

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 12 December 2013.

Present: Councillors Barnes, Buchanan, Butler, Carden, Earl, Galley, Hawtree, Howson (Chairman), Peltzer Dunn, Powell, 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), Mr. D. Savage (Treasurer), Miss. L. Woodley (Deputy Monitoring Officer), Mr. R. Charman (Director of Financial Services) and Mrs. S. Klein (Clerk).

747. **DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS**

747.1 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.

748. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

748.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Lambert.

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

749.1 There were none.

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

750.1 There were none.

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

751.1 There were none.

752. **NON-CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 12 SEPTEMBER 2013**

752.1 **RESOLVED** – That the non-confidential Minutes of the meeting held on 12 September 2013 be approved and signed by the Chairman. (Copy in Minute Book).

753. **CALLOVER**

753.1 Members reserved the following items for debate:

754. Sussex Control Centre

756. Industrial Action by Fire Brigades' Union members

757. Quarterly Report for July to September 2013

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

754. **SUSSEX CONTROL CENTRE**

- 754.1 The Fire Authority considered a report of the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive which updated Members on the progress with Sussex Control Centre. (Copy in Minute Book).
- 754.2 The Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive (CFO&CE) informed Members that the building side of the project was progressing to time and to budget, with handover of the building planned for 20 December 2013. The HR work stream had been closed and it was now known who would be leaving and when, with all costs within the budget.
- 754.3 However, information now received on other workstream aspects indicated that meeting a 'go live' date of no later than 31 March 2014 was unlikely to be achieved.
- 754.4 A Joint Programme Board meeting had been convened between ESFRS and WSFRS Principal Officers to discuss the implications and they received a full briefing from the SCC Project Owner. Following this meeting, an Urgency Panel meeting was convened for 28 November 2013 where Members of the Panel were provided with a briefing.
- 754.5 The Urgency Panel had endorsed the revised project plan proposed by officers and asked officers to identify funding sources as part of the Budget planning processes to fund the additional costs and loss of savings.
- 754.6 It was considered that no further announcements on a 'go live' date should be made until February 2014.
- 754.7 The Treasurer informed Members that the projected additional costs were unlikely to be as high as initially reported, now estimated at £150-£200k over a four month period. The main focus, however, continued to be the delivery of the project.
- 754.8 Councillor Scott congratulated ACO Rolph on the project, saying that he was comfortable with the slight delay to the 'go live' date as, ultimately, savings would be realised. Councillor Pragnell was disappointed about the delay, but also congratulated the ACO on doing so well. Councillor Theobald also agreed with Councillor Scott and also asked the CFO&CE about plans for the HQ building, which was becoming too large for the number of staff who would be based there.
- 754.9 The CFO&CE gave Members a brief update on the work being undertaken by the ACFO to identify the best option for a future HQ.
- 754.10 **RESOLVED** – That the report be noted.

755. **SERVICE PLANNING UPDATE 2014/15-2018/19**

755.1 The Fire Authority considered a joint report of the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive and Treasurer which provided an update on the Service planning process. (Copy in Minute Book).

755.2 **RESOLVED** – That the update on the Service planning process be noted.

756. **INDUSTRIAL ACTION BY FIRE BRIGADES' UNION MEMBERS – UPDATE**

756.1 The Fire Authority considered a report of the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive which informed Members of the current position on industrial action by members of the Fire Brigades' Union. (Copy in Minute Book).

756.2 The Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive explained that the discontinuous strike action agreed by Fire Brigades' Union (FBU) following a ballot of its members remains in place on dates and times notified by the FBU. The FBU had run an additional ballot of its members, including control room staff, for industrial action short of strike action and this closed on 4 December 2013. The CFO&CE reported that, of those who had taken part in the ballot, 85.4% had voted for, and 14.3% against industrial action short of a strike (with 0.3% 'spoiling' their voting papers).

756.3 Members noted that this vote would supplement, but not replace, the current strike action ballot in England and Wales. The CFO&CE explained that 'industrial action short of strike action' could include a refusal to work over-time or 'act up' in order to keep an appliance on the run – once they had definite information, officers could consider their options to mitigate the impact on the Service.

756.4 Councillor Scott declared an interest in this item as a member of Unite. He was disappointed that the Fire Minister seemed happy to see conflict, and wished that he would take a different approach, including more consultation. Councillor Theobald asked what effect the action was having on the Fire Authority's budget, and the Director of Financial Services confirmed that the action so far had cost a net £5-10k, with an additional £10-20k for preparation of vehicles for cover; if the action became protracted or continuous, these costs would increase.

756.5 **RESOLVED** – That the current position on industrial action by members of the Fire Brigades' Union be noted.

757. **QUARTERLY REPORT FOR JULY TO SEPTEMBER 2013**

757.1 The Fire Authority considered a report of the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive which provided the quarterly results for the period 1 July to 30 September 2013. (Copy in Minute Book).

757.2 Councillor Galley asked for clarification of paragraph 2.1, where the establishment showed 61 whole-time specialist and supervisory staff, but the actual strength showed 70. ¹

¹ Members were subsequently notified that, following the ICS Review taking effect on 1 June 2013, nine posts were removed from the Establishment, however, individuals had remained in post to complete project work, or were yet to be relocated into Established posts.

- 757.3 Councillor Hawtree was concerned that the number of false alarms attended was as high as fires attended and special services (including road traffic collisions) put together. The CFO&CE explained that a false alarm was treated as a fire when the call was received, and until proven to be a false alarm; CFOA had published guidance on false alarms, and a paper with options would be brought to a future meeting. Councillor Hawtree also asked about the costs involved and the CFO&CE explained that more detail used to be included on the Quarterly Report, until Members had asked for this to be reduced; officers would be guided by Members as to the type of information to be provided, and the format in which to do this.
- 757.4 Councillor Taylor asked whether there was any way of reducing false alarms and Councillor Scott suggested charging repeat offenders. He also suggested re-introducing the Top 20 list of offenders to the Quarterly Report. Councillor Barnes suggested that the Scrutiny & Audit Panel should be tasked with examining the issue in more detail, and this type of report should only go to the full Fire Authority on an annual basis.
- 757.5 Councillor Theobald asked whether Over the Border Calls assistance to West Sussex was mainly to Shoreham, and the CFO&CE confirmed this was correct. He also explained that a large number of the Retained Duty System resignations occurred because firefighters found primary employment which meant they could no longer continue their RDS role. The cost of RDS recruitment was subsequently increasing.
- 757.6 **RESOLVED** – That the report be noted.
758. **EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC.**
- 758.1 Councillor Scott moved a recommendation, which was seconded by Councillor Wincott, that item 761 be discussed in the open part of the meeting, as he felt it would be in the public interest. Councillors Theobald and Barnes suggested that, as the proposals being discussed were still in their formative stage, it was not the right time to discuss in open session; Councillor Barnes stated he was fully in support of open meetings and public transparency, but the proposals were not yet at this stage. Councillor Hawtree also felt that it was better to discuss the various options in private initially, as he was concerned that the proposals being discussed could be misinterpreted. The Deputy Monitoring Officer explained that the report contained confidential 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, but it was for Members to decide where the public interest lay. Councillor Scott called for a recorded vote to be taken on item 761 being discussed in the open part of the meeting, supported by Councillors Carden, Rufus and Wincott, and the votes were recorded as follows:
- For: (3) Councillors Carden, Scott and Wincott
 Against: (14) Councillors Barnes, Buchanan, Butler, Earl, Galley, Hawtree, Howson (Chairman), Peltzer Dunn, Powell, Pragnell, Rufus, Sheppard, Taylor and Theobald

758.2 **RESOLVED** – That the following items be exempt under the paragraphs indicated 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 grounds that they include information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person and 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:

759. Paragraphs 3 and 4

760. Paragraph 3

761. Paragraph 4

The meeting concluded at 13:35 hours.

Signed

Chairman

Dated this day of

2014.