

**EAST SUSSEX FIRE AUTHORITY**

**Minutes of the meeting of the POLICY & RESOURCES PANEL held at County Hall, St. Annes Crescent, Lewes, East Sussex at 11:30 hours on Thursday 27 April 2017.**

**Members Present: Councillors Barnes, Howson (Chair), Lambert, Pragnell and Theobald.**

**In attendance:**

Ms. D. Whittaker (Interim Chief Fire Officer), Mr. M. O'Brien (Interim Assistant Chief Fire Officer), Ms. E. Woodley (Deputy Monitoring Officer), Mr. D. Savage (Assistant Director Resources / Treasurer), Mr. D. Drummond (Interim IT Manager) and Mrs. K. Ward (Clerk).

**045. DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS**

045.1 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.

**046. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

046.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Scott and Mr. M. Andrews (Interim Deputy Chief Fire Officer).

**047. NOTIFICATION OF ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT / CHAIRMAN'S BUSINESS**

047.1 There were none.

**048. NON-CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF THE POLICY & RESOURCES PANEL MEETING HELD ON 19 JANUARY 2017**

048.1 **RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the meeting held on 19 January 2017 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman. (Copy in Minute Book).

**049. CALLOVER**

049.1 Members reserved the following items for debate:

050. Revenue Budget and Capital Programme Monitoring 2016/17

051. East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service IT Strategy

052. Fire Reform and the Adrian Thomas Review

**050. REVENUE BUDGET AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING 2016/17**

050.1 The Panel considered a joint report of the Assistant Director Resources/Treasurer that reported on issues arising from the monitoring of the 2016/17 Revenue Budget and Capital Programme as at 31 March 2017. (Copy in minute book).

- 050.2 The Treasurer advised Members that the Revenue Budget was forecast to be underspent by £558,000 which equated to 1.4% of the total revenue budget. This would provide the Authority with the opportunity to establish an earmarked reserve to fund the one off costs of wholetime firefighter recruitment during 2017/18 and 2018/19.
- 050.3 The overall Capital Programme was projected to be £31,000 underspent although the current year's Capital programme was projected to be underspent by £694,000. Despite a review, there was continued slippage in the Property General budget into 2017/18, although it had been assessed to have no immediate impact on operational service delivery.
- 050.4 Overall, the year-end balance was forecast to be £21.119m which was £5.223m higher than planned, primarily due to slippage in the Capital Programme, delayed contractual milestone payments relating to the IMD Transformation project slipping from 2016/17 into 2017/18 and additional specific grants received from central government which would be spent in 2017/18. All forecast savings were expected to be achieved.
- 050.5 The Treasurer advised Members of an amendment to the table shown within the report at paragraph 1.1. The revenue budget reported to the last Policy & Resources Panel should have read £528,000, this Policy & Resources £558,000 with movement of £30,000.
- 050.6 Interim Chief Fire Officer Whittaker reassured Members that the underspend would be utilised, particularly now firefighter recruitment was underway. Officers had been working in collaboration with the Police in the processing of the applications by using their specialised recruitment software.
- 050.7 **RESOLVED** –That the report be noted, particularly in relation to the:
- (i) projected Revenue Budget underspend;
  - (ii) projected underspend in the Capital Programme;
  - (iii) variation to the Capital Programme;
  - (iv) planned use of reserves;
  - (v) monitoring of savings taken in 2016/17; and
  - (vi) current years investments

051. **EAST SUSSEX FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE IT STRATEGY**

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- 051.1 The Panel considered a report of the Assistant Director Resources / Treasurer which provided the IT strategy for East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service which builds upon work previously carried out by Spirit Acuity and is a documented form of the power point presentation provided to Corporate Management Team at the end of December 2016. (Copy in minute book).

- 051.2 The strategy aimed to provide the Service with a long term view of how the underlying IT of the Fire Service could be adapted and flexed to satisfy business need. Formulation of the IT Strategy concentrated on establishing a direction of travel across key technology areas mapped to a solid framework of activity that would incrementally unlock desired business outcomes.
- 051.3 Existing funding of £7m would not be sufficient to fully support the forecast cost of £8.8m which would need the Fire Authority to identify the funding through the budget setting process for 2018/19. Funding would always pose a challenge, which was why the strategy aimed to put in realistic funding requirements and not overly hedging ambition.
- 051.4 The IT strategy would need to be integrated into business and programme planning. The Service had recently appointed Telent as its IT delivery partner which would help ensure that IT became a key enabler to support change at the business pace required.
- 051.5 The Assistant Director Resources / Treasurer informed Members that the Strategy was one part of the Service's IMD Transformation Programme. It sat alongside the outsourcing of service delivery to telent Technology Services Ltd, the delivery of a number of transformation milestones to improve our IT infrastructure, the establishment of a strong client side team and new governance structures. The Strategy had been subject to extensive consultation with service managers to ensure it met the needs of the business and projects had been prioritised by the Corporate Management Team.
- 051.6 Councillor Lambert asked about staffing of the client side. The Treasurer advised that a development plan had been put in place to support the staff who had taken on roles in the new client side (known as the Information Technology Group or ITG) to ensure they had the necessary skills.
- 051.7 Councillor Barnes highlighted the point that it was the IT systems and support that brought the Service together and that with an external business partner providing our systems, there would be a more imaginative grasp on the digital aspect of business. Councillor Barnes highlighted the importance of having IT systems that worked together, both internally and with other external agencies.
- 051.8 Dan Drummond Interim IT Manager advised that integration of systems internally and sharing of data with partners was reflected in the Strategy. ITG staff would have the business intelligence to know how IT would be best utilised and telent would source to the Services needs.

- 051.9 **RESOLVED** – That
- (i) the Fire Authority be recommended to approve the IT Strategy 2017-22 including the use of existing funding of £7m for its delivery; and
  - (ii) Subject to a satisfactory business case, further funding be identified through the budget setting process and review of the Capital Asset Strategy for 2018/19.

052. **FIRE REFORM AND ADRIAN THOMAS REVIEW**

- 052.1 The Panel considered a report of the Interim Chief Fire Officer which provided Members with an update on the Government's reform agenda for Fire and Rescue Services and outlined the progress made by ESFRS in relation to the expectations. (Copy in minute book).
- 052.2 Interim Chief Fire Officer Whittaker reported that the Government had set out three pillars of reform for the fire and rescue service which included accountability and transparency, efficiency and collaboration and workforce reform. Members were advised that the outcomes of the review together with the release of the Adrian Thomas review and its 45 recommendations would mean a considerable pace of reform over the next year for the Local Government Association (LGA), National Joint Council (NJC) and Fire & Rescue Services.
- 052.3 The Minister for Policing and the Fire Service, Brandon Lewis had given his vision for the fire sector earlier in the year. He had noted that reform had been taking place, but didn't feel Services were doing enough and not at a quick enough pace.
- 052.4 To aid Accountability and Transparency, it was announced that there would be a new inspectorate for the fire service that will determine how effective each service is to prevent and respond to incidents; whether the Service provides value for money; whether the Service understands its demands and future risk; and its leadership, training, diversity, values and culture. The inspectorate will also undertake an inspection regime.
- 052.5 A national website would also be created which would contain information provided by all fire & rescue services, such as Chief Officer pay, workforce composition, expenditure, etc so the public could scrutinise and ascertain the performance of their local service against others.
- 052.6 In relation to Efficiency and Collaboration, the Fire Minister had commented on the procurement of goods by fire services and differences paid for similar items. The Chief Fire Officers Association created a new commercial strategy to deal with the comments made and identified categories of high expenditure where savings could be made by collaborating. The duty to collaborate was now a statutory duty under the Act and the Service was expected to keep collaboration opportunities under review.
- 052.7 Members were advised that to aid workforce reform, there would be the establishment of a new professional standards body which would set standards on issues such as leadership, workforce development, equality and diversity and classify effective practice.

- 052.8 The Adrian Thomas Review identified initial priorities: Culture and Trust; Retained Duty System; Conditions of Service and role maps and duty systems. These were then broken down into five main themes: the working environment; documented conditions of Service; industrial relations; retained duty system; and management of fire & rescue Services. Members were advised that work was underway to develop the gap analysis into a formal action plan.
- 052.9 Councillor Barnes made reference to the good progress already made by the Service in relation to collaboration and in particular, ethnicity.
- 052.10 **RESOLVED** – That the report be noted.
053. **EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**
- 053.1 **RESOLVED** – That item 054 and 055 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 12:37 hours.

Signed

Chairman

Dated this

day of

2017