

## **EAST SUSSEX FIRE AUTHORITY**

**Minutes of the meeting of the POLICY & RESOURCES PANEL held at East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service Headquarters, 20 Upperton Road, Eastbourne, at 12.45 hours on Thursday 11 July 2013.**

**Members Present: Councillors Barnes, Hawtree, Howson (Chairman), Lambert, Pragnell, Rufus, Scott and Theobald**

### **Also present:**

Mr. D. Prichard (Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive), Mr. G. Walsh (Deputy Chief Fire Officer), Mrs. C. Rolph (Assistant Chief Officer), Mr. D. Savage (Treasurer), Miss L. Woodley (Deputy Monitoring Officer) and Mrs. K. Ward (Clerk).

### **887. DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS**

887.1 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.

### **888. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN**

888.1 **RESOLVED** – That Councillor Howson be appointed Chairman of the Panel for the ensuing year.

### **889. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

889.1 There were none.

### **890. ANY OTHER NON-EXEMPT ITEMS CONSIDERED URGENT BY THE CHAIRMAN/CHAIRMAN'S BUSINESS**

890.1 There were none.

### **891. TO CONSIDER ANY PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS**

891.1 There were none.

### **892. NON-CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF THE POLICY & RESOURCES PANEL MEETING HELD ON 11 APRIL 2013**

892.1 **RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the meeting held on 11 April 2013 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman. (Copy in Minute Book).

### **893. CALLOVER**

893.1 Members reserved the following items for debate:

894. 2014/15 Strategic Service Planning and Medium Term Financial Plan

896. Sussex Control Centre

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

894. **2014/15 STRATEGIC SERVICE PLANNING AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN**

- 894.1 Members considered a joint report of the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive and the Treasurer which provided an update on the medium term service planning strategy and proposed approach for 2014/15 – 2018/19. (Copy in Minute Book).
- 894.2 The Treasurer informed Members that the current and proposed MTFP reflected the continuing and sustained reductions in funding for public services as the Government sought to reduce the national deficit. The Chancellors Budget announced further reductions in local authority funding for 2014/15, on top of those previously announced in the provisional settlement in December 2012. A range of assumptions would have to be made as only a limited amount of detail had been announced from the outcomes of the Spending Review 2013 (SR13) and the level of funding for the fire service after 2015/16 would not be determined until after the next national elections. When taken alongside the significant changes to local government funding which had been implemented in 2013/14, there was a heightened degree of complexity, risk and uncertainty in determining the financial resources that would be available to the Authority in the period 2014/15 – 2018/19.
- 894.3 Members were advised that revisions to both the expenditure and funding elements of the MTFP indicated, based on the information available at this stage, that there was a need for the Authority to identify an estimated additional saving of £7.112m or 18.2% of the current Revenue Budget between 2014/15 and 2018/19. Members acknowledged that the MTFP and savings target would need to be revised as later information became available.
- 894.4 Since 2011/12 the Authority had delivered in excess of £7m of savings. Approximately £1.2m (17%) had come from operational service which make up 61% of the 2013/14 Revenue Budget, with the balance (83%) of the savings coming from central or support service budgets which make up only 39% of the Revenue Budget.
- 894.5 Members were advised that the Authority needed to agree its savings strategy so that it delivered sustainability across all aspects of the Authority's business and functions. This would mean modelling up to 20% savings across both operational and central/support budgets over the 5 year period. In order to achieve this, the Deputy Chief Fire Officer was building on past reviews and initiatives and carrying out a review of prevention, protection and response services. This was considering a range of options for delivering savings across the whole of service delivery whilst seeking to maintain performance to current service standards.
- 894.6 Members were advised of the enormous amount of work and the continuing discussions and approaches being undertaken by officers in devising proposals that provided the Fire Authority with the opportunity to maintain its Service Standards. Fire Authority Members accepted that some of the decisions they would need to take were unlikely to find favour with the Unions and that local communities may not be supportive of proposals that included fewer firefighters and less fire appliances. However, the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive stressed the importance to Members of the need to approve the approach noted within the report to meet the Fire Authority's significant savings target up to 2018/19.

894.7 Members discussed past decisions to accept the Council Tax freeze grant offered by Central Government together with the consequences of accepting any future grant. The Chairman, Councillor Hawtree, Councillor Rufus and Councillor Scott indicated that they felt the only way forward would be to decline the grant and raise Council Tax. Councillors Theobald and Barnes both indicated they did not necessarily support this view but would need to give careful consideration to all the implications.

894.8 Members expressed their view that they would like officers to look at the feasibility of closer collaboration and even a merger with other Authorities. The Chairman confirmed that he was in talks with other Authorities and was seeking to progress the matter.

894.9 **RESOLVED** – That:

- i. the updated medium term financial plan for 2014/15 – 2018/19 be noted; and
- ii. the approach to identifying savings options to meet required savings targets as set out in the report be approved.

895. **REVENUE BUDGET & CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING 2013/14**

895.1 Members considered a joint report of the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive and the Treasurer which reported on issues arising from the monitoring of the 2013/14 Revenue Budget and Capital Programme as at 31 May 2013. (Copy in Minute Book).

895.2 **RESOLVED** – That the Panel note:

- i. the projected 2013/14 Revenue Budget outturn;
- ii. the projected Capital Programme outturn;
- iii. the current and planned use of Reserves; and
- iv. the monitoring of savings taken in 2013/14.

896. **SUSSEX CONTROL CENTRE – PROGRESS REPORT**

896.1 Members considered a report of the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive which gave an update on progress in relation to the Sussex Control Centre (SCC). (Copy in Minute Book).

896.2 Members were advised that in relation to the property, the tenders for the refurbishment of the building had come in higher than the original indicative costs and that, based on the first one evaluated, the capital provision set aside by both East and West Sussex was insufficient.

896.3 Officers reviewed the existing business case and the review of the existing Control Rooms to see if there had been any material changes which would affect the decision in relation to Haywards Heath Fire Station being the preferred and most viable option. Officers concluded that it was viable and made a recommendation to the Urgency Panel that the scheme value be increased from £0.666m to £1.100m.

- 896.4 The Urgency Panel had approved the recommendation to increase the scheme value and officers advised that this would be funded from the Capital Programme Reserve. Members requested that officers bring a report to a future meeting of the Fire Authority detailing the lessons learnt together with the outcomes of the review into the internal processes of West Sussex County Council.
- 896.5 ACO Rolph reported that the other areas of the project were progressing well. Members were apprised of the project plan and risk plan. The project plan had a number of work streams which were at a critical level and were being managed with close attention. The risk plan was examined monthly by the Project Board which was particularly important at the moment as the number of risks had increased during the quarter as all the work streams were currently at high activity.
- 896.6 Members were advised that consultation on staffing structures, posts and roles, shift patterns and hours of working had commenced with the FBU, Unison and the Fire Officers Association. It was hoped that an agreement was close to being secured.
- 896.7 **RESOLVED** – That the Panel note the report.
897. **EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**
- 897.1 **RESOLVED** – That items 898 and 899 be exempt under paragraphs 3 and 4 of Schedule 12A to 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), and information relating to any consultation or negotiations, or contemplated consultation 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.

The meeting concluded at 15.25 hours.

Signed

Chairman

Dated this Day of

2013