

Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority Chair's Report of the Meeting held on 12 December 2012

Meeting Schedule 2013

The Fire Authority has agreed the schedule of dates for its 2013 meetings and those of its committees. Future meetings of the full Fire Authority will continue to commence at 3.00 pm, rather than 2.00 pm, in an attempt to avoid any clashes with meetings of Shropshire Council.

Annual Audit Letter

The Fire Authority has received and formally approved the Annual Audit Letter 2011/12 of the Audit Commission. The Letter provided an unqualified opinion on the Authority's financial statements and an unqualified value for money conclusion on the Authority's arrangements to secure value for money.

2013/14 and Later Years Budget

Having considered the recommendations of its Strategy and Resources Committee, the Fire Authority unanimously agreed the following as the basis for consultation, leading to a final decision at the Authority's meeting on 13 February 2013:

- To base its revenue expenditure planning and consultation on a budget of £20,232,000 for 2013/14;
- Its outline capital programme, subject to consideration of the prudential guidelines and minimum revenue provision policy by the Strategy and Resources Committee;
- Its Reserves and Provisions and the General Reserve;
- To base its planning and consultation on an expectation of an increase of 2% in the precept in 2013/14 and the following years; and
- To decline the offer of a two-year council tax freeze grant.

2020 Strategic Planning Process Summary Phase One Outcomes

The 2020 Strategic Planning Process aligned a number of past planning processes and introduced the concept of scenario based planning to create the Fire Authority's '2020 Strategy'. During the summer and autumn of 2012 approximately 70 table-top scenario planning exercises took place, led by members of the Authority's Strategic Risk and Planning Working Group. The sessions resulted in direct engagement with approximately 90% of the Service's staff.

During the sessions, staff were asked to assess a number of scenarios, decide whether they present a threat or opportunity and then evaluate the likelihood of their occurring and the potential impact upon the Authority, Service and community. The results of this exercise will contribute to the development of a prioritised Integrated Risk Management Plan during 2013. Greatest attention will be paid to the scenarios identified as having the highest likelihood of occurring together with the highest impact, scenarios such as reduced Council Tax revenue, catastrophic failure of technology and increased flash flooding.

The next phase of the planning process will develop a range of strategies to address the threats and take advantage of opportunities that may arise. This phase will involve further member-led consultation, both with staff and communities, to develop the range of strategies. The Fire Authority will receive the outcome of this exercise in the summer of 2013.

Aerial Ladder Platform Crewing Project

Following a year-long pilot programme and consultation with the Fire Brigades Union, the Fire Authority agreed that the primary Aerial Ladder Platform (ALP) will be based at Shrewsbury and switch crewed with the fire appliance. This entails two fire fighters from the fire appliance crew mobilising the ALP to incidents, when required. The remaining crew will proceed on the fire appliance to the incident to provide support and a dedicated pump for the ALP. A second 'spare' ALP will be based at Telford to provide resilience and will only respond when the Shrewsbury ALP is committed to an incident or is off the run.

Rescue Tender Crewing Project

The 2010 Public Value review programme set out what the Service is aiming to achieve within the four-year period of the current spending review. The most significant change in the programme proposed for 2014/15 relates to changes in crewing of the Rescue Tender, which will involve identifying new ways of staffing the Rescue Tender to achieve a £297,000 reduction in staffing costs.

The initial staff consultation phase of this project was conducted at Wellington Fire Station, where the Rescue Tender is based. A number of crewing options were put forward for consideration, from which three have been identified for trials during 2013 to determine the most appropriate staffing model. Consultation on all aspects of the trials will continue as they are undertaken. When the trial period is complete a report will be submitted to the Fire Authority with proposals for an alternative staffing model for the Rescue Tender that should enable the proposed reduction in staffing costs to be achieved.

Operational Command Review

At the July 2012 Fire Authority meeting, Councillor Price was tasked with undertaking a review of officer resilience within the Service, following concerns raised by both officers and Members of the Authority.

Having conducted the review, Councillor Price has concluded that, whilst the Service now has the minimum number of operational commanders to allow for safety, the current level of officer cover is sufficient for normal operational situations. The review also identified a number of other concerns, including a reduction in Brigade Managers and increases in officer workload. The Chief Fire Officer has been tasked with reviewing these concerns.

Fire and Emergency Support Services

The British Red Cross operates a Fire and Emergency Support Service (FESS) across the United Kingdom, providing trained, skilled volunteers to work alongside the Fire and Rescue Service at many kinds of emergency. FESS volunteers, equipped, with a specially adapted vehicle, respond around the clock to provide help and support in the aftermath of a fire, flood or similar incident. This includes offering immediate safe shelter, together with clothing and food, and help with practical necessities, such as securing temporary accommodation.

The Fire Authority has agreed funding of £19,000 from its existing balances to part fund the introduction of the FESS into Shropshire. This is matched with £19,000 raised by the British Red Cross and will be used to fund a new FESS vehicle. Around 30 FESS volunteers have been identified and have received initial training, including some delivered by the Fire and Rescue Service with regard to conduct on and around incidents. It is envisaged that an interim FESS capability will be introduced in February 2013, providing an opportunity for volunteers to engage with operational crews. The new vehicle should then be ready for use following its 12-week 'build stage'.

The Scheme for the Payment of Members' Allowances 2013/14

The Fire Authority has agreed unanimously its Scheme for the Payment of Member Allowances 2013/14 to take effect from 1 April 2013. It has also agreed that, regardless of whether the National Joint Council agrees any percentage increase for the coming financial year, the basic, special responsibility, travel and subsistence allowances for Members will remain at their current level.



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

Background Papers

Agenda Papers for the meeting of Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority held on 12 December 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 12 December 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.