

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 Friday 14 February 2014.

Present: Councillors Barnes, Butler, Carden, Earl, Galley, Hawtree, Howson (Chairman), Lambert, Peltzer Dunn, Pragnell, Powell, Rufus (Vice-Chair), 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), Mr. A. Ghebre-Ghiorghis (Monitoring Officer), Miss. E Woodley (Deputy Monitoring Officer), Mr. R. Charman (Director of Financial Services), and Mrs. A. Bryen (Clerk).

762. **DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS**

762.1 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.

763. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

763.1 An apology for absence was received from Councillor Buchanan. Members wished him a speedy return to good health.

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

764.1 Richard Charman, Director of Financial Services

764.1.1 The Chairman said that this would be the last Fire Authority meeting that Richard Charman would be attending before he retired at the end of March 2014.

764.1.2 Richard had been a long standing public servant since he joined East Sussex County Council in 1970 where he served for 14 years. He started work with the Fire & Rescue Service in October 1984 and had a track record of promotion and achievement culminating in being appointed as Director of Financial Services in 2006. In 1995 Richard completed 25 years local government service and received the East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service Medal & Certificate.

764.1.3 Colleagues had commented that Richard had a friendly, outgoing personality, and he was popular amongst his colleagues, where he displayed a caring, conscientious and common sense approach. He possessed qualities of unselfish loyalty and integrity and displayed leadership, initiative, intuitive thought and perceptiveness.

764.1.4 On behalf of the Fire Authority, the Chairman thanked Richard for his support and advice to Members over the years that had been much appreciated, and wished him a happy and healthy retirement.

- 764.1.5 Councillor Scott, Leader of the Labour Group, echoed the sentiments expressed by the Chairman, and thanked Richard for his valuable advice and contribution to the work of the Authority.
- 764.1.6 Councillor Theobald, Leader of the Conservative Group, congratulated Richard on a long and successful career and wished him well in his retirement.
- 764.1.7 Councillor Lambert, Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group, thanked Richard for the excellent advice he had given to Members, particularly at the beginning of their term of office with the Fire Authority, and wished him a long and happy retirement.
- 764.1.8 Councillor Rufus, Leader of the Green Group, wished Richard well, and thanked him for his care and consideration, as well as his good company.
- 764.1.9 Richard responded that he had enjoyed his public service career and working at East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service, and thanked Members for their good wishes.

764.2 Sprinkler Systems

- 764.2.1 The Chairman informed Members that East Sussex County Council (ESCC), at its meeting on 11 February 2014, had unanimously agreed that ESCC will commit to installing fire sprinklers in all new build council owned buildings should finances allow, ESCC would consider installing domestic sprinkler systems in any buildings owned by the County Council; and that the Council will also actively promote the use of fire sprinklers and encourage others to install them into any building where they are not otherwise required to by Building Regulations or Council Planning rules.

He hoped that District and Borough Councils would follow suit and urged Members to promote this across local authorities in the County and the City.

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

- 765.1 The following question was received, to which the Chairman replied as indicated in Appendix A to the minutes.

765.2 Question from Mr L Cacciatore

“When considering the impact of the proposals on response and resilience, what evidence is there to support that the proposals will have no effect on attendance times and numbers of resources to incidents, and also resilience during busy or spate conditions?”

Mr Cacciatore asked the following supplementary question:

“Is the Fire Authority happy with the service standards set and is the Fire Authority aware that changes will have a detrimental effect on attendance times?”

The Chairman replied on behalf of the Fire Authority. There were no longer any national standards of fire cover. He was content with the current local standards which had been set some while ago with advice from the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive.

766. **TO CONSIDER PUBLIC PETITIONS, IF ANY**

766.1 There were none.

767. **NON-CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 12 DECEMBER 2013**

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

768. **CALLOVER**

768.1 Members reserved the following items for debate:

769. Role of Treasurer

770. Fire Authority Service Planning Processes for 2014/15 and beyond

Part A Draft Annual Plan 2014/15

Part B Fire Authority Service Planning processes for 2014/15 and beyond – Revenue Budget 2014/15 and Interim Capital Programme 2014/15-2018/19

771. Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) Review of Prevention, Protection and Response

773. Pay Policy Statement for 2014/15

774. Procurement Strategy 2014/15

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

769 **ROLE OF THE TREASURER**

769.1 Duncan Savage, the Treasurer, left the room during discussion of this item.

769.2 The Fire Authority considered a joint report of the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive and the Monitoring Officer seeking authority to formally appoint a Treasurer and approval of the arrangements for this. (Copy in Minute Book).

- 769.3 Legislation required the Authority to appoint a Treasurer and an officer responsible for the proper administration of its financial affairs under section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972. In February 2013, the Fire Authority had authorised the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive to appoint a Treasurer for up to 18 months, and Mr Duncan Savage had been appointed to the role on a part-time basis to end no later than 30 September 2014. It was recommended that a competitive process to appoint a permanent part-time Treasurer should now be undertaken. It was also recommended that, for this appointment, the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive be appointed as a professional adviser to the Appointments Panel and be afforded the usual protocol, including posing questions and marking the interview process.
- 769.4 Councillor Theobald asked what salary range would be assigned to the post and what would be included in the job description and specification. The Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive confirmed that he would be advised by the Head of Human Resources about the job role and content, and that funding for the post would be met from the budget previously set aside to meet the costs when the role had been provided by East Sussex County Council.
- 769.5 Councillor Barnes suggested that the Treasurer should be considered as one of the Principal Officers of the Authority.
- 769.6 **RESOLVED** – That
- (i) the appointment of a Treasurer and Section 151 Officer to the Fire Authority be formally approved;
 - (ii) an amendment to the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive’s delegated powers, D2 (Employees), as set out below shown in bold, be approved;

‘To shortlist candidates for the positions of Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Assistant Chief Officers **and the Treasurer.**’
 - (iii) an amendment to the terms of reference of paragraph 3 of the Principal Officer Appointments Panel, as set out below shown in bold, be approved;

‘To conduct final interviews and make appointments to the positions of Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Assistant Chief Officers **and Treasurer to the Fire Authority.**’
 - (iv) delegated responsibility be granted to the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive to make the necessary arrangements through a competitive recruitment process to appoint a Treasurer; and
 - (v) for this appointment, the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive be appointed as a professional adviser to the Principal Officers Appointments Panel and be afforded the usual protocol, i.e. the ability to pose questions and mark the candidates at the interview process.

770. **FIRE AUTHORITY SERVICE PLANNING PROCESSES FOR 2014/15 AND BEYOND**

770.1 The Fire Authority considered a joint report of the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive and the Treasurer that presented the relevant reports on the Service Planning Processes for 2014/15 and beyond for approval for the purposes of setting the 2014/15 Council Tax precept and other relevant matters. (Copy in Minute Book).

770.A **Draft Annual Plan 2014/15**

770.A.1 The Fire Authority considered a report of the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive that summarised the outstanding actions required to complete the Draft Annual Plan 2014/15 for approval and for final completion by the publication date of 30 June 2014. The current 2013/14 Annual Plan contained key information on the Fire Authority's Service priorities for the year ahead including summary performance information and available resources. The draft 2014/15 Annual Plan had been prepared alongside the decisions being made by the Fire Authority and its Panels on similar issues for 2014/15 and beyond. (Copy in Minute Book).

770.A.2 The final version of the draft 2014/15 Annual Plan would be adapted to take into consideration the outcomes of all of the 2014/15 Service Planning preparations including current Community Risk Management review activities, the latest Revenue Budget and Capital Programme as well as the outcome of the corporate performance results 2013/14. Approval was sought for the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chairman, to approve the final version of the Annual Plan prior to publication.

770.A.3 **RESOLVED** that:

- i) the roll forward of the draft Annual Plan for publication by 30 June 2014, subject to any final amendments once the Revenue Budget had been approved at this meeting and other outstanding information set out in the report, be approved in principle; and
- ii) approval of the final version of the Annual Plan be delegated to the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive in consultation with the Chairman.

770.B **Fire Authority Service Planning processes for 2014/15 and beyond – Revenue Budget 2014/15 and Interim Capital Programme 2014/15 to 2018/19**

770.B.1 The Fire Authority considered a joint report of the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive and the Treasurer that set out the final draft 2014/15 Fire Authority Revenue Budget and Interim Capital Programme. (Copy in Minute Book).

- 770.B.2 The Treasurer provided a brief overview of the national economic situation. Despite recent improvements in UK economic performance, there was no consensus about the sustainability of the economic recovery and it was expected that the national debt will continue to grow until 2018. Indications were that deficit reduction plans would be in place until at least 2020, and that the cuts in funding for public services, including fire and rescue services, would continue whatever the outcome of the next general election. The Fire Authority's Medium Term Plan had been updated in July 2013 and identified that £7.1m savings had to be found over the next 5 years. The Authority had developed a range of savings options as part of its Changing the Service, Shaping the Future programme and phase 1 operational savings and a range of non-operational savings approved by the Fire Authority in December 2013 had been built into the 2014/15 Revenue Budget proposals and the revised MTFP. Despite this good progress, based on current assumptions, further savings of up to £2.6m would still need to be identified to meet the £7.1m target overall by 2018/19.
- 770.B.3 The Treasurer said that in drawing up the Medium Term Financial Plan, assumptions had been made that funding from government would reduce by 10% per annum. The MTFP also assumed that the Authority would raise council tax by 1.94% each year from 2015/16 – 2018/19.
- 770.B.4 The Treasurer said that the report provided two options for the Fire Authority to consider in setting its precept. Option A was to accept the Council Tax Freeze grant in 2014/15 which would involve setting a net budget requirement of £38.602m, a Council Tax requirement of £21.881m and freezing Band D Council Tax at £81.86 i.e. 0% increase on 2013/14. Option B was to increase Council Tax by 1.94% i.e. just below the Council Tax Referendum threshold, which would involve setting a net budget requirement of up to £38.775m, a Council Tax Requirement of £22.306m and increasing Band D Council Tax to £83.45.
- 770.B.5 The Treasurer confirmed that he was satisfied that the financial planning assumptions were robust in the medium term, and that the reserves and balances were proportionate and appropriate.
- 770.B.6 It was moved by Councillor Wincott, and seconded by Councillor Scott, that the Fire Authority approves an increase in Council Tax of 1.94% (Option B) and the consequent recommendations set out in the report relating to the adoption of Option B.
- 770.B.7 The Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive drew Members' attention to the Medium Term Financial Plan 2014/15 – 2018/19 predictions based on a 1.94% Council Tax rise going forward each year, (set out on pages 33-35 of the report). As indicated by the Treasurer, if the Authority approved a 1.94% rise in Council Tax there still remained £2.4m of savings to be found, but if the Authority decided to accept the Government's freeze grant then it would need to review the current planning assumption of a 1.94% increase in Council Tax each year for 2015/16 – 2018/19. If this was reduced to a 1% increase each year this could increase the remaining savings gap to in excess of £3m There was no indication from the Government of future years' Council Tax Referendum Thresholds but it did not seem likely to rise above the current level of 2% and could be lower.
- 770.B.8 Councillor Rufus supported a 1.94% rise in Council Tax.

- 770.B.9 Councillor Scott said that a rise of 1.94% would give some flexibility in the budget. The public had indicated in previous consultations that a small increase would be acceptable to protect front-line services.
- 770.B.10 Councillor Barnes agreed that the Authority had the confidence of the public to increase the council tax by a small percentage to protect services, and whilst he was a reluctant taxpayer, he agreed that a rise in council tax would be a permanent improvement to the Authority's base budget.
- 770.B.11 Councillor Theobald supported a council tax freeze and felt that acceptance of the Government's freeze grant would help to keep costs down for local residents. Councillor Peltzer Dunn also supported a council tax freeze.
- 770.B.12 Councillor Galley, whilst wishing to support a council tax freeze, said that this could have a detrimental cumulative effect on the Fire Authority's future budget and services and, therefore, supported an increase of 1.94%. He felt that a reserve of 8% of the net revenue budget would be sufficient to give adequate protection and asked for clarification on what was included in the reserve of 13%. He also asked if the budget proposals would have an impact on staff earning a minimum wage or living wage.
- 770.B.13 The Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive responded that the Fire Authority had always sought to be prudent with regard to the level of reserves it held. Historically, several major events had impacted upon the Authority's level of reserves, such as the floods in 2000 and the explosions at Marlie Farm in 2006 where not all losses were covered by insurance. The level of reserves was prudent for a single service authority.
- 770.B.14 The Treasurer added that there was no rule or formula about the level of reserves to be held. The Treasurer reminded Members that reserves were held for two broad purposes, firstly general or unallocated reserves to manage financial risk and to provide a buffer against the need to make in year savings which was particularly important for a single service authority, and secondly, reserves earmarked for specific purposes to smooth the impact of one off or cyclical spending on the revenue budget. These were set out in detail in the Reserves and Balances Policy in Appendix F to the report. The overall level of reserves currently held reflected the prevailing circumstances i.e. a period of significant change within the service and included provision for the costs of transforming the service for example, subject to the outcomes of the public consultation on phases 2 and 3, capital investment in up to four day crewed plus facilities, without the need to borrow. Members were reminded that the level of reserves held by this Authority was around the average for all fire authorities.
- 770.B.15 ACO Cheryl Rolph advised that the lowest paid staff on the national minimum wage were apprentices.

- 770.B.16 Councillor Lambert said that she was concerned that small increases in council tax from local authorities across the county added up to significant sums, particularly for those on fixed incomes. However, the Fire Authority had a responsibility to respond to requests for service, and as the public had previously indicated support for a small increase to protect services, she would support a rise in Council Tax of 1.94%.
- 770.B.17 Councillor Powell said that she was in favour of this small modest increase. Councillor Butler also supported a rise of 1.94%
- 770.B.18 The Monitoring Officer advised Members that deciding upon the Authority's budget was not a quasi-judicial function. The Authority's Code of Conduct for Councillors expected Members to exercise their personal judgement in decision-making and that this may take into account the views of the Political Party that they represented.
- 770.B.19 Councillor Barnes referred to fees and charges and suggested that a more detailed review be carried out at a future date, particularly for false alarm charges for high offenders, and animal rescues. Further consideration was given to charges for false alarms in the Phase 3 savings proposals and this would consider the impact of charging on demand and also the administrative costs on the net amount of income that could be generated.
- 770.B.20 Councillor Pragnell supported an increase in Council Tax of 1.94% which would offset some of the negative effects of savings reductions on the fire service.
- 770.B.21 Councillor Earl supported a rise of 1.94%, which he felt was paramount in enabling the Service to look after vulnerable members of the community. He asked that future consideration be given to recovering costs from incidents such as diesel spillages and road traffic accidents.
- 770.B.22 The Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive said that no charges were levied for diesel spillages as this work was considered as an emergency special service. Only a small number of these incidents occurred and the Authority could only recover costs, not make any profit.
- 770.B.23 Councillor Lambert said that she supported Councillor Barnes in that the Fire Authority should take an entrepreneurial approach to providing services, and proposed that the Policy & Resources Panel be asked to consider a review of full cost recovery for a range of services ESFRS provided.
- 770.B.24 Councillor Carden supported an increase of 1.94% to enable the Authority to continue to meet its statutory duties.
- 770.B.25 The motion from Councillor Wincott and seconded by Councillor Scott that the Fire Authority approves an increase in Council Tax of 1.94% (Option B) and the consequent recommendations set out in the report relating to the adoption of Option B, was put.

770.B.26 In accordance with Standing Order 22.1, four Members having requested it, a recorded vote was taken, the result was as follows:

For (15): Councillors Barnes, Butler, Carden, Earl, Galley, Hawtree, Howson, Lambert, Powell, Pragnell, Rufus, Scott, Sheppard, Taylor and Wincott.

Against (2): Councillors Peltzer Dunn and Theobald.

Abstention (nil)

The motion was carried.

770.B.27 **RESOLVED** – That

- (1) An increase in Council Tax of 1.94% be approved and the following also be approved:
 - (i) the budget proposals set out in the report and the net budget requirement of £38.775m for 2014/15;
 - (ii) the Council Tax requirement of £22.306m;
 - (iii) the Council Tax and precepts as set out in Appendix G, part 2;
 - (iv) the interim capital programme for the next five years and the capital budget of £4.141m for 2014/15 and the plans to use capital grant, capital receipts and revenue contributions to finance that expenditure;
 - (v) the maintenance of the General Reserve at a minimum of 8% of the net revenue budget over the medium term;
 - (vi) the transfer £121,000 from Earmarked Reserves no longer required into the Improvement & Efficiency Reserve;
 - (vii) the transfer of any revenue underspend, currently projected to be £0.349m for 2013/14 to the Capital Programme Reserve; and
 - (viii) the fees and charges set out in Appendix D;
- (2) the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chairman and Treasurer, be authorised to make adjustments to the presentation of the budget to reflect the final Local Government Finance Settlement; and
- (3) the Policy & Resources Panel be asked to review options for charges with officers to bring forward a report for further discussion.

Council Tax Calculations

**EAST SUSSEX FIRE AUTHORITY
PRECEPT FOR 2014/15
REF: S43 LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE ACT 1992**

	£	£
NET BUDGET REQUIREMENT		38,775,000.00
Forecast Business Rates retained	2,272,000.00	
Top Up grant	4,640,000.00	
Total Base Line funding	<u>6,912,000.00</u>	
Add Revenue Support Grant	9,051,000.00	
Total Grant funding (excluding transitional/freeze grant)	<u>15,963,000.00</u>	
Section 31 Grant Business Rates adjustment	230,000.00	
Previous Year's Surpluses/(Deficits)	276,000.00	
Total Council Tax required		<u>22,306,000.00</u>
Tax base	267,300.78	
Basic Council Tax (Band D equivalent)		83.45
Basic Council Tax from above calculation		<u>Council Tax</u>
Band A	6/9	55.63
Band B	7/9	64.91
Band C	8/9	74.18
Band D	9/9	83.45
Band E	11/9	101.99
Band F	13/9	120.54
Band G	15/9	139.08
Band H	18/9	166.90
	<u>Tax Base</u>	<u>Precept</u>
Brighton and Hove	81,359.20	6,789,425
Eastbourne	32,126.50	2,680,956
Hastings	23,733.00	1,980,519
Lewes	34,670.70	2,893,270
Rother	35,377.08	2,952,217
Wealden	60,034.30	5,009,862
	267,300.78	22,306,250

771. **INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN (IRMP) REVIEW OF PREVENTION, PROTECTION AND RESPONSE**

- 771.1 The Fire Authority considered a report of the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive that sought approval to commence public consultation on the outcomes of the IRMP Review of Prevention, Protection and Response. This formed part of the Phase 2 and 3 proposals necessary to meet the funding gap and consequential savings target of £7.1m, as identified within the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for the period 2014/15 – 2018/19. (Copy in Minute Book).
- 771.2 The Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive reminded Members that Government funding had been cut substantially over time and the Fire Authority was restricted in the amount it could raise through Council Tax. There was a need to deliver savings of approximately £7.1m, or 18.2% of the current revenue budget, over the next five years (in addition to £1.3m of savings already agreed for 2014/15).
- 771.3 Over the last decade, the Fire & Rescue Service nationally and locally had seen a significant reduction in the number of incidents that it had been required to attend, and it was now opportune to change the way in which operational services were delivered, whilst maintaining performance standards and significant investments in firefighter safety.
- 771.4 The Fire Authority, at its meeting on 12 December 2013, had approved phasing in of changes to Prevention, Protection and Response functions over the term of the MTFP.
- 771.5 The three phases presented proposals which would lead to a reduction in posts across the Authority, with fewer staff working on fire stations and in prevention and protection services. Current estimates were that the necessary reduction in staff to meet the savings required would be between 50-80 posts. The Authority would continue to seek to minimise the risk of compulsory redundancies through natural turnover, holding vacancies, and its redeployment policy, but compulsory redundancies would not be ruled out.
- 771.6 Further work was underway to understand how the savings proposals in Phase 2 and 3 would be implemented, especially where they are reliant on reductions in posts to achieve the savings.
- 771.7 A number of Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) had been drafted which assessed the impacts of decisions as a result of proposals for future provision of Prevention, Protection and Response services, which would result in a reduction in the operational establishment and changes in the way the Service delivered prevention and protection services to the public of East Sussex and the City of Brighton & Hove. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer advised that the EIAs would be refined further for the Fire Authority to consider at a future meeting.
- 771.8 The Deputy Chief Fire Officer informed Members that on predictive analysis of the proposals, the Service would be able to maintain its service standards.

- 771.9 Members suggested minor drafting amendments to the draft consultation document, and were informed that these would be made before the document was released for public consultation on 17 February 2014. Councillor Lambert thanked officers for the amount of work which had been done in a short period of time to produce the proposals.
- 771.10 Councillor Theobald commented about the proposed reduction in the number of firefighter posts for the City of Brighton and Hove, specifically at Roedean.
- 771.11 Councillor Scott commented about the potential loss of firefighter posts and appliances, as well as the potential redesignation of fire stations at Battle and the Ridge, and the impact this could have on Bexhill. He asked about the Service's resilience and suggested that the Government should be lobbied for more funding. He said that he would have found it more helpful to see individual proposals considered by the Fire Authority some of which he could support. As there were some proposals he was more concerned about he did not feel he was able to consider the proposals as a package and, therefore, he would not be able to support the proposal in its current form.
- 771.12 The Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive said that he had previously approached the Fire Minister about the financial predicament of the Fire Authority, but no increase in funding would be made available. The proposals in the Plan had been drafted to ensure that the Fire & Rescue Service met its standards of fire cover, delivered good cover for the County and Brighton & Hove and delivered the savings required.
- 771.13 Councillor Wincott suggested that the Fire Authority should not discount the possibility that more funding may become available in the future. He suggested that savings proposals could have been considered individually he was of the view that some of the proposals could increase response times. He did not support all of the proposals.
- 771.14 Councillor Barnes said that the public needed to be aware of the financial situation facing the Fire Authority, and that there were no easy options. Any alternative proposals coming forward from the public consultation exercise could be considered. It was important for all Members to remember that the Fire Authority had already approved draft proposals at its meeting in December 2013 and it was agreed that Members had considered the proposals several times at different meetings culminating in the draft consultation document now under consideration.
- 771.15 Councillor Rufus concurred that Members did not wish to see cuts in services but that there was little choice given the financial circumstances. Members had been involved in the draft Plan throughout. He asked for assurance about the robustness of the consultation process and presentation of the proposals.

- 771.16 The Monitoring officer advised that the Fire Authority was not being asked to make a decision on the proposals in the Plan at this meeting, but to approve the draft for public consultation. Comments from the Fire Brigades Union would be factored into the final report for consideration by the Fire Authority at its meeting in June 2014. In his opinion, the consultation document was comprehensive and would withstand a challenge.
- 771.17 Councillor Powell said that whilst this was a lengthy document, it was entirely right that the public should be given comprehensive information. She further suggested that information about Principal Officers' remuneration could be included. Councillor Barnes suggested that the cuts that had already been made should be included in the consultation document.
- 771.18 Councillor Wincott suggested that more should be done to effect mergers with neighbouring authorities, and MPs be asked to press for more funding from central Government.
- 771.19 The Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive said that he met regularly with local MPs and had discussed the budget pressures. The view of the Fire Minister, Brandon Lewis, was that Fire Authorities should deal with these issues locally. He had also met with other public bodies about shared services, including the Police and East Sussex County Council about opportunities for co-locating.
- 771.20 The Deputy Chief Fire Officer said that the draft consultation document would now be amended to reflect the impact of the earlier decisions taken to increase the Council Tax by 1.94% as well as Members comments, including providing simple methods for responses to be received.
- 771.21 On the motion to approve the recommendations set out in the report, in accordance with Standing Order 22.1, four Members having requested it, a recorded vote was taken, and the result was as follows:
- For (13): Councillors Barnes, Butler, Earl, Galley, Hawtree, Howson, Lambert, Peltzer Dunn, Pragnell, Rufus, Sheppard, Taylor and Theobald.
- Against (3): Councillors Carden, Scott and Wincott.
- Abstention (1) Councillor Powell
- The motion was carried.
- 771.22 **RESOLVED** – That
- (i) the commencement of formal consultation on the proposals contained in Phase 2 and Phase 3, as approved by the Authority at its meeting on 12 December 2013, and as detailed in Appendices to this report, be approved;
 - (ii) the formal consultation and communication plans, as set out in the report be noted;

- (iii) the rationale for the term of consultation be noted, and the recommendation for 10 weeks consultation, for officers to report outcomes to the full Fire Authority at its meeting on 5 June 2014 be approved; and
- (iv) the outcomes of the Equality Impact Assessments for the savings proposals included in the Medium Term Financial Plan, as set out in the report, be noted.

772. **FIRE AUTHORITY TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY FOR 2014/15**

772.1 The Fire Authority considered a report of the Treasurer that recommended borrowing limits, the prudential indicators and limits, the investment strategy and policy as required by Section 3 (1) of the Local Government Act 2003 and the Prudential Code for Capital Finance 2004. (Copy in Minute Book).

772.2 The emphasis continued to be on security and liquidity. The strategy and limits were consistent with the proposed capital programme and revenue budget. However, due to global events, it was impossible in practical terms to eliminate all credit risk. The Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) and Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) statement was set out in Appendices 2 and 3 to the report to comply with best practice. The 2014/15 strategy continued the prudent approach and ensured that all investments were only to the highest quality rated banks and only up to a period of one year.

772.3 The Authority was recommended to approve borrowing limits to give flexibility for any future consideration in undertaking new external long-term/replacement borrowing should the need arise or market conditions prove favourable.

772.4 The Treasury Management policy statement for 2014/15 remained unchanged from the current year.

772.5 **RESOLVED** – That

- i) the treasury management strategy and policy statement for 2014/15 be approved (and adopted for the remainder of 2013/14);
- ii) for 2014/15 the Authorised Limit for borrowing shall be determined at £13.982m;
- iii) the prudential indicators as set out in the attached Appendix 2 to the report be adopted; and
- iv) the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Statement for 2014/15 as set out in the attached Appendix 3 to the report be approved.

The meeting adjourned at 13:10 and resumed at 13:25 hours

773. **APPROVAL OF PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2014/15**

773.1 The Fire Authority considered a report of the Monitoring Officer that set out the legal requirements relating to the adoption of a pay policy statement, and the details of what that should contain. (Copy in Minute Book).

773.2 Members were informed that Principal Officers had had a pay freeze since 2009, did not claim overtime for the additional hours of work during the strike by members of the Fire Brigades Union, nor had they taken their full leave entitlement. Furthermore, there had been a reduction in the number of Principal Officers from 5 to 4. Any review of conditions of service would need to be considered by the Principal Officers Appointments Panel.

773.3 **RESOLVED** – That the Pay Policy Statement for 2014/15, appended to the report, be approved.

774. **PROCUREMENT STRATEGY 2014/15**

774.1 The Fire Authority considered a report of the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive that set out a revised procurement strategy. (Copy in Minute Book).

774.2 A strategic review of procurement and an Internal Audit report had identified a range of issues in compliance as well as opportunities for improvement, which the updated Strategy was designed to address. The strategy also identified the resources required to address the changes needed and ensured that the Service had a compliant procurement function that was fit for purpose. It was also designed to identify and enable efficient and effective ways of working that supported the delivery of key corporate outcomes and enabled Managers to manage their resources effectively.

774.3 A number of the recommendations within the new Procurement Strategy had financial implications, in the main related to the introduction of e-tendering (a statutory requirement) and additional administrative support. Early indications were that the costs would be in the region of £25,000 and would not exceed £50,000. These costs could be met from the Improvement and Efficiency Reserve.

774.4 Councillor Butler suggested where paragraph 6.1 stated that ‘the Act allows that evaluation criteria *may* include social considerations etc..’ this should be strengthened to ensure that it is a requirement. The Monitoring Officer advised against making this a mandatory requirement as this would have other implications, and recommended that it remain as an expectation. It was agreed that the wording be amended to ‘where appropriate’.

774.5 Councillor Butler asked that the Authority should continue to provide opportunities for apprentices. The Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive gave an assurance that this would continue, wherever possible.

774.6 Councillor Lambert asked that the Authority should undertake joint procurement with other local government bodies and to recoup costs through joint tendering, procurement, collaboration and shared services. The Treasurer informed Members that collaboration was already a key part of the Authority's work, both at local and national level through various frameworks and joint contracts. Consideration was also being given to opportunities to achieve a more sustainable procurement function through sharing resources. The Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive said that discussions continued to take place with West Sussex Fire & Rescue Service about what services could be run jointly and that joint procurement provided an opportunity to reduce costs.

774.7 **RESOLVED** – That

- (i) Subject to the amendment to paragraph 6.1, the new Procurement Strategy for 2014/15 be approved; and
- (ii) the use, in principle, of the Improvement and Efficiency Reserve to fund the estimated cost implications of the new Strategy be noted.

775. **EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

775.1 **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 (including the authority holding that information), 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:

Item 776 Paragraphs 3 & 4
Item 777 Paragraph 3
Item 778 Paragraph 4

The meeting concluded at 14:10 hours.

Signed

Chairman

Dated this 5th day of June 2014.

Question: When considering the impact of the proposals on response and resilience, what evidence is there to support that the proposals will have no effect on attendance times and numbers of resources to incidents, and also resilience during busy or spate conditions?

Answer: Much work has been undertaken by ESFRS since the introduction of the Integrated Risk Management Planning process to accurately understand and profile the community risks across our Service area. When considering the impact of the proposals on response and resilience, both historic analysis in the form of incident data, and predictive modelling i.e. travel time predictions, have been used alongside professional judgement to give a holistic view of the proposal being considered and the impact it will have on response times and resilience.

ESFRS has provided a wide range of evidence through previous reviews including:

- the demand placed on each fire appliance in terms of the number of incidents that occur within a fire station area, including the types of incident and the times of day they occur
- the availability of each fire appliance
- the overall impact on the Service's ability to attend life risk incidents
- the potential impact on the level of life risk within the locality
- the proximity of other appliances able to provide appropriate cover in an area
- the number of firefighters affected, including their crewing systems
- the savings associated with the removal of an appliance
- the need to ensure that strategically located fire stations are not adversely affected by the removal of an appliance
- the potential impact on any strategically located specialist vehicles at fire stations affected
- the potential impact on fire stations over the border, i.e. within other Fire and Rescue Authority areas
- distribution of our vulnerable communities across the service area, including other geographical risk factors such as rurality risk

The analysis in respect of this review of prevention, protection and response has not stated that there will be no effect on attendance times but rather, there would be no significant impact on attendance and we would still continue to meet our attendance standards set by the Fire Authority for our life-threatening incidents.

With respect to resilience during busy or spate conditions, fire cover will continue to be managed professionally by our M&CC staff and the Service can access additional support from our neighbouring fire and rescue services under Section 13 and 16 agreements which has been the standard procedure in place for a number of years.

The number of fire stations and fire appliances across the Service has broadly stayed the same over the last 10 years and yet we attend several thousand fewer incidents today than we did a decade ago, so we believe that resilience during busy or spate conditions can be maintained with the additional support from local regional and national fire and rescue service resources.

All of this analysis is in a consultation document which will be publicly available from Monday 17 February.

