

EAST SUSSEX FIRE AUTHORITY

Minutes of the meeting of the East Sussex Fire Authority held at County Hall, St. Anne's Crescent, Lewes BN7 1UE at 10:30 hours on Thursday 7 September 2017. 

Present: Councillors Barnes (Chairman), Deane, Earl, Elford, Galley, Lambert, Morris, O'Quinn, Osborne, Peltzer Dunn, Penn, Pragnell, Scott, Sheppard, Smith, Taylor, Theobald (Vice-Chairman) and Tutt.

N.B. Councillor Pragnell attended the meeting in place of Councillors Dowling, who had temporarily resigned from the Fire Authority.

Also present:

Mrs. D. Whittaker (Interim Chief Fire Officer), Mr. M. Andrews (Interim Deputy Chief Fire Officer), Mr. M. O'Brien (Interim Assistant Chief Fire Officer) Ms. E. Woodley (Deputy Monitoring Officer), Mr. D. Savage (Treasurer/Assistant Director Resources), Mr. R. Fowler (Assistant Director Operational Support & Resilience), Mrs. L. Ridley (Assistant Director Planning & Improvement), Mr. G. O'Reilly (Operations Group Manager), Mrs. K. Ward (Clerk to the Fire Authority).

993. **INTERESTS**

993.1 It was noted that, in relation to matters on the agenda, no participating Member had any disclosable interest under the Authority Code of Conduct for Members.

994. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

994.1 Apologies were received by Councillor Morris.

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

995.1 There were none.

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

996.1 There were none.

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

997.1 There were none.

998. **NON-CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 15 JUNE 2017**

998.1 **RESOLVED** – That the non-confidential minutes of the meeting held on 15 June 2017 be approved and signed by the Chairman. (Copy in Minute Book).

999. **CALLOVER**

999.1 Members reserved the following items for debate:
000. 2018/19 Strategic Service Planning and Medium Term Financial Plan



001. Efficiency Strategy and Plan

002. Revenue Budget and Capital Programme Monitoring 2017/18

999.2 **RESOLVED** – That all other reports be approved according to the recommendations set out in the reports.

000. **2018/19 STRATEGIC SERVICE PLANNING AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN**

000.1 The Fire Authority considered a report by the Interim Chief Fire Officer and Assistant Director Resources/Treasurer to roll forward the Fire Authority's medium term financial plan for 2018/19 to 2022/23. (Copy in Minute Book).

000.2 The report set out the financial context for the service planning process, through an update of the Medium Term Finance Plan (MTFP). The review process sought to determine how best to deliver the Authority's purpose "to make our communities safer", its supporting commitments, its Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP), and the targets and priorities that underpinned them.

000.3 Due to sustained reductions in public sector funding and the consequent need to deliver significant savings, Members and Officers would need to ensure that the service planning process delivered sustainability in the medium term for both revenue and capital budgets and the Service as a whole.

000.4 The MTFP was previously updated when the 2017/18 Budget was set in February 2017. A balanced budget was forecast through to 2021/22 although it was acknowledged that central funding for 2020/21 and 2021/22 was uncertain.

000.5 Savings had been identified through a range of initiatives. Members were provided with details of the risks that had the potential to impact on the Authority's ability to deliver its budget plans over the medium term, such as:

- ability to deliver existing savings as set out within the MTFP;
- national pay award for grey book staff in excess of the current provision; and
- uncertainty about future governance and funding.

000.6 Members were advised that between 2010/11 and 2017/18, revenue settle grant had reduced by £10.149m, or 69% and the rolled forward MTFP makes the underlying assumption of further reduction of £2,176m to £2.025m by 2022/23.

000.7 Business rate assumption was based on information from billing authorities and the business rate revaluation during 2017 resulted in an increased level of provision made by billing authorities against potential appeals. The outcome of this revaluation was not yet known, therefore business rates assumption would remain static.

000.8 Since 2010/11 the Authority planned to make savings totalling £8.645m of which £8.128m would be delivered by the end of 2017/18.

000.9 Councillor Peltzer Dunn highlighted the assumptions and pressures contained within paragraph 3.11 of the report, in particular the assumption regarding pay, and felt Officers were assuming everything would go on as planned. Both he and

Councillor Barnes felt the figures for the next 3 years should be revised to be more reflective of the emerging position.

000.10 Councillor Theobald noted her disappointment that retrofit Sprinkler funding would be coming to an end. The Treasurer advised Members that it would be a Fire Authority decision whether to continue with funding. Councillor Barnes noted there was a major review of sprinklers and planning regulations underway at the moment and perhaps it would be prudent to await its outcomes before making any decision on retro fit funding.

000.11 **RESOLVED** – That the Fire Authority approve the updated Medium Term Financial Plan for 2018/19 to 2022/23 and its underlying assumptions.

001. **EFFICIENCY STRATEGY AND PLAN**

001.1 The Fire Authority considered a report by the Assistant Director Resources/Treasurer which provided an update on the delivery of the Authority's existing Efficiency Plan and set out its proposed approach to identifying future efficiencies. (Copy in Minute Book).

001.2 In order to access the four year funding settlement from 2016/17 – 2019/20, the Government required the Fire Authority to submit an Efficiency Plan for approval, in which the Home Office set out a specified range of information to be included.

001.3 Approval was given by the Fire Minister as part of the announcement of the Local Government Finance Settlement 2017/18 on 16 December 2016. The Fire Authority committed to publish an annual report on the progress on the Efficiency Plan. Members were advised that the information expected by the Home Office was required to be in a specific format, however the information was contained within existing sources, therefore a commentary on progress would be provided instead of a refreshed Efficiency Plan.

001.4 Since 2010/11, the Fire Authority has made savings totalling £8.650m, of which £6.708m were delivered by the end of 2016/17. The Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) showed a balanced budget in 2018/19 and 2019/20 and then a need to deliver additional savings of £1.6m by 2022/23.

001.5 There have been a number of approaches to identifying and delivering savings and efficiencies which are no longer sufficient on their own due to the factors driving the requirement for the Authority to evolve its approach, such as: the Fire Reform Agenda, the statutory duty to collaborate with emergency services, the Fire Authorities commitment to make effective use of its resources, the approval of the new Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP); and the renewed commitment to collaboration.

001.6 **RESOLVED** – That the Fire Authority:

- i) approve the progress update on the Authority's published efficiency plan; and
- ii) approve the proposed approach to the identification of future efficiencies.

002. **REVENUE BUDGET AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING 2017/18**

002.1 The Fire Authority considered a report by the Assistant Director Resources / Treasurer which reported on issues arising from the monitoring of the 2017/18 Revenue Budget and Capital Programme as at 31 July 2017. (Copy in Minute Book).

002.2 Members were advised that whilst the Revenue budget was currently forecast to be overspent by £6,000 it was still early in the year and certainty would increase with time as more data became available. The overall Capital Programme was projected to be underspent by £214,000 and the Capital Programme was forecast to be underspent by £1,546,000 due to slippage on appliances and other vehicles. The Assistant Director Resources / Treasurer advised this particular slippage was due to a review of vehicles purchased to ensure they were fit for purpose and best value for money.

002.3 Councillor Penn highlighted the overspend on PPE and Uniform and requested an explanation. The Assistant Director Resources / Treasurer advised that it was a contractual issue and Officers were entering discussions with the supplier to try and reduce costs. The Chief Fire Officer added that the Service would be looking at other ways in which it could reduce the cost of uniform and PPE until the contract ended, such as reusing the clothing of those firefighters that had left the service.

002.4 **RESOLVED** – That the Fire Authority note:
i) the risks to the projected Revenue Budget overspend;
ii) the risks to and the projected slippage and underspend in the Capital Programme;
iii) the use of reserves;
iv) the monitoring of savings taken in 2017/18; and
v) the current year investments.

003. **PEOPLE AND ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2017 – 2022**

003.1 The Fire Authority considered a report by the Interim Deputy Chief Fire Officer which advised the Fire Authority about the existing People and Organisational Development Strategy that formed part of the suite of strategies that sat within the Fire Authority Constitution. It was due for review in March 2017. This has now been reviewed and refreshed with an updated strategic direction drawing out the main drivers for change over the next 5 year period. (Copy in Minute Book).

003.2 **RESOLVED** – That the Fire Authority support the implementation of the revised People and Organisational Development Strategy for 2017-2022.

004. **EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

004.1 **RESOLVED** – That item no. 005 be exempt under paragraphs 3 and 4 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006 and accordingly is not open for public inspection on the following grounds: it contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information), and any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated

consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority and employees of the authority.

The meeting concluded at 12:57 hours.

Signed
Chairman



Dated this 7th day of December 2017

