

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, 14 June 2018.

Present: Councillors Barnes (Chairman), Deane, Dowling, Earl, Elford, Field, Galley, Lambert, Morris, O'Quinn, Osborne, Peltzer Dunn, Penn, Sheppard, Smith, Theobald (Vice-Chairman) and Tutt.

N.B. Apologies were received from Councillor Scott.

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 CHAIRMAN

- 1.1 Members resolved to appoint Councillor John Barnes as Chairman of the Fire Authority for the year 2018-2019.

2 ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN

- 2.1 Members resolved to appoint Councillor Carol Theobald as Vice-Chairman of the Fire Authority for the year 2018-2019.

3 URGENT ITEMS AND CHAIRMAN'S BUSINESS

- 3.1 The Chairman reminded the Authority that it was the first anniversary of the tragic fire at Grenfell Tower. The Authority would join the rest of the nation in marking the anniversary with a 72 second silence at midday to remember the 72 lives lost and to think of our Fire Service colleagues who had attended the scene.
- 3.2 The Chairman informed the Authority that he wished to take an oral update on the Sussex Control Centre as an urgent item at the conclusion of the published agenda.

4 PAY POLICY STATEMENT FOR 2018/2019

- 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 the reflected the political groups on the Authority. The rules governing this representation were outlined in the report.

- 4.3 The Authority confirmed the Panel arrangements and political representation as set out in the report. They agreed that the political balance provisions shall not apply to the membership of the Principal Officer Appointments Panel and, as had been the practice in the past, to leave the appointment of Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Panels to the Panels at their first meeting.

5 FIRE AUTHORITY AND PANEL MEETINGS 2018/19

- 5.1 The Fire Authority received and noted the dates of meetings of the Fire Authority and Panels for the remainder of 2018 and 2019.

6 SAFER COMMUNITIES STRATEGY 2018-2021

- 6.1 The Fire Authority were presented with the Safer Communities Strategy 2018-21 for approval and adoption. The report supported East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service's purpose to make our communities safer. The strategy outlined the future delivery design of ESFRS Prevention services over the next three years supporting the delivery of interventions under five themed prevention strands.
- 6.2 Members supported the strategy, they deemed it comprehensive and supportive of the existing good work promoting community safety. Members were impressed by the dedication of staff and the events that they organised particularly Biker Down and Safe Drive, Stay Alive
- 6.3 The CFO advised that both the Service's intervention and prevention work saves lives. In terms of response to emergencies our staff were well equipped, well trained and enabled to make early interventions which save lives, helped by the Authority maintaining budget commitments which supported rapid attendance. The Authority resolved to approve and adopt the Safer Communities Strategy 2018-2021 subject to minor textual amendments.

7 COMMUNICATIONS & CONSULTATION STRATEGY 2018-2021

- 7.1 The Fire Authority considered a report presenting the revised Communications and Consultation Strategy 2018-2021 for approval and adoption. The Communications and Consultation Strategy had been revised to support the delivery of the Service's other strategies. Members thought that the Strategy was a positive document, but felt that there could be more attention paid to Social Media.
- 7.2 Members were advised that the Service was exploring the plethora of Social Media platforms to ensure that we made the best use of what was available to us. The Service currently has some core sites, including Facebook, Twitter and a soon to be launched Instagram account, and would introduce others as appropriate. The Service sought to continuously improve its communications and all ideas were welcomed.

- 7.3 The strongest communication available was face to face, the Service would continue to use this as much as possible through roadshows, station open days and attending events hosted by other services or authorities. The Safety in Action week at Newhaven Fort enabled the Service to engage with approximately 800 children from many schools. The safety messages these children learned would be passed on to many more people including their friends and families.
- 7.4 Members thanked the Communications staff for the work that they do and extended this to those other staff involved in updating social media and for the great work achieved by on station staff who do so much for community engagement. The Fire Authority resolved to approve and adopt the revised Communications & Consultation Strategy 2018-2021.

8 TREASURY MANAGEMENT – STEWARDSHIP REPORT FOR 2017/18

- 8.1 The Fire Authority received a report presenting the Annual Treasury Management Stewardship Report 2017/18. The report was an annual requirement and informed Members of Treasury Management performance for 2017/18 and compliance with Prudential Indicators. Compliance with the Authority's approved Treasury Management Strategy and Prudential Indicators for the year was confirmed.
- 8.2 In challenging economic conditions the average rate of interest received through the Services Treasury Management Activity was 0.50% reflecting the Fire Authority's continuing prioritisation of security and liquidity over yield.
- 8.3 No new borrowing had been undertaken in 2017/18 with total loan debt outstanding of £10.773m at 31 March 2018 with an average interest rate of 4.60%. There had been no beneficial opportunities to reschedule debt during the year. The outturn of the Fire Authority's Capital Financing Requirement (CFR), a measure of the underlying need to borrow, is £10.773m.
- 8.4 Members queried whether it would be possible to reduce the current rate of interest on debts and whether improved interests rates on savings could be found.
- 8.5 Opportunities to reschedule debt were regularly reviewed but none had arisen at present. The Public Works Loan Board (PWLb) increased all of its lending rates in October 2010 by 1% but not the rate of interest used for repaying debt. Meaning the cost of future borrowing had increased and the opportunity to restructure debt had been significantly reduced. The Service had not taken out any new borrowing since 2008, but the Estates Strategy may change this stance on long-term borrowing.
- 8.6 Members were reminded that the Authority had set its Treasury Management approach in February 2018, the new policy meant it had opted to remain prudent, whilst allowing more flexibility and permitting the use of higher risk options. There would be an opportunity to review an investment with NatWest when it matured in August 2018.

- 8.7 Whilst the Service currently held historically high levels of reserves, the strategies agreed in February 2018 would work to drop these to £5m in 5 years. This remaining reserve would be a 'rainy day' fund that needed to be accessible at short notice, therefore not committed to a long term investment. The Fire Authority noted the Treasury Management Performance for 2017/18.

9 INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN (IRMP) REVIEW OF ATTENDANCE STANDARDS – CONSULTATION RESULTS

- 9.1 The Fire Authority were presented with the outcomes of the 8 week consultation exercise undertaken in relation to the review of attendance standards as detailed in the Fire Authority's Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) 2017/20. The report detailed the views of staff partners and communities to enable the Fire Authority to consider their views before it made its final decision.
- 9.2 The consultation had a broad reach, staff had held roadshow events across the 6 local authority areas, and a quantitative open consultation questionnaire had been available online and as a hard copy. The response was the highest in any IRMP consultation exercise to date.
- 9.3 The majority of respondents agreed that the 'call-handling time' be included as part of ESFRS's attendance standard and that the standards should be variable and report separately for on station and on call responses. The responses also showed that the second engine should not be measured as a public standard, but only for internal use.
- 9.4 Members sought clarification on the recommendation that the second engine be measured for internal purposes only and not reportable, they were interested in how internal monitoring helped to ensure there were sufficient resources available.
- 9.5 It was essential for Officers to know the speed and weight of attack required to resolve any incident, including how fast all resources attending got there to provide a response, this additional data was used to help with planning. It was obtained automatically from the mobilising system and detailed the exact speed, time and weight of response, it was used on a daily basis to inform immediate cover moves. It was also essential that this information was available for the purposes of dynamic resource management and in case of a coroner or police enquiry.
- 9.6 The Fire Authority resolved to agree to adopt the outcomes of the consultation which proposed to include the call handling time as part of the new attendance standards, to set an attendance standard for the 1st fire appliance with an 'on-station- response of 10 minutes 70% of the time, to set an attendance standard for the 1st fire appliance with an 'on-call' response of 15 minutes 70% of the time and not to set a standard for attendance of the second appliance but to monitor it for internal reporting.

The Meeting of the Fire Authority then ceased for the duration of the 72 seconds silence to pay its respects to those 72 people who lost their lives in the fire at Grenfell Tower on 14 June 2017.

10 URGENT ITEM: UPDATE ON SUSSEX CONTROL CENTRE

- 10.1 The Fire Authority were provided with and oral update on the current situation at the Sussex Control Centre. For some years now ESFRS had been involved with WSFRS in a project to replace the legacy mobilising systems used by each Service with one shared software system, Remsdaq 4i, to be based on a shared site at Haywards Heath.
- 10.2 Members were reminded that ESFRS had gone live with the 4i system on 20 March 2018. The final decision to go live, and the timetable for doing so, had been made on 19 March 2018 by the CFOs of both ESFRS and WSFRS following comprehensive testing. The agreement had been for WSFRS to follow and go live between 4-6 weeks later.
- 10.3 There were complex links required between different bits of software and hardware, whilst some issues with delivery of the new system had been encountered, this was not unexpected with the integration of any new software, but as it was fundamental to Service provision, there had always been layers of support in place to mitigate for any issues. Since go live, there had been over 1860 incidents and during this period, 158 reports of issues had been made. The majority of these were not related to incidents, some had been technical, some operator error which had highlighted a need for further training. The issues that had arisen were being dealt with, all had been diagnosed and a solution was either in place or being worked on. A joint investigation with the FBU into these issues was underway.
- 10.3 Immediately following go live the project team ensured engineers were on site to resolve any issues quickly, monitoring of these continued. The issues had been with the communication between 4i and systems which send signals to hardware alerting the crews. The issues encountered were not with the mobilising software itself.
- 10.4 Members enquired whether the software, hardware and Wi-Fi issues had been pre-existing. Officers had been aware of some legacy issues and there had been plans in place to address them and the new 4i system had made these issues more visible. The ongoing IT strategy had made some improvements, and other planned solutions were being brought forward. Wi-Fi was a particular local issue, and not service specific, but it was imperative that the improvements that had already begun were carried out across weak signal areas.
- 10.5 The Fire Authority were grateful for the update received, both at the meeting and throughout the process. They appreciated how well the complex set of issues had been handled and felt reassured as to the safety and compliance of the new system. They proposed that consideration be given to establishing a scrutiny board to look in-depth at the project.

COUNCILLOR JOHN BARNES
CHAIRMAN OF EAST SUSSEX FIRE AUTHORITY

14 June 2018