

EAST SUSSEX FIRE AUTHORITY

Report of a meeting of the East Sussex Fire Authority held at County Hall, St. Anne's Crescent, Lewes BN7 1UE at 10:30 hours on Thursday, 9 June 2022.

Present: Councillors Galley (Chairman), Lambert (Vice-Chair), Azad, Dowling, Evans, Geary, Hamilton, Maples, Marlow-Eastwood, Osborne, Peltzer Dunn, Powell, Redstone, Scott, Taylor, Theobald, Ungar and West

The agenda and non-confidential reports can be read on the East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service's website at <http://www.esfrs.org/about-us/east-sussex-fire-authority/fire-authority-meetings/> A brief synopsis and the decisions relating to key items is set out below.

1 ELECTION OF CHAIRPERSON

- 1.1 Members resolved to appoint Councillor Roy Galley as Chairman of the Fire Authority for the year 2022-23.

2 ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRPERSON

- 2.1 Members resolved to appoint Councillor Carolyn Lambert as Vice-Chair of the Fire Authority for the year 2022-23.

3 URGENT ITEMS AND CHAIRMAN'S BUSINESS

- 3.1 The Fire Authority recorded its thanks to Councillor David Tutt who had ended his membership at the end of May. The Authority was grateful to Cllr Tutt for his hard work and dedication over the years, especially in his role as Chair of the Pension Board and as the Authority's Lead Member for IT for which his fellow Members and Officers were particularly appreciative.
- 3.2 The Chairman welcomed Councillor John Ungar who had been newly appointed to fill the vacancy from East Sussex County Council.
- 3.3 The Chairman encouraged all Members of the Fire Authority to attend the newly reinstated Station Open Days that had begun again having been stopped due to Covid-19. Additionally, there were Biker Down, Safe Drive Stay Alive, Water Savvy Water Safe and Safety in Action events to which Members were always welcome.

4 POLITICAL REPRESENTATION ON THE PANELS OF THE FIRE AUTHORITY

- 4.1 The Authority received a report seeking to secure political balance on its Panels in accordance with the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990 and agree to the resultant Membership to the Panels of the Fire Authority.

- 4.2 The Authority was required to keep under review the allocation of seats on Committees and other bodies to ensure, so far as practicable, that they reflected the political groups on the Authority. The rules governing this representation were outlined in the report.
- 4.3 There are four political groups on the Fire Authority: Conservative, Green, Labour and Liberal Democrat. The size of each Panel was not constituted and could be agreed by the Fire Authority. The size of each Panel remains at 6 Members, with each Panel an exactly proportionate replica of one third of the Fire Authority.
- 4.4 The Authority confirmed the Panel arrangements, political representation and membership of each panel at the meeting and appointed to each Lead Member role. They agreed that the political balance provisions shall not apply to the membership of the Principal Officer Appointments Panel. The Authority agreed the appointment of Cllr Peltzer Dunn as Chairperson of the Policy & Resources Panel, Cllr Lambert as Chairperson of the Scrutiny & Audit Panel and Cllr Hamilton as Chairperson of the Pensions Board in accordance with Standing Order 41.13. The Authority agreed that the remaining Panels would appoint a Chairperson at their first meeting under Standing Order 41.14.

5 FIRE AUTHORITY AND PANEL MEETINGS 2021/23

- 5.1 The Fire Authority received and noted the dates of meetings of the Fire Authority and Panels for the remainder of 2022 and 2023.

6 BANKING ARRANGEMENTS – CHANGES TO AUTHORISED SIGNATORIES

- 6.1 The Fire Authority approved an updated list of officers authorised to sign cheques on behalf of the Fire Authority.

7 TREASURY MANAGEMENT – STEWARDSHIP REPORT FOR 2021/22

- 7.1 The Fire Authority received the Annual Treasury Management Stewardship Report, a requirement of the Fire Authority's reporting procedures which informed Members of Treasury Management performance and compliance with Prudential Indicators for 2021/22.

- 7.2 The Fire Authority had complied with its approved Treasury Management Strategy and Prudential Indicators for the year. The average rate of interest received in 2021/22 through Treasury Management Activity was 0.26%, reflecting the Authority's continuing prioritisation of security and liquidity over yield. No new borrowing had been undertaken and two loans were repaid during the year. The Authority reviewed options to invest a portion of core balances in longer duration funds during the setting of the 2020/21 Strategy. Decisions on investment had been taken in the context of the current economic climate, the current approved capital programme and the requirement to fund it over the medium term. No investment in longer duration funds was made during the year. The current economic climate was evolving rapidly and opportunities were being explored to secure investment returns within the acceptable risk parameters set out in the Authority's agreed Strategy. During the year the Authority had invested in Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) funds that met its policy criteria for security and liquidity and offered comparable or better returns than similar non ESG funds.
- 7.3 Members queried why the narrative description of the world economic situation was not more specific. The narrative was the view, in April, of the Authority's appointed external advisors and provided their assessment of the economy for the year ended 31 March 2022, comment would be sought from the external advisers on matters raised including Brexit and Climate Change. Regular budget monitoring reports were presented to the Policy & Resources Panel containing detailed analysis of financial risks, including those mentioned. There was a broader piece of work underway regarding sustainability which would be presented to the Fire Authority at its meeting in September. The Fire Authority approved the Treasury Management Stewardship Report.

8 PROCUREMENT STRATEGY REFRESH 2022-2025

- 8.1 The Fire Authority considered a report presenting the refreshed Procurement Strategy for the Period 2022-2025. It did not represent a significant departure from the current approach, but reflected a change in emphasis, highlighting less the need to change ways of working and more the need to continue to deliver against established themes. The continued progression of Procurement as a strategic function meant that limited professional resources could be focused on vital value adding activities, driving savings and efficiencies. With continued pressure on budgets and reductions in funding it was more important than ever that the Authority's Procurement Strategy delivered cost effective services that met the needs of the community.

- 8.2 Members were concerned that not enough focus was paid to sustainable procurement, considering the significant targets for carbon neutrality set by government and the expectation that environmental sustainability would be a larger driving force in terms of procurement. This report related to the overarching strategy, which was to provide context, and Members were reminded they had approved the responsible procurement policy which set out the Authority's commitment to considering factors such as climate change in its procurement decisions. The ability of the Service to make any significant impact would depend on the specific items purchased, but it was known that 80% of its carbon footprint was equally split between buildings and heavy fleet which were both challenging to address. It was noted that on current advice it was anticipated that to make the Service carbon neutral would cost in excess of £20m. This would be presented to the Authority in detail in a paper to be presented in September.
- 8.3 The Authority heard that whilst there was work being led by the National Fire Chiefs Council into reduced prices for electric (EV) appliances, the most significant way to reduce carbon emissions in the sector was to reduce fires and to mandate sprinklers. These would alleviate carbon impacts in a far greater way than focusing on fleet. Members' support in lobbying for these would be appreciated. Some Members felt that the focus on EV appliances was a distraction and that there needed to be more fundamental changes and collective working to address carbon neutrality. The general feeling of Members was that there was no disagreement that sustainability was an essential focus for the Authority and that the concerns raised were shared by all, and that this was a live procurement document which itself referred to the need to adapt as the corporate position developed, particularly in response to climate change.
- 8.4 The Fire Authority agreed to approve the Procurement Strategy 2022-25 and accepted that an update would be provided to the Scrutiny & Audit Panel on progress in the Service's commitment to support the local economy and diverse suppliers.

COUNCILLOR ROY GALLEY
CHAIRMAN OF EAST SUSSEX FIRE AUTHORITY

9 June 2022