

## 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 12 December 2013.**

**Present:** Councillors Barnes, Buchanan, Butler, Carden, Earl, Galley, Hawtree, Howson (Chairman), Peltzer Dunn, Powell, Pragnell, Rufus, Scott, Sheppard, Taylor, Theobald and Wincott.

#### **1. Industrial Action by Fire Brigades' Union Members**

- 1.1 The Fire Authority was informed of the current position on industrial action by members of the Fire Brigades' Union. The FBU has a trade dispute nationally about its members' pension arrangements and following a ballot, its members had voted in favour of industrial action consisting of strike action.
- 1.2 The FBU has run an additional ballot of its members, including control room staff, for industrial action short of strike action, which had been supported. This vote would supplement, but not replace, the current strike action ballot in England and Wales. 'Industrial action short of strike action' could include a refusal to work over-time or 'act up' in order to keep an appliance on the run.
- 1.3 The Director of Financial Services confirmed that the action so far had cost a net £5-10k, with an additional £10-20k for preparation of vehicles for cover; if the action became protracted or continuous, these costs would increase.
- 1.4 Contingency cover arrangements had been put in place at strategic locations and there was a local agreement in place with the FBU for firefighters to return to duty in the event of a major incident.

#### **2. Service Planning Update 2014/15-2018/19**

- 2.1 The Fire Authority considered an update on the Service planning process.
- 2.2 The Fire Authority had previously identified the need to deliver savings of approximately £7.1m, or 18.2%, of the current revenue budget over the next five years (in addition to £1.3m of savings already agreed for 2014/15), primarily due to expected reductions in grant funding from central government of over 75%. There is little indication of additional funding becoming available for the foreseeable future, with reductions in public funding expected to continue to 2020.
- 2.3 The Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) continues to model increases in Council Tax of 1.94% pa (i.e. below the expected referendum threshold of 2%) across the five years to 2018/19. This equates to an increase of £1.59 per Band D property in 2014/15 and £8.25 by 2018/19. The impact of accepting the 1% freeze grant would be a reduction in funding of £203,000 in 2014/15 against that currently modelled and, if the grant does not continue after 2015/16, a potential reduction in funding of £864,000 in 2016/17 (in comparison to that currently modelled).

2.4 Whilst previous savings, through the 'Service Prioritisation' and 'Facing the Challenge' programmes, have, in the main, protected operational services, the scale of the savings now required means that the Service Planning processes will need to cover all aspects of the Authority's functions including Prevention, Protection and Response. The financial situation means that difficult decisions will have to be made and the Authority will have to consider the way it delivers its services in the future. Members will consider a formal savings plan as part of the 2014/15 Revenue Budget and Capital Programme Report in the New Year.

**3. Quarterly Report for July to September 2013**

3.1 The Fire Authority considered the quarterly results for the period 1 July to 30 September 2013, during which period East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service responded to 2,721, calls, a 6.5% increase on the same period in 2012/13 (2,556) and a 5% increase on the same period 2011/12 (2,590). There were no fire fatalities during this period in 2013/14.

3.2 The Care Providers' scheme now has a total of 85 partner organisations signed up to refer vulnerable clients. During July to September the scheme produced 1,163 referrals for Home Safety Visits. Although there were no new partners joining the scheme, practitioners of six care organisations received awareness training.

3.3 Community Volunteers have now undertaken the first few Health and Wellbeing visits which are directed at members of the community who are aged over 80 and had their original visits over 3 years ago. The aim of the visits is to identify changes in the occupiers' circumstances, i.e. reduced mobility, hearing/sight impairments, trips and falls, heating/fuel poverty, hygiene/nutrition, general welfare, abuse, etc. Where issues are identified to assist the occupiers to continue to live independently and more safely in their own homes, the Community Volunteers will, with the occupiers' consent, refer the individuals to the appropriate partner agency to provide assistance.

3.4 The Chief Fire Officers' Association (CFOA) has confirmed its intention to host the Black Museum; this will have a very positive effect on its development and standing. Trading Standards have indicated their wish to contribute and benefit from the site.

3.5 ESFRS has been a key contributor to the implementation of a joint multi-agency tactical training programme which now takes place regularly. In addition, ESFRS staff will have key roles in planning and delivering a large scale real-time multi-agency exercise planned for next year. A range of memorandums of understanding (MoUs) covering a number of operational activities is being considered by the Sussex Emergency Services Operations Liaison Group (SESOLG) which will further ensure seamless and effective multi-agency working at operational incidents.

**Councillor Philip Howson**  
**Chairman of East Sussex Fire Authority**

13 December 2013