

EAST SUSSEX FIRE AUTHORITY

Report of a meeting of the East Sussex Fire Authority held at Fire & Rescue Service Headquarters at 10.30 hours on Thursday 5 February 2009.

Members present: Councillors Carden, Freeman, Gadd, Harmer-Strange, Healy, Howson, Kemble, Kirby, Livings, Murphy (Chairman), Ost, Pidgeon, Rufus, Scott, Sparks and Wilson.

1. FIRE AUTHORITY SERVICE PLANNING PROCESSES FOR 2009/10 AND BEYOND

- 1.1 The Fire Authority has considered joint reports of the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive and the Treasurer concerning the draft Fire Authority Service Planning and Revenue Budget processes for 2009/10 and beyond.
- 1.2 The Treasurer reported that, in his opinion, the budget met the requirements of Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003 in terms both of the robustness of the estimates made for the purposes of calculating the adequacy of the proposed financial reserves.
- 1.3 Extensive consultation has taken place on the proposed budget options for 2009/10 and there has been significant support for the options presented. The representative bodies have also been consulted and were supportive of the budget strategy.

The Treasurer highlighted to Members the changes in the budget proposals since the confirmation by collection authorities of the Council Tax Base and Collection Fund Surpluses and Deficits, primarily the additional provision of £47,000 in the base budget for purchase of smoke alarms and the re-instatement of savings of £50,000 relating to learning and development and staff advertising. Members were also reminded of a number of continuing risks related to the current economic recession e.g. possible further reductions in treasury management income, impact on Council Tax Collection rates and reduced likelihood of achieving capital receipts to finance the capital programme.

The Treasurer confirmed that a Council Tax rise of 3.92% was required in order to meet the Authority's net budget requirement of £38.020m. He also advised that whilst it was not possible to judge what the Government would regard as "substantially below 5%" for the purposes of capping, the Authority had a sound justification for the proposed rise of 3.92%.

- 1.4 The Treasurer thanked EFRS and County Council staff for their support to him and the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive in producing the budget. Members concurred with this, agreeing that it had been a difficult job, undertaken during difficult circumstances, producing excellent results.
- 1.5 The Fire Authority has approved the necessary detailed budget and service planning decisions and, in accordance with the Local Government Finance Act 1992:
 - approved the amount calculated by the Fire Authority as its budget requirement for the year 2009/10 at £38.020m; a 3.1% increase on the 2008/09 budget base of £36.892m;
 - approved the amount calculated by the Fire Authority as the basic amount of its council tax (i.e. for a Band D property) for the year 2009/10 at £80.08 (based on final taxbase figures); (3.9% increase on the 2008/09 Council Tax Band D figure of £77.06);
 - agreed that Brighton & Hove City Council and the Borough and District councils of East Sussex (the billing authorities) be advised by the Treasurer of the relevant amounts payable and the council tax in the other bands.

