

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 10 September 2015.

Present: Councillors Buchanan, Butler, Deane, Earl, Galley, Howson (Chairman), Lambert (Vice-Chair), Morris, O'Quinn, Peltzer Dunn, Pragnell, Scott, Sheppard, Taylor, Theobald and Wincott.

1. CHIEF FIRE OFFICER & CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1.1 The Fire Authority congratulated DCFO Gary Walsh on his appointment as Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive, to take effect from 1 October 2015.

1.2 This was Des Prichard's last meeting as Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive and a presentation was made to him by Members at the conclusion of the meeting, during which Group Leaders said a few words and thanked him, on behalf of their Groups, for his commitment to the Fire Authority.

2. STRATEGIC SERVICE PLANNING AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL PLAN 2016/17

2.1 The Fire Authority has considered a joint report of the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive and Treasurer that set out the Fire Authority's medium term service planning strategy and medium term financial plan for 2016/17-2020/21. The Treasurer clarified a number of points regarding business rates and confirmed that, if the small business rate relief was renewed after March 2016, it was expected that compensation would still be paid to local authorities through a Section 31 grant.

2.2 The CFO&CE explained that the government's £75m fire transformation fund for 2015/16 had all been allocated, with ESFRS being part of a collective bid for transforming the transport functions of Surrey and Sussex emergency services. There was no information as to whether further transformation funding would be made available for future years.

2.3 The Fire Authority has agreed that:

- i) the updated Medium Term Financial Plan for 2016/17 – 2020/21 and its underlying assumptions be approved; and
- ii) the continuing work under the Changing the Service, Shaping our Future programme to identify savings options to meet required savings targets set out in the report be noted.

3. REVENUE BUDGET AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING 2015/16

3.1 The Fire Authority has considered a joint report of the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive and Treasurer on issues arising from the monitoring of the 2015/16 Revenue Budget and Capital Programme as at 31 July 2015.

3.2 The Treasurer confirmed that the current year's forecast shortfall in savings was being managed by making savings elsewhere. The Treasurer explained that the savings approved in the Medium Term Financial Plan reflected both revised values and phasing of approved savings and would be reviewed in 2016/17. The savings in the MTFP included the implementation of Day Crewed Plus but from 1 January 2017, a year later than originally planned. A further report on Day Crewed Plus would be brought to the next meeting of the Policy & Resources Panel in November 2015. It was also noted that not all the savings from the Sussex Control Centre had yet been delivered, but there were robust balances which would offset any delays in the delivery of these savings beyond 1 April 2016.

3.3 DFCO Walsh gave details of the changes made to the system operating at Day Crewed Stations, and explained that, following consultation with staff, an amended two-watch system rather than a one-watch, self-rostered duty system was implemented. This was being kept under review.

3.4 The Fire Authority has agreed:

- i) the projected 2015/16 Revenue Budget outturn;
- ii) the projected Capital Programme outturn;
- iii) the current use of reserves;
- iv) the monitoring of savings taken in 2015/16; and
- v) the current year investments.

4. REVISION TO CONTRACT STANDING ORDERS

4.1 The Fire Authority has considered a report of the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive that updated the Authority's Contract Standing Orders, in particular the financial thresholds that dictate the required procurement process and officer authorisation.

4.2 Councillor Wincott agreed with most of the recommendations in the report but voiced concerns about past problems with procurement, and the importance of having democratic accountability. He therefore proposed that, in Contract Standing Orders, Section C, Part B para 7.2 'and the relevant Member of the Authority' should **not** be deleted. This would also protect officers when waiving any provisions in Contract Standing Orders. Councillor Galley seconded the proposal and, following Members' agreement, it was agreed that it was also necessary to retain para 1.26 in Appendix 1 to Section C, Part B, which defined 'Relevant Member of the Authority'.

4.3 Councillor Galley also suggested that under para 13.6 (c) (where ... there is only one contractor who can properly provide the Supplies, Services or Works required ...) there should be a provision to protect the officer taking the decision by, either having a

Member authorise the decision, or bringing a report to the next meeting of the Scrutiny & Audit Panel.

4.4 The Treasurer agreed with Councillor Galley's proposal to bring a report to the next meeting of the Scrutiny & Audit Panel, following such a decision being taken. The Treasurer also explained that the officers' thresholds were set in line with EU legislation and confirmed that these were reviewed on 1 January each year, in line with the euro exchange rate.

4.5 The Fire Authority agreed that a revision of the current Contract Standing Order thresholds and authorisations, as set out in the report and its appendices and as amended in paragraphs 4.2 and 4.3 above, be approved, to take effect from 1 February 2016.

5. ANNUAL PERFORMANCE OUTCOME REPORT 2014-15

5.1 The Fire Authority considered a report of the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive that presented the annual performance results for 2014/15. The CFO&CE confirmed that, although the direction of travel for performance at Life Threatening Incidents was declining, the targets were still being met. As each Service set out its own attendance standards it was not possible to make any national comparisons, although Members could make the targets more sophisticated if they so wished.

5.2 Councillor Theobald was concerned at the high number of injuries and incidents being reported, compared to other Services and the CFO&CE explained that employees were being encouraged to report all accidents, however minor. A further report would be brought to a future meeting of the Scrutiny & Audit Panel which would include benchmarking data.

5.3 Councillor Scott asked about the decline in the number of Home Safety Visits being carried out and the inspections of high risk premises completed. The CFO&CE put some of this decline down to a reduction of Community Safety staff, but reassured Members that he was looking to see how these services could be delivered better or differently in the future, including making more use of Health & Well-being visits carried out by volunteers through 3VA; all staff who carry out these visits are trained in who to report any concerns to. The DCFO explained, that while the number of Community Safety Advisers had been reduced, they had been brought into a central control, from where they could be deployed more effectively to any area. Councillor Scott commended officers carrying out this work and noted that ESFRS was the only agency to attend a recent community event in Hastings, with staff working effectively with local residents.

5.4 Councillor Galley was concerned about the increase in primary fires in Rother and Wealden, while there were decreases in the urban areas, together with a decrease in Home Safety Visits, and he sought assurances that the rural areas were not being neglected. The CFO&CE reminded Members that no fire stations had been closed and that RDS recruitment was a key priority and was being actively pursued. The DCFO explained that it would always be harder to achieve reductions in accidental dwelling fires in isolated areas due to the very low numbers of incidents, but there had been considerable success in reducing deliberate fires in a number of areas. Borough

Commanders were now tasked with examining risks in their areas and targeting their resources to the areas needing most support, with accidental dwelling fires high on the list.

5.5 Councillor Deane asked about the gender differences for injuries sustained in primary fires, and it was noted that a report giving more detail was going to the next meeting of the Scrutiny & Audit Panel on 17 September 2015. The DCFO also pointed to the differences in living habits, such as smoking, drinking and health issues, and the work being undertaken with health providers. Councillor Deane noted that the majority of accidental dwelling fires occurred in the early evening, during the traditional 'cooking time', and asked whether there was any evidence to indicate why a higher number of men were injured in these fires. The CFO&CE informed Members of the work being undertaken by Kent FRS into how people behave in fires; this would ultimately help staff educate the public more effectively, and reduce the number of injuries suffered in accidental dwelling fires.

5.6 The Fire Authority noted the report.

6. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

6.1 Members noted the dates of future meetings, especially the revised dates for Panel meetings in January, February, May and November 2016*.

17 September 2015	Scrutiny & Audit Panel
5 November 2015	Scrutiny & Audit and Policy & Resources Panels
10 December 2015	Fire Authority
*21 January 2016	Policy & Resources Panel
*4 February 2016	Scrutiny & Audit Panel
11 February 2016	Fire Authority
*26 May 2016	Scrutiny & Audit and Policy & Resources Panels
16 June 2016	Fire Authority
7 July 2016	Scrutiny & Audit and Policy & Resources Panels
8 September 2016	Fire Authority
15 September 2016	Scrutiny & Audit Panel
*3 November 2016	Scrutiny & Audit and Policy & Resources Panels
8 December 2016	Fire Authority

All Fire Authority meetings to commence at 10:30 hours
All Panel meetings to commence at 10:00 hours

COUNCILLOR PHILIP HOWSON
CHAIRMAN OF EAST SUSSEX FIRE AUTHORITY

11 September 2015