

## EAST SUSSEX FIRE AUTHORITY

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Report of a meeting of the East Sussex Fire Authority held at Fire & Rescue Service Headquarters at 10.30 hours on Thursday 2 June 2011.

**Present:** Councillors Belsey, Carden, Fawthrop, Freebody, Healy, Heaps, Kenward, Ost, Pidgeon, Rufus, Scott, Sparks (Vice-Chairman in the Chair), Theobald, Thomas. Waite and Wakefield.

### 1. **Budget Monitoring and Projected Outturn 2010/11**

1.1 Members have considered the latest projection for 2010/11 – the outturn will be under budget by £458,000 that comprises £410,000 for outstanding commitments and £48,000 unallocated underspend. The final accounts are still at an early stage and any changes to this position will be reported to subsequent meetings of the Policy & Resources Panel and Fire Authority. The Capital Programme is projected to underspend by £685,000 compared to the £308,000 reported to the Panel in January. Members have considered a full analysis of the 2010/11 spend that comprised slippage of £474,000, underspends of £237,000 and small overspends of £26,000. Members have also considered the overall Revenue Budget spend and projected outturn and the current and future use of Balances, as well as summaries of the 2010/11 Capital Expenditure, 2010/11 Capital Receipts and Capital Programme monitoring for projects over more than one year.

Members have noted:

- 1) the draft outturn position for the Revenue Budget for 2010/11, prior to Audit;
- 2) the closing Balances position at 31 March 2011 and allocations in 2011/12;
- 3) the outstanding commitments and project delays to be carried forward to 2011/12; and
- 4) the draft outturn position for the Capital Programme in 2010/11, including those schemes exceeding original budget provision by 10%

### 2 **Community Volunteers Scheme**

2.1 A pilot Community Volunteer Scheme was approved in June 2009, which has operated out of Heathfield Fire Station. The project was subsequently extended for a further two years following the pilot (from July 2010) with the potential for a one year extension based on the achievement of agreed outcomes. A full-time Volunteer Recruitment and Support Officer (VRSO) was recruited and seconded from 3VA to take over the running of the Project and started in post in December 2010. Up to April 2011, 10 volunteers provided 393 hours of volunteering activity and generated 34 Home Safety Visits in the Wealden area. Currently, the Service has 8 active volunteers and 4 more are in the process of being inducted as new volunteers. It is anticipated that this number will increase steadily.

2.2 In March 2011, after consulting with the team, the Deputy Chief Fire Officer proposed that the Project should be extended outside of the Wealden area with the view of achieving a Service-wide community volunteer initiative through attracting volunteers from other areas within East Sussex and the City of Brighton & Hove. The VRSO continues to look at the future sustainability of the scheme. A Strategic Plan has been developed to support this area of work.

### **3. Progress with Joint Business Case for Increased Collaboration between East Sussex and West Sussex Fire & Rescue Services (Exempt Categories 3 & 4)**

3.1 The Fire Authority has considered a confidential report that sought approval to the latest version of the business case proposing a merger. This is supported by a formal consultation programme, which will be commenced at the earliest opportunity, once concurrent decisions and governance consideration have been agreed by West Sussex County Council (WSSC) on the same matter.

3.2 Members were informed that WSSC would be considering the latest version of the business case on 1 July 2011. A public consultation document was being drafted appropriately phrased in terms of the outcomes expected from the decisions made by this Authority and WSSC, and subject to the financial issues being settled.

3.3 It was expected that a full business case would be prepared in October/early November 2011, (to include the consultation outcomes and any financial information from the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG), for consideration by Members of both authorities. A final decision to proceed may still be dependent upon the outcome of announcements on 2013/14 and 2014/15 Formula Grant changes and resultant planned council tax equalisation arrangements. Any merger would also require DCLG approval.

3.4 The Fire Authority has noted, amongst other things:

- 1) the launch of a required formal 12 week public consultation exercise using a consultation version of the Business Case which will include the key outcomes expected from a possible merger along with appropriate caveats/qualifications, synchronised with WSSC expected to commence in mid July; and
- 2) the intention to bring back a full and final Business Case in November/December 2011 for final joint Member consideration which will include the missing information, along with consultation outcomes.

3 June 2011

PAUL SPARKS  
Chairman of the meeting of East Sussex Fire Authority  
held on 2 June 2011