

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 12 FEBRUARY 2015

Present : Cllrs C Devine, A Bennett, E Clark, P Edge, Cllr Mrs Groom, R Jones MBE, J Knight, N Martin, C Newbury, J Tray and B Wayman.

78 Minutes of the Last Meeting

The Minutes of the Meeting of 11 December 2014 were approved and signed.

79 Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr Payne and Cllr Perkins.

80 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. Cllr Edge declared that he was in receipt of a firefighter's pension.

81 Chairman's Announcements.

- a. The Chairman announced that following a request at the December CFA, he had sent a non-committal letter urging the Fire Minister to continue a constructive dialogue with the unions to resolve the ongoing dispute with the firefighters' pensions.
- b. The Chairman reported that he had received a number of letters from firefighters regarding concerns about the fitness and pensions. He summarised the Authority's position thus:

"We are advised that the addendum to the National Framework, issued by DCLG in December 2014 continues to provide discretion over the award of an unreduced pension in the case where a firefighter is unable to pass a fitness test through no fault of their own, is over 55, does not qualify for ill-health retirement and it is not possible to redeploy them. The Authority would evaluate the circumstances of each and every case and would consider whether Authority Initiated Early Retirement would assist economical, effective and efficient management together with the cost considerations of the proposed retirement. We have been advised that the discretion whether to pay an unreduced pension cannot be fettered and that it would be unlawful to offer a guarantee of any level of pension in advance of the circumstances arising, although the Authority can confirm that it would, at the very least, consider an Authority Initiated Early Retirement. Employees should be assured that this Authority is committed to supporting them to maintain their fitness throughout their career".

- c. The Chairman informed the meeting that the FBU had announced another period of 24 hour strike action.

82 Declarations of Urgent Business

- a. Cllr Newbury asked that the issue of substitutes for committees be discussed.
- b. The Chairman announced that precept referendum would be discussed.

83 Questions from the Public

There were no questions from the public.

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84 Minutes of the Finance Review and Audit Committee

The draft minutes of the Finance Review & Audit Committee held on 18 December 2014 were received.

85 Minutes of the Programme & Scrutiny Board Meeting

The draft minutes of the Programme & Scrutiny Board meeting held on 29 January 2015 were received. In relation to Minute 40/14, the Chairman reported that it was intended to start fitness training later in the year.

86 Capital Programme 2015/16, Minimum Revenue Provision 2015/16 and Prudential Indicators.

The Treasurer presented a paper and explained that the capital programme at Annex A was for a standalone authority.

RESOLVED:

- a. To approve the Capital Programme for 2015/16.
- b. To approve the Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement for 2015/16, that is

“in accordance with the Local Authorities (Capital Finance & Accounting) (England)(Amendment) Regulation 2008, the Fire Authority’s policy for calculation of MRP in 2015/16 shall be the asset life (equal instalment) method for prudential borrowing.”

- c. To approve the prudential indicators in respect of the Capital Programme 2015/16.

87 Revenue Budget 2015/16 and Fire Precept.

The Treasurer outlined his paper. The Authority unanimously

RESOLVED:

- a. To approve the Net Revenue Budget 2015/16 be approved at £24,785,600 with a contribution from balances of £178,700 (Budget Requirement £24,606,900).
- b. To approve the Precept Requirement of £15,474,000
- c. That the Fire Precept Band D be set at £64.88
- d. To authorise the Brigade Manager, Governance & Assurance, to give notice of the approved precept to the appropriate billing authorities.
- e. To authorise the Brigade Manager, Governance & Assurance, to pay out of the combined fire service fund sums in respect of:
 - i. All accounts and debts due by the Authority forming the Authority’s gross revenue expenditure for 2015/16 in the approved budget and such changes may be agreed subsequently by the Authority.
 - ii. The cost of capital items including the purchase and leasing of equipment specified in the capital budget, and
 - iii. Such loans made by the Authority as may be approved.
- f. To authorise the Brigade Manager, Governance & Assurance, to borrow such sums as may be required in respect of schemes in the capital budget.

88. Protection, Prevention & Intervention

The members watched a short visual presentation with interest.

89. Staffing Committee Minutes

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The Authority received the draft minutes of the Staffing Committee meeting held on 22 January 2015.

90. Pay Policy Statement 2015/16.

The Brigade Manager, People & Development presented a paper on the Pay Policy.

RESOLVED:

- a. *To approve the Pay Policy Statement 2015/16*
- b. *To ask officers to work with colleagues in Dorset Fire & Rescue Service to produce a Pay Policy Statement for 2016/17 for the new Combined Fire Authority to approve.*

91. Pensions Discretions – Local Government Pension Scheme.

The Brigade Manager, People & Development presented a paper on the LGPS Pensions' Discretions.

RESOLVED:

- a. *To approve the LGPS Discretions Policy.*
- b. *To request officers to work with colleagues in Dorset Fire & Rescue Service to produce a discretions policy for the new Combined Authority to approve.*

92. Pensions Board – Firefighter Pension Scheme

The Brigade Manager, People & Development presented a paper on the requirement for the Authority to have a Pensions Board.

RESOLVED:

To delegate the decision making for the Pensions Board to the Staffing Committee

93. Update on Combination

The CFO presented a paper updating the meeting on Combination.

94. Joint Committee.

The draft minutes of the Joint Committee Meeting held on 26 January 2015 were presented.

95. Urgent Business

a. Referendum. Having agreed the budget for FY 15/16, the Authority recognised that there was no requirement for a referendum on increasing the precept above the proscribed limit this year. However, should the Combination with Dorset not proceed, the Authority may be forced to consider it as an option in future years.

b. Committee Substitutes. The meeting discussed the issue of substitutes on committees

RESOLVED:

- i. *The request the political groups of the CFA to provide the Clerk with the names of up to two members from each group to act as substitutes for places allocated to them on each committee of the Wiltshire & Swindon Fire Authority.*
- ii. *To ask the Joint Committee to reconsider its view on the question of substitution.*
- iii. *To review the issue of substitutes at the AGM.*

Signature.....

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96. Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 11 June 2015.

(Meeting Closed 12:20)

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