

MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

FULL AUTHORITY MEETING

29th NOVEMBER 2011

MINUTES

Present: Councillors Tony Newman (Chair), Jimmy Mahon, Vi Bebb, Linda Maloney, Lesley Rennie, Terry Jones, Ian Lewis, Dave Hanratty, Sharon Sullivan, Barbara Murray, Denise Roberts, Les Byrom, Colin Strickland, Andrew Blackburn, Eddie Clein, Ted Grannell and Steve Niblock.

Independent Members Linda Philips and Carole Roberts

Apologies for absence were received from:
Councillor Robbie Ayres

1. Preliminary Matters

The Authority considered if there were any declarations of interest, matters of urgency or items that may require the exclusion of the press and public due to the disclosure of exempt information.

- (a) No declarations of interest were made by Members in relation to any item of business on the agenda.
- (b) No additional items were determined as a matter of urgency.
- (c) The following items of business on the agenda, required the exclusion of the press and public due to the disclosure of exempt information:
 - Item 3 – Part 2 (EXEMPT) Minutes of the Previous Meeting – 27th September 2011.
 - Item 10 – CFO/149/11 – Staffing Issues Update

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The Minutes of the previous meeting of the Authority held on 27th September 2011 are to be amended to include the attendance of Councillor Sharon Sullivan and Councillor Denise Roberts.

With the inclusion of this amendment they were approved as a correct record and signed accordingly by the Chair.

3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting – Part 2 (EXEMPT)

Part 2 (EXEMPT) Minutes of the previous meeting of the Authority held on 27th September 2011, were approved as a correct record and signed accordingly by the Chair.

4. Annual Audit Letter

Robin Baker from the Audit Commission presented the Authority with the Annual Audit Letter, which highlighted the key findings from the 2010/11 audit.

Members resolved that the content of the report and presentation be noted and that Robin Baker and Paul Bassnet of the Audit Commission be thanked for their attendance.

5. Financial Review 2011/12 – April to September (CFO/145/11)

Members considered report CFO/145/11 and the attached Equality Impact Assessment, of the Deputy Chief Executive concerning the financial performance of the Service.

Members resolved that:

- (a) the 2011/12 budget variations identified in this report, be approved.
- (b) progress against the savings delivery plan, be noted, in particular the forecast underspend of £1,000m.
- (c) the use of the resultant forecast underspend of £1.000m, to increase reserves as outlined in the report, be approved.
- (d) the Deputy Chief Executive, be instructed to continue working with budget managers to maximise savings in 2011/12.

6. Financial Plan Update and Potential Employee Implications (CFO/151/11)

Members were provided with a presentation by the Deputy Chief Executive highlighting the emerging risks and challenges, identified within the current financial plan

Members then considered report CFO/151/11 and the attached Equality Impact Assessment of the Deputy Chief Executive concerning the financial plan.

Members resolved that:

- (a) the good progress on delivering the current financial plan, be noted.
- (b) the risks that appear to be arising around pay awards assumptions in phase one of the financial plan, be noted.
- (c) the potential for considering a strategy to freeze council tax grant and this associated savings requirement, be noted.
- (d) the fact that national average grant cuts for the fire service have been announced for 2013/14 and 2014/15 and that they are twice as high as national average grant cuts applied in 2011/12-2012-13, be noted.
- (e) depending on decisions made by the Authority in setting its February budget (and certainly in relation to phase 2), it be noted that it will be increasingly difficult to avoid compulsory redundancy (based on an assumption that the Authority will receive cuts at national average grant cut levels in Phase 2).
- (f) in order to have the flexibility to consider a range of budget and council tax decisions, the Chief Fire Officer be instructed to conduct a review, as a matter of urgency, of all back office services with a view to identifying a savings plan that would allow the Authority to review its phase one strategy and be well prepared for phase two.
- (g) the risk of these reviews identifying staff at risk of compulsory redundancies, be noted.

**7. Resource Intensive and Vexatious Customer Policy and Service Instruction
(CFO/140/11)**

Members considered Report CFO/140/11 and the attached Equality Impact Assessment of the Deputy Chief Fire Officer the concerning the Resource Intensive and Vexatious Customer Policy and Service Instruction.

Members resolved that the Resource Intensive and Vexatious Customer and Service Instruction, be approved.

**8. Collective Agreement with FBU
(CFO/152/11)**

Members considered report CFO/152/11 of the Chief Fire Officer concerning the agreement reached with the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) to resolve the existing trade dispute.

Members resolved that the agreement reached with the Fire Brigades Union to resolve the existing trade dispute, be endorsed.

9. Presentation- Legal Responsibilities/ Equality and Diversity

Members were provided with a presentation by Janet Henshaw – Clerk to the Authority and Jayne Monkhouse – Strategic Equality Advisor, highlighting the legal responsibilities of Public Authorities and their responsibilities in relation to equality and diversity.