

Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority Chair's Report of the Meeting held on 26 September 2012

Appointment of the Independent Person

The Fire Authority has appointed Mr Michael Tebbutt as Independent Person to assist the Standards Committee and the Monitoring Officer in administering the new ethical framework for Members, established by the Localism Act 2011 and subsequent legislation. It has also appointed Mr Christopher Humphries as reserve for Mr Tebbutt. Both appointments will run until 30 June 2013.

Code of Corporate Governance

The Fire Authority has approved and formally adopted its Code of Corporate Governance for 2012/13, which is based on the document "Delivering Good Governance in Local Government – Framework", published by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers.

Budget Projections from 2013/14

The Fire Authority has received a report, outlining the projections currently being used by officers to plan future service strategy together with the latest information on future expenditure and income. It has also confirmed the assumptions to plan future budget strategy and tasked officers with modelling alternative levels of precept increase.

Community Right to Challenge

The Localism Act 2011 has introduced a right for parish councils, community and voluntary bodies, charitable trusts and two or more local authority employees to submit an expression of interest in taking over the provision of a service on behalf of the authority. Where a valid expression of interest is received, the authority is required to undertake a procurement exercise for that service, which may lead to the authority awarding a contract for its provision.

The Fire Authority has now adopted various arrangements in order to operate the new Community Right to Challenge. In particular, it has appointed its Monitoring Officer as the proper officer for the receipt, validation and acceptance or rejection of expressions of interest under the community right to challenge.

It has appointed its Deputy Monitoring Officer to act as his deputy in a situation where he is absent or if a conflict situation exists between him and the expression of interest submitted.

Indemnities for Members and Officers

Although the Local Authorities (Indemnities for Members and Officers) Order 2004 (Statutory Instrument 3082) empowered authorities to indemnify Members and officers in certain circumstances, the Fire Authority had never enshrined this power within its constitution. To address this issue the Authority has now set out an indemnity in writing, which provide clarity to both Members and officers regarding the circumstances, under which an indemnity would and would not operate.

National Framework Document

In July 2012 the Government published the Fire and Rescue Service National Framework document, replacing the previous version, which had covered 2008 to 2011. Within the document, the Government summarises its priorities for Fire Authorities as follows:

1. Identify and assess the full range of fire and rescue related risks, which their areas face, make provision for prevention and protection activities and respond to incidents appropriately
2. Work in partnership with their communities and a wide range of partners locally and nationally to deliver their service; and
3. Be accountable to communities for the service they provide.

The document then goes on to detail how fire authorities should go about achieving these priorities by specifying 18 'Must Do' requirements.

The Fire Authority has received a report from its officers, providing a list of the 'Must Do' requirements and setting out the extent to which they are currently being met. A rough outline has also been given of the type of work, which needs to be undertaken to ensure compliance.

Partnership with the Environment Agency

For many years the Environment Agency has operated a national agreement with the Fire and Rescue Service, whereby the Agency supplies the equipment necessary to deal with most environmental incidents, and the Service uses that equipment to respond to, and deal with, the aftermath of those incidents on its behalf. This has included the provision of equipment, which enables the Service to make an immediate attempt at preventing any chemical spillage from progressing into the drainage systems and water sources in the vicinity of the incident.

The Agency has recently advised that up to £24k is available to Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service to enhance its environmental protection capability. This sum will be put towards funding the purchase of another Incident Support Unit and developing

additional equipment. The Service will then be able to respond more quickly to all areas of the County, especially those on the extremities of its borders. The four-wheel-drive capability of such Units also allows greater flexibility, in that equipment can be taken closer to streams and rivers threatened by a pollutant.



Stuart West
Chair
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority
September 2012

Background Papers

Agenda Papers for the meeting of Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority held on 26 September 2012

The agendas and reports (with the exception of exempt or confidential items) for all Fire Authority meetings and those of its Committees appear on the Service's website:

www.shropshirefire.gov.uk

To access reports go to the Authority's website. Click on Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority on the right hand side of the screen, then Committee Meetings, then Fire and Rescue Authority, then 26 September 2012 and the various reports and appendices will be listed.

If you have any difficulty with the website, please contact Lynn Ince, Executive Support Officer on 01743 260225.