

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 11 September 2014.

Present: Councillors Barnes, Buchanan, Butler, Carden, Deane, Earl, Galley, Hawtree, Howson, Lambert, Peltzer Dunn, Powell, Scott, Sheppard, Taylor, Theobald and Whetstone.

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. W. Tricker (Head of Finance & Procurement), and Mrs. S. Klein (Clerk).

Members, officers and the public paid tribute to the victims of the 11 September 2001 New York terrorist attacks, by holding a minute's silence.

794. **DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY INTERESTS**

794.1 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.

794.2 Councillors Butler, Howson, Lambert and Sheppard declared an interest in item 807 – Newhaven Community Fire Station – as local Members, but were advised by the Monitoring Officer that they could remain in the room and take part in any discussions on this item

795. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

795.1 Apologies were received from Councillor Wincott.

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

796.1 The Chairman was pleased to welcome Councillor Rufus to the meeting in order to thank him for his work with the Authority. The usual courtesy for an outgoing Member would to have been presented with an engraved rose bowl as a memento of their service here, but Councillor Rufus had asked that the value of the bowl he would have received be given to the Firefighters' Charity, and he very generously matched that amount.

Councillor Rufus joined the Fire Authority in June 2007 and made a valuable contribution in seeing that services were delivered in an effective and efficient way throughout the area, through his contributions to the work of East Sussex Fire Authority during the last seven years and, most recently, as Vice-Chairman of the Fire Authority and Chairman of the Scrutiny & Audit Panel. Councillor Rufus also worked tirelessly as the Lead Member for Environment & Sustainability, and contributed widely to the work of the Member Development Steering Group.

Councillor Rufus had contributed not only as a decision-maker setting the direction of the Service, but also in taking part in the wider activities of the Service such as station open days, Pass-Outs, and Award Ceremonies, to name but a few.

- 796.1.1 Councillor Rufus responded that working with the Fire Authority had been his most pleasurable duty during his role as a Councillor for Brighton & Hove City Council. He had worked with good people – officers and Members – from different backgrounds and there had been a good spirit of co-operation, until recently, with few political arguments and everyone committed to the best interests of the Fire Authority. Councillor Rufus thanked everyone for the messages he had received since resigning from the Fire Authority in June.
- 796.1.2 Councillor Theobald said that Councillor Rufus had been a very devoted and conscientious Member and she was sad that he had had to resign.
- 796.1.3 Councillor Scott commented that Councillor Rufus had been a straightforward Member and they had worked well together despite their political differences. The last two years had been very difficult for the Fire Authority and he thanked him for his contribution.
- 796.1.4 Councillor Lambert echoed these sentiments and said that she had appreciated Councillor Rufus's calm and balanced approach. He had chaired the Scrutiny & Audit Panel well and she hoped that she could do as well, further commenting that he was an extremely honourable man.
- 796.1.5 Councillor Powell held Councillor Rufus in great esteem and thanked him for his leadership, guidance and suggestions on how to get up to speed on Fire Authority business when she first joined the Authority. He had done the honourable thing and she thanked him.
- 796.2 The Chairman welcomed Councillor Deane to her first meeting of the Fire Authority. Councillor Deane had been appointed by Brighton & Hove City Council following Councillor Rufus's resignation from the Fire Authority. Councillor Deane responded that she was very honoured and that Councillor Rufus would be a tough act to follow.
- 796.3 The Chairman welcomed Councillor Whetstone to his first meeting of the Fire Authority. Councillor Whetstone had been temporarily appointed by East Sussex County Council following Councillor Pragnell's temporary resignation from the Fire Authority.
- 796.4 The Chairman congratulated Adrian Brown, Director of Response & Resilience, who had worked with East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service for 30 years, and who would be retiring in November.

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

797.1 The following question was received, to which the Chairman replied as indicated in Appendix A to the minutes. Nancy Platts was the only questioner present, so five other questioners received written answers following the meeting (see Appendix A); Ms Platts also asked a supplementary question and this, together with the answer, is included in the Appendix.

797.1.1 **Question from Nancy Platts:**

Recent newspaper reports have highlighted occasions when fire and rescue services were likely to be stretched even with existing resources to manage flooding and road traffic accidents. These included:

1. In June 2014 – a report in The Argus saying that one hundred people were killed or seriously injured on Sussex’s roads– the worst month in four years.
2. In July 2014 – a report in The Argus saying that a crew from Newhaven had to cover for Roedean due to the day’s extreme weather (page 4 ‘Crew douses manhole fire) suggesting that all five appliances from the City were already attending other incidents.

At the Fire Authority meeting on 5th June, members took the decision to remove a fire engine and 24 firefighters from Brighton and Hove and instead put more funds into fire prevention, however, this would not have helped in any of these instances.

Can Fire Authority members confirm that response times and the weight of response to road traffic accidents and flooding incidents will not be adversely affected when the fire engine and 24 firefighters are removed from the City of Brighton and Hove?

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

798.1 There were none.

799. **NON-CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 5 JUNE 2014**

799.1 **Item 791 – IRMP Review of Prevention, Protection & Response – Consultation Outcomes and Way Forward**

The Monitoring Officer reminded Members that they had agreed that the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive would have the authority to take the decision as to which pump should be removed from the City. Members agreed to the addition of the following (approved) recommendation:

791. (ii) (d) The Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive be authorised to take all steps necessary or incidental to the implementation of the proposals.

799.2 **RESOLVED** – That, subject to the above amendment, the non-confidential Minutes of the meeting held on 5 June 2014 be approved and signed by the Chairman. (Copy in Minute Book).

800. **CALLOVER**

800.1 Members reserved the following items for debate:

802. 2015/16 Strategic Service Planning and Medium Term Financial Plan

803. 2014/15 Revenue Budget and Capital Programme monitoring

804. 2013/14 Annual Performance Outcome report

805. Business Rate Pooling

807. Newhaven Community Fire Station

808. Sussex Control Centre

809. Principal Officers' Pay – NJC Settlement

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

801. **MINUTES OF THE PRINCIPAL OFFICER APPOINTMENTS PANEL MEETING HELD ON 28 JULY 2014**

801.1 **RESOLVED** – That the non-confidential Minutes of the meeting held on 28 July 2014 be approved and signed by the Chairman. (Copy in Minute Book).

802. **2015/16 STRATEGIC SERVICE PLANNING AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN**

802.1 The Fire Authority considered a joint report of the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive and Treasurer that set out the Fire Authority's medium term service planning strategy and medium term financial plan for 2015/16-2019/20. (Copy in Minute Book).

802.2 Councillor Galley asked about the different scenarios around a possible Council Tax Freeze Grant and the Treasurer informed Members that the difference in income between accepting a 1% Freeze Grant and raising Council Tax by 1.94% in 2015/16 was £181,000. The MTFP showed this gap widening in future years, to £303,000 by 2019/20, as the Freeze Grant was rolled into Revenue Support Grant, which was assumed to be subject to further annual reductions.

802.3 Members were advised that the proposal to draw down £200,000 to fund the Service Transformation Team would enable difficult decisions to be implemented and worked through in a safe and effective way, including the investigation of the proposals in Phase 3 of the IRMP.

802.4 Councillor Barnes recommended keeping a council tax increase as an option until nearer budget-setting time; he felt that there would still be pressures to reduce government grants in the next Parliament, and we would need to reduce our spending to preserve front-line services.

- 802.5 The CFO&CE reminded Members that, even with a council tax increase of 1.94% each year over the 5-year MTFP, further savings of £1.7m would still be needed. The MTFP also indicated that the Authority would be operating a surplus over at least the next two years, and this could be used to help manage the transformation process and off-set any short term pressures.
- 802.6 Councillor Earl stressed the importance of maintaining the council tax base so that income would grow with inflation, but he was not optimistic about business rate collection. Outside of London there were a lot of empty properties and arrears were growing, and he felt that officers should stick to their plan. Councillor Theobald pointed out that the City was having a lot of success with its business rates collection.
- 802.7 Council Howson agreed with the CFO&CE and had heard that the Shadow Chancellor and Shadow Fire Minister would be following the same financial plans as the present government if they were elected.
- 802.8 Councillor Scott felt that 1.94% was a small increase in council tax and he was confused by the government's statement that there was no money available, when they had just given £2m towards the restoration of Eastbourne's Pier.
- 802.9 Councillor Deane appreciated the work officers had put into the medium term financial plan, but felt that agreeing the cuts proposed was condoning the cuts from government.
- 802.10 Councillor Powell asked for further detail on the Service Transformation Team and DCFO Walsh explained that some skills were available from within the organisation, with two operational officers being seconded to the Team while their posts were temporarily back-filled. Only one post had so far been advertised externally, for a 'lean' practitioner who could drive efficiencies and processes and deliver outcomes – DCFO Walsh would discuss this further with Councillor Powell after the meeting.
- 802.11 Councillor Barnes made three observations. Priority 1 was to preserve the front line as far as possible; priority 2 was to have a long-term plan to make the most appropriate savings efficiently; and priority 3 to make clear to the public and employees the difference between revenue money, and one-off capital money, which cannot be used to preserve services.
- 802.12 **RESOLVED** – That
- i) the updated medium term financial plan for 2015/16 – 2019/20 and its underlying assumptions be approved (12 votes for, 5 against, 1 abstention);
 - ii) the continuing work under the Changing the Service Shaping our Future programme to identify savings options to meet required savings targets set out in the report be noted; and
 - iii) the drawdown of up to £200,000 from the Improvement and Efficiency Reserve to fund the Service Transformation Team be approved (11 votes for, 3 against, 4 abstentions).

803. **2014/15 REVENUE BUDGET AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING**

- 803.1 The Fire Authority considered a joint report of the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive and Treasurer that reported on issues arising from the monitoring of the 2014/15 Revenue Budget and Capital Programme as at 31 July 2014. (Copy in Minute Book).
- 803.2 Councillor Theobald asked for clarification of the increasing costs of industrial action and the transfers to Balances; the CFO&CE explained that the cost of industrial action was increasing, the longer the action continued, and the Treasurer explained that there had been no changes in the planned contributions to Balances since the budget was approved in February.
- 803.3 Referring to the projected revenue budget outturn, Councillor Galley asked why such a high proportion of the Authority's budget was spent on support services. The CFO&CE reminded Members that the costs shown for support services included staffing costs but primarily related to third party spend, e.g. repair and maintenance of front-line buildings and equipment (including fire appliances) and ICT. Councillor Barnes reminded Members that ESFA had been a very proactive and willing partner in merger talks, and it was important to look at sharing services with other local authorities, police, etc. Councillor Howson confirmed that talks were on-going with various potential partners for different ways of working collaboratively. The CFO&CE referred Members to the appendix at agenda item 806 which showed which areas were currently being looked at. Councillor Galley reminded officers that he considered the level of reserves and balances held by the Authority to be higher than was needed.
- 803.4 Councillor Earl suggested looking further into charging for some services, e.g. attendance at false alarms, and providing advice to developers on how to equip buildings. Councillor Scott agreed that false AFD calls should be charged for and also pointed out that Hastings Borough Council is trying to encourage developers to install sprinklers and alarms in new buildings as part of a Planning Note.
- 803.5 Councillor Scott felt that mergers alone would not be enough to provide the savings required, and that Regional FRSs would be the way forward – he acknowledged that this would have to be driven by government. Councillor Hawtree also agreed with Councillor Scott and asked about sharing services with Police and ambulance, as in France. The CFO&CE suggested this be a future topic for a Members' Seminar.
- 803.6 **RESOLVED** – That
- i) the projected 2014/15 Revenue Budget outturn be noted;
 - ii) the current and planned use of Reserves be noted;
 - iii) the monitoring of savings taken in 2014/15 be noted;
 - iv) the projected Capital Programme outturn be noted; and
 - v) a variation to the Capital Programme by £1,855,000 for the Day Crewed Plus savings proposal be approved (15 votes for, 3 abstentions).

804. **2013/14 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE OUTCOME REPORT**

- 804.1 The Fire Authority considered a report of the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive that presented the 2013/14 Performance Outcome results. (Copy in Minute Book).
- 804.2 Liz Ridley, Head of Performance Management, introduced the report which had been further developed to present more meaningful comparisons and to be more easily understood.
- 804.3 Councillor Peltzer Dunn commented that this was an excellent report and remarkably clear. He questioned why Lewes Borough seemed to be performing so badly regarding reductions in primary fires, accidental dwelling fires and deliberate primary fires, and was informed that the performance appeared to be 'bad' due to the small number base in Lewes. Ms Ridley would include actual figures in future reports which would reflect trends more transparently. Councillor Barnes suggested showing the 'rates' or figures per 1,000 head of population to make comparisons better.
- 804.4 Councillor Whetstone was concerned about the large number of deliberate fires and asked how many of these were concentrated on the Ashdown Forest. Ms Ridley explained that, while a small number were in Ashdown Forest, the majority were small grassland fires – she could provide a breakdown for Councillor Whetstone following the meeting.
- 804.5 Councillors Lambert and Hawtree congratulated officers on a clear and interesting report. Councillor Taylor also liked the visual impact of the report and suggested having the column showing the National Quartile Position at the end of the table, rather than in the middle – Ms Ridley would consider this suggestion, but explained that ESFRS's benchmarking report is being compared with the national report and this is a merger, showing where the Service is nationally. The National Indicator numbers also appeared to be 'random' because they were national indicators which ESFRS had adopted.
- 804.6 Councillor Barnes also congratulated officers on the presentation but asked why a primary fire fatality due to suicide was counted in the performance figures; it was explained that DCLG sets the categories for national performance indicators.
- 804.7 Councillors Peltzer Dunn and Barnes suggested that, rather than colouring the arrows red and green, which could be confusing if the trend was downward, but good (e.g. in the percentage of fires in homes with no smoke alarm) the arrows could be black, and the 'good' or 'bad' performance be indicated by colouring the background red or green.
- 804.8 Councillor Barnes also suggested that as the Service was comfortably achieving the 70% target for indicator 1 – percentage of HSVs to vulnerable people – this should be increased. The CFO&CE explained that the target had been increased from 60% to 70% but the Service liked to keep flexibility and spare capacity to meet ad hoc requests that might not meet our strict criteria; Councillor Barnes suggested that this could be considered by the Scrutiny & Audit Panel and Ms Ridley confirmed the timescales – targets are set by managers using 5-year trends and based on the available operational resources, and these are then ratified by the Policy & Resources Panel.

- 804.9 Councillor Theobald also supported the use of actual figures, rather than percentages, and asked where in Brighton the fire deaths had occurred. She was also concerned that staff sickness rates were not improving. Ms Ridley reminded Members that a report on Fire Deaths was being considered by the Scrutiny & Audit Panel on 18 September.
- 804.10 ACO Rolph confirmed sickness figures for the current year were improving and that the sickness target for this year was 6.5 days, which the Service looked set to achieve. Currently, figures for Quarter 1 of 2014/15 were showing a 24% reduction in absence. This was due in part to the introduction of a new HR database and Crewing database and the introduction of the Bradford factor scoring index.
- 804.11 Councillor Scott queried the figures on injuries and ACFO Ferrand explained that, while these figures were high enough to alert officers, the year-on-year trend analysis had not identified any discernable patterns of cause; the Scrutiny & Audit Panel would consider this in due course.
- 804.12 Councillor Powell noted that age was not included in the performance measurements for Strategic Aim 2 and also asked how the trend for the recruitment of female RDS firefighters could be rising when the target was not being met. ACO Rolph explained that the HR database was still being refined and next year's report would include information on protected characteristics; she also explained that the percentage of female (RDS) firefighters recruited had increased from last year, although this year's target would not be achieved.
- 804.13 The CFO&CE also reminded Members that ESFRS had run the first Asian & Trans LGBT Conference in the country, the day before the PRIDE event in Brighton, and had included the Asian Firefighters' Association. Members added their congratulations to ACFO Ferrand.
- 804.14 **RESOLVED** – That the 2013/14 performance results be noted.

The Chairman left the meeting at this point (12.40 hours), due to a worsening chest condition, and the Vice-Chair, Councillor Lambert, took the Chair

805. **BUSINESS RATE POOLING**

- 805.1 The Fire Authority considered a report of the Treasurer that sought Members' approval to enter into a Business Rates Pool, following which an application would be submitted on behalf of the East Sussex County, Borough, and District Councils and the East Sussex Fire Authority in October 2014, subject to it being financially advantageous to do so after a further financial review in September 2014. (Copy in Minute Book).
- 805.2 Councillor Hawtree asked what would happen if the Pool were to become unwieldy and Councillor Earl asked what would happen if one or two members withdrew from the Pool.

805.3 The Treasurer explained that, once the Pool had been approved, there was an opportunity for any Authority to withdraw from it for a short period, once the Local Government Finance Settlement was announced in December, but this would mean that the whole Pool could not proceed. The current composition of the Pool was believed to be manageable and would be administered by Wealden Borough Council.

805.4 **RESOLVED** – That the following be agreed:

- i) Wealden District Council be nominated as the lead authority
- ii) in principle, no authority will receive a lower level of funding than they would have received without the pool;
- iii) resources gained on the basis of the levy amount that was saved by individual authorities be split as follows: 40% to ESCC, 10% to the Fire Authority and the remaining 50% split amongst the District/Borough Councils;
- iv) the finalisation of the submission, agreement of the Memorandum of Understanding, and the final decision on whether to partake in the pool, along with the annual review, is delegated to respective Chief Finance Officers for the reasons outlined in the report; and
- v) Chief Finance Officers review membership of the Pool on an annual basis. Should an authority decide to withdraw membership, notification of their intent to do so to be given to the remaining authorities at the earliest opportunity

806. **FACING THE FUTURE: FINDINGS FROM THE REVIEW OF EFFICIENCIES AND OPERATIONS IN FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITIES IN ENGLAND**

806.1 The Fire Authority considered a report of the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive that advised Members of the written Ministerial statement on Sir Ken Knight's review of efficiencies and operations in Fire and Rescue Authorities in England. (Copy in Minute Book).

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

- i) the publication and key review findings, the implications of which will be considered in detail as part of the review of the Medium Term Financial Plan;
- ii) the commencement of an independent review of the conditions of service for operational staff in the fire and rescue service; and
- iii) details of areas of collaboration/shared services currently being reviewed by officers.

807. **NEWHAVEN COMMUNITY FIRE STATION**

807.1 The Fire Authority considered a report of the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive that advised Members on progress towards the construction of the new community fire station. (Copy in Minute Book).

807.2 Councillor Theobald asked for the value of the Fort Road site which is being disposed of and ACFO Ferrand confirmed that a report would be brought to the Policy & Resources Panel in November setting out this detail. Councillor Deane asked for background information on the need for a new fire station and the ACFO would brief her following the meeting.

807.3 Councillor Hawtree was pleased to learn of the progress which would bring Newhaven forward as a whole, and Councillor Butler thanked ACFO Ferrand, his team and the partners for their work on this project.

807.4 **RESOLVED** – That the progress as set out in the report be noted.

808. **SUSSEX CONTROL CENTRE**

808.1 The Fire Authority considered a report of the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive that updated Members on the progress and financial position of the Sussex Control Centre Project. (Copy in Minute Book).

808.2 ACO Rolph informed Members that the only new item to report was the actuarial review of the net strain on the pension fund. Councillor Scott asked for an update on staffing numbers, etc. and the ACO confirmed that all workstreams for the SCC project were complete apart from the introduction of the new mobilising system and the buddying arrangements with Cambridgeshire FRS.

808.3 There were some technical operational issues which she would report on in the closed session (item no. 812)

808.4 **RESOLVED** – That the following be noted:
i) the latest position in relation to progress; and
ii) the financial position as described in Paragraph 1.2 and 3.1 of the report.

809. **PRINCIPAL OFFICERS' PAY – NJC SETTLEMENT**

809.1 The Fire Authority considered a report of the Monitoring Officer that advised Members of the outcome of the negotiations between the National Employers and the Association of Principal Fire Officers regarding the annual NJC pay award for 2014, which has been agreed by the National Employers, to be awarded to Brigade Managers. (Copy in Minute Book).

809.2 Councillor Lambert reminded Members that the pay award had been agreed nationally and was for noting – the Principal Officers had already received the pay award.

809.3 A number of Members expressed concerns at the size of the award – 1% of £100,000 was felt by some to be a large amount during a period of budget cuts and austerity measures. Other Members, however, felt this was a reasonable increase, as Principal Officers had not had a pay rise since January 2010 and this was below the level of inflation.

809.4 The Head of Finance & Procurement confirmed that firefighters had received a 1% pay rise from 1 July 2014 – provision had been made in the budget for the pay awards.

809.5 **RESOLVED** – That it be noted that the pay award for 2014, as determined by the NJC Scheme of Conditions of Service for Brigade Managers will be implemented.

NB – CFO Prichard, DCFO Walsh, ACFO Ferrand, ACO Rolph and Duncan Savage, the Treasurer, declared interests in this item, as the subjects of the recommendation, and left the room during discussion thereof.

810. **EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

810.1 **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 an individual and information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information):

Item 811 Paragraph 1
Item 812 Paragraph 3
Item 813 Paragraph 3

The meeting concluded at 14:30 hours.

Signed

Chairman

Dated this 11th day of December 2014.

PUBLIC QUESTION RECEIVED FROM NANCY PLATTS:

Recent newspaper reports have highlighted occasions when fire and rescue services were likely to be stretched even with existing resources to manage flooding and road traffic accidents. These included:

1. In June 2014 – a report in The Argus saying that one hundred people were killed or seriously injured on Sussex's roads– the worst month in four years.
2. In July 2014 - a report in The Argus saying that a crew from Newhaven had to cover for Roedean due to the day's extreme weather (page 4 'Crew douses manhole fire) suggesting that all five appliances from the City were already attending other incidents.

At the Fire Authority meeting on 5th June, members took the decision to remove a fire engine and 24 firefighters from Brighton and Hove and instead put more funds into fire prevention, however, this would not have helped in any of these instances.

Can Fire Authority members confirm that response times and the weight of response to road traffic accidents and flooding incidents will not be adversely affected when the fire engine and 24 firefighters are removed from the City of Brighton and Hove?

Answer given at meeting of Fire Authority:¹

Firstly, I would like to clarify some of the figures that you have quoted from the Argus to provide a bit of context before I confirm that the weight of response and response times will not be adversely affected.

The first article you quote was a report in the Argus which stated one hundred people were killed or seriously injured on Sussex's roads in June 2014. I would like to clarify two key points. Firstly, this figure covers the whole area of both East AND West Sussex and, secondly, was for a full year, not just for the month of June. East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service does not attend all road traffic collisions; typically, we may attend around 25-30% of the total RTCs that occur as the majority of reported RTCs are, thankfully, only minor and, whilst they require the attendance of the Police and, sometimes, the Ambulance Service, they do not require the attendance of East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service. Of the RTCs we do attend, on almost 60% of occasions it is to make the vehicle or scene safe or offer advice, as opposed to releasing or extricating persons.

Taking these two points into account, I can confirm that out of the 42 RTC incidents that ESFRS attended in June 2014, there were no fatalities but there were a total of 40 casualties which occurred across 11 incidents. Again, this is Service-wide, so if we concentrate on RTCs in the City of Brighton & Hove for June, this equates to 8 RTC incidents that we attended, which resulted in no fatalities and 6 injuries.

¹ Following the meeting, a revised answer was sent to Ms Platts – please see page 15

The second article you referred to was a report in the Argus saying that a crew from Newhaven had to cover for Roedean due to the day's extreme weather. The article states that 'A fire crew from Newhaven, covering at Roedean because of the day's extreme weather, put the fire out using a dry extinguisher at 7.30am on Monday.' This is incorrect as Newhaven did not attend this incident. It was, in fact, an appliance from Steyning in West Sussex which dealt with the incident as it was in the locality, having come from a previous incident at the Esso garage along Station Approach in Hove. Newhaven crews were standing by at Roedean fire station, but were not called to this incident. Appliances are distributed across East and West Sussex by the Sussex Control Centre staff who ensure that there is the optimum level of Fire Cover across both the Service areas at any given time. This will mean, at times, relocating appliances to standby at other stations, particularly during protracted incidents and, in this case, spate conditions due to the weather meant that appliances would be utilised across Sussex to deal with incidents – this is normal procedure.

Coming to the second part of my response, I can confirm that response times and the weight of response to road traffic collisions and flooding incidents will not be adversely affected when the fire engine and 24 firefighters are removed from the City of Brighton & Hove. Analysis has been previously carried out as part of the review to identify the impact on our speed of response which was detailed in the report on 5th June - this demonstrated that we would continue to meet the attendance standards that the Fire Authority had previously set. The weight of response remains the same i.e. we will continue to send a minimum of 8 firefighters to life-threatening incidents. In recognising the potential for spate conditions, the Fire Authority agreed to set a further attendance standard to all incidents within the Service boundary. This was agreed in 2009/10 and is set at 95% of all incidents attended within 20 minutes. I am, therefore, confident that response times and the weight of response to road traffic collisions and flooding incidents will not be adversely affected.

Supplementary question:

An amendment was agreed at the last meeting of the Fire Authority to put additional funds into fire prevention. Does this mean that anyone who asks will receive a Home Safety Visit and a smoke alarm? And will anyone who has requested one in the previous year now receive one?

Answer to supplementary question:

Preventative work was being increased following the Fire Authority's request to officers to look again at a previously agreed proposal to reduce the number of Community Safety Advisers (CSAs). The decision, which affected the whole of East Sussex and the City of Brighton & Hove, had now been deferred and four CSAs would be maintained, with three dedicated to the City. Work was ongoing with the City Council to identify ways of preventing road traffic collisions and introducing more sprinklers into residential properties.

The installation of smoke alarms was continuing to be targeted at the most vulnerable first, e.g. pensioners living alone, those with impaired mobility, and single parents, and these continued to be assessed according to need. 'Hot strikes' were also carried out in the locality following an incident.

PUBLIC QUESTION RECEIVED FROM NANCY PLATTS:

Recent newspaper reports have highlighted occasions when fire and rescue services were likely to be stretched even with existing resources to manage flooding and road traffic accidents. These included:

1. In June 2014 – a report in The Argus saying that one hundred people were killed or seriously injured on Sussex's roads – the worst month in four years.
2. In July 2014 – a report in The Argus saying that a crew from Newhaven had to cover for Roedean due to the day's extreme weather (page 4 'Crew douses manhole fire) suggesting that all five appliances from the City were already attending other incidents.

At the Fire Authority meeting on 5th June, members took the decision to remove a fire engine and 24 firefighters from Brighton and Hove and instead put more funds into fire prevention, however, this would not have helped in any of these instances.

Can Fire Authority members confirm that response times and the weight of response to road traffic accidents and flooding incidents will not be adversely affected when the fire engine and 24 firefighters are removed from the City of Brighton and Hove?

Revised Answer sent to Nancy Platts on 17 September 2014:

Further to your most recent correspondence, I would like to apologise sincerely for what was an error on our part, in the written response that you received to your public question. I will ensure that all Members of the Fire Authority are informed and that any reference to this in the report to the Fire Authority is amended. Please can I take this opportunity to confirm that the one hundred people that were killed or seriously injured on Sussex's roads were:

1. For both East and West Sussex (I did not contest your original statement in the previous response, but thought it prudent to confirm to East Sussex Fire Authority, as well as all those that were listening on the day, that these figures were for both Counties).
2. For the month of June 2014.

Having reviewed our response to your public question, I can see the 2nd point included a reference to the figures relating to a whole year – which is incorrect – and was due to an error on our part; I would like to assure you that we make every effort to ensure the information we provide is correct; on this occasion we got it wrong and for that I apologise.

I recognise that although we attend a small percentage of road traffic collisions, compared to Sussex Police or South East Coast Ambulance Service, that our response to your question could also be seen as underestimating the impact that these collisions have on individuals, their families or disruption to the community and the economy or the emergency response when required. Road safety is a key priority for East Sussex Fire Authority and we will continue to work with our partners across East Sussex and the City of Brighton & Hove to prevent incidences of road traffic collisions resulting in fatalities and serious injuries.

PUBLIC QUESTION RECEIVED FROM DAVID TRANGMAR:

How much extra fire cover will the Fire Authority provide for the 24,000 new households due to move into the City of Brighton and Hove when the new homes required under National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) are built?

PUBLIC QUESTION RECEIVED FROM DAN WILSON:

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires the City of Brighton and Hove to find space for 24,000 additional homes (based on recent ONS six monthly population figures). The figure at the time of the last IRMP would have been about 20,000.

Can the Fire Authority confirm whether the most recent IRMP took into account the additional house building planned for the City of Brighton and Hove of 20,000 new homes?

Answer:

East Sussex Fire Authority is committed to ensuring that our resources are allocated to effectively mitigate and reduce the risks across our ever-changing communities in a way that also provides best value.

It is important to note that, whilst there are no national standards of fire cover, East Sussex Fire Authority has set its own locally determined standards in support of our agreed Vision of 'Achieving Safer and More Sustainable Communities'. In setting our own challenging response standards this Authority improved on the previous National Standards which only considered property risk; this Authority has focussed response standards on life risk at all the different types of incidents that ESFRS attends. The standards are:

For life-threatening incidents

1 appliance: In 8 minutes, on 60% of occasions. In 13 minutes, on 90% of occasions
2 appliances: In 8 minutes, on 50% of occasions. In 13 minutes, on 80% of occasions

For all incidents

1 appliance in 20 minutes, on 95% of occasions.

These standards apply to all those that live, work and visit East Sussex and the City of Brighton & Hove. If and when the 24,000 new homes you have referenced in your question are built, these too will be subject to the Service standards that apply. Naturally, locations of new building developments, along with changes and additions to the road infrastructure, are considered as part of the Integrated Risk Management Planning process.

Despite the ever-increasing population, East Sussex Fire Authority is committed to reducing the number and severity of incidents across our Service area. Over the past decade there has been a 10% increase in the number of residents in Brighton & Hove based on figures from the Office of National Statistics (an additional 28,300 households). However, in the same time period there has very pleasingly been a 37% reduction in the number of incidents that East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service attend, due to our increasingly stronger focus on prevention work and community/business safety. It is also important to note that, under the new building standards to which any new properties in the City of Brighton & Hove will be built, new properties will be required to have hard wired smoke detectors fitted.

PUBLIC QUESTION RECEIVED FROM GARY PALMER:

How can the Fire Authority justify the recruitment of a part-time Finance Director/Head of Service on a salary of around £80k at the same time as making cuts to frontline services that include the removal of a fire engine from the City of Brighton and Hove?

Answer:

It is assumed that the question relates to the position of Treasurer, as there is no part-time Finance Director/Head of Service post. On that basis the post, which is a part time role and salary (which is £59,031 pro-rata), for the Treasurer was agreed by the Fire Authority earlier this year.

The role of Treasurer is a statutory appointment and the Combination Order which created East Sussex Fire Authority and East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service requires the Authority to appoint a treasurer of the combined service fund.

Provisions imposed on CFAs by section 112 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 ensure that CFAs make arrangements for the proper administration of their financial affairs and that one of their officers has responsibility for the administration of those affairs. This role also makes requirements about the professional qualifications of the Treasurer.

It is important to note that this is not a new role. Until 18 March 2013 the role of Treasurer and Deputy Treasurer were provided as part of the contract with East Sussex County Council for financial services. From 18 March 2013 the role of Treasurer has been a direct appointment to the Fire Authority on a part time basis. This change was as part of a restructuring of senior finance roles at the Authority which saw the full time posts of Assistant Chief Officer Corporate Services and Director of Financial Services deleted (from 31 March 2013 and 31 March 2014 respectively). Taken together these changes have saved the Authority approximately £125,000 per annum and are a clear illustration of the Authority's determination to reduce the number of senior posts, where we can, to protect front-line services.

PUBLIC QUESTION RECEIVED FROM BRIAN SNOW:

If a fire engine is removed and replaced with a combined aerial rescue appliance, will this have to provide cover outside the City of Brighton & Hove?

My concern is that resources will be spread too thinly in the event of several incidents taking place simultaneously across a wider area.

Answer:

East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service is a single service organisation, and we therefore have much less scope to find efficiencies as we strive to provide the best service we can with the resources available, particularly with the savings that have already been made.

The reviews detailed in the phase 3 of the five year plan may result in us making further changes to the way in which we provide our services, so that we are able to balance our resources against risks and other demands, within the context of available finances.

One of these Reviews is to:

*"Commence the purchase of two Aerial Rescue Platforms for Hastings and the City (of Brighton & Hove) **following a review** of the ARP implementation at Eastbourne in April 2014. The introduction of the two appliances in 2017/18 would reduce firefighter establishment by 8."*

This Review has not yet commenced and it is clear that there is further investigation needed before formal proposals for change are to be brought to the Fire Authority for approval; this will include how the Service wishes to provide working at height vehicles based on the risk in both the City of Brighton & Hove, and Hastings; how the aerial rescue pump has been used since its introduction in Eastbourne; and whether this type of appliance is appropriate in other parts of the Service's area.

In undertaking the Review, the Service will consider the use of the existing vehicles, which already provide assistance across the County, as well as the location of similar vehicles in other neighbouring Services.

PUBLIC QUESTION RECEIVED FROM EMMA DANIEL:

I believe the Fire Authority is still planning on removing another fire engine and the aerial ladder platform and replacing them with one combined aerial rescue appliance (CARP). But that would further reduce firefighter numbers and given historical issues with the Eastbourne appliance and those around the country, are these a safe and sufficient resource to provide fire cover?

Answer:

The Fire Authority has approved a number of reviews to be carried out in Phase 3 of the Authority's five year plan. These reviews may result in us making further changes to the way in which we provide our services, so that we are able to balance our resources against risks and other demands within the context of available finances.

One of these Reviews is to:

*"Commence the purchase of two Aerial Rescue Platforms for Hastings and the City **following a review** of the ARP implementation at Eastbourne in April 2014. The introduction of the two appliances in 2017/18 would reduce firefighter establishment by 8."*

This Review has not yet commenced and it is clear that there is further investigation needed before formal proposals for change are to be brought to the Fire Authority for approval. The Review will include how the Service wishes to provide working at height vehicles based on the risk in both Brighton & Hove, and Hastings, and how the aerial rescue pump has been used since its introduction in Eastbourne, and whether this type of appliance is appropriate in other parts of the Service's area.

In undertaking the Review the Service will consider the use of the existing vehicles which already provide assistance across the County, as well as the location of similar vehicles in other neighbouring Services. There is no evidence that the appliance introduced at Eastbourne is unsafe, nor that it cannot provide a suitable response to incidents.

The Fire Authority will only purchase fire appliances, including aerial appliances and combined aerial rescue pumps, if they are suitable for the risk they are expected to respond to.