the traditional 'cooking time', and asked whether there was any evidence to indicate why a higher number of men were injured in these fires. The CFO&CE informed Members of the work being undertaken by Kent FRS into how people behave in fires; this would ultimately help staff educate the public more effectively, and reduce the number of injuries suffered in accidental dwelling fires.

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

872. **LOCAL GOVERNMENT PENSION SCHEME – DISCRETIONS POLICY**

872.1 The Fire Authority considered a report of the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive that sought approval of the East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service (ESFRS) Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) Employer Discretions Policy. (Copy in Minute Book).

872.2 **RESOLVED** – That the ESFRS LGPS Employer Discretions Policy be approved as detailed in Appendix A to the report.

873. **PENSIONS UPDATE**

873.1 The Fire Authority considered a report of the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive that updated them on recent pension developments. (Copy in Minute Book).

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

874. **PEOPLE & ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (POD) STRATEGY (2015/2017) AND INCLUSION & DIVERSITY (I&D) STRATEGY (2015/2017)**

874.1 The Fire Authority considered a report of the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive that presented revised strategies for approval. (Copy in Minute Book).

874.2 **RESOLVED** – That the revised strategies be approved.

875. **DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

875.1 Members noted the dates of future meetings, especially the revised dates for Panel meetings in January, February, May and November 2016*.

875.2	17 September 2015	Scrutiny & Audit Panel
	5 November 2015	Scrutiny & Audit and Policy & Resources Panels
	10 December 2015	Fire Authority
	*21 January 2016	Policy & Resources Panel
	*4 February 2016	Scrutiny & Audit Panel
	11 February 2016	Fire Authority
	*26 May 2016	Scrutiny & Audit and Policy & Resources Panels
	16 June 2016	Fire Authority
	7 July 2016	Scrutiny & Audit and Policy & Resources Panels
	8 September 2016	Fire Authority
	15 September 2016	Scrutiny & Audit Panel
	*3 November 2016	Scrutiny & Audit and Policy & Resources Panels
	8 December 2016	Fire Authority

All Fire Authority meetings to commence at 10:30 hours

All Panel meetings to commence at 10:00 hours

876. **EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

876.1 **RESOLVED** – That items nos. 877, 878 and 879 be exempt under the paragraphs indicated below 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 following grounds:

877 Paragraphs 1 and 3 – includes information relating to an individual and includes information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) and includes information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

878 Paragraph 3 – includes information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

979 Paragraph 3 – includes information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

The meeting concluded at 12:15 hours.

Signed

Chairman

Dated this 10th day of December 2015.