

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 6 June 2013.

Present: Councillors Barnes, Buchanan, Butler, Carden, Earl, Galley, Hawtree, Howson, Lambert, Peltzer Dunn, Pragnell, Rufus, Scott, Sheppard, Taylor, Theobald and Wincott.

1. Political Representation On The Panels Of The Fire Authority

1.1 The Fire Authority has considered the political balance on Panels, and changes to the terms of reference of its Panels in which Members have agreed to disband the Standards Panel and include its functions in the Scrutiny & Audit Panel terms of reference. The Grievance and Discipline & Dismissal Panels have been merged into a Human Resources Panel.

1.2 Members have resolved that:

1.2.1 the Panel arrangements and political representation, as set out below, be confirmed;

1.2.2 the Chairmen of the Panels be appointed by the Panels in accordance with Standing Order 40.14;

1.2.3 it be noted that a report will be submitted to the Scrutiny & Audit Panel on 11 July 2013, following a request to each Political Group to make any changes to current nominations to these posts; and

1.2.4 that the Monitoring Officer be authorised to make consequential amendments to the Members' Handbook to reflect the revised Panel structure.

	Based upon political proportions for 2013/14	
	TOTAL	
Appointments	6	2 Cons, 1 LDem, 1 Green, 1Lab, 1 UKIP
Scrutiny & Audit *	8	3 Cons, 1 LDem, 1 Green, 2 Lab, 1 UKIP
Policy & Resources	8	3 Cons, 1 LDem, 2 Green, 1 Lab, 1 UKIP
Human Resources Appeals	6	3 Cons, 1 Lab, 1 Green, 1 UKIP
Urgency	6	3 Cons, 1 LDem, 1 Green, 1Lab
* informal protocol – up to 3 P&R Members to serve on S&A Panel		

(The total number of seats = 34, divided 14:6:6:4:4 on the basis of the 2013/14 political balance).

2. Provisional Revenue And Capital Outturn 2012/13

- 2.1 Members have considered and noted the provisional revenue and capital outturn position for 2012/13
- 2.2 An updated analysis of reserves and balances has been considered and the figures presented were expected to be close to the final outturn, although it was possible that changes may be required before certification and final publication.
- 2.3 The provisional Revenue Budget Outturn for 2012/13 showed an underspend of £62,000 which would be transferred to General Balances and the provisional Capital Budget outturn for 2012/13 showed an underspend of £237,000 against the revised Capital Programme. The Treasurer has assured Members that the finances are being well managed and that the small underspend equated to 1.2% of the budget. The aim throughout the year had been to control spending whilst maximising reserves and balances.
- 2.4 The Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive informed Members that the retained pay budget was underspent as the number of call outs was less than anticipated. Members were also informed that spend on the planned capital scheme for a new fire station in Newhaven had been re-phased as a result of the time taken to investigate the possibility of partnership working with other agencies.
- 2.5 The Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive advised Members that there was very little income generated by fees from callouts. The Service did have the ability to charge for certain types of calls and the Officer in charge would determine the appropriateness of charging at the scene after getting a special service form signed by the person making the request. The previous Fire Authority however, had agreed not to charge for most types of services as tax payers had already paid for the service and it was generally felt that they should not, in effect, be charged twice.

3. Facing The Future: Findings From The Review Of Efficiencies And Operations In Fire And Rescue Authorities In England And The Proposed Way Forward

- 3.1 Members considered the findings of Sir Ken Knight's review of efficiencies and operations in Fire and Rescue Authorities in England, the proposed way forward and the conclusion that Fire Authorities could save up to £196m, and that £123m could be saved if Authorities increased their retained duty system staff by 10%. The Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive explained, however, that this would be a difficult option for ESFRS as an increase in retained staff of 11% would be approximately 27 staff. To make the equivalent level of savings intimated within the report would result in the loss of around 70 whole time staff.

- 3.2 Councillor Wincott felt the report did not take into account the individual make up of Fire Authorities, the make-up of the areas those Authorities served, for example the infrastructure and Sir Ken Knight did not explain the methodology used in producing the findings report.
- 3.3 Councillor Rufus noted his disappointment with the report and didn't feel there was much objectivity. He was willing to support the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive in a robust and forthright reply. Councillor Scott felt the report was lacking, the sums did not add up and that more for less would be expected. He felt that further discussion with Government was required.
- 3.4 The Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive advised Members that Officers would draft a response and would contact other Services to see what they did as good practice and if those practices could be adopted by East Sussex. He added that the cost of bureaucracy can be large which was why a merger with West Sussex County Council had been sought. This would have provided a more cost effective Service with similar bureaucracy but within a much larger organisation. If this was the favoured option with Members, the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive advised Members that the way forward lay with them in discussions with their colleagues.

4. Quarterly Report For January To March 2013

- 4.1 Members considered the quarterly results for the period January to March 2013 and commented on the wealth of information that the quarterly report provided and the breadth of Services offered. Councillor Wincott noted that there appeared to be a spike of fatalities during 2011/12 and asked why that might be.
- 4.2 The Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive advised that one of the issues currently being focused on by the Service was encouraging people to report fires. Insurers hold on record many more fires than were currently reported to the Service. The Fire Authority had been supportive of sprinklers and a previous Chairman, Mr Murphy, had been the spokesperson for the LGA on sprinklers. The Fire Authority would be considering reports in the future to continue to support the installation of sprinkler systems in vulnerable homes.
- 4.3 Members were concerned that sprinklers were not installed in schools and it was suggested that if the profile and benefits of sprinkler systems could be raised with the general public, then pressure would mount with planners and developers. The Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive added that Sheffield had just refurbished a Council Tower block and installed a sprinkler system. It was important to examine these cases as they would provide invaluable information as to what they have done, how it was done and at what cost.

- 4.4 Members considered an update on the current progress on the Service Control Centre between West Sussex County Council and East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service. It was anticipated that the Centre would open in April 2014 providing approximately £475,000 per annum in savings. Currently just over 60 staff were based between Eastbourne and Chichester and when the new centre opens in Haywards Heath, it was anticipated that there would be approximately 40 staff.
- 4.5 Assistant Chief Officer (People & Organisational Development) Cheryl Rolph informed Members that 36 new staff had joined the Service having transferred over from West Sussex County Council via TUPE arrangements and were now in the employment of East Sussex Fire Authority. It was anticipated that the contractors would finish at the Haywards Heath site by mid December. The contract had been awarded for the technical aspect which was on schedule.

Councillor Philip Howson
(Chairman)

4 July 2013