

**POLICY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE
(Resumed Meeting)**

of the

MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

4th August, 2006

**PRESENT: Councillor Don Prout in the Chair
Councillors Les Byrom, Eddie Clein,
Kevin Firth, Dave Hanratty, Betty Lowe,
Linda Maloney, Isabel Moon and Tony
Newman**

**Councillors Vera Best, John George,
Jimmy Mahon and Tommy Mann also
attended**

**Apologies for absence were received from
Councillors Jack Colbert, Ted Grannell and Peter
Johnson**

9. Preliminary Matters

The Committee considered declarations of interest, items of urgency or items which may require the exclusion of the press and public.

Resolved that:-

- (A) four additional items of business relating to a Senior Management Review, Commitment to Individual Resilience, Fairness at Work and Service to the Community, the City Centre Fire Station and a letter relating to the Chief Medical Officer's Annual Report be considered as matters of urgency as a delay would not be in the interests of the efficient operation of the Service; and
- (B) the press and public be excluded from part of the consideration of the resumed item relating to a ballot for industrial action by the Fire Brigades Union as exempt information in connection with a labour relations matter may be disclosed and the Clerk has verified that in all the circumstances the public interest in making the exclusion outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

10. Minutes of Last Meeting

Resolved that the proceedings of the last adjourned meeting of the Committee held on 27th July be approved as a correct record and be signed accordingly by the Chair.

11. Senior Management Review
(CFO/148/06)

The Committee considered Report CFO/148/06 of the Chief Fire Officer concerning a proposed review of the senior management structure of the Authority with a view to identifying net savings which will contribute to the dynamic staff savings target set by the Authority.

Resolved that

- (A) the need to review the senior management structure with the aim of releasing further savings be approved;
- (B) the leading of the review in the first instance by the Deputy Chief Fire Officer and Executive Director of Finance be noted;
- (C) the appointment by the review leaders of external professional Human Resource advisers to quality assure and provide independent advice to the Authority be approved; and
- (D) the review be completed with as much urgency as possible in the light of the importance of meeting the agreed dynamic staff savings.

12. Commitment to Individual Resilience, Fairness at Work and Service to the Community
(CFO/149/06)

The Committee considered Report CFO/149/06 of the Chief Fire Officer concerning a proposal to recognise employees showing individual resilience, commitments to fairness and the community and incorporating the provision of operational resilience as being part of Continued Professional Development.

Resolved that -

- (A) the proposal to recognise a commitment from employees to individual resilience, fairness at work and service to the community by a Continued Professional Development payment be approved; and
- (B) the provision of personal resilience contracts as being within that area of Continued Professional Development, be endorsed.

13. City Centre Fire Station

The Committee, considered a verbal report of the Chief Fire Officer concerning the operational opening today of the new City Centre Fire Station in St. Anne Street on time and within budget.

Resolved that -

- (A) the report and the visit being made by Members to the Fire Station at the conclusion of this meeting be noted; and
- (B) the Chief Fire Officer be requested to thank firefighters in the City Centre on Members' behalf for their patience and understanding during the difficult transition period at the existing Canning Place Fire Station prior to the opening of the new Fire Station.

14. Chief Medical Officers' Annual Report

The Committee considered and noted a letter from the Department for Communities and Local Government acknowledging the important contribution the Service makes to the reduction in domestic fire deaths and to the promotion of public health. This letter follows the Annual Report of the Chief Medical Officer, Sir Liam Donaldson, which included best practice from around the regions. Merseyside was singled out in the North West for its outstanding contribution to health through its reduction in fire related injuries that are the highest reduction of any fire and rescue service in the country.

15. Fire Brigades Union Ballot (CFO/146/06), (CFO/147/06)

The Committee resumed consideration of Report CFO/146/06 of the Chief Fire Officer concerning the announcement by the Fire Brigades Union of a ballot for strike action and the issues arising from that announcement. In the light of these issues the Committee also considered -

- (1) Report CFO/147/06 of the Chief Fire Officer concerning the redeployment of the second appliance at Croxteth Fire Station due to the demand for refresher training for personnel who will provide the interim firefighting capability in the event of industrial action by the Fire Brigades Union;
- (2) a letter to the Chairman from the President of the Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA) setting out its position in relation to comments made by the Fire Brigades Union citing its interpretation of CFOA guidance relating to proposals being made by the Authority;
- (3) a copy of an email from the Fire Brigades Union Secretary to the Leader of the Conservative Group on St. Helens Council; and

(4) a supporting verbal report of the Chief Fire Officer.

Resolved that -

- (A) the redeployment of the second fire appliance at Croxteth for the purposes of training be supported;
 - (B) the proposal to request the Fire Brigades union to make exemptions in the event of industrial action at Southport, Birkenhead and Upton Fire Stations be supported;
 - (C) all Leaders of political groups on Merseyside be invited to the Members Seminar on 8th September;
 - (D) The Director of Communications be requested to write in appropriate terms to the Secretary of the Fire Brigades Union advising him of the willingness of political group leaders to meet again with the Union in advance of the next meeting of this Committee or at any other appropriate time;
 - (E) the Chief Fire Officer make an appropriate request to the Department for Communities and Local Government to establish the possibility of being afforded by the armed forces specific resources in specific circumstances in the event that industrial action does occur;
 - (F) the Executive Director of Law and Human Resources be requested to write on behalf of Members to Councillor Colbert to convey their message of support to him on a personal level in the light of the circumstances described to the meeting; and
 - (G) the meeting be adjourned and re-convened for further discussion of the issues arising from the strike ballot, at 1.00 p.m. on Wednesday 16th August 2006.
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