

EAST SUSSEX FIRE AUTHORITY

NON-CONFIDENTIAL 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, 14 June 2018.

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

Also present:

D Whittaker (Chief Fire Officer), M O'Brien (Deputy Chief Fire Officer), M Andrews (Assistant Chief Fire Officer), A Ghebre-Ghiorghis (Monitoring Officer), D Savage (Treasurer/Assistant Director Resources), L Ridley (Assistant Director Planning & Improvement), M Matthews (Assistant Director Safer Communities), H Scott-Youldon (Assistant Director Training & Assurance), E Curtis (Communications & Marketing Manager), S Milner, Simon Neill, Chris Fry, J Ochser, M Winton, K Matthews, G Hughes, F Le Duc (Press) and A Blanshard (Senior Democratic Services Officer).

33 INTERESTS

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

34 ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

34.1 The Fire Authority considered the report of the Monitoring Officer inviting them to elect a Chairman for the forthcoming year and, once elected to ask the Chairman to advise of their preferred title. (*Copy in Minute Book*)

34.2 The Combination Order for the creation of the East Sussex Fire Authority set down the procedure for the election of a Chairman of the Authority.

34.3 The Standing Orders of the Fire Authority required a Chairman to be elected from its Members as the first item of business at the annual meeting.

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

- i. appointed Councillor John Barnes as Chairman of the Authority; and
- ii. The Chairman advised that his preferred title was that of 'Chairman'.

35 ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

35.1 The Fire Authority considered the report of the Monitoring Officer inviting them to elect a Vice-Chairman for the forthcoming year and, once elected to ask the Vice-Chairman to advise of their preferred title.

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

- i. appointed Councillor Carol Theobald as Vice-Chairman of the Authority; and
- ii. The Vice-Chairman advised that her preferred title was that of 'Vice-Chairman'.

36 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

36.1 Apologies had been received from Councillor Scott.

37 URGENT ITEMS AND CHAIRMAN'S BUSINESS

37.1 The Chairman reminded the Authority that it was the first anniversary of the tragic fire at Grenfell Tower. The Authority would join the rest of the nation in marking the anniversary with a 72 second silence at midday to remember the 72 lives lost and to think of our Fire Service colleagues who had attended the scene.

37.2 The Chairman informed the Authority that he wished to take an oral update on the Sussex Control Centre as an urgent item at the conclusion of the published agenda.

38 TO CONSIDER PUBLIC QUESTIONS, IF ANY

38.1 There were none.

39 TO CONSIDER PUBLIC PETITIONS, IF ANY

39.1 There were none.

40 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 15 FEBRUARY 2018

40.1 **RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the meeting held on 15 February 2018 be approved and signed by the Chairman. (*Copy in Minute Book*)

41 CALLOVER

41.1 Members reserved the following items for debate:

42 Political Representation on the Panels of the Fire Authority

44 Safer Communities Strategy 2018-2021

45 Communications & Consultation Strategy 2018-2021

46 Treasury Management Stewardship Report 2017-18

47 Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) Review of Attendance Standards – Consultation Results

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

42 POLITICAL REPRESENTATION ON THE PANELS OF THE FIRE AUTHORITY

42.1 The Fire Authority received the report of the Monitoring Officer (MO) seeking to secure political balance on Panels in accordance with the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990 and agree to the resultant Membership to the Panels of the Fire Authority. (*Copy in Minute Book*)

42.2 The Fire Authority was required to keep under review the allocation of seats on Committees and other bodies to ensure, so far as practicable, that the reflected the political groups on the Authority. The rules governing this representation were outlined in the report.

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

- i) confirmed the Panel arrangements and political representation as set out in the report;
- ii) agreed (with no member voting against) that the political balance provisions shall not apply to the Membership of the Principal Officer Appointments Panel; and
- iii) agreed that, as had been the practice in the past under Standing Order 41.14, to leave the appointment of Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Panels to the Panels at their first meeting.

43 FIRE AUTHORITY AND PANEL MEETINGS 2018/19

43.1 The Fire Authority received the Report of the Senior Democratic Services Officer (SDSO) which informed Members of the dates of meetings of the Fire Authority and Panels for the remainder of 2018 and 2019 (*Copy in Minute Book*)

43.2 **RESOLVED** – That the Fire Authority noted the dates of meetings of the Fire Authority and Panels for the next 12 months.

44 SAFER COMMUNITIES STRATEGY 2018-21

44.1 The Fire Authority considered the Report of the Chief Fire Officer (CFO) which presented Members with the Safer Communities Strategy 2018-21 for approval and adoption. (*Copy in Minute Book*)

44.2 The report supported East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service's (ESFRS) purpose to make our communities safer. The strategy, Appendix A to the report, outlined the future delivery design of ESFRS Prevention services over the next three years to support the delivery of interventions under five themed prevention strands.

44.3 Members expressed their support of the strategy which they deemed comprehensive and felt that it supported the existing good work that the service was achieving in promoting community safety. Members were always impressed

by the dedication of staff and the events that they organised particularly Biker Down and Safe Drive, Stay Alive

- 44.4 Members suggested that a textual amendment be made on page 9 of the Strategy. It was felt that the statement that the strategy “will” achieve a reduction in the number of people killed and seriously injured in road traffic collisions. Members explained that they were not questioning the contribution the service made to the reduction of deaths and injuries in traffic collisions but felt that by writing it in this way we could be perceived to be making a promise that could not be delivered by the service alone.
- 44.5 The CFO advised that both the Service’s intervention and prevention work saves lives. In terms of response to emergencies our staff were well equipped, well trained and enabled to make early interventions which save lives, helped by the Authority maintaining budget commitments which support rapid attendance.
- 44.6 The Authority proposed potential minor textual amendments and agreed that the CFO be permitted to amend the strategy to reflect that this was an aim and not a guarantee.
- 44.7 **RESOLVED** – That the Fire Authority approved and adopted the Safer Communities Strategy 2018-2021 subject to the Chief Fire Officer, in consultation with the Chairman, making minor textual amendments to page 9 of the Strategy.

45 COMMUNICATIONS & CONSULTATION STRATEGY 2018-2021

- 45.1 The Fire Authority considered the Report of the Assistant Director Planning & Improvement (ADP&I) which presented the Authority with the revised Communications and Consultation Strategy 2018-2021 for approval and adoption. (*Copy in Minute Book*)
- 45.2 The Authority currently had a Communications and Engagement Strategy in place and it was this document that had been revised and updated. Over the past year the Service had developed its approach to strategies and a number of them had been re-written and agreed. The Communications and Consultation Strategy had been revised to support the delivery of the Service’s other strategies.
- 45.3 Members thought that the Strategy was a positive document, but felt that there could be more attention paid to Social Media as a communication tool. Whilst the Service was using Twitter and Facebook, they believed that there might be more that could be done to engage on these platforms. It was suggested that the Service should consider using Instagram, which they felt was more conversational, and to create short video clips of safety advice and training that the public could share on other sites.
- 45.4 The CFO responded firstly by stating that the Service had a great Communications team that served as a valuable resource. They did a strong and exemplary job promoting the work of the Service and gave Officers solid advice.
- 45.5 Members were advised that the Service was exploring the plethora of Social Media platforms to ensure that we made the best use of what was available to us. The

Service currently has some core sites, including Facebook, Twitter and a soon to be launched Instagram account, and would introduce others as appropriate.

- 45.6 The CFO explained that whilst there were many routes that the Service could communicate with the Public, the strongest available was face to face therefore, we would continue to use this as much as possible by using roadshows, station open days and having a presence at events hosted by other services or authorities. The CFO used the recent Safety in Action week at Newhaven Fort as an example during this week, the Service made contact with approximately 800 children from many different schools. The safety messages that the children attending the event had learned would be passed on to many more people including their friends and families.
- 45.7 Members then praised the weekly Service Brief and asked how far the contents of this was circulated. The Communications and Marketing Manager explained that in full it was sent to Staff, Fire Authority Members and those stories that contained public information were disseminated out to the public via a variety of channels including the website, traditional press and social media. She went on to explain that the Service sought to continuously improve its communications and all ideas were welcomed.
- 45.8 Members thanked the Communications staff for the work that they do and extended this to those other staff who were involved in updating social media and for the great work achieved by on station staff who do so much for community engagement including attending open days and hosting their own.
- 45.9 **RESOLVED** – That the Fire Authority approved and adopted the revised Communications & Consultation Strategy 2018-2021.

46 TREASURY MANAGEMENT – STEWARDSHIP REPORT FOR 2017/18

- 46.1 The Fire Authority received the Report of the Assistant Director Resources/Treasurer (ADR/T) which presented the Annual Treasury Management Stewardship Report 2017/18. The receipt of this report was an annual requirement of the Fire Authority's reporting procedures and informed Members of Treasury Management performance for 2017/18 and compliance with Prudential Indicators. (*Copy in Minute Book*)
- 46.2 The report confirmed that the Fire Authority had complied with its approved Treasury Management Strategy and Prudential Indicators for the year.
- 46.3 The Bank of England (BoE) base rate had been raised from 0.25% to 0.50% on 2 November 2017. In challenging economic conditions the average rate of interest received through the Services Treasury Management Activity was 0.50% which reflected the Fire Authority's continuing prioritisation of security and liquidity over yield.
- 46.4 Members were informed that no new borrowing had been undertaken in 2017/18 with total loan debt outstanding of £10.773m at 31 March 2018 with an average interest rate of 4.60%. There had been no beneficial opportunities to reschedule debt during the year but there was a £200k loan maturity on 31 December 2017.

The outturn of the Fire Authority's Capital Financing Requirement (CFR), a measure of the underlying need to borrow, is £10.773m.

- 46.5 Members referred to the 4.60% interest rate on debts and queried whether it would be possible to reduce this rate of interest on debts. They also wondered whether improved interests rates on savings could be found.
- 46.6 The ADR/T explained that opportunities to reschedule debt were regularly reviewed none had arisen at present. The Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) had increased all of its lending rates in October 2010 by 1% but it had not increased the rate of interest used for repaying debt. This meant that the cost of future borrowing had increased and the opportunity to restructure debt when market conditions allowed had been significantly reduced. He added that the Service had not taken out any new borrowing since 2008, but that the Estates Strategy may change this stance on long-term borrowing.
- 46.7 The ADR/T reminded Members that the Authority had set its Treasury Management approach in February 2018, and that the new policy meant that it had opted to remain prudent, whilst allowing more flexibility and permitting the use of slightly higher risk options. He informed Members that there would be an opportunity to review one of our investments with NatWest when it matured in August 2018.
- 46.8 The ADR/T reminded Members that whilst the Service currently holds historically high levels of reserves, the strategies that the Authority agreed in February 2018 would work to drop these reserves to £5m in 5 years. The majority of this remaining amount was in General/Unallocated Balances held against the risks set out in the Reserves and Balances Policy, in effect a 'rainy day' fund that would need to be accessible at short notice. This would therefore need to be a key consideration when evaluating longer term investments.
- 46.9 **RESOLVED** – That the Fire Authority noted the Treasury Management Performance for 2017/18.

47 INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN (IRMP) REVIEW OF ATTENDANCE STANDARDS – CONSULTATION RESULTS

- 47.1 The Fire Authority considered the Report of the Deputy Chief Fire Officer (DCFO) which presented the outcomes of the consultation exercise undertaken in relation to the review of attendance standards as detailed in the Fire Authority's Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) 2017/20. The report detailed the views of staff partners and communities to enable the Fire Authority to consider their views before it made its final decision.
- 47.2 The report presented Members with the results of an 8 week public consultation on the IRMP Review of Attendance Standards. The consultation had a broad reach, staff had held roadshow events across the 6 local authority areas, and in addition to these a quantitative open consultation questionnaire had been available online and as a hard copy. A useable response of 474 meant that this was the highest response rate in any IRMP consultation exercise to date.

- 47.3 The results showed that the majority of respondents agreed that the 'call-handling time' be included as part of ESFRS's attendance standard. Also that the standards should be variable and report separately for on station and on call responses. Finally, the responses showed that the second engine should not be measured as an outward facing public standard, but that it be measured for internal use.
- 47.4 Members thanked Officers for conducting the consultation and for compiling the responses. They sought clarification on the recommendation that the second engine be measured for internal purposes only and not reportable. Members were interested in how this internal monitoring helped to ensure that there were sufficient resources available.
- 47.5 The CFO explained that it was essential for Officers to know the speed and weight of attack required to resolve any incident. Amongst this was how fast all resources attending get there to provide a response, this additional data was required internally for every response and used to help with planning. It was obtained automatically from the mobilising system. Internally the Service was measuring the exact speed, time and weight of response and it was used on a daily basis to inform immediate cover moves.
- 47.6 The CFO explained that for the purposes of dynamic resource management, it was essential that this information was available. This detailed information must also be available in case of a coroner or police enquiry.
- 47.7 Members questioned why, as outlined in the response received from the Fire Brigades Union (FBU), the attendance standards had not been split on geographical terms.
- 47.8 The CFO informed Members that the proposal was to change from an average County attendance time. This consultation had enabled enhanced transparency. There was a variance between urban and rural because of the nature of the duty systems, some Firefighters are on the station some have to be called to attend. In addition, nationally, union representatives were keen to have a unique attendance standard set for each station. This would be incredibly difficult to achieve as ESFRS did not operate a service where a station served just one community, as already mentioned the new mobilising system operated in a dynamic way, meaning that the nearest appliance at that moment, whether on station or on the move, was sent to an incident.
- 47.9 **RESOLVED** – That the Fire Authority:
1. Considered the results of the staff, public and stakeholder exercise and agreed to adopt the outcomes of the consultation which proposed to:
 - i) include the call handling time as part of the new attendance standards;
 - ii) set an attendance standard for the 1st fire appliance with an 'on-station-response of 10 minutes 70% of the time;
 - iii) set an attendance standard for the 1st fire appliance with an 'on-call' response of 15 minutes 70% of the time; and

- iv) not to set a standard for attendance of the second appliance but to monitor it as part of its internal reporting.

The Meeting of the Fire Authority then ceased for the duration of the 72 seconds silence to pay its respects to those 72 people who lost their lives in the fire at Grenfell Tower on 14 June 2017.

48 URGENT ITEM: UPDATE ON SUSSEX CONTROL CENTRE

- 48.1 The Chairman reconvened the meeting, inviting the Chief Fire Officer (CFO) and Deputy Chief Fire Officer (DCFO) to provide an update to the Fire Authority on the current situation at the Sussex Control Centre.
- 48.2 The Chairman, in consultation with the Monitoring Officer explained that the majority of this discussion would be taken in open session. However, it would be necessary to consider excluding the public and press from the meeting for the remainder of the discussion on the grounds that if the public and press were present there would be disclosure to them of exempt information, as specified in paragraphs 3 and 5 of Part 1 Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended i.e. that it includes information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular persons and information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings.
- 48.3 The CFO gave Members some context to the update. She reminded them that for some years now ESFRS had been involved with WSFRS in a project to replace the legacy mobilising systems used by each Service with one shared software system to be based on a shared site at Haywards Heath.
- 48.4 The Services had been progressing the project to the single solution for some time, the new system is Remsdaq 4i. The CFO then explained that the mobilising software then needed to link into station end equipment such as alarm bells, doors, pagers and hardware on appliances. There were complex links required between several different bits of software and hardware. The CFO informed Members that we had encountered some issues with delivery of the new system, but this was not unexpected with the integration of any new software, but as it was fundamental to Service provision, there had always been layers of support in place to mitigate for any issues.
- 48.5 The DCFO then provided a more detailed update on the experience so far and future plans. Members were reminded that ESFRS had gone live with the new 4i system on 20 March 2018. The final decision to go live, and the timetable for doing so, had been made on 19 March 2018 by the CFOs of both ESFRS and WSFRS following comprehensive testing. The agreement was for WSFRS to then follow and go live with the system between 4-6 weeks later.
- 48.6 The DCFO explained that in the two weeks following ESFRS go live there had been some issues, but the project team had ensured that there were engineers on site to resolve these issues quickly, he added that since then, monitoring had continued. Members were informed that the issues that arose had been with the communication between mobilising (4i) and the systems which send signals on to

other hardware alerting the crews. These messages also go to Mobile Data Terminals (MDTs) on each Fire Appliance, a form of pc through which we send information during incidents, they also go to alerters and pagers. The recent issues encountered were not with the mobilising software itself. The configuration between 4i and the MDTs needed adjusting and at this stage it became apparent that there were some hardware issues with cabling, some equipment overheating and weak on-station Wi-Fi signals.

- 48.7 The DCFO explained that since go live, there had been over 1860 incidents and during this period, 158 reports of issues had been made. The majority of these issues were not related to incidents. Some of these issues had been technical, some had been operator error, and these had highlighted the need for further training. The DCFO explained that the issues that had arisen were being dealt with. All had now been diagnosed and a solution was either in place or being worked on. A joint investigation with the FBU into these issues was underway.
- 48.8 The DCFO reassured Members that the Service would not wait for the investigation to conclude before it remedied any issues discovered, this was ongoing. The Service had immediately started work on enhancing Wi-Fi strength at stations and replacing hardware. ESFRS's IT provider, telent, had commenced work on reviewing all station end equipment. Additionally, a new way of monitoring the systems 24/7 had been agreed, this enabled us to constantly see what was happening and provided a better opportunity to fix any issues on discovery.
- 48.9 Members enquired as to whether the software, hardware and Wi-Fi issues had been pre-existing and had the Service been aware of them. Officers explained that we had been aware of some legacy issues and there had been plans in place to address them but the new 4i system had in fact made these issues more visible. The ongoing IT strategy had already made some improvements, and other planned solutions were being brought forward. Historic monitoring systems had not been able to pick up issues automatically and had been reliant on issues with frontline issues being reported by individual Firefighters. Wi-Fi was a particular local issue, and not service specific, but as we were reliant upon it was imperative that the improvements that had already begun were carried out across the weak signal areas.
- 48.10 Members were concerned that it was hard to get an idea of the scale of the problem. The CFO likened it to a concentric circle, we previously did not know what we did not know, what we now know we are addressing immediately and additional information is becoming apparent and being dealt with accordingly.
- 48.11 Members agreed that the transition from one IT system to another was always difficult, but wanted reassurance that "command and control" was still being achieved and that the right appliances were getting to the right incidents on time. They also requested confirmation that the project management process had been robust, and queried who was on the project board and had it included suppliers.
- 48.12 The DCFO reassured Members that the Project Management method being used was standard and had been used correctly, thoroughly and appropriately. There had been a Project Implementation Board, created jointly between ESFRS and WSFRS. The project team had ensured that robust testing had been carried out

prior to go live and all these had been passed satisfactorily. Some of the issues that had become apparent had been pre-existing and had been highlighted by the way the Service is using the new technology. Members were informed that the combined project team had been actively monitoring user acceptance testing, this had not looked at the whole estate operating at the same time, but used a sampling approach testing each function individually.

- 48.13 The CFO added that whilst the Project Implementation Board was formed of staff from both ESFRS and WSFRS there were no suppliers represented at this executive board level. They contributed to the User Working groups which fed into the project and reported up to the executive decision making board. telent, who were responsible for providing IT across the whole service, outlined the specifics for each project.
- 48.14 Members discussed the project as a whole, they were minded that the 4i project had started some years ago and that important lessons had been learned from the process already and that there would be more to come. A report would be made to Scrutiny and Audit regarding the project for consideration before 2021 when the Service would need to move again to a new system. They agreed that 4i had been far more ruthlessly tested as a result of the delays to installation that had occurred and that ESFRS deliberately did not go live until there was certainty that it would not fall over. They further agreed that perhaps a lesson had been learned that more attention should have been paid to peripherals and linking hardware when the project commenced and not left to be discovered at this stage in the process.
- 48.15 The ADR/T added that the IT Strategy, approved by Members in June 2017, included activities around station end equipment including the replacement of pagers, modernisation of MDTs and enhancement of Wi-Fi. Specific pieces of work had been brought forward. Physical Wi-Fi surveys of all stations and all station end equipment had been commissioned and funding for updating was already identified within the current strategy. He added that there were 4 suppliers involved across the two services, telent (outsourced IT service delivery), Remsdaq (4i) and two others, one for the provision of arriving calls and the other for MDTs. Before go live, work had been conducted to ensure responsibilities of all parties were defined and the supplier resolution response since go live had been good. The response from telent in particular had been exemplary, the speed and competency of their specialist response had been very positive.
- 48.16 Members were grateful for the updates received, both today and throughout the process. They appreciated how well the complex set of issues had been handled and felt reassured as to the safety and compliance of the new system. They proposed that consideration be given to establishing a scrutiny board to look in-depth at the project.
- 48.17 Members then requested an update on the crews and whether they were happy with the new system.
- 48.18 The DCFO informed Members that there had been some knock to confidence when issues arose, but that these concerns were being addressed jointly with the FBU. There were regular updates on the system to crews which included a rationale as to why issues had occurred and how they were being remedied. The

staff at the Service Control Centre were broadly confident in how the system worked.

- 48.19 The CFO informed Members of the importance of the enhanced monitoring that was provided by 4i. There was now more detailed information available about West Sussex, mobilisation and new officer satnavs in cars providing more information to attend incidents.
- 48.20 The CFO explained that as a result of 4i, station mobilising of appliances is now “dynamic”, as outlined previously this meant that the nearest appliance is alerted and not the nearest station. These appliances may therefore be already on the move. Some of the issues that had been reported were about the lack of understanding of the impacts of this change. The system is doing exactly what we ask of it, but there is clearly an issue with communication of this.
- 48.21 Members asked what the time frame was for fixing those issues that remained. The DCFO responded to reiterate that all the issues had now been identified, many had been resolved already and of those outstanding interim measures were in place and there was an estimate of 6-8 weeks to replace or fix the station end equipment.
- 48.22 At this point the Chairman requested the exclusion of the press and public, as agreed at the beginning of the item, for the remainder of the discussion on the grounds that if the public and press were present there would be disclosure to them of exempt information, as specified in paragraphs 3 and 5 of Part 1 Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended i.e. that it includes information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular persons and information in respect of which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings.
- 48.42 **RESOLVED** – That the Fire Authority agreed that:
- i) The Chairman of the Fire Authority be requested to write to the Cabinet Member for Safer, Stronger Communities at West Sussex County Council outlining the concerns of the Members of East Sussex Fire Authority regarding the Service Control Centre and arranging a meeting between them to enable further discussion; and
 - ii) Following a response to the above letter and after ensuing discussions, that a report be requested to be presented to a relevant meeting of the Panels of the Fire Authority.

The meeting concluded at 14:02 hours.

Signed

Chairman

Dated this

day of

2018