

**MINUTES of a MEETING of the WILTSHIRE & SWINDON FIRE AUTHORITY  
held at the WILTSHIRE FRS TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT CENTRE, DEVIZES  
on THURSDAY 17 DECEMBER 2009**

**Present :** Councillors Brigadier R Hall (Chairman), M Bawden, P A Brown (until the end of the business in minute no.54), P Davis, C Devine, Mrs M Groom, D Montaut, J Osborn, G Payne, D Wren.

**41 Minutes of Last Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 September 2009 were confirmed and signed.

**42 Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors H R Marshall, N Martin and C Newbury.

**43 Members' Interests**

Councillors Brigadier Hall and Wren each declared a personal interest in the business discussed under minute nos.49 & 58 by reason of their positions as Alternate Director and Director respectively of South West Fire Control Limited. The Clerk to the Authority also declared an interest in the same items of business because of his position as Company Secretary of the Company.

**44 Chairman's Announcements**

The Chairman welcomed Assistant Chief Fire Officer Chris Hartrick who was attending his first Fire Authority meeting.

The Chairman informed members of appointments made by the Local Government Association which reflected this Authority's influence within the Association. Councillor Newbury had been appointed a Deputy Chairman of the Fire Services Management Committee, which had in turn appointed him as its representative on the Fire Services College Strategic Stakeholder Board and the CLP Sub-Group for Fire. Councillor Bawden had been appointed to the Fire Forum; and the Chairman himself had been asked to serve on the Centre for Leadership Stakeholder Panel/Programme Board.

The Chairman reported that Wiltshire FRS had played a leading role as a pilot service in developing the new Equality and Diversity Framework, which had been developed in partnership with the Improvement & Development Agency and launched nationally on 7 December.

The Chairman informed members that four retained firefighters based at Mere had received commendations from the Chief Executive of the Great Western Ambulance for their efforts as co-responders in trying to save a man's life, and said that the Ambulance Service was very appreciative of the level of assistance provided by retained firefighters in the rural communities in Wiltshire and Swindon.

The Chairman mentioned the efforts of two firefighters, Stuart Hillier and Dan Cooke, who had assisted in the international emergency response following the earthquake in Indonesia, the former as part of the search and rescue organisation RAPID UK in Indonesia and the latter in the operations room of the UK headquarters.

At the invitation of the Chairman, the recently-appointed Secretary of the local branch of the FBU introduced himself and the Branch Chairman who were attending the meeting as members of the public.

Finally, the Chairman informed members that Mrs Marian Wheeler would be retiring at the end of January. Mrs Wheeler had been the minute-taker at Authority meetings for nine years. The Chairman thanked her for her service and wished her well.

#### **45 Audit Commission CAA Report**

On considering a paper by the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive, and the Audit Commission's Comprehensive Area Assessment for the Authority,

Resolved :

- (a) *To note with pleasure the outcome of the Comprehensive Area Assessment, i.e. that the Authority 'performs well';*
- (b) *To thank officers and staff for their work in achieving this result;*
- (c) *To ask officers to draw up an action plan for the Programme & Scrutiny Board to consider areas highlighted in the Comprehensive Area Assessment as needing improvement.*

#### **46 Programme & Scrutiny Board**

A report of the meeting of the Programme & Scrutiny Board held on 19 November 2009 was received.

On considering the recommendations of the Board contained in the report,

Resolved :

- (a) *To appoint the following additional deputy members of workstreams :*
  - Communities : Cllr Mrs M Groom*
  - Finance & Resources : Cllr M Bawden*
  - People : Cllr C Newbury*
- (b) *To note that members would be invited to an Equality & Diversity Seminar focusing on issues relevant to the Fire & Rescue Service, to be held on 1 March;*
- (c) *To note that a Budget Seminar for members had been arranged for 26 January.*

#### **47 Finance Review Committee**

The minutes of the meeting of the Finance Review Committee held on 22 September 2009 were received.

#### **48 Members' Allowances**

On considering a paper by the Clerk,

Resolved :

To amend the Scheme of Members' Allowances as follows :

- (a) Paragraph 15 (6) to read : 'attendance at outside conferences, courses, seminars and like meetings where a member's attendance has been properly authorised in accordance with the Authority's approved procedure for such authorisations;'
- (b) Paragraph 16 to read : 'The amounts of [travelling and subsistence] allowances paid by the Authority are set out in the Schedule [of the Scheme]. The amounts of subsistence allowances are maxima within which the actual expenditure will be reimbursed.'
- (c) Paragraph 19 to read : 'The rates of travelling and subsistence allowances shall be the same as those to which employees of the Authority are entitled and shall be adjusted and take effect in line with alterations made from time to time to the latter.'

**49 Regional Control Centre Funding**

On considering a paper by the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive,

Resolved :

To ask the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive in consultation with the Chairman to make a submission to the Select Committee inquiry into the FireControl programme, to reflect the views expressed by members in the discussion on the paper.

**50 Revised Capital Programme 2009/10**

On considering a paper by the Finance Director,

Resolved :

- (a) To approve the revised Capital Programme for 2009/10 of £3.253m as shown in Appendix A to the report presented;
- (b) To approve the revised prudential indicators, as a result of the change in the capital programme 2009/10, as shown in Appendix B to the report presented.

**51 Health & Safety Annual Statement**

On considering a paper by the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive,

Resolved :

To note the report and to endorse the annual Policy Statement.

**52 Staffing Committee**

A summary of the minutes of the meeting of the Staffing Committee held on 12 November 2009 was received.

**53 New Dimensions Long Term Capability Management**

On considering a paper by the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive,

Resolved :

- (a) *To note the report;*
- (b) *To note that the CLG will be transferring ownership of its New Dimension equipment to individual Fire Authorities with effect from 1 February 2010*
- (c) *To authorise Agreements being entered into for the transfer and maintenance of the equipment as referred to in the report, subject to confirmation from the Authority's legal advisor as to the Agreement's terms.*

**54 Protection, Prevention and Intervention**

A short visual presentation was made.

**55 Standards Committee**

- (1) The minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on 29 October 2009 were received.
- (2) The annual report of the Standards Committee for 2008/09 was received.

**56 Review of Finance Review Committee's Terms of Reference**

On considering a paper by the Clerk to the Authority, the Finance Director and the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive, and the recommendations of the Working Group set up at the last meeting of the Authority,

Resolved :

- (a) *To rename the Committee the Finance Review & Audit Committee;*
- (b) *To approve the powers and duties of the Committee as set out in Appendix A to these minutes.*

**57 Regional Management Board (RMB)**

The minutes of the meetings of the Regional Management Board held on 30 September and 9 November 2009 were received.

**58 South West Fire Control Limited**

- (1) Summaries of the discussion and decisions at the meetings of the Board of Directors held on 2 October and 9 November 2009 were received.
- (2) The minutes of the AGM of the Company held on 9 November 2009 were received.

**59 Exclusion of the Public**

Resolved :

*In accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, to exclude the public from the business specified in minute no.60 below because it is likely that if*

*members of the public were present there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 3 and 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act.*

**60 Fire Authority Structures**

On considering a paper by the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive,

Resolved :

- (a) *To ask the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive to look further into the possibilities of more joint working with partner organisations particularly in respect of back office functions;*
- (b) *To decline the specific approaches for structural re-organisation received from other authorities on the grounds that in the Authority's view such re-organisation would not be in the best interests of the communities served by this Authority.*

(Duration of meeting 15.05pm to 16.45pm)

POWERS AND DUTIES OF THE FINANCE REVIEW & AUDIT COMMITTEE

- 1 The power to consider and take decisions on any matter to do with the corporate financial governance of the Authority in relation to accounts and audit, including any duty or function placed upon the Authority by virtue of regulations made under the Audit Commission Act 1998. Within this power are included the duties :
- ◆ To consider the head of internal audit's annual report and opinion, and a summary of internal audit activity (actual and proposed) and the level of assurance it can give over the Authority's corporate governance arrangements
  - ◆ To consider summaries of specific internal audit reports as requested
  - ◆ To consider reports dealing with the management and performance of the providers of internal audit services
  - ◆ To consider a report from internal audit on agreed recommendations not implemented within a reasonable timescale
  - ◆ To consider the external auditor's annual letter, relevant reports, and the report to those charged with governance
  - ◆ To consider specific reports as agreed with the external auditor
  - ◆ To comment on the scope and depth of external audit work and to ensure it gives value for money
  - ◆ To liaise with the Audit Commission over the appointment of the Authority's external auditor
  - ◆ To commission work from internal and external audit
  - ◆ To oversee the production of the Authority's Statement on Internal Control and to recommend its adoption
  - ◆ To consider the Authority's arrangements for corporate financial governance and agree necessary actions to ensure compliance with best practice
  - ◆ To consider the Authority's compliance with its own and other published standards and controls of financial governance.
  - ◆ To receive, review and approve the annual Statement of Accounts. Specifically, to consider whether appropriate accounting policies have been followed and whether there are concerns arising from the financial statements or from the audit that need to be brought to the attention of the Council
  - ◆ To consider the external auditor's report to those charged with governance on issues arising from the audit of the accounts

- ◆ To be responsible for the review and approval of the System of Internal Control
  - ◆ To deliver the core functions of an audit committee as identified in CIPFA guidance
- 2 The power to approve the Authority's 'Treasury Management Policy Statement and Practices' and the Authority's Annual Investment Strategy.
  - 3 The power to review the process by which the Authority's annual budget is formulated with a view to assessing its robustness. For the avoidance of doubt, the Committee has no role in the formulation of the estimates which comprise the budget and has no power to amend the estimates.
  - 4 The power to undertake regular monitoring of the Authority's Revenue and Capital budgets. In exercising this power, the Committee:
    - will have regard to any views of the appropriate workstreams, and
    - will draw the attention of the Programme & Scrutiny Board and, where appropriate, the Authority to any significant variation which in the Committee's opinion needs to be addressed, but will not commission investigations on its own account.
  - 5 The power to approve the Authority's Financial Regulations and Contract Standing Orders.
  - 6 The power to review financial management arrangements generally to ensure they are 'fit for purpose'.
  - 7 The power to consider any matter not reserved to the full Authority where in the opinion of the Clerk or Treasurer it would be appropriate for the Committee to do so.