

**MINUTES of a MEETING of the WILTSHIRE & SWINDON FIRE AUTHORITY
held at the WILTSHIRE FRS TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT CENTRE, DEVIZES
on THURSDAY 14 FEBRUARY 2013**

Present : Cllr Brigadier R Hall (Chairman), Cllr P Davis, Cllr C Devine,
Cllr Mrs M Groom, Cllr H Marshall, Cllr N Martin, Cllr B Mattock,
Cllr C Newbury, Cllr G Payne, Cllr G Perkins, Cllr J Osborn,
Cllr Mrs B Wayman, Cllr B Wright

1 Minutes of last Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 December 2012 were confirmed and signed.

2 Members' Interests

The Clerk reported that:

- members had been advised to consider whether they had a potential disclosable pecuniary interest by virtue of any beneficial interest in land in the area of the Authority and if so whether to apply for a dispensation to enable them to participate and vote in the setting of the precept (minute 9 below refers); and
- under his delegated powers, he had granted the dispensations which had been applied for, namely to Cllrs Davis, Mrs M Groom, Brig. R Hall, H Marshall, N Martin, B Mattock, J Osborn, G Payne, G Perkins, Mrs B Wayman, and R Wright.

The Chairman referred to a letter which the Minister had sent to local authority leaders in which, notwithstanding an acknowledgement that the Dept of Communities and Local Government did not issue legal advice, it was opined that members of local authorities need not seek dispensations in relation to the setting of the council tax or precept. The Clerk informed members that this view was not shared by the Authority's Monitoring Officer nor himself whose advice to members remained unaltered.

3 Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman:

- Referred to the forthcoming retirements from Wiltshire Council of Cllr Peter Davis and himself. He paid tribute to the contribution made by Cllr Davis since joining the Authority in 1997 and presented him with a Long Service Certificate and a Service plaque.
- Informed members of the forthcoming retirement of Russ Symons, Personnel Adviser to the Authority since 2008. He advised that Ian Morgan, Head of HR Services at South West Councils would be acting in his stead.
- Advised members that he would be attending the Fire Commission in London the following day. If there was anything to report to Members after the meeting he would communicate with them via e-mail.
- Expressed his good wishes to those Members of the Authority who would be standing in the May elections for Wiltshire Council. He thanked those who might be unsuccessful at the polls or who might not be re-appointed to the Fire Authority, for their service on the Authority and for the valuable contributions they had made to the work of the Authority.

4 Questions from the Public

There were no questions from the public.

5 Programme & Scrutiny Board

A report of the meeting of the Programme & Scrutiny Board held on 24 January 2013 was received.

6 Peer Review

On considering a report by the Chief Fire Officer providing an overview of the Fire Peer Challenge and Operational Assessment process undertaken in January 2013,

Resolved:

- (a) *To note the report.*
- (b) *To agree to the final report of the Peer Review team and the Service's improvement plan being published on the Service's website when to hand.*
- (c) *To ask the Chief Fire Officer to send a copy of the final report and the improvement plan to members as soon as practicable.*

7 Finance Review & Audit Committee

The minutes of a meeting of the Committee held on 11 December 2012 were received.

8 Capital Programme 2013/14 and Prudential Indicators

On considering a paper by the Brigade Manager, Finance & ICT,

Resolved:

- a) *To approve the Capital Programme for 2013/14 as shown in Appendix A to the paper presented;*
- b) *In accordance with the Local Authorities (Capital Finance and Accounting) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2008, to approve the asset life (equal instalment) method for prudential borrowing as the Authority's policy for the calculation of minimum revenue provision in 2013/14.*
- c) *To approve the key prudential indicators in respect of the Capital Programme for 2013/14 as shown in Appendix B to the paper presented.*

9 Revenue Budget 2013/14 and Council Tax Resolution

On considering a paper by the Brigade Manager, Finance & ICT and the Chief Fire Officer, which included the strong recommendation of the Brigade Manager, Finance & ICT (in his capacity as Treasurer of the Authority) and the Chief Fire Officer that, in order to protect the Authority's long term financial position, the Council Tax Freeze Grant for 2013/14 offered by Government be rejected,

Resolved:

- (a) *Not to increase the council tax requirement for 2013/14 and to accept the Governments' offer of Council Tax Freeze Grant equivalent to a 1% increase in council tax.*
- (b) *To acknowledge the long term financial risks (identified in the paper presented) inherent in the acceptance of the Council Tax Freeze Grant for 2013/14.*

- (c) *To approve a Net Revenue Budget for 2013/14 of £25,447,300 as shown in Appendix A to the paper presented, and the use of £400,100 of general reserves to balance the budget.*
- (d) *To approve the Authority's basic amount of council tax for 2013/14 of £62.38 (i.e. no change from 2012/13) with the following consequential council tax levels at each band:*

<i>Band A</i>	<i>£41.59</i>
<i>Band B</i>	<i>£48.52</i>
<i>Band C</i>	<i>£55.45</i>
<i>Band D</i>	<i>£62.38</i>
<i>Band E</i>	<i>£76.24</i>
<i>Band F</i>	<i>£90.10</i>
<i>Band G</i>	<i>£103.97</i>
<i>Band H</i>	<i>£124.76</i>

- (e) *To authorise the Brigade Manager, Finance & ICT to give notice of the approved council tax requirement to the appropriate billing authorities.*
- (f) *To authorise the Brigade Manager, Finance & ICT to pay out of the combined fire service fund sums required in respect of:*
- i. All accounts and debts due by the Authority forming the Authority's gross revenue expenditure for 2013/14 in the approved budget and such changes as 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.*
- (g) *To authorise the Brigade Manager, Finance & ICT to borrow such sums as may be required in respect of schemes in the capital budget.*

(Note: Members requested that it be recorded that their approval of the above resolutions was unanimous.)

10 Protection, Prevention and Intervention

A short visual presentation was made.

11 Staffing Committee

The minutes of the Staffing Committee held on 24 January 2013 were received.

12 Pay Policy Statement

On considering a paper by the Brigade Manager, People and Development, and a recommendation of the Staffing Committee,

Resolved:

- a) To approve the Authority's pay policy statement for 2013/14 as presented.*

b) *To ask the Staffing Committee, when next reviewing the pay policy, to consider the comment made by Cllr Wright in relation to the final paragraph of the statement for 2013/14.*

13 Appeal Committee

A summary of the minutes of the Appeal Committee held on 17 December 2012 was received.

14 Closing Remarks

Cllrs Martin and Osborn and a number of other Members paid tribute to the considerable contribution that Cllr Brigadier Hall had made whilst serving on the Authority since 2005, and as Chairman of the Authority since 2009. They referred in particular to the time invested by him in making sure he was totally briefed on all relevant subjects; and to the very able and effective way he discharged his duties as Chairman. Members offered their best wishes to Brigadier Hall in his forthcoming retirement from the Authority and Wiltshire Council.

15 Exclusion of the Public

Resolved:

In accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, to exclude the public from the business specified in minute no. 16 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 paragraph 4 of Part 1 of schedule 12A to the Act.

16 Future Organisation

The Chief Fire Officer gave a short verbal update on progress of the proposed plans for the future organisation of the Service. This included an update on consultations with the representative bodies.

(Duration of meeting 10.30 a.m. to 12.30 p.m.)