

FIRE AUTHORITY

Minutes of the meeting of the FIRE AUTHORITY held at Council Chamber, County Hall, East Sussex County Council, St Anne's Crescent, Lewes at 10.30 am on Thursday, 9 June 2022.

Present: Councillors Galley (Chairman), Lambert (Vice-Chair), Azad, Dowling, Evans, Geary, Hamilton, Maples, Marlow-Eastwood, Osborne, Peltzer Dunn, Powell, Redstone, Scott, Taylor, Theobald, Ungar and West

Also present: D Whittaker (Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive), A Ghebre-Ghiorgis (Monitoring Officer), M Matthews (Assistant Chief Fire Officer), D Savage (Assistant Director Resources/Treasurer), L Ridley (Assistant Director Planning & Improvement), L Woodley (Deputy Monitoring Officer), M Lloyd (Assistant Director Safer Communities) and A Blanshard (Senior Democratic Services Officer)

94 Declarations of Interest

There were none

95 Election of Chairperson

The Fire Authority considered the report of the Monitoring Officer inviting the Fire Authority to elect a Chairperson and to request, once elected that they advise on their preferred title. (*Copy in Minute Book*)

The Combination Order for the creation of the East Sussex Fire Authority set down the procedures for the election of the Chairperson of the Authority.

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

Councillor Lambert nominated Councillor Roy Galley to be the Chairperson of the Fire Authority, seconded by Councillor Geary and agreed by the Fire Authority.

RESOLVED - That the Fire Authority:

- i. appointed Councillor Roy Galley as Chairperson of the Authority; and
- ii. the Chairperson advised that their preferred title was that of 'Chairman'.

96 Election of Vice Chairperson

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

Councillor Galley proposed Councillor Carolyn Lambert, seconded by Councillor Maples and agreed by the Fire Authority.

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RESOLVED – That the Fire Authority:

- i. appointed Councillor Carolyn Lambert as Vice-Chairperson of the Authority;
and
- ii. the Vice-Chairperson advised that their preferred title was that of ‘Vice-Chair’.

97 Apologies for Absence

There were none

98 Notification of items which the Chairperson considers urgent and proposes to take at the end of the agenda/Chairperson's business items

The Chairman asked that the Fire Authority record its thanks to Councillor David Tutt who had ended his membership at the end of May. The Authority was grateful to Cllr Tutt for his hard work and dedication over the years, especially in his role as Chair of the Pension Board and as the Authority's Lead Member for IT for which his fellow Members and Officers were particularly appreciative.

The Chairman welcomed Councillor John Ungar who had been newly appointed to fill the vacancy from East Sussex County Council.

The Chairman encouraged all Members of the Fire Authority to attend the newly reinstated Station Open Days that had begun again having been stopped due to Covid-19. These events were an excellent opportunity for the Members of the Fire Authority to meet the crews on station and speak to the public who attend. Additionally, there would be Biker Down, Safe Drive Stay Alive, Water Savvy Water Safe and Safety in Action events to which Members were always welcome. Democratic Services reminded Members that the dates of all these events were circulated to them all every week and would be grateful if they could be informed if Members were planning on or had attended.

99 To consider any public questions

There were none

100 To receive any petitions

There were none

101 Non-confidential Minutes of the Previous Meeting

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting held on 10 February 2022 be approved and signed by the Chairman.

102 Callover

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Members reserved the following items for debate:

- 166 Political Representation on the Panels of the Fire Authority
- 169 Treasury Management Stewardship Report for 2021/22
- 170 Procurement Strategy Refresh 2022-2025

RESOLVED – The Fire Authority agreed that all other reports on this Agenda be approved in full.

103 Political Representation on the Panels of the Fire Authority

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 the resultant memberships to the Panels of the Fire Authority.

The Fire Authority was required to keep under review the allocations of seats on Committees and other bodies to ensure, so far as practicable, that they reflected the political groups on the Authority. The rules governing this representation were outlined in the report. There are four political groups on the Fire Authority: Conservative, Green, Labour and Liberal Democrat, there has been no change to the size of these groups this year.

The Panels are the Authority's committees set up in accordance with Standing Order 41 and their terms of reference are shown in the Constitution. The size of each Panel is not constituted and could be agreed by the Fire Authority. The size of each Panel remains at 6 Members, enabling each Panel to be an exactly proportionate replica of one third of the Fire Authority.

The Membership of each Panel was confirmed to the meeting, and it was agreed that the Authority would elect a Chairperson to the Scrutiny & Audit and Policy & Resources Panels and to the Pension Board at this meeting. The remaining Panels will elect a Chairperson as the first item of business when they hold their first meeting.

There were two nominations for the Chairperson of the Scrutiny & Audit Panel: Councillor Lambert was nominated by Cllr Osborne, seconded by Cllr Theobald.

Councillor Powell was nominated by Cllr Maples, seconded by Cllr Evans.

As the position was contested a recorded vote was held with each Member declaring their choice for the role. The results were as follows:

Cllr Lambert	12 votes	(Cllrs Azad, Dowling, Galley, Geary, Lambert, Marlow-Eastwood, Osborne, Peltzer Dunn, Redstone, Taylor, Theobald, Ungar)
Cllr Powell	6 votes	(Cllrs Evans, Hamilton, Maples, Powell, Scott, West)

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Cllr Lambert was duly appointed as Chairperson of the Scrutiny & Audit Panel.

Councillor Peltzer Dunn was nominated as Chairperson of the Policy & Resources Panel by Cllr Galley, seconded by Cllr Lambert. The nomination was uncontested and passed by the Authority.

Councillor Hamilton was nominated as Chairperson of the Pensions Board by Cllr Evans, seconded by Cllr Galley. The nomination was uncontested and passed by the Authority.

	Conservative	Labour	Liberal Democrats	Green
SCRUTINY & AUDIT (6)	3 Azad Redstone Theobald	1 Scott	1 Lambert (Ch)	1 Powell
POLICY & RESOURCES (6)	3 Peltzer Dunn (Ch) Galley Taylor	1 Evans	1 Lambert	1 Maples
HUMAN RESOURCES (6)	3 Azad Geary Marlow-Eastwood	1 Scott	1 Osborne	1 West
URGENCY (6)	3 Dowling Galley Geary	1 Scott	1 Lambert	1 Powell
PRINCIPAL OFFICER APPOINTMENTS PANEL (5)	2 Galley (Ch) Theobald	1 Evans	1 Lambert	1 Maples
PENSIONS BOARD (4)	Redstone, Hamilton (Ch), Ungar, West			

The Authority also agreed the appointment of the following Lead Member roles:

Health & Safety – Cllr Theobald
Assurance & Peer Review – Cllr Geary
Inclusion & Diversity – Cllrs Powell and Evans
IT – Cllr Redstone
Environment & Sustainability – Cllr West
Estates – Cllr Peltzer Dunn

RESOLVED – That the Fire Authority:

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- i. confirm 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. appointed the Chairperson of the Scrutiny & Audit (Cllr Lambert) and Policy & Resources (Cllr Peltzer Dunn) Panels and the Pensions Board (Cllr Hamilton) in accordance with Standing Order 41.13. The Authority agreed that the remaining Panels (Human Resources, and Urgency) would appoint a Chairperson at their first meeting under Standing Order 41.14.

104 Fire Authority and Panel Meetings 2022-2023

The Fire Authority received the report of the Senior Democratic Services Officer informing Members of the dates of meetings of the Fire Authority and Panels for the remainder of 2022 and 2023.

RESOLVED - The Fire Authority noted the dates of meetings of the Fire Authority and Panels for the next 18 months.

105 Banking Arrangements - changes to authorised signatories

The Fire Authority considered the report of the Assistant Director Resources/Treasurer presenting Members with changes to the list of authorised signatories to the Authority's bank accounts following staff changes.

RESOLVED – The Fire Authority approved the updated list of officers authorised to sign cheques on behalf of the Fire Authority.

106 Treasury Management - Stewardship Report for 2021/22

The Fire Authority received the report of the Assistant Director Resources/Treasurer (ADR/T). The Annual Treasury Management Stewardship Report was a requirement of the Fire Authority's reporting procedures and informed Members of Treasury Management performance and compliance with Prudential Indicators for 2021/22.

The report summarised that the Fire Authority had complied with its approved Treasury Management Strategy and Prudential Indicators for the year. The Bank of England Base Rate increased on three occasions during 2021/22 from 0.10% in December 2021 to 0.75% in March 2022, it took these steps to help mitigate inflationary pressure during the latter part of the year. The average rate of interest received in 2021/22 through Treasury Management Activity was 0.26%, reflecting the Fire Authority's continuing prioritisation of security and liquidity over yield. No new borrowing had been undertaken and

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two loans were repaid during the year. The Fire Authority reviewed options to invest a portion of core balances in longer duration funds during the setting of the 2020/21 Strategy. Decisions on investment had been taken in the context of the current economic climate, the current approved capital programme and the requirement to fund it over the medium term. No investment in longer duration funds was made during the year. The current economic climate was evolving rapidly and opportunities were being explored to secure investment returns within the acceptable risk parameters set out in the Authority's agreed Strategy. During the year the Authority had invested in Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) funds that met its policy criteria for security and liquidity and offered comparable or better returns than similar non ESG funds.

Members queried why the narrative description of the world economic situation was not more specific and seemed to make no reference to Brexit or climate change. The ADR/T explained that the narrative was the view, in April, of the Authority's appointed external advisors and provided their assessment of the economy for the year ended 31 March 2022. The ADR/T agreed to seek comment from the external advisers Link on these matters.

The ADR/T reminded Members that regular budget monitoring reports were presented to the Policy & Resources Panel that contained detailed analysis of financial risks, including those mentioned. The Authority were reminded that there was a broader piece of work underway regarding sustainability, as discussed with the Lead Member for Environment & Sustainability, which would be presented to the Fire Authority at a future meeting.

RESOLVED – The Fire Authority noted the Treasury Management Performance for 2021/22.

107 Procurement Strategy Refresh 2022-2025

The Fire Authority considered the report of the Assistant Director Resources/Treasurer (ADR/T) presenting Members with the refreshed Procurement Strategy for the Period 2022-2025. The refreshed strategy did not represent a significant departure from the current approach, but reflected a change in emphasis, highlighting less the need to change ways of working and more the need to continue to deliver against established themes. The continued progression of Procurement as a strategic function and deployment of this strategy, means that the limited professional resources can be focused on the vital value adding activities, driving savings and efficiencies. With continued pressure on budgets and reductions in funding it was more important than ever that the Authority's Procurement Strategy delivered cost effective services that met the needs of the community.

There was a concern from Members that there was not enough focus being paid to sustainable procurement, considering the significant targets for carbon neutrality set by government and that there was an expectation that environmental sustainability would be a larger driving force in terms of procurement. The ADR/T responded that this report was relating to the overarching strategy, which was to provide context, and reminded Members that they had approved the responsible procurement policy which set out the Authority's commitment to considering factors such as climate change in its

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procurement decisions. The ability of the Service to make any significant impact would depend on the specific items purchased, but it was known that 80% of its carbon footprint was equally split between buildings and heavy fleet which were both challenging to address. It was noted that on current advice it was anticipated that to make the Service carbon neutral would cost in excess of £20m. This would be presented to the Authority in detail in the paper to be presented at a future meeting.

The CFO added that whilst there was work being led by the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) into reduced prices for Electric (EV) appliances, the most significant way to reduce carbon emissions in the sector was to reduce fires and to mandate sprinklers. These would alleviate carbon impacts in a far greater way than focusing on fleet. Members' support in lobbying for these would be appreciated. Some Members felt that the focus on EV appliances was a distraction and that there needed to be more fundamental changes and collective working to address carbon neutrality. The general feeling of Members was that there was no disagreement that sustainability was an essential focus for the Authority and that the concerns raised were shared by all, but it must be remembered that this was a live procurement document which itself referred to the need to adapt as the corporate position developed, particularly in response to climate change.

There was a request from Members for more information to be provided on how the Service would fulfil its commitment to support the local economy and diverse suppliers. The ADR/T confirmed that this was still early days as the Responsible Procurement Policy had only recently been approved but that an update would be provided to the Scrutiny & Audit Panel on progress in this area.

RESOLVED – The Fire Authority agreed to:

- i. approve the Procurement Strategy 2022-25; and
- ii. provide an update to the Scrutiny & Audit Panel on progress in the Services commitment to support the local economy and diverse suppliers.

The meeting concluded at 11.42 am

Signed

Chairman

Dated this

day of

2022