



**DORSET & WILTSHIRE
FIRE AND RESCUE
AUTHORITY**

**(Extract of) Minutes of the
Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Authority
held at 10:00 hours on Thursday 9 March 2017 at the
Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters, Salisbury**

Members present: Cllr Rebecca Knox, Chairman; Cllr Abdul Amin; Cllr Les Burden; Cllr Steve Butler; Cllr Ernie Clarke; Cllr Christopher Devine; Cllr Beverley Dunlop; Cllr Peter Edge; Cllr Spencer Flower; Cllr Mollie Groom; Cllr Susan Jefferies; Cllr Paul Kimber; Cllr John Knight; Cllr Colin Lovell; Cllr Nick Martin; Cllr Christopher Newbury; Cllr Graham Payne; Cllr Garry Perkins; Cllr Christopher Rochester; Cllr Ricky Rogers; Cllr Vikki Slade; Cllr Ann Stribley; Cllr Joe Tray and Cllr Bridget Wayman.

Officers in attendance: Chief Fire Officer, Benjamin Ansell; Director of Finance & Treasurer, Mr Phil Chow; Clerk & Monitoring Officer, Mr Jonathan Mair; and Democratic Services Officer, Mrs Marianne Taylor.

17/21 Consideration of the exclusion of the Press and Public

17/21.1 The Clerk & Monitoring Officer outlined the law relating to the exclusion of the press and public from local authority meetings. He explained that there was a two-part test to be applied:

1. Is the subject matter of the report within one of the categories of potentially exempt information described in part 2 of schedule 12A Local Government Act 1972 and
2. Is it in the public interest that the press and public should be excluded in order to enable confidential business to be dealt with in closed session.

17/21.2 In relation to the first part of the test the Clerk and Monitoring Officer explained that the information in the report related to the business affairs of the Authority and so was potentially exempt from discussion in public. In

relation to the second part of the test Members would need to decide whether the public interest required that the item should be dealt with in closed session. In this respect he referred to sensitivity around the pre-election period and the timing of any consultation with constituent councils.

17/21.3 Members discussed the proposal to exclude the press and public for the reasons given by the Clerk & Monitoring Officer. However, following deliberation, Members voted in favour of keeping the meeting open to the public.

17/21.4 **RESOLVED: That the press and public not be excluded from the meeting for the remainder of the agenda.**

17/21.5 **ACTION: Democratic Service to ensure that the report was made publically available and publish in line with other papers.**

17/22 Possible change in the membership of the Fire and Rescue Authority

17/22.1 Cllr Flower introduced the report reminding Members that at its meeting on 23 June 2016 the Fire and Rescue Authority resolved that a Governance Working Group be formed to complete a review of the Authority's governance arrangements by May 2017.

17/22.2 The terms of reference of the Group included: to consider and provide options in respect of the total number of elected Members on the Authority and to determine the appropriate process for any subsequent amendment to the Combination Order and the Authority's standing Committees.

17/22.3 The Governance Working Group had met five times and a Governance Seminar was provided for all Members. There were a range of options for a possible reduction in the number of elected Members of the Authority; potential consequential changes to the Authority's governance arrangements and suggested next steps.

17/22.4 Members discussed the options fully and were generally in support of those options that gave equal representation between the north and south of the area served by the Authority. A number of Members raised issues associated with the timing of any potential reduction given that local government review was being considered across Dorset, Bournemouth and Poole. The Clerk and Monitoring Officer stated that any reviewed membership as a result of Local Government Reorganisation in Dorset would not have a significant impact on the proposals being considered by the Authority.

- 17/22.5 Members also raised issues about the effect that any potential membership might have on the existing governance arrangements and the committee structures. The Clerk and Monitoring Officer explained that any significant reduction would necessitate a review of the Authority's governance arrangements. Both of the predecessor fire and rescue authorities had operated effectively with fewer members and in a smaller Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Authority it would be possible to devise governance arrangements which maintained local accountability and at the same time improved the efficiency and effectiveness of the Authority more generally.
- 17/22.6 The Clerk and Monitoring Officer also referred to the Adrian Thomas review, the Policing and Crime Act and recent announcements by the Minister for Policing and Fire as key factors driving the need to slim down governance structures across the fire and rescue service sector more generally.
- 17/22.7 After much debate and having been proposed by Cllr Flower and seconded by Cllr Perkins, upon being put to the vote, it was agreed in principle to support a reduction in the membership of the Authority to 18 members.
- 17/22.8 The Clerk & Monitoring Officer outlined the process that would follow this meeting; a letter would be sent to the five constituent councils seeking their views about the proposed changes. The views received would be presented to the meeting of the Authority on 8 September 2017.
- 17/22.9 **RESOLVED: That a proposed membership of the Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Authority of 18 be approved in principle as the basis for consultation with constituent authorities.**
- 17/22.10 **RESOLVED: That the views of the constituent councils be reported at the meeting of the Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Authority on 8 September 2017.**
- 17/22.11 **ACTION: the Clerk & Monitoring Officer to write to the constituent councils to consult them about the proposed membership changes.**

The meeting closed at 13:05hrs.

Signed: _____