

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 6 June 2013.

Present: Councillors Barnes, Buchanan, Butler, Carden, Earl, Galley, Hawtree, Howson, Lambert, Peltzer Dunn, Pragnell, Rufus, Scott, Sheppard, Taylor, Theobald and Wincott.

Also present:

Mr. D. Prichard (Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive), Mr. G. Walsh (Deputy Chief Fire Officer), Mr. G. Ferrand (Assistant Chief Fire Officer), Mrs. C. Rolph (Assistant Chief Officer – People & Organisational Development), Mr. A. Ghebre-Ghiorghis (Monitoring Officer), Miss. L. Woodley (Deputy Monitoring Officer), Mr. D. Savage (Treasurer), Mr. R. Charman (Director of Financial Services) and Mrs. K. Ward (Clerk).

716. DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS

- 716.1 a. 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.
- b. It was noted that, in relation to matters on the agenda, Councillor Scott declared a personal interest as his brother-in-law works for East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service.

717. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

- 717.1 The Fire Authority considered a report of the Monitoring Officer that set out the procedures governing the election of Chairman and invited the Fire Authority to appoint a Chairman for the ensuing year. (Copy in Minute Book).
- 717.2 **RESOLVED** – That Councillor Howson be appointed Chairman of the Fire Authority for the ensuing year.

718. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

- 718.1 The Fire Authority considered a report of the Monitoring Officer that set out the procedures governing the election of Vice-Chairman and invited the Fire Authority to consider whether it wished to appoint a Vice-Chairman for the ensuing year. (Copy in Minute Book).
- 718.2 **RESOLVED** – That Councillor Rufus be appointed Vice-Chair of the Fire Authority for the ensuing year.

719. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- 719.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Powell.

720. **URGENT ITEMS AND CHAIRMAN'S BUSINESS**

720.1 The Chairman welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the newly elected Fire Authority and thanked Members for electing him as their Chairman for the ensuing year.

720.2 The Chairman notified Members of two induction events that had been organised to help new Members understand the work of the Fire & Rescue Service and to help smooth the way for what would be for many Members a new experience.

720.3 The Chairman highlighted some of the key events from the last administration and informed Members that these, together with a strategic overview and introduction to key strategies, would be discussed amongst other issues during the induction programme.

720.4 The Chairman noted the amount of work Members would need to undertake within a quick timescale in order to achieve the aspirations set out in the Medium Term Plan and continue to deliver a first class service to the Council Tax payers within the budget constraints whilst identifying savings in the order of around £4m by 2017/18.

720.5 The Chairman, together with Councillor Theobald (Leader of the Conservative Group), Councillor Scott (Leader of the Labour Group), Councillor Rufus (Leader of the Green Group) and Councillor Lambert (Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group) wished to thank previous Members, in particular John Livings (former Chairman) and Paul Sparks (former Vice Chairman), for their dedication and leaving the Fire Authority in a strong position from which to go forward.

720.6 The Chairman introduced Brian Pidgeon and Joy Waite to the new Authority, noting that there was 10 years' service between them and that they had made contributions not only as decision-makers setting the direction of the Service, but also in taking part in the wider activities of the Service such as station open days, pass-out parades and award ceremonies. The Chairman thanked them for their hard work and commitment during their term and presented them with rose bowls as a token of the Fire Authority's appreciation.

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

721.1 There were none.

722. **TO ACCEPT PETITIONS, IF ANY**

722.1 There were none.

723. **NON-CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 7 FEBRUARY 2013**

723.1 **RESOLVED** – That the non-confidential Minutes of the meeting held on 7 February 2013 be approved and signed by the Chairman. (Copy in Minute Book).

724. **CALLOVER**

724.1 Members reserved the following items for debate:

- 725. Political Representation on the Panels of the Fire Authority
- 726. Provisional Revenue and Capital Outturn 2012/13
- 727. Treasury Management – Stewardship Report for 2012/13
- 729. Facing the Future: Findings from the Review of Efficiencies and Operations in the Fire & Rescue Authorities in England
- 730. Quarterly Report for January to March 2013

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

725. **POLITICAL REPRESENTATION ON THE PANELS OF THE FIRE AUTHORITY**

725.1 The Fire Authority considered a report of the Monitoring Officer to secure political balance on Panels in accordance with the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990 and agree the resultant membership to the Panels of the Fire Authority. (Copy in Minute Book).

725.2 Members were advised that changes had been proposed which included the disbandment of the Standards Panel and its terms of reference being taken on by the Scrutiny & Audit Panel. It was also proposed that the Grievance and Discipline & Dismissal Panels be merged into a Human Resources Panel.

725.3 **RESOLVED** – That:

- 1) the Panel arrangements and political representation, as set out below, be confirmed;
- 2) the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of the Panels be appointed by the Panels in accordance with Standing Order 40.14;
- 3) it be noted that a report will be submitted to the Scrutiny & Audit Panel on 11 July 2013, following a request to each Political Group to make any changes to current nominations to these posts; and
- 4) the Monitoring Officer be authorised to make consequential amendments to the Members’ Handbook to reflect the revised Panel structure.

	Based upon political proportions for 2013/14	
	TOTAL	
Appointments	6	2 Cons, 1 LDem, 1 Green, 1Lab, 1 UKIP
Scrutiny & Audit *	8	3 Cons, 1 LDem, 1 Green, 2 Lab, 1 UKIP
Policy & Resources	8	3 Cons, 1 LDem, 2 Green, 1 Lab, 1 UKIP
Human Resources	6	3 Cons, 1 Lab, 1 Green, 1 UKIP
Urgency	6	3 Cons, 1 LDem, 1 Green, 1Lab
* informal protocol – up to 3 P&R Members to serve on S&A Panel		

(The total number of seats = 34, divided 14:6:6:4:4 on the basis of the 2013/14 political balance).

726. **PROVISIONAL REVENUE AND CAPITAL OUTTURN 2012/13**

- 726.1 Members considered a joint report of the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive and Treasurer which advised the Authority on the provisional outturn position for 2012/13. (Copy in Minute Book).
- 726.2 The report provided an updated analysis of reserves and balances and the figures presented within the report were expected to be close to the final outturn, although it was possible that changes may be required before certification and final publication.
- 726.3 The provisional Revenue Budget Outturn for 2012/13 showed an underspend of £62,000 which would be transferred to General Balances and the provisional Capital Budget outturn for 2012/13 showed an underspend of £237,000 against the revised Capital Programme.
- 726.4 Councillor Taylor asked Officers to explain how the underspend had occurred. The Treasurer assured Members that the finances were being well managed and that the small underspend equated to 0.15% of the budget. The aim throughout the year had been to control spending whilst maximising reserves and balances.
- 726.5 The Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive reassured Members that a report is provided to Policy & Resources Panel once a quarter so that Members can monitor spend but the nature of the Service was unpredictable and therefore some budgets would vary. One such budget was the retained pay budget. This was underspent as the number of call outs were less than anticipated. The Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive also noted that spend on the planned capital scheme for a new fire station in Newhaven had been re-phased as a result of the time taken to investigate the possibility of partnership working with other agencies.
- 726.6 Councillor Barnes asked Officers about the level of income generated. The Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive advised Members that there was very little income generated by fees from callouts. The Service does have the ability to charge for certain types of calls and the Officer in charge would determine the appropriateness of charging at the scene after getting a special service form signed by the person making the request. The previous Fire Authority agreed not to charge for most types of services as tax payers had paid for the service and it was generally felt that they should not in effect be charged twice.
- 726.7 **RESOLVED** – That the provisional revenue and capital outturn for 2012/13 be noted.

727. **TREASURY MANAGEMENT – STEWARDSHIP REPORT FOR 2012/13**

727.1 Members considered a report of the Treasurer which provided Members with the annual treasury management stewardship report which confirmed that the Authority had complied with its approved Treasury Management Strategy and Prudential indicators. (Copy in Minute Book).

727.2 In response to questions from Members, the Treasurer advised that no new borrowing had been undertaken in 2012/13, with a total loan debt outstanding at £11.123m at 31 March 2013 and that, whilst opportunities for debt rescheduling had been reviewed, the current level of PWLB interest rates for new loans and the premium for early repayment of existing loans meant that there were no economic opportunities to reschedule debt. The likely outturn of the Fire Authority's Capital Financing Requirement (CFR), a measure of the underlying need to borrow, was confirmed as £10.578m.

727.3 **RESOLVED** – That the Fire Authority note the treasury management performance for 2012/13.

728. **AUTHORISED BANKING ARRANGEMENTS**

728.1 Members considered a joint report of the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive which sought to agree the change in arrangements relating to the Authority's principal bank accounts. (Copy in Minute Book).

728.2 **RESOLVED** – that the amended list of Officers authorised to sign cheques on behalf of the Fire Authority be approved.

729. **FACING THE FUTURE: FINDINGS FROM THE REVIEW OF EFFICIENCIES AND OPERATIONS IN FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITIES IN ENGLAND AND THE PROPOSED WAY FORWARD**

729.1 Members considered a report of the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive which presented Members with the findings of the review of efficiencies and operations in Fire and Rescue Authorities in England and the proposed way forward. (Copy in Minute Book).

729.2 The Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive felt the findings report was unremarkable. He noted that the report had concluded Fire Authorities could save up to £196m and that £123m could be saved if Authorities increased their retained duty system staff by 10%. The Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive went on to add that this would be a difficult option for East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service as an increase in retained staff of 11% would be approximately 27 staff. To make the equivalent level of savings intimated within the report would result in the loss of 70 whole time staff.

729.3 Councillor Wincott felt the report did not take into account the individual make up of Fire Authorities, the make-up of the areas those Authorities served, for example the infrastructure and Sir Ken Knight did not explain the methodology used in producing the findings report.

729.4 Councillor Rufus noted his disappointment with the report and didn't feel there was much objectivity. He was willing to back the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive in a robust and forthright reply. Councillor Scott felt the report was lacking, the sums did not add up and that more for less would be expected. He felt a grown up discussion with Government was required.

729.5 The Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive advised Members that Officers would draft a response. He also added that he would contact other Services to see what they did as good practice and if those practices could be adopted by East Sussex. He considered that the cost of bureaucracy can be large which was why a merger with West Sussex County Council was sought. This would have provided a more cost effective Service with similar bureaucracy but within a much larger organisation. If this was the favoured option with Members, the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive advised Members that the way forward lay with them in discussions with their colleagues.

729.6 **RESOLVED** – That the Service's performance and plans for further improvement, as set out in the report, be noted.

730. **QUARTERLY REPORT FOR JANUARY TO MARCH 2013**

730.1 Members considered a report of the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive that presented the quarterly results for the period January to March 2013. (Copy in Minute Book).

730.2 Councillors commented on the wealth of information that the quarterly report provided and the breadth of Services offered. Councillor Wincott noted that there appeared to be a spike of fatalities during 2011/12 and asked why that might be.

730.3 The Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive said he would provide the information to Councillor Wincott. He noted that one of the issues currently being focused on by the Service is encouraging people to report fires. Insurers hold on record many more fires than are currently reported to the Service. He added that the Fire Authority had been supportive of sprinklers and that a previous Chairman, Mr Murphy, had been the spokesperson to the LGA on sprinklers. The Fire Authority would be considering reports in the future to continue to support the installation of sprinkler systems in vulnerable homes.

730.4 Members were concerned that sprinklers were not installed in schools and it was suggested that if the profile and benefits of sprinkler systems could be raised with the general public, then pressure would mount with planners and developers. The Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive added that a council tower block in Sheffield had just had a sprinkler system installed, courtesy of the British Automatic Fire Sprinkler Association, who hoped this pilot project would demonstrate the practicability and cost effectiveness of using sprinklers to safely protect people from fire in high rise tower blocks. It was important to look to these cases as they would provide invaluable information as to what they have done, how it was done and at what cost.

730.5 Members were given an update on the current progress on the Service Control Centre between West Sussex County Council and East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service. It was anticipated that the Centre would open in April 2014 providing approximately £475,000 in savings. Currently just over 60 staff were based between Eastbourne and Chichester and when the new centre opens in Haywards Heath, it is anticipated that there will be approximately 40 staff.

730.6 Assistant Chief Officer (People & Organisational Development) Cheryl Rolph informed Members that 36 new staff had joined the Service having transferred over from West Sussex County Council via TUPE and were now in the employment of East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service. It was anticipated that the contractors would finish at the Haywards Heath site by mid-December. The contract had been awarded for the technical aspect which was on schedule.

731. **EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC.**

731.1 **RESOLVED** – That item 732 be exempt under paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 as amended by 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 12.35 hours.

Signed

Chairman

Dated this day of

2013.