

## 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 16 June 2016.

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

### 1. **ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN AND VICE-CHAIR**

1.1 The Fire Authority has elected Councillor Howson as its Chairman and Councillor Lambert as its Vice-Chair.

### 2. **PERFORMANCE INDICATORS REVIEW**

2.2 The Fire Authority has considered amending the Fire Authority's performance indicators to ensure that they remained relevant and useful (item no. 927 on the Fire Authority agenda refers).

2.3 The Fire Authority has agreed a reduction in the list of indicators from 36 to 22 to be reported from 2016/17; these will continue to be monitored on a quarterly basis by the Scrutiny and Audit Panel. The list of indicators is set out as Appendix 1 to agenda item no. 927 contained in the Fire Authority agenda.

### 3. **SENIOR MANAGEMENT RESTRUCTURE**

3.1 The Fire Authority has considered the progress made with the Senior Management Restructure (item no. 928 on the Fire Authority agenda refers).

3.2 The new structure became operational on 7 March 2016. Following a rigorous recruitment process in March, Mrs Dawn Whittaker has been appointed to the post of Deputy Chief Fire Officer and Mr Mark Andrews to the post of Assistant Chief Fire Officer, both of whom commenced their duties on 1 June 2016.

3.3 The Fire Authority has welcomed the appointments and noted the progress made on the implementation of the review, and that there was nothing significant or material to report at this time that occasioned the Chief Fire Officer to recommend any changes to the proposals.

### 4. **RELOCATION OF LEWES FIRE STATION, NORTH STREET LEWES**

4.1 The Fire Authority has considered proposals to relocate Lewes Fire station as part of the North Street Quarter redevelopment scheme (item no. 929 on the Fire Authority agenda refers). The current fire station falls within the development zone and Lewes District Council is keen to identify a suitable site for its relocation to ensure that the scheme and associated benefits can be

realised. The Fire Station falls within phase 2 of the scheme and it is anticipated that works will commence for this phase towards the end of 2017. Lewes District Council has agreed Heads of Terms to enter into a joint venture agreement with the Santon Group to deliver the North Street Quarter redevelopment scheme.

4.2 A number of relocation sites have been considered during the outline discussion stage and Springman House, the former NHS and SECamb site located nearby on the junction of North Street and Lancaster Street, has been identified as ESFRS's preferred relocation site. Lewes District Council has authorised officers to negotiate and complete the purchase of the Springman House site from the NHS and SECamb, for either its own use or to support the relocation of the Fire Station in Lewes.

4.3 The Fire Authority has agreed to issue a letter of intent to Lewes District Council, and has approved in principle a draft Memorandum of Agreement (subject to contract), together with a schedule of accommodation outlining the baseline requirements for a replacement site.

## **5. POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER**

5.1 The Fire Authority has considered a report about the implications of the Policing & Crime Bill which is likely to receive Royal Assent in the Autumn. (Item 932 on the Fire Authority agenda refers which was considered in that part of the meeting which was open to the press and public and is available on ESFRS website). The Bill will introduce a duty on all three emergency services to collaborate where it would be in the interests of their own efficiency and effectiveness and one or more of the other services take the same view. The Bill will give Police & Crime Commissioners (PCC) the ability to assume the governance of Fire & Rescue Services where a local case is made.

5.2 Katy Bourne, the Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner, and Carl Rushbridge, the PCC's Chief Finance Officer joined the Fire Authority for this debate.

5.3 The PCC had recently made a formal approach for the Fire Authority to co-operate in exploring whether or not a sound business case existed for moving fire & rescue services in Sussex under the responsibility of the PCC.

5.4 Katy Bourne said that it was her intention to establish a Reference Group which would include senior officers from Sussex Police, East and West Sussex FRSs, and elected Members from East Sussex Fire Authority and West Sussex County Council. This Group would meet to establish the terms of reference for the business case. The use of an independent business partner would give rigour and independence to the business case. A procurement exercise would be undertaken for a business partner. She confirmed that the cost of this would be borne by the Office of the PCC.

5.5 Katy Bourne said that she would be making representations to the Home Office to assist with the costs of the business case. The current collaborations, such as with Health and Adult Social Care, would be taken into account in the preparation of the business case. The Treasury had set out five strands that the

business case should include and this extended beyond financial implications. She anticipated that it would take three months to complete a business case. The Reference Group would not include attendees from the South East Coast Ambulance Service. The business case would conclude whether or not a proposal to bring the governance of the FRS under the PCC was viable. If a case was made, there would be full public consultation. If a case was not made there would be no public consultation.

5.6 Members expressed their concerns about the following matters:

- a change of governance for the East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service may disrupt the collaborative work currently undertaken with other agencies, particularly with Health and Adult Social Care, and the home safety work carried out by ESFRS;
- the business case must take account of the wider implications of a change of governance, such as community benefits/dis-benefits that would arise from a change of governance;
- the business case must be able to show that if ESFRS was to be governed by the PCC, the Home Secretary's objectives would be more readily achieved by a change in governance and it needed to clearly show that the outcomes would be better under PCC control; however, it was difficult to see at present that ESFRS's community outcomes could be improved upon;
- the resource implications, particularly staff time, in participating in the development of a business case, especially with other anticipated pressures on officer time such as devolution proposals;
- the Home Office should be asked to provide sufficient funds to meet the cost of backfilling staff that were needed to work on the business case;
- there should be public consultation should the business case determine that there would be benefits to the PCC taking on the governance of ESFRS; and
- disappointment that the Home Secretary had not included the Ambulance Service in proposals for collaboration; the Ambulance Service (SECAMB) should be formally brought into the process of compulsory collaboration and should be invited to take part in developing the business case.

5.7 The Fire Authority has agreed:

- (i) to note the progress of the Policing and Crime Bill through Parliament and the specific duty to collaborate contained within it; and
- (ii) the recent formal request (dated 26 May 2016) by the PCC to co-operate with the intention to explore whether or not a sound business case exists for moving Fire and Rescue Services in Sussex under the responsibility of the PCC, (given the requirement in the Bill that the relevant FRAs should cooperate with the PCC in preparation of the proposal), be noted;
- (iii) the establishment of the Reference Group, (which will include the Chairman and the Chief Fire Officer), to consider and agree terms of reference for the business case be welcomed;
- (iv) the business case should explore various options for future governance of ESFRS including no change, as well as the PCC joining the CFA as an observer;
- (v) the resource implications in contributing to the development of a business case, particularly officer time, be noted with concern;

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- (vi) full public consultation be welcomed if the business case shows that there is a need for a change in governance; and
- (vii) the Fire Authority's response to the Government's consultation 'Enabling closer working between the Emergency Services' (set out in Appendix 1 to the report), remain unchanged following the debate at this meeting, but the Fire Authority recognises its duty to be constructive in the preparation of a business case and agrees to co-operate fully in that regard, and reaffirms its belief in collaboration, where it improves delivery of services to the public and creates efficiencies.

**COUNCILLOR PHILIP HOWSON**  
**CHAIRMAN OF EAST SUSSEX FIRE AUTHORITY**

**30 June 2016**