

MINUTES of a MEETING of the WILTSHIRE & SWINDON FIRE AUTHORITY held at the BRIGADE TRAINING CENTRE, DEVIZES on THURSDAY 16 NOVEMBER 2000

Present : Mr D J Willmott (Chairman), Mr B Atfield, Mrs C Crisp, Councillor D Dart, Mr P R Davis, Councillor M Dilley, Councillor F Foley, Mrs L P Morris, Councillor T Page, Mrs P Rugg, Mrs M E Salisbury, Mr T R Sturgis, Mr N S E Westbrook.

103 **Minutes of Last Meeting** The minutes of the meeting held on 21 September 2000 were confirmed and signed subject to the deletion of Mrs L P Morris from, and the addition of Mrs M Salisbury to, the list of attendees.

104 **Revenue and Capital Monitoring Statements** A paper by the Chief Fire Officer and Treasurer was received.

105 **Borrowing 2000** On considering a paper by the Treasurer,

Resolved:

To amend the maximum amount which the Authority may have outstanding by way of short-term borrowing in the financial year 2000/1 from £500,000 to £1,000,000, and to vary the terms of Min.24(b) – 2000 accordingly.

106 **Green Paper: Modernising Local Government Finance** On considering a paper by the Treasurer,

Resolved:

To make representations on the Green Paper, as set out in Appendix A to these minutes.

107 **Recruit Physical Entry Standards** A paper by the Chief Fire Officer was received.

108 **The Fire Service Equal Opportunities Action Plan** On considering a paper by the Chief Fire Officer,

Resolved:

a) *To note the paper.*

b) *To support the general principles of the Equal Opportunities Action Plan produced by the Equal Opportunities Task Group of the Central Fire Brigades' Advisory Council.*

c) *To ask the Chief Fire Officer to present a further paper in May 2001 to inform members of progress being made in implementing the Brigade's Action Plan.*

- d) *To agree that equal opportunities be one of the subjects for members' seminars after May next year.*

- 109 **Retained Firefighters' Position Statement** On considering a report by the Chief Fire Officer,

Resolved:

- a) *To note the report.*
- b) *To note with pleasure the initiatives being taken to recruit retained firefighters.*
- c) *To ask the Chief Fire Officer to present a report to a future meeting on the policy of the Authority on the retirement age of retained firefighters.*

- 110 **Operational Performance Information** A paper by the Chief Fire Officer was received and a short video presentation was made.

- 111 **Fire Safety Performance Information** A paper by the Chief Fire Officer was received.

- 112 **Community Fire Safety Pilot Project** On considering a paper by the Chief Fire Officer,

Resolved:

- a) *To note the paper.*
- b) *To ask the Chief Fire Officer to present a further report to a future meeting, reviewing progress on the pilot project.*

- 113 **Best Value Review Panel** A report of an informal meeting of members of the Panel held on 28 September 2000 was received.

- 114 **Collaboration with the Emergency Services: Joint Member Monitoring Group (JMMG)** A summary of issues discussed at the JMMG meeting on 10 October 2000 was received.

- 115 **South West Forum of Fire Authorities** The Chairman gave an oral report on matters discussed at the meeting of the Forum held on 3 November 2000.

- 116 **Seminar for Elected Members on Health and Safety: 17 January 2001**

Resolved:

To approve the Chairman's attendance at this seminar to be held in London organised by the LGA with the support of the Health & Safety Executive and CACFOA, and to agree attendance being approved duty for the payment of allowances.

- 117 **Debts** It was noted that in accordance with his delegated powers, the Chief Fire Officer had written off one debt of £172 in the half-year ended 30 September 2000.

118 **Exclusion of the Public**

Resolved:

In accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, to exclude the public from the meeting for the business specified in minute 119 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 paragraph 11 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Act.

119 **Collaboration with the Emergency Services: Joint Communications Centre Project** On considering a paper by the Clerk, Chief Fire Officer and Treasurer

Resolved:

- a) *To note the paper.*
- b) *To note the changes to the likely terms of the Agreement between the parties, and the risks to the Fire Authority which are unlikely to be resolved at the time the Agreement is due to be signed.*
- c) *To note the progress of the project against the original timetable.*
- d) *To note the likely availability of borrowing powers and, in order to diminish the risk of inadequate borrowing powers, to ensure that the Authority utilises its borrowing power in the current financial year in the ways recommended in the paper.*
- e) *To ask officers to present further reports to the Authority to keep members informed of the progress of this project.*

GREEN PAPER : MODERNISING LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE

Representations of the Wiltshire & Swindon Fire Authority

While supporting the ‘Provisional Position Statement’ by the Local Government Association on the Local Government Finance Green paper, this Authority also supports specific changes to the current system of local government finance in respect of Combined Fire Authorities, as set out below, and urges that any new system for improving the Revenue Support Grant system should have stability and predictability as an essential element.

Revenue Support Grant

Any improved system for allocating revenue support grant should:

- (a) include a more realistic assessment of the costs of providing the Fire Service, embracing the financing of a funded pension scheme for fire fighters in the longer term, and recognising the need to significantly improve the conditions of service of retained fire fighters;
- (b) acknowledge the costs of providing adequate levels of fire cover in sparse rural areas, particularly the need to maintain a relatively high number of stations, and use a formula for distribution which removes perverse incentives.

Any review of the adequacy of funding for the fire service should include a reconsideration of the annual 2% efficiency savings incorporated into the comprehensive spending review. (The Local Government Association has suggested that a more realistic figure is 0.5%.)

New Funding Model for Combined Fire Authorities

As part of the review of local government finance system an alternative funding model for combined fire authorities should be adopted, with the aim of making them self-precepting like Metropolitan Fire Authorities and all Police Authorities.

Combined fire authorities should have the power to hold balances and reserves, whether or not the self-precepting model is adopted.