

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 December 2015.

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

Also present:

Mr. G. Walsh (Chief Fire Officer), Mr. S. Apter (Deputy Chief Fire Officer), Mr. G. Ferrand (Assistant Chief Fire Officer), Mrs. C. Rolph (Assistant Chief Officer), Mr. D. Savage (Treasurer), Miss. E. Woodley (Deputy Monitoring Officer), Mr. W. Tricker (Head of Finance and Procurement) and Mrs. K. Ward (Clerk).

880. DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

880.1 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.

881. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

881.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Sheppard

882. URGENT ITEMS AND CHAIRMAN'S BUSINESS

882.1 There were no urgent items for consideration.

882.2 CFO Gary Walsh

The Chairman welcomed Gary Walsh to his first Fire Authority meeting as Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive.

882.3 DCFO Steve Apter

Members welcomed Steve Apter, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, to his first meeting of the Fire Authority and wished him well during his time with East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service. Steve had been seconded from Hampshire Fire & Rescue Service and Members welcomed his temporary appointment.

882.4 ACFO Gary Ferrand

This was Gary Ferrand's last meeting as Assistant Chief Fire Officer and a presentation was made to him by Members. The Chairman and Group Leaders said a few words and thanked him, on behalf of their Groups, for his commitment to the Fire Authority over the last 6 years.

882.5 Governance Team of the Year Award
Councillor Lambert wished to record her congratulations to Brighton and Hove Corporate Legal Team who won the Governance Team of the Year award at the Lawyers in Local Government Legal Awards.

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

883.1 There were none.

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

884.1 There were none.

885. **NON-CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 10 SEPTEMBER 2015**

885.1 **RESOLVED** – That the non-confidential Minutes of the meeting held on 10 September 2015 be approved and signed by the Chairman. (Copy in Minute Book).

886. **CALLOVER**

886.1 Members reserved the following items for debate:

887. Autumn Statement Update

888. Member Allowances Scheme – Annual Review

889. Day Crewed Plus Duty System

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

887. **AUTUMN STATEMENT UPDATE**

887.1 The Treasurer gave an oral update on the recent Spending Review and Autumn Statement which was announced on 25 November 2015.

887.2 Economic forecasts have improved by £27bn allowing the Government more flexibility than anticipated. However, there is some concern about the volatility of these figures. Government spending in 2010 took up 45% of national income and by the end of the current spending review period it was set to reach 36.5%. The headline figure for local government funding quoted by government is a cash terms rise from £40.3 billion to £40.5 billion in 2019/20 representing a fall of just 1.7% per year in real terms over the Spending Review period. Central government grant is to fall from £11.5 billion in 2015/16 to £5.4 billion in 2019/20, a real terms reduction of 56.3% or 18.7% per year. Assessing the impact of this is made complex by a range of associated announcements and the exact impact is not likely to become clearer until the local government finance settlement is announced. Initial views are that a cut of all government funding of in the region of 20-25% in cash terms over the life of the spending review would remain a reasonable planning scenario. Cuts of that order would be within our current planning assumptions. The total of locally-raised funding (mostly council tax and business rates) is estimated to increase from £28.8 billion in 2015/16 to £35.1 billion in 2019/20, a real terms increase of 13.1% or 3.1% per year. It is not possible to say yet how consistent that is with our local assumptions.

- 887.3 No new announcements on council tax were made in the Autumn Statement although subsequent clarification indicated that the 2% threshold would remain in place. The local government finance settlement was expected between 16 and 18 December 2014, when the referendum threshold was also expected to be announced. It was anticipated that no Council Tax Freeze Grant would be offered this year.
- 887.4 The expectation was that the funding settlement would be for one year only despite Councils lobbying Government for a longer term settlement so that they could plan for the future. The Government has indicated that by the end of Parliament, Local Government would retain 100% of business rate revenues. It expected that this would come with additional responsibilities and empower local authorities to deliver services in a way right for their area and lead to the withdrawal of revenue support grant
- 887.5 Other announcements to Members included that Newhaven had been made an Enterprise zone which meant they could offer companies business rates relief, streamlined planning regulations through the use of local development orders, and capital funding assistance aimed at supporting job creation. The Government also confirmed its intention to make it a statutory duty for emergency services to collaborate.
- 887.6 **RESOLVED** that the update be noted.

888. **MEMBER ALLOWANCES SCHEME – ANNUAL REVIEW**

- 888.1 The Fire Authority considered a joint report of the Chief Fire Officer, Treasurer and Monitoring Officer that apprised Members of the annual review of the Member Allowances Scheme. (Copy in Minute Book).
- 888.2 The scheme was formally reviewed every four years and monitored annually to ensure it remained fair and equitable. The Deputy Monitoring Officer advised Members that accepting a 1% increase in the rates of basic pay and special responsibility allowance would be consistent with other Authorities.
- 888.3 Councillor Wincott requested that Appendix 2 be amended to include rail travel.
- 888.4 **RESOLVED** – That:
- i) with effect from 1 April 2016, a 1% increase in rates of basic and special responsibility allowances be implemented; and
 - ii) it be noted that the Chief Fire Officer has authority to keep travel and subsistence rates under review and upgrade them.

889. **DAY CREWED PLUS DUTY SYSTEM**

- 889.1 The Fire Authority considered a report of the Chief Fire Officer that informed Members of the decision of the Policy & Resources Panel to recommend to the Fire Authority that the alternative savings proposals are accepted, rather than continue to incur costs and risks associated with the introduction of Day Crewed Plus, as previously approved at the full Fire Authority on 5 June 2014. (Copy in Minute Book).

- 889.2 Negotiations had taken place with the Fire Brigades' Union on the implementation of the Fire Authority's decision on 5 June 2014 for the introduction of the Day-Crewed Plus duty system (DCP) at Roedean and The Ridge Fire Stations.
- 889.3 As a result of a failure to reach agreement on the implementation of the proposals, both parties had agreed to request assistance from the National Joint Council, Joint Secretaries. Following this, both parties had agreed to seek alternative proposals that would allow the Fire Authority to achieve the savings required in the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and bridge the funding gap of £2.1m by 2020/21 (at the time of the negotiations this was £1.4m by 2019/20).
- 889.4 Agreement on three viable options for alternative savings proposals had been reached with the Fire Brigades' Union, as set out in the report. Members were advised of the related legal considerations, and the alternative savings proposals following extensive negotiations with the Fire Brigades' Union.
- 889.5 Councillor Galley acknowledged how encouraging it was that the FBU were behind the proposals and went on to ask if Officers were satisfied that it was safe to ride at the minimum.
- 889.6 The Chief Fire Officer advised Members that more riders would always be preferable, however, the practice of riding at a four was commonplace nationally and at times locally and the Director of Response & Resilience was currently looking at the implications of introducing this system. Given the reduction of incidents and improvements on matters such as training, equipment, etc, reviewing rider numbers was considered appropriate and safe at this time.
- 889.7 Councillor Wincott suggested that to reduce the number of firefighters riding an appliance to 4 would decrease the establishment by 28 posts which would impact on the Service's resilience, particularly as neighbouring Services were reducing their numbers and East Sussex could no longer rely on their support. Councillor Wincott also asked Officers if assurances had been given to the FBU about there being no compulsory redundancies and that the Service's reserves would be used to cover the 28 posts.
- 889.8 The Chief Fire Officer reminded Members that the options on the table were put forward by both Officers and the FBU and that resilience wasn't solely reliant on whole time staff, but included retained duty system staff. It was also highlighted that no guarantee could be given about compulsory redundancies as the future was unknown, however, officers would aim for no compulsory redundancies in line with the Authority's previously agreed HR approach.
- 889.9 Councillor Deane expressed concern that for every firefighter post removed, additional pressure would be exerted on those left and that East Sussex Fire Authority should write a letter to Government requesting adequate funding. Councillor Scott supported this view and felt it should be pointed out to the Government that if we don't have a resilient service, someone would eventually get hurt.
- 889.10 The Chairman reminded Members that he sat on the Fire Commission which had written a collective letter on the matter requesting a meeting with the Minister.

- 889.11 **RESOLVED** – That
- i) the report be noted; and
 - ii) the recommendation of the Policy & Resources Panel be approved; that the alternative savings proposals are accepted, rather than continue to incur costs and risks associated with the introduction of Day Crewed Plus as approved at the full Fire Authority on 5 June 2014.

Councillor Deane abstained from the vote.

890. **EAST SUSSEX FIRE AUTHORITY CONSTITUTION – REVIEW**

890.1 The Fire Authority considered a joint report of the Chief Fire Officer and Monitoring Officer that reviewed East Sussex Fire Authority’s Constitution. (Copy in Minute Book).

RESOLVED – That the following be approved:

- i) Section E (Scheme of Delegations) paragraph 2.6 be amended to read:
The Principal Officers are authorised to act in all matters for those functions that fall within their remit of responsibility and, without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing, to exercise the functions set out in paragraph 4.3 below with the exceptions of paragraphs 4.3 (viii), (ix) and (xi); and
- ii) Section B (East Sussex Fire Authority and its Panels) Principal Officer Appointments Panel paragraph 3 be amended to read:
To conduct final interviews and make appointments to Principal Officer posts.

891. **DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

891.1 Members noted the dates of future meetings:

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

892. **EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

892.1 **RESOLVED** – That items nos. 893, 894, 895, 896 and 897 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:

893 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).

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

895 Paragraphs 2 and 4 – includes information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual; and includes 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.

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

897 Paragraphs 3 and 5 – includes information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) and information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings.

The meeting concluded at 13:40 hours.

Signed

Chairman

Dated this 11th day of February 2016