

WILTSHIRE & SWINDON FIRE AUTHORITY

MINUTES of a MEETING of the WILTSHIRE & SWINDON FIRE AUTHORITY held at the WILTSHIRE FRS TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT CENTRE, DEVIZES on THURSDAY 25 SEPTEMBER 2014

Present : Cllrs C Devine, G Perkins, E Clark, R Jones MBE, J Knight, H Marshall, N Martin, C Newbury, G Payne, J Tray and B Wayman.

31 Minutes of the Last Meeting

The Minutes of the Meeting of 10 July 2014 were approved and signed.

32 Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr Mrs Groom and Cllr Bennett.

33 Members' Interests

The Chairman reminded members of the need to declare any interests which the Authority's Code of Conduct required to be disclosed, or dispensations granted by the Clerk to the Authority or by the Ethics Committee. None were received.

34 Chairman's Announcements

- a) The Chairman announced that Rohan McMillan would be standing down as Independent Person at the end of the month and that the Authority would be sending him a token of their appreciation.
- b) The Chairman had attended the Emergency Services Show and gave his thanks to all the staff involved, especially Louise Knox who played a key role on the organising committee. The CFO added that next year was the 10th Anniversary of the Show. (*Afternote: the 2015 ESS is scheduled for 13 Sep 15*).
- c) The Chairman reported that he and the CFO had attended the "Chiefs and Chairs" meeting in Taunton.

35 Questions from the Public

There were no questions from the public.

36 Minutes of the Urgency Committee.

The minutes of the Urgency Committee meeting held on 22 July 2014 were received.

37 Membership of Committees.

The issue of substitutes for committees was discussed.

RESOLVED:

- a. *That all members of the CFA are substitutes for the Urgency Committee, with Committee members nominating another from their political group to deputise for them, excepting members from smaller political groups may nominate a Member from another party.*
- b. *That all members of the CFA be invited to observe at Urgency Committee meetings.*
- c. *That the issue of substitutes be discussed by the Ethics Committee.*

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38 Amendment to Standing Orders

The paper by the Clerk on the amending standing orders in light of the Openness in Local Government Regulation 2014 was considered. Members voiced concern about being misrepresented and asked that a multi-directional recording device be obtained at a reasonable cost for use at meetings where they may be recorded by third parties. It was suggested that the Ethics Committee consider how long the recordings should be retained.

RESOLVED:

To amend para 20 of the Wiltshire and Swindon Fire Authority Standing Orders to read:

“Any person wishing to report proceedings of the meeting, using audio, visual or any other means, must do so without causing disruption or distraction. Any person causing a disruption or distraction will be asked to stop by the Chairman and may be asked to leave the meeting”.

39 Programme & Scrutiny Board

The report of the meeting of the Board held on 11 Sep 14 was received.

40 Annual Report

The Annual Report of the Programme & Scrutiny Board was received. It was noted that there was a requirement for more detail in future reports.

41 Protection, Prevention & Intervention

The members watched a short visual presentation.

42 Averages Fire

The DCFO gave a report on the Averages fire which had burnt from 21 July to 17 September and crews had been stationed at the site round the clock. He reported that there had been good partnership working with the Environment Agency, Public Health England and Swindon Borough Council. SBC were heading up the recovery phase and their scrutiny committee would be carrying out a review.

The Monitoring Officer paid thanks to the FRS for the critical role they had played and reported that the Local Resilience Forum would carry out the review which would then go before the SBC scrutiny committee, however this was likely to be delayed until the New Year.

Members queried the costs and recoveries. The Treasurer reported that the final cost would not be known until the end of the month, but it was thought that the total cost was around £100k. There were ongoing discussions with the DCLG to see if the Bellwin Scheme would cover the costs, but this seemed unlikely. However, it was possible to cover the additional costs within existing resources.

Members reported concerns from the Retained Fire Fighters that their employers were unhappy with the number of hours they had been called out for recently, due to industrial action and the knock on effect of the Averages fire. In response the CFO reported that he planned to write to employers thanking them for their support, but nevertheless overuse of retained personnel remained a concern.

The CFO reported that unlicensed tips were a national issue. CFOA and the Environmental Agency had mapped the risk and there were 20 high risk tips in the

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Wiltshire FRS's area, although these were not necessarily all a high fire risk. A programme of visits was being drawn up in conjunction with the Environment Agency and it was anticipated that the visits would be complete by the end of the year.

43 Industrial Relations

The Brigade Manager (People & Development) outlined the two industrial disputes that were ongoing; firstly the UNISON dispute over the annual pay award, which had resulted in one day of strike with another one planned; secondly the FBU action regarding pensions. To date there had been 46 periods of strike action and there was now a period of action short of a strike ie an overtime ban and a ban on additional hours. The Fire Minister was in talks with the FBU. It was noted that the current action was impacting on operations.

It was noted that the visits by members to fire stations had been well received and the firefighters had been reassured by the message that the proposed merger was not about job losses. It was suggested that the People & Development Workstream coordinate feedback from the visits and the Clerk would arrange visits to stations who had not yet been visited by a Member.

44 Independent Person

The CFA approved the recommendation of the interview panel that Caroline Baynes be appointed the Independent Member.

45 Consultation Update

The Consultation Institute had validated the consultation process which had begun on 21 July and would continue until 20 October. Documents had been widely distributed, including to partner stakeholders. The Chairman thanked the officers who had attended public forums in the evenings and he reported that public interest was high.

46 Date of Next Meeting

- a. The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 11 November at 1400hrs.
- b. The meetings for 2015 were confirmed as 12 February, 11 June, 24 September and 10 December.

47 Urgent Business

Cllr Bob Jones MBE reported that the Wiltshire Safeguarding Adults Board had made very positive remarks about the Wiltshire FRS in its report and it had used WFRS as an example of good practice.

48 Exclusion of the Public

Resolved:

In accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, to exclude the public for the business specified in minute no. 5 below because it is likely that if members of the public were present there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 3 & 4 of Part I of Schedule 12A to the Act.

49 Minutes of the Combination Oversight Board

The Minutes of the Combination Oversight Board of the 3 September 2014 were received.

(Meeting Closed 13:15)

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