

COMMUNITY SAFETY FORUM

Agenda Item 10

Brighton & Hove City Council

EAST SUSSEX FIRE AUTHORITY

Report of a meeting of the East Sussex Fire Authority held at Fire & Rescue Service Headquarters at 10.30 hours on Thursday 2 February 2012.

Present: Councillors Carden, Fawthrop, Healy, Heaps, Howson, Kenward, Livings (Chairman), MacCafferty, Ost, Pidgeon, Rufus, Scott, Sparks, Theobald, Thomas, Tidy, Waite and Wakefield.

Also present:

Mrs Redman, Chair of the Standards Panel and Mr Wheeler, Independent Person and Member of the Standards Panel.

1. **FIRE AUTHORITY SERVICE PLANNING PROCESSES FOR 2012/13 AND BEYOND**

1.1 The Fire Authority considered reports on the Service Planning Processes for 2012/13 and beyond, for approval for the purpose of setting the 2012/13 Council Tax precept and other relevant matters.

1.2 **Draft Annual Plan 2012/13**

1.2.1 The Fire Authority considered a report that summarised the outstanding actions required to complete the Draft Annual Plan 2012/13 for approval and for final completion by the publication date of 30 June 2012.

1.2.2 The Fire Authority resolved that:

- a) the roll forward of the draft Annual Plan for publication by 30 June 2012, be approved, in principle, subject to any final amendments once the Revenue Budget has been approved at this meeting and other outstanding information set out in the report; and
- b) authority for the approval of the final version of the Annual Plan be delegated to the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive in consultation with the Chairman.

1.3 **Draft Revenue Budget 2012/13**

1.3.1 The Fire Authority considered a report on the final draft Fire Authority Revenue Budget 2012/13. The Deputy Treasurer reported that both he and the Treasurer were satisfied that the estimates used for calculating the budget and council tax requirement were produced in a robust and transparent way and the proposed financial reserves were prudent and necessary and in line with Fire Authority policy.

1.3.2 The Deputy Treasurer reminded Members that this budget was being set in the context of some considerable financial challenges in future years. Based on current modelling, further savings in excess of £1m would be required by the end of the CSR period. However, there was a degree of uncertainty as a result of the general economic outlook, the potential for further reductions in public sector

funding set out in the Chancellor's Autumn Statement, and the impact of both the localisation of business rates and of council tax benefits.

- 1.3.3 The Deputy Treasurer reminded Members that, in view of the nature of its business, the Fire Authority needed to recognise that risks, financial and otherwise, and their impact on the budget and reserves, may change during the year and would need to be continually reviewed and managed in line with the Authority's policy.
- 1.3.4 Councillors MacCafferty, Rufus and Wakefield wished it to be recorded that they voted against accepting the Council Tax Freeze Grant.
- 1.3.5 The Fire Authority has approved the necessary detailed budget and service planning decisions, including
- a) approving its budget requirement for the year 2012/13 as £40.030m; an increase of 2.1% on the 2011/12 base budget of £39.203m giving a Council Tax requirement of £24.764m in 2012/13;
 - b) approving a council tax precept (Band D property) for the year 2012/13 of £81.36; and
 - c) agreeing that Brighton & Hove City Council and the borough and district councils (the billing authorities) be advised by the Treasurer of the relevant amounts payable and the council tax in the other bands.

2. JOINT BUSINESS CASE FOR INCREASED COLLABORATION AND POSSIBLE MERGER

- 2.1 Members considered a report that advised them of the outcome of latest advice from the DCLG on potential formula grant implications arising from a possible merger and sought their decision on the most appropriate way forward.
- 2.2 The Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive informed Members that a full business case had been prepared which indicated a positive outcome for merger. Unfortunately, the remaining financial issues could not be resolved which included the necessary outstanding information from the DCLG on Formula Grant exemplifications, thereby preventing a full and final evaluation of the strategic financial issues involved in a possible merger. On this basis, the business case could not be completed and neither the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive nor the Deputy Treasurer was able to recommend that Members approve a merger proposal at this time.
- 2.3 It was moved by Councillor Sparks and seconded by Councillor Thomas that, following the outcome of the continuing discussions with West Sussex County Council, the work of the Joint Steering Group and discussions with DCLG, it has become apparent that, as a direct consequence of the Local Government Resource Review, West Sussex County Council has been unable to obtain sufficient clarity on its Fire grant element to enable the Business Case to be completed, despite the best efforts of all involved. On that basis, East Sussex Fire Authority is unable to take a decision to agree to a merged Fire Authority from 1st April 2013.

3. **JOINT CONTROL PROJECT – PROGRESS UPDATE**

- 3.1 Members of the Fire Authority considered an oral report that updated them on progress with the Joint Control project.
- 3.2 The Deputy Chief Fire Officer informed Members of the successful bid to DCLG for funds to assist in the creation of a new merged East and West Sussex Control Room. Funds totalling £3.6m had been allocated.
- 3.3 The search was progressing to find a mutually suitable site along the A23 corridor and a 'go live' date of September 2013 had been agreed. Future increased operational resilience was expected and a team was now in place to oversee the process.

4. **MEMBER ALLOWANCES**

- 4.1 The Fire Authority considered a report on the annual review of the Member Allowances Scheme and resolved that a nil increase in rates be approved with effect from 1 April 2012, and the special responsibility allowance for a Director of the South East Fire & Rescue Control Centre (SEFRCC – (the 'LACC')) be deleted from the scheme.

COUNCILLOR JOHN LIVINGS
CHAIRMAN OF EAST SUSSEX FIRE AUTHORITY
3 February 2012

EAST SUSSEX FIRE AUTHORITY

Report of a meeting of the East Sussex Fire Authority held at Fire & Rescue Service Headquarters at 10.30 hours on Thursday 7 June 2012.

Present: Councillors Carden, Fawthrop, Healy, Howson, Kenward, Livings, Ost, Pidgeon, Powell, Rufus, Scott, Sparks, Summers, Theobald, Thomas, Tidy and Waite

Also present: Mrs Redman, Chair of the Standards Panel and Mr Wheeler, Independent Person and Member of the Standards Panel.

1. URGENT ITEMS AND CHAIRMAN'S BUSINESS

- 1.1 The Chairman welcomed Councillors Stephanie Powell and Christina Summers to their first meeting of the Fire Authority; they had replaced Councillors MacCafferty and Wakefield as two of the three Green Party Members from Brighton & Hove City Council. Councillors MacCafferty and Wakefield had been invited to attend this meeting, but Councillor Wakefield was away on holiday.
- 1.2 Councillor Livings welcomed Councillor MacCafferty to the meeting and presented him with a plaque in recognition of his work for the Fire Authority during the last twelve months. Councillor MacCafferty thanked the Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive and his officers for an enjoyable year and wished everyone good luck for the future.

2. NOTE OF THE PANEL MEETINGS HELD SINCE THE LAST MEETING OF THE FIRE AUTHORITY

- 2.1 The Fire Authority considered a report on the Panel meetings held since the meeting of the Fire Authority with regard to those issues of greater significance or requiring a decision from the Fire Authority.
- 2.2 The report of the Policy & Resources Panel meeting held on 24 May 2012 covered the current position on property options for the Sussex Control Centre (paragraph 10). Members had formally approved, on behalf of the Fire Authority, Haywards Heath Fire Station as the location for the Sussex Control Centre. Members noted that, once this decision had been ratified by West Sussex County Council, a formal announcement would be made and it was hoped that the project would now meet its deadline of September 2013. Although the original preference was for a stand-alone building, the costs had proved prohibitive and the accommodation at Haywards Heath Fire Station would realise considerable savings as it is an established building, owned by the Fire & Rescue Service.

COUNCILLOR JOHN LIVINGS
CHAIRMAN OF EAST SUSSEX FIRE AUTHORITY
11 June 2012