

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 11 December 2008.

Members present: Councillors Carden, Freeman, Gadd, Harmer-Strange, Mrs. Healy, Howson, Kemble, Kirby, Marsh, Murphy (Chairman), Pidgeon, Scott, Skilton, Sparks, Waite and Wilson. Mrs. Redman, Independent Person and Chair of the Standards Panel and Mr. Wheeler, Independent Person.

1. NOTE OF THE PRINCIPAL OFFICER APPOINTMENTS, POLICY & RESOURCES, SCRUTINY & AUDIT AND STANDARDS PANEL MEETINGS HELD SINCE THE LAST MEETING OF THE FIRE AUTHORITY

- 1.1 The Fire Authority has considered a report that set out the reports of the Chairmen and Chair of the Panels that had met since the last meeting of the Fire Authority.
- 1.2 Councillor Scott proposed a motion that the resolution by the Policy & Resources Panel on 21 November 2008, item 537 (to remove the Service day crewed housing allowances for council tax, water and sewage rates and the annual redecoration allowance) be referred back to an appropriate panel for further discussion and consideration.
- 1.3 The resolution by the Policy & Resources Panel was that 'the action taken with regard to the recommendation 8 of the Management Action Plan be approved, as amended, to be phased in over a three year period'. Councillor Skilton suggested that this item be added to the agenda for the next meeting of the Way Forward Working Group on 9 January 2009, to allow for discussion with members of staff and the representative bodies.
- 1.4 The motion was seconded by Councillor Carden, and was subsequently lost.

2. FIRE AUTHORITY SERVICE PLANNING

- 2.1 The Fire Authority gave initial consideration to a projection of the draft 2009/10 Fire Authority Service Planning and Resource Management issues which would be finalised over the period from December 2008 to February 2009.
- 2.2 Members were informed that the announcement of the detailed Formula Grant for the period 2008/09 to 2010/11 had been made last year. The financial context for local government remained one of continued and significant financial constraint, with requirements to meet the latest efficiency savings targets for 3 years from 2009/10 as well as a potential to have to meet losses on collection funds, a reduction in the council tax base and other budget impacts as the economic conditions hardened. Government had restated guidance that council tax increase should be 'substantially below 5%' but it was still not clear exactly what this meant. Members requested that officers should model the impact of a council tax increase below 4% for future meetings. The use of balances to ease any one-off pressures would also be examined.
- 2.3 The Fire Authority confirmed the current planning assumptions; considered the draft service investment proposals, including the revenue consequences of the draft Capital Programme, and considered the draft savings proposals. Members noted that the Fire Authority must set its precept for 2009/10 on 5 February 2009.

- 2.4 **RESOLVED** – That the Fire Authority supports the indicative budget proposals set out in the report.
3. **FURTHER REVISIONS TO THE FIRE AUTHORITY TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY AND POLICY STATEMENT FOR 2008/09**
- 3.1 The Fire Authority has considered revisions to the Treasury Management Strategy for 2008/09, following the earlier approval of this on 7 February 2008, and amended on 5 June 2008 due to the worsening situation in the financial markets.
- 3.2 Under the Local Government Act 2003 and the Prudential Code for Capital Finance 2004, the Fire Authority was required to determine its authorised borrowing limit, to adopt treasury management prudential indicators and limits, to approve the Minimum Revenue Provision Statement and to agree the treasury management strategy and policy statement. The Fire Authority agreed these for 2008/09 at its meeting on 7 February 2008 and an amendment to the strategy was approved on 5 June 2008. Members were informed of the details of the latest revision for 2008/09, which applied only to the treasury management strategy.
- 3.3 It was noted that the strategy prioritised access and security and consequently was likely to result in reduced investment income and, together with the recent cut in the base rate, would mean that investment income would be lower than originally expected. This position was likely to continue into 2009/10 if interest rates were reduced by further base rate cuts.
- 3.4 Members thanked the Treasurer for his continued work in this area, and his wise and prudent approach to Treasury management which had ensured that none of the Authority's money was invested in Icelandic banks and that appropriately cautious approaches had been adopted on all related matters.
- 3.5 **RESOLVED** – That the further revisions to the Treasury Management Strategy for 2008/09 be approved.

COUNCILLOR MIKE MURPHY
CHAIRMAN OF EAST SUSSEX FIRE AUTHORITY
12 December 2008

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 15 January 2009.

Members present: Councillors Carden, Ensor, Freeman, Gadd, Harmer-Strange, Mrs. Healy, Howson, Kemble, Kirby, Marsh, Murphy (Chairman), Pidgeon, Scott, Sparks, Thomas and Wilson.

N.B. Councillor Ensor attended the meeting in place of Councillor Livings, having been nominated by the Monitoring Officer in consultation with the relevant Group spokesperson.

1. DIANA WILLIAMS, MBE – ASSISTANT CHIEF OFFICER (CORPORATE SERVICES)

1.1 The Fire Authority has congratulated Diana Williams, Assistant Chief Officer (Corporate Services) on her award of an MBE in the New Year's Honours, for services to local government. Diana, who had worked for 35 years in local government, started her career at Brighton Borough Council, then moved to East Sussex County Council, with the last 15 years with East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service.

2. GARY WALSH – APPOINTMENT TO POST OF DEPUTY CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

2.1 The Fire Authority has congratulated Gary Walsh on his appointment to the post of Deputy Chief Fire Officer. He will be taking up the post from 9 April 2009.

3. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY CHARTER FOR FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY MEMBERS

3.1 Members of the Fire Authority have demonstrated their commitment to equality and diversity by publicly signing the Local Government Association's five-point Equality and Diversity Charter for Fire & Rescue Authority Members.

4. CONSULTATION OUTCOMES REPORT ON THE DRAFT 2009/10 INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN AND STRATEGIC PLAN

4.1 The Fire Authority has given consideration to the results of the consultation exercise relating to the Integrated Risk Management Plan for 2009-12. Opinions from staff, partners, stakeholders and the public were sought through various methods.

4.2 The Fire Authority was required statutorily to consult on the 3-year IRMP Plan and staff, partner organisations, stakeholders and the public had been consulted. The overall net response was that generally the respondents were supportive of the Plans.

4.3 The Fire Authority approved the Integrated Risk Management Plan for 2009-12.

5. FIRE AUTHORITY SERVICE PLANNING PROCESS FOR 2009/10 AND BEYOND – DRAFT REVENUE BUDGET 2009/10 AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2009/10 TO 2013/14

5.1 The Fire Authority has given consideration to the initial draft service planning document.

5.2 Members considered the draft detailed Service Planning documents, recognising the need for the continuation of existing service commitments in addition to the approved Improvement Agenda, and within the context of a tight financial regime.

- 5.3 The Fire Authority noted that the implications of the Revenue Budget and Capital Programme will be incorporated into the 2009/10 Strategic Plan and the 2009/10 Annual Plan once the Fire Authority has given final approval on 5 February 2009 for their publication by 30 June 2009 in line with amended legislation.
- 5.4 The following key issues were noted by the Fire Authority:
- a) the projected expenditure for 2008/09 of £36.892m which was unchanged from the original estimate;
 - b) the continued Revenue Budget consultations taking place; and
 - c) the proposed restricted budget pressures being considered this year and the compensatory savings already identified for subsequent consideration by the Fire Authority at its next meeting on 5 February 2009, which should help to contain Council Tax increases below the Fire Authority's original target of 4%, subject to the final Council Tax figures yet to be published.
- 5.5 The following key issues were approved by the Fire Authority:
- a) a committed budget of £37.927m for 2009/10 including provision for pay awards, price increases and net escapable commitments;
 - b) Increases to fees and charges;
 - c) an amended Capital Programme for 2008/09 totalling £3.911m and Capital Programme for 2009/10 totalling £5.162m and the related revenue consequences.

6. DRAFT 2009/10 SERVICE PRIORITIES FOR INCLUSION WITHIN THE FIRE AUTHORITY'S 2009/10 IMPROVEMENT PLAN

- 6.1 The Fire Authority has considered proposed key Service Improvements for the draft 2009/10 Improvement Plan which takes account of the Fire Authority's own improvement priorities, longer term projects being undertaken through Key Task Areas (corporate projects) and priorities arising from the Fire & Rescue Service National Framework 2009/11. Members considered the corporate priorities that will continue on into 2009/10 as well as the following new Key Task Areas for 2009/10:
- KTA 5 Land acquisition for a new City Fire Station
 - KTA 6 Review fire cover and resilience in non-urban areas (IRMP outcome)
 - KTA 10 Implementation of VFM Review of Learning & Development
 - KTA 11 Review the long term needs of operational service delivery in order to sustain improvements in operational competence (IRMP outcome)
 - KTA 15 Expansion in capacity of Wide Area Network
 - KTA 16 Review the effectiveness of other support services in relation to local service delivery needs and corporate governance requirements (IRMP outcome).
- 6.2 The Fire Authority approved the proposed 2009/10 Service Improvements detailed in the report.

COUNCILLOR MIKE MURPHY
CHAIRMAN OF EAST SUSSEX FIRE AUTHORITY
16 January 2009