

Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority Chair's Report for the Meeting held on 13 February 2013

Capital Programme, Revenue Budget Medium Term Financial Planning and 2013/14 Precept

Following recommendations from its Strategy and Resources Committee and the receipt of a £6,447,000 grant from Government, the Fire Authority has agreed its:

- Capital programme;
- Provisions and reserves;
- Revenue budget for 2013/14 together with a forward financial projection to 2019/20; and
- The key financial principles to be incorporated into its Medium Term Corporate Plan.

The Fire Authority has set its 2013/14 net budget requirement at £20,890,000 and due to one of the largest reductions to Government Grant for any Fire Authority approved a Council Tax, resulting in a Band D rate of £88.66, which represents an increase of 3p per week on last year.

The amount payable by billing authorities for 2013/14 is as follows:

Shropshire Council	£8,802,133
Borough of Telford & Wrekin Council	£3,831,593
	<u>£12,633,726</u>

Fire Authority Treasurer

The Fire Authority noted the appointment of James Walton, Head of Financial Advice and Section 151 Officer for Shropshire Council, as Treasurer for the Fire Authority.

Findings and Recommendations arising from the Operational Performance Assessment 2012

The Operational Performance Assessment (OpA) is designed to form a structured and consistent basis to drive continuous improvement within the nation's Fire and Rescue Services and to provide fire and rescue authorities and Chief Fire Officers with information that allows them to challenge their operational service delivery to ensure that it is efficient, effective and robust.

Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service began preparations for a formal OpA peer review in the spring of 2012. This involved collaborative working with Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service, which led to the publication of two fire and rescue authority specific self-assessments, both of which included improvement action plans, identifying area of further co-operation.

In the autumn of 2012, a Local Government Association led OpA peer review team visited both Shropshire and Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Services to undertake two independent four-day reviews. The review team's findings were published in report format in October 2012.

The Fire Authority agreed to incorporate the findings of OpA within the Annual Statement of Assurance and approved proposals that the Fire Authority should enter into detailed discussions with Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Authority to form a strategic alliance, aimed at delivering service improvements and increased resilience for the communities of both fire authority areas.

2020 Strategic Planning Process

During 2012, officers and elected members of the Strategic Risk and Planning Working Group undertook work on 2020 Scenario Planning and presented the outcomes from this to the Fire Authority at its meeting in December 2012. This report highlighted what officers, members and staff considered to be the significant uncertainties facing the Service over the next eight years.

This was the first step in the Authority's longer-term strategic planning process, the ultimate aim of which is to develop a flexible Strategic Plan to ensure that the Authority meets the pressures placed upon all public services, in general, and the Fire and Rescue Service in particular

To ensure that all of the necessary work can be completed in time for the December 2013 meeting of the Fire Authority, officers have developed the 2020 Project Plan, which consists of eight phases of activity. The Fire Authority approved the 2020 Project Plan and officers will now begin to implement the activities outlined in it.

There will be some difficult decisions to make as part of this process and the Authority will fully involve all partners, including both Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin Councils, at each significant stage.

Annual Review of Charges for Special Services

For the financial year 2013/14 the Fire Authority has approved an increase in its charges for special services, in line the pay increase awarded to firefighters in 2012/13, i.e. a 1% increase.

Combined Control Room Project

Work is continuing to progress the creation of a 'virtual' combined fire control room. This project is a formal collaboration with Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Authority with the aim of establishing a single common system which can be operated from control rooms in two locations – Shrewsbury and Worcester.

Full alignment of the systems is initially expected to take up to 24 months and preparations to scope out the various elements of work that will realise both authorities' aspirations are now underway

Once implemented the new system will provide each fire and rescue service with an immediate and fully operational fall-back arrangement, which will enable the closure of current secondary control rooms with some identified savings. The deployment of a fully integrated solution with common operating procedures will offer improved resilience and broader operational benefits to both fire and rescue authorities



Stuart West
Chair
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority
April 2013

Background Papers

Agenda and papers for the meeting of Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority held on 13 February 2013

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 Brigade'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 Fire and Rescue Authority, then 13 February 2013 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.