

WILTSHIRE & SWINDON FIRE AUTHORITY

REPORT REFERENCE NO.	8
MEETING	Fire Authority
MEETING DATE	24 September 2015
SUBJECT OF REPORT	PROGRAMME & SCRUTINY BOARD: ANNUAL REPORT 2014/15
LEAD OFFICER	Keith Strickland, Acting Clerk to the Authority
RECOMMENDATIONS	To receive the Board's annual report for 2014/15.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	This paper takes the form of the Programme & Scrutiny Board's annual report to the Authority for 2014/15.
APPENDICES	None

Background

- 1 The Programme & Scrutiny Board (PSB) is required to present an annual report to the Authority with a review of its activities during the previous year. This paper is in the form of a draft report covering the immediate past "municipal year", i.e. the period between the annual meetings of the Authority in June 2014 and June 2015.
- 2 The PSB was established in 2006 to act in an advisory capacity to the Authority. The Board's full terms of reference (ToR) are set out in the Members' Handbook.
- 3 As recognised in the ToRs, the Board's primary task is to scrutinise and/or review policies, plans, resources and the effectiveness of services.
- 4 To assist the PSB, much of the detailed work of scrutiny/review is undertaken by the three workstreams thus enabling the Board to focus on strategic level issues. Reports from each of the workstreams are an item of business at meetings of the PSB. This enables the Board to monitor the work of the workstreams. This is particularly important where issues cut across each of the workstream areas, e.g. the financial situation, industrial action and the Networked Fire Control Services Project.
- 5 The workstreams cover the following areas:
 - Governance and assurance.
 - Operational delivery.
 - People and development.
 Their detailed ToRs are set out in the Members' Handbook.

- 6 Each workstream met 3 times during the year.

Meetings

- 7 During the period to which this report relates, the PSB met on four occasions, viz. 11 September 2014, 20 November 2014, 29 January 2015 and 14 March 2015. A number of strategic issues were a common theme. These included:
- the consultative arrangements on what at the time was the proposed combination with Dorset Fire Authority;
 - the effect of national industrial action by the FBU over pensions and of UNISON's dispute on pay; and
 - the project to upgrade the Service's control systems in partnership with neighbouring fire & rescue services and to merge Dorset's control room functions with the Service's.
- 8 Other strategic issues included:
- a constant review and updating of the strategic risk register;
 - funding for the 2015/16 financial year; and
 - the Service's performance reports.
- 9 Arising from the regular reports of the three workstreams' activities, the following is a selection of the matters discussed and/or noted by the Board:
- the implications of legislation relating to corporate manslaughter;
 - the availability of retained firefighters;
 - the cost and staffing of the serious fire at a waste site in Swindon;
 - the possible financial benefit to the Authority arising from planning gain;
 - fitness standards;
 - fire prevention in mobile homes;
 - the outcome of a software audit regarding software licences;
 - the Service's obligations under health and safety at work legislation; and
 - apprenticeships.

Policy Implications

- 10 It is the Board's belief that its ability to give prior consideration to major issues and to offer views and recommendations is a significant help to the Authority in the way the Authority works at member level.

Risks

- 11 None arising directly from this report. The Board "owns" the strategic risk register which is reviewed at every Board meeting.

HR, Equality and Diversity Implications

- 12 None arising directly from this report.

Environmental Implications

- 13 None arising directly from this report.

Financial and Legal Implications

- 14 None arising directly from this report.

Combination Implications

- 15 None arising directly from this report.

Conclusion

- 16 The Programme & Scrutiny Board undertook significant work during 2014/15. This was a period when the future of the Service and how it might best evolve to meet present and future demands was being critically examined. The Board has encouraged and promoted the work undertaken by the workstreams.
- 17 The Board and its workstreams continued to support greater knowledge of and participation in the Authority's decision-making and scrutiny processes by members.
- 18 As a concluding remark, it is worth noting that members believe that the effectiveness of the Board and its workstreams justifies the continuation of the current arrangements for the remainder of 2015.

Recommendations

- 19 To receive the Programme & Scrutiny Board's annual report for 2014/15.

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Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive

Unpublished documents used in the preparation of this report :
None.

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