

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 11.30 hours on Thursday 15 May 2014.

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. Ferrand (Assistant Chief Fire Officer), Mrs. C. Rolph (Assistant Chief Officer - People & Organisational Development), Mr. W. Tricker (Head of Finance & Procurement), Mrs. L. Ridley (Head of Performance Management), Miss L. Woodley (Deputy Monitoring Officer) and Mrs. K. Ward (Clerk).

933. DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

933.1 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.

934. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

934.1 There were none.

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

935.1 FRA Transformation Fund Bidding Process 2015-16

935.1.1 Members considered a report of the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive which advised them of the proposed FRA Transformation Bid submissions from ESFA for 2015-16. (Copy in Minute Book).

935.1.2 The Chairman accepted the report as an urgent item due to the closing date for bids being before the date of the next meeting of the Panel or Fire Authority – this was the last opportunity for Members to approve the bid before its submission.

935.1.3 **RESOLVED** – That the bid submissions to the DCLG for capital funding in the year 2015-16 be noted and agreed.

936. TO CONSIDER ANY PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS

936.1 There were none.

937. **NON-CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF THE POLICY & RESOURCES PANEL MEETING HELD ON 16 JANUARY 2014**

937.1 **RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the meeting held on 16 January 2014 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman. (Copy in Minute Book).

938. **CALLOVER**

938.1 Members reserved the following items for debate:

939 Revenue Budget And Capital Programme Monitoring 2013/14

940 Corporate Performance Targets Up To 2015/16

941 Pensions Update

942 Predetermined Attendances At Automatic Fire Alarms

939. **REVENUE BUDGET AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING 2013/14**

939.1 Members considered a joint report of the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive and the Treasurer which outlined issues arising from the monitoring of the 2013/14 Revenue Budget and Capital Programme as at 31 March 2014. (Copy in Minute Book).

939.2 The Revenue Budget outturn for 2013/14 was projected to underspend by £664,000, an increase of £315,000 on the previously reported £349,000. The overall underspend reflected a range of savings in Corporate Services and Support Services which had been removed from the 2014/15 budget as part of the non-operational savings proposals, a small net underspend on Service Delivery and Operational budgets, and project slippage, primarily in Information Management Department. The total value of projects expected to slip into 2014/15 was currently estimated as £471,000 and this would be confirmed as part of the final accounts process and reported to the Panel in July.

939.3 The overall Capital Programme was projected to be under planned spending by £410,000 compared to the £362,000 reported to the last Policy & Resources Panel. The current year's Capital Programme and spending profile was projected to be underspent by £2,958,000, an increase of £1,195,000 on the previously reported £1,763,000. The projected underspend was made up of two main elements: schemes which had been delivered under budget or had been removed as no longer necessary which had resulted in a saving of £416,000 and; schemes that had been delayed and the spend slipped into 2014/15 and these totalled £2,548,000. The majority (89%) of this slippage related to two major partnership schemes Newhaven Fire Station and Sussex Control Centre (Information Management and Accommodation).

939.4 The Authority maintained Earmarked and General Reserves in order to assist it in managing its spending plans across financial years (Earmarked Reserves) and making provisions for the financial risks it faces (General Reserve). The projected year end position reflected a lower than planned net drawdown from reserves by £735,000, primarily due to re-phasing of a number of IMD projects and the funding of a range of costs including redundancy payments from within the revenue budget. A number of reserves were no longer required and in line with the decision taken by the Fire Authority in February 2014 they would be transferred into the Improvement and Efficiency Reserve.

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

- (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 shortfall in 2013/14 budget savings being managed within the current overall underspend.

940. **CORPORATE PERFORMANCE TARGETS UP TO 2015/16**

940.1 Members considered a report of the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive which presented the corporate performance indicator targets up to 2015/16 (base line 2010/11) for approval by the Fire Authority for inclusion in the Service's Planning documents. (Copy in Minute Book).

940.2 In May 2011, the Panel had agreed strategic performance indicator targets for application in 2011/12 covering the five year period up to 2015/16 after which they would be reviewed for a further five year period. The targets were set to achieve incremental improvements in the majority of service delivery indicators. Last year, the Panel agreed to freeze the targets at the 2012/13 level, as it was unknown what the impact of the funding gap would be on the Service's resources and performance. However, there were three exceptions to this; Home Safety Visits and deaths in primary and accidental dwelling fires.

940.3 The indicators and targets were reviewed annually against projected performance results and discussed with the relevant Directorates.

940.4 It was proposed that the following targets be deleted this year:

- 26 - Retained Duty Staff Female firefighters as new entrants to the FRS
- 27 - Minority ethnic staff as new entrants to the FRS
- 28 - Disabled employees as new entrants to the FRS
- 31 - Affordable community safety services
- 6 - Expenditure per head of the population on the provision of Fire & Rescue Services

- 940.5 A new indicator was proposed to monitor short term sickness against the Bradford factor. This indicator would initially be introduced as a measure until benchmarking data is available to set a target for the following year.
- 940.6 The current priority areas were:
- Percentage of HSVs to the vulnerable members of our community
 - Number of accidental fires in dwellings
 - Percentage of accidental dwelling fires confined to room of origin
 - Percentage reduction of automatic fire alarms
 - Number of working days/shifts lost due to sickness absence for all staff
- 940.7 Councillor Hawtree asked Officers how the targets for recruitment would continue to be monitored once removed from the Indicator list. Officers confirmed that work would still continue to monitor the diversity of the workforce even though it would be unlikely that there would be any recruitment for the foreseeable future. ACO Rolph reminded Members that Councillor Scott was involved as the Member Lead for Equality & Diversity matters.
- 940.8 Councillors asked Officers if they felt there was an opportunity to charge for additional Services around the inspection of high risk/business premises particularly given consideration to the set up of the Community Interest Company (CIC). ACFO Ferrand advised Members that the Authority had a statutory duty to enforce fire safety legislation and therefore were unable to charge for activities that form part of this duty, but any other activities such as advising or assessing risks on behalf of businesses would have to take into consideration the potential for a conflict of interest, and whilst this issue was not insurmountable, all implications had to carefully be considered alongside legal advice from the Monitoring Officer. Members were also advised that consideration would have to be given to the matter of 'State Aid' as staff in ESFRS were mainly employed to deliver the statutory functions of the Fire Authority and were provided through public funding. If these staff were to be used to generate income and potentially take trade away from other businesses, then there would need to be a robust and transparent mechanism of apportioning the true cost of doing business by these staff, to ensure there could be no legal challenge regarding 'State Aid' being used to subsidise this part of the enterprise. ACFO Ferrand advised that the delivery of advice or engagement activities with businesses could be explored further by delivery through the CIC but the above factors would need to be taken into account.
- 940.9 **RESOLVED:** That the following be approved:
- (i) the performance indicator targets were frozen last year at the 2012/13 target level as it was unknown what the impact of the funding gap would be on performance be noted;
 - (ii) the performance indicator targets for application in 2014/15 onwards contained in Appendix 1, Table 1 and 2 of the report be approved;
 - (iii) the changes to the current suite of indicators as detailed in paragraph 6 of the report be approved; and
 - (iv) the existing 'Top set' of strategic indicators remain for 2014/15.

941. **PENSIONS UPDATE**

- 941.1 Members considered a joint report of the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive and the Treasurer which informed Members of the current position on a number of pension issues related to the FPS, NFPS and the LGPS. (Copy in Minute Book).
- 941.2 Members had received regular updates on various issues in relation to the Firefighters Pension Scheme (FPS) 1992, the New Firefighters Pension Scheme (NFPS) 2006 and the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS), as well as relevant court cases which would have consequences for the Fire Authority's revenue budget.
- 941.3 The revenue budget for 2014/15 and the Medium Term Financial Plan included a number of provisions for pension related costs based on the best information in February. Officers were working through the practical implications of the issues highlighted in the report and would be finalising the implementation plan and consulting with the Representative Bodies as necessary.
- 941.4 **RESOLVED:** That the latest information available on various pension related issues, be noted.

942. **PRE-DETERMINED ATTENDANCES AT AUTOMATIC FIRE ALARMS**

- 942.1 Members considered a report of the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive which outlined the regional work to standardise pre-determined attendances to Automatic Fire Alarms and to seek approval to change the previous IRMP decision. (Copy in Minute Book).
- 942.2 Following the introduction of Integrated Risk Management Planning (IRMP) the Fire Authority reviewed its policy for the attendance to Automatic Fire Detection (AFD) calls as part of the IRMP Action Plan for 2004/05. A revised Service policy was approved and implemented on 1st April 2004. Since then it had been subject to minor amendments following further risk assessments.
- 942.3 Following the introduction of a new post in 2010 and operational changes to call challenge, the number of incidents of unwanted fire signals had reduced each subsequent year. Despite this downward trend, the current levels of unwanted signals from AFD systems continue to place an unacceptable burden on the Service.
- 942.4 The Sussex Control Centre Project (SSC) was working with the regional Ways of Working group (WOW) to develop common standard operating procedures and common Pre-Determined Attendance (PDA) for all calls received including Automatic Fire Alarms (AFAs). The current policy for attending AFAs had been endorsed by Fire Authority and the Panel was asked to approve an amendment, (set out in the report to the Panel), of a new attendance policy in line with West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service to achieve a common PDA for AFAs.

- 942.5 If the proposed revised PDAs were adopted, not only would this achieve consistency across the two services but also cashable and non-cashable efficiency savings would be made. The busiest stations for attending AFAs were the wholetime stations. Productivity on these stations could be increased in terms of less disruption to the working shift which could result in significantly more time to undertake operational training, 7.2 (d) visits and Community Safety work.
- 942.6 The Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive referred to a letter the FBU sent to all Members noting their concerns at the report being considered by the Panel. Members considered the correspondence from the FBU and were satisfied that the policy being put forward for determination, was in line with that adopted by a number of other Fire Authorities, and also in line with the policy currently in place in West Sussex. This way of working was already familiar with West Sussex who we were sharing a control centre with. Under the proposals, the Officer in charge would carry out a dynamic risk assessment and make up resources as with any other type of call should they be needed.
- 942.7 Officers answered Councillors concerns about whether there had been any negative impact reported by those Services that had implemented a one pump response to AFA's. Councillors agreed that a unified response with West Sussex and other Authorities would be appropriate.
- 942.8 **RESOLVED:** That an amendment to the existing Automatic Fire Alarm policy to allow for a standardised Pre Determined Attendance (PDA) across Sussex in line with the regional Ways of Working be endorsed.
943. **EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**
- 943.1 **RESOLVED** – That item 944 be exempt under paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006 and, accordingly, is not open for public inspection on the grounds that it includes information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Authority holding that information).

The meeting concluded at 13.20 hours.

Signed

Chairman

Dated this Day of

2014