

## **Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority Chair's Report of the Meeting held on 7 October 2015**

### **Meeting Schedule 2015 and 2016**

The Fire Authority has revised its Meeting Schedule for October to December 2015, and agreed its Meeting Schedule for 2016. Copies of both schedules have been sent to Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin Councils.

### **Fire Authority Pension Board**

Under The Public Service Pensions Act 2013, the Fire Authority (in line with other local authorities) is required to establish 'a properly constituted, trained and competent pension board, with member nominees, responsible for meeting good standards of governance, including effective and efficient administration' (Hutton Review recommendation 17).

The Fire Authority's Pension Board was established by the required date of 1 April 2015 and is made up of the Fire Authority's Treasurer and Deputy Chief Fire Officer (employer representatives), one member of the Fire Brigades Union and one member of the Retained Firefighters Union (employee representatives).

The Fire Authority has agreed the terms of reference for the Board, including the process for appointment of its Chair, namely that the Board itself should appoint its Chair. In addition, an officer of the Service has been designated to take responsibility for developing and implementing a knowledge and understanding framework to ensure that each Board member is able to fulfil their role effectively.

### **Annual Review 2014/15**

The Fire Authority has agreed its Annual Review 2014/15, which is accessible via the Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service website.

A National Framework for the Fire and Rescue Service has been in existence since 2004 and has been regularly revised. During 2012 the Coalition Government published a new Fire and Rescue National Framework, which placed particular requirements on the fire and rescue authorities regarding the development and publication of an Annual Review.

As fire and rescue authorities are ultimately accountable to their local communities, the Framework states that they need to be transparent about decisions and actions taken, and engage with communities, so local people can scrutinise and influence service delivery. They should also ensure that local communities can access information to compare the performance of their authority with that of others.

The Annual Review is the means by which the Authority is required to communicate such information clearly. It looks back at the last financial year and explains the Fire Authority's objectives, performance, risks and initiatives, along with its plans for the future. It also acts as a signposting document to other information, which may be of interest to the audience.

## **Code of Corporate Governance 2015/16**

Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority is committed to the principles of effective corporate governance and has, therefore, adopted a Code of Corporate Governance, which follows the guidance on corporate governance issued by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers (SOLACE), entitled:

"Delivering Good Governance in Local Government – Framework"

The Fire Authority has conducted its annual review the Code of Corporate Governance and agreed the recommendations of its Audit and Performance Management Committee regarding changes required to ensure that the Code is accurate and up-to-date.

In addition, Internal Audit has completed its independent, annual audit of the Code of Corporate Governance 2015/16 and has given the assurance opinion of "**Good** - There is a sound system of control in place which is designed to address relevant risks, with controls being consistently applied." This is the highest level of assurance. No recommendations emanated from the audit and no exceptions were identified.

## **Review of Whistleblowing Policy**

The Fire Authority has in place a Whistleblowing Policy, which enables workers to raise concerns about unlawful conduct, financial malpractice (including fraud, bribery and corruption), failure to comply with any legal duty, danger to health and safety, damage to the environment and other unethical conduct. It is considered best practice for policies, such as this, to be reviewed annually.

Having carried out a review of the Policy, the Fire Authority has agreed minor changes to bring it up-to-date.

## **Review of Standing Orders and Scheme of Delegation to Officers**

The Fire Authority has reviewed and amended its Standing Orders for the Regulation of Proceedings and Business, Standing Orders relating to Contracts and its Scheme of Delegation to Officers.

## **Review of Financial Regulations**

Following a major review carried out by officers, the Fire Authority has replaced its former Financial Regulations with a much more comprehensive document, based on the model developed by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA). This provides the Authority with a sound, governance document and a single source of reference for all staff, clearly outlining their responsibilities in this area.

In order to provide practical guidance on how the Regulations should be interpreted and applied, officers have compiled detailed procedure notes, which will ensure a consistent application of practices and controls on a day-to-day basis.

Any subsequent amendments proposed to the Regulations will be brought to the Fire Authority, as need arises. The Treasurer will be responsible for ensuring that the associated procedure notes are subject to regular review and amendment, where necessary, to reflect current practices.

## **Integrated Risk Management Planning Projects**

Officers have provided the Fire Authority with an update on the following Integrated Risk Management Planning (IRMP) projects:

### **IRMP 1 - Staffing Model Review**

To undertake a review of the current staffing model, to identify options capable of improving service delivery and increasing efficiency by approximately £400k by 2020. Any resulting model should match resources to risk and make use of the operational workforce as a whole;

### **IRMP 2 - Fire Control Review**

To undertake a review to identify options capable of improving service delivery and the cost effectiveness of the Fire Control function by approximately £300k per annum by 2020; and

### **IRMP 3 - Review of Telford Central Site Requirements**

To undertake a review, including fire station, training facilities and multi-agency opportunities to include tactical and strategic incident command

Following completion of the reviews, which will include extensive staff consultation, it is intended that a report will be brought to the Fire Authority in April 2016 to decide upon the optimum option in each case.

## **Enabling Closer Working between the Emergency Services Consultation**

On 11 September the Home Office issued a consultation document on proposals to increase joint working between emergency services. The Government believes that greater joint working can strengthen the emergency services and deliver significant savings and benefit for the public.

The intention is that, where a local case is made for the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) to take responsibility for the fire service in the interests of economy, efficiency, effectiveness and public Safety, the Government will remove the barriers to prevent that choice being made. The change must be agreed by the local people and will involve a change in legislation.

The consultation proposes a number of changes to the governance and approach of the emergency services. The main proposals are as follows:

- Introducing a high level duty to collaborate on the three emergency services to improve efficiency and effectiveness;
- Enabling Police and Crime Commissioners to take over governance of their local fire and rescue authority, where a local case is made;
- Where a Police and Crime Commissioner takes on the responsibilities of a fire and rescue authority, enabling him or her to create a single employer for police and fire staff, facilitating the sharing of back-office functions and streamlining management;
- Enabling Police and Crime Commissioners to be represented on fire and rescue authorities, in areas where such authorities remain in place;
- Bringing fire and rescue services in London under the direct responsibility of the Mayor of London by abolishing the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority; and
- Encouraging local ambulance foundation trusts to consider their engagement with their local Police Crime and Commissioners and whether to have Police and Crime Commissioner representation on their council of governors.

The Fire Authority has responded to the consultation, which closed on 23 October 2015.

## **Details of Lives Saved and those Protected from Harm**

At each of its meetings the Fire Authority receives a paper, which highlights the number of people, who have been protected from harm or rescued by operational crews during the previous and current years. The paper also attempts to provide an economic value for this rescue work, based on a formula used by the official NHS Advisor.

At this meeting officers reported that from April to September 2015 the economic value put on the work carried out by Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service is £24,337,500.

## **Shropshire Fire Risk Management Services Ltd Board of Directors**

The Fire Authority has reaffirmed the existing membership of the Board of Directors of its trading arm, Shropshire Fire Risk Management Services Ltd., and has appointed the Deputy Chief Fire Officer to sit as a Director on the Board.



Stuart West  
Chair  
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority  
October 2015

## **Background Papers**

Agenda and Papers for the meeting of Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority held on 7 October 2015

**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:**

<http://www.shropshirefire.gov.uk>

To access reports go to the Fire Service's website and follow the steps below.

- Click on the 'Managing the Service' icon at the bottom of page
- Click on the 'Fire Authority' icon
- Click on 'Meetings' in the list on the right hand side of the screen
- Click on '7 October 2015' 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.