

Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority Chair's Report of the Meeting held on 26 February 2014

1 Capital Programmes and Prudential Guidelines

The Fire Authority confirmed its 2014/15 to 2018/19 capital programmes, and approved its Prudential Guidelines, the Treasury Strategy for 2014/15 and the Minimum Revenue Provision 2014/15.

2 Adequacy of Provisions and Reserves and Robustness of Budget

The Fire Authority agreed the reserves and provisions, recommended by its Strategy and Resources Committee, and noted the Treasurer's assurances covering the robustness of the 2014/15 budget and adequacy of the reserves and provisions, together with the material uncertainties from 2015/16 onwards.

3 Revenue Budget and Medium Term Financial Planning 2014/15

Since the December 2013 meeting of the Fire Authority a 2% council tax referendum threshold had been announced. There had also been an increase in the business rates income figures for 2014/15, which would be factored into planning assumptions for 2014/15 and future years. Although previously a budget deficit of £1.9m in 2019/20 had been predicted, the projections now indicated a deficit of £877,000 in 2019/20.

The Fire Authority considered recommendations made by its Strategy and Resources Committee and Strategic Risk and Planning Group Members' Working Group in relation to the revenue budget for 2014/15. Both the Committee and the Group had given much thought to the precept issue and had concluded that raising the precept by 1.99% gave more benefit to the Authority than accepting the council tax freeze grant. The Fire Authority, therefore, agreed a precept increase of 1.99% for 2014/15.

4 Revenue Budget: 2014/15 Precept

The Fire Authority agreed:

- A net budget requirement of £21,379,887
- A total precept of £13,091,142 to be levied on the billing authorities
- A Council Tax resulting in a basic amount of Council Tax at Band D of £90.42
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- The amount payable by billing authorities for 2014/15, as follows:

Council	Precept £
Shropshire Council	9,084,966
Borough of Telford & Wrekin Council	4,006,176
	<hr/> 13,091,142 <hr/>

5 Integrated Risk Management 2020 Process

The Fire Authority considered the outcomes from Phase 2 of the Integrated Risk Management Planning (IRMP) 2020 Process and the recommendations from its Strategy and Resources Committee and Strategic Risk and Planning Group Members' Working Group.

In relation to the five proposals put forward to the Fire Authority it agreed that:

- The closure of the four 'Low Risk' fire stations (Baschurch, Clun, Hodnet and Press) should not go forward to Phase 3
- The removal of a Wholetime fire engine from the Shrewsbury or Telford area should not go forward to Phase 3
- The possible merger of the Service's Fire Control function, with at least one other service, should go forward to Phase 3
- Changes to the current Wholetime shift system, capable of producing up to £400k worth of savings, should go forward to Phase 3 and
- Changes to the current shift system operated in Fire Control should not go forward to Phase 3, but might need to be explored further, if an option for change to the function arose.

It was possible to make these decisions in light of budgetary announcements by the Government and generally improving economic conditions across the County. The forecast budget deficit was now approximately £0.9m, as opposed to between £1.5 and £1.9m, which had been projected at various stages of Phase 2 of the IRMP process.

The Fire Authority noted that the following proposals, which are within the remit of the Chief Fire Officer, would be considered, with staff, during Phase 3.

- Reduce the budgeted contributions to Capital Reserve, for items purchased from Reserve
- Reduce the Ill-Health Retirement Contribution budget
- Reduce the Occupational Health budget
- Review the current hydrant maintenance contract
- Reduce the recruitment advertising budget
- Reduce the Medical Reports budget
- Reduce the non-specialist work costs in Workshops
- Reduce the support staff pay budget
- Convert Business Fire Safety grey book posts into green book posts
- Use retained duty staff to cover short to medium-term wholetime vacancies

Phase 3 will consist of formal consultation on the proposals identified above. Whilst only one or two of these will require involvement from the public and other external stakeholders, staff will have an opportunity to comment on all of the Phase 3 options.

6 Annual Service Plan 2014/15

The Fire Authority agreed the outline format and contents of the Service Plan 2014/15. It reaffirmed the following three strategic aims:

To be there when you need us in an emergency
with a professional and well equipped team

To reduce the number of fires in our community

To reduce the number of fire related deaths and serious injuries

and amended its fourth strategic aim to:

To deliver a fire and rescue service, which provides
value for money for our community now and into the future

In addition the Fire Authority delegated responsibility to its Strategy and Resources Committee to agree the Public Value Measures 2014/15, which support the Fire Authority's four Strategic Aims.

7 Code of Corporate Governance 2013/14

The Fire Authority reviewed and formally adopted its 2013/14 Code of Corporate Governance. It noted that Internal Audit had completed its independent annual audit of the Code and had 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". No recommendations emanated from the audit and no exceptions were identified.

8 Annual Review of Charges for Special Services

The Fire Authority has completed its annual review of the tariff for special services charges and agreed an increase of 1% with effect from 1 April 2014, in line with the 1% pay increase awarded to firefighters during 2013/14.

9 Amendments to the Pay Policy Statement

The Fire Authority has conducted its annual review of the Pay Policy Statement and agreed minor changes to bring it up to date. The amended Statement has now been published and will be reviewed annually, following notification of national pay decisions determined in respect of Gold, Grey and Green Book staff each year.

10 Shropshire Fire Risk Management Services

At its meeting in April 2013 the Fire Authority agreed to establish Shropshire Fire Risk Management Services, a company controlled by the Fire Authority. The Board of Directors of the company held its inaugural meeting on 16 July 2013, at which it agreed that trading should commence from that date.

The Fire Authority received a progress report on the company, which provided an update on performance and other matters.



Stuart West
Chair
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority
February 2014

Background Papers

Agenda Papers for the meeting of Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority held on 26 February 2014

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 Meetings, then Fire and Rescue Authority, then 26 February 2014 and the various reports and appendices will be listed.