

POLICY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the POLICY ADVISORY COMMITTEE held in the Main Authority Room, Fire and Rescue Headquarters, Nissan Way, Barmston Mere, Sunderland on MONDAY, 16TH OCTOBER, 2006 at 10.30 a.m.

Present:

Councillor Gibson in the Chair

Councillors Bollands, Cooney, Huscroft and Jordan.

Mr D. Francis and Iain Bathgate were also in attendance.

Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Minutes

1. RESOLVED that: -

the minutes of the meeting of the Policy Advisory Committee held on 19th June, 2006 – Part I (circulated) be confirmed and signed as a correct record;

Ten Year Vision for Fire and Rescue

The Chief Fire Officer, the Clerk to the Authority and the Finance Officer submitted a joint report (circulated) to request that Members consider the Ten Year Vision Statement and provide comments as appropriate.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The Chief Fire Officer advised the Committee that the report outlined proposals, which had been agreed by the Fire Services Management Committee to allow the LGA to lead on developing a ten-year vision for fire rescue. Subsequent discussions then agreed that it would be most sensible to produce a single, coherent vision for fire and rescue which all the three key delivery bodies (LGA, DCLG and CFOA) could sign up to.

The report set out the principles on which the vision had been based and stated that the statement had been developed over a number of months, with input from various stakeholders, elected members, principal officers, fire service staff, community groups and business representatives.

The Committee referred to the vision statement and having considered the wording, commented that there was no specific reference to resources or governance arrangements and also that the fire and rescue services' involvement in Local Strategic Partnerships and Local Area Agreements was not given a mention. Nevertheless, members appreciated that it was to be a broad statement and that it would be useful in setting the strategic direction for fire and rescue in England.

Consideration was then given to the consultation paper, attached as Appendix A. At this juncture a detailed discussion ensued regarding the main outcomes that the fire and rescue service would be seeking to achieve in 2017, in particular: -

Accountability – Members commented that this begged the question where does the regional agenda fit in? Locally, Members were happy to lead on the agenda based on delivering each of the priorities within their communities;

Partnership Working – it was agreed that collaborative working was an important factor to ensure was in place to allow effective service provision for local communities;

Engaging local communities – Members recognised that the vision was about moving forward, whilst fully engaging with the local communities they serve;

Utilising technology – Members reported that technological changes had already taken place and that internal infrastructures would continue to move forward to ensure the fire and rescue services make the best use of technology to deliver effective and efficient services;

Authorities to take pride in – Members raised concern with the way in which this point was written. It was suggested that the point should reinforce that the Fire and Rescue Authorities do take pride.

In response to comments put forward by members regarding the approach that should be taken in order to progress the vision, the Fire Officer responded that it was too early at this stage to discuss progress and that future spending reviews would allow discussions to take place in future.

Following a detailed discussion, it was:-

2. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the Ten Year Vision Statement be received and noted; and
- (ii) the Ten Year Vision – Consultation paper be received and noted;

Comprehensive Spending Review 2007

The Chief Fire Officer, Clerk to the authority and Finance Officer submitted a joint report (copy circulated) to the meeting. The Chief Fire Officer advised that the next Government Spending Review covered the period 2008/2009 to 2010/2011 and would be announced by the Chancellor in July 2007. The purpose of the report was to update Members on the LGA's submission to the Treasury.

(For copy report – see original minutes).

The Finance Officer commented that there was a strong emphasis on efficiency in the report and that the fire and rescue service had developed a good track-record which would have greater prominence in the 2007 Spending Review. He added however that more savings would need to be made.

Members of the Committee then commented that due the significant savings that had been made, Tyne and Wear were better placed than other authorities to deal with the emergent position. It was also suggested that the Committee have regard to the next 4-5 year period when considering the budget for 2007/2008.

Having given consideration to the report, it was:-

3. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the report be received and noted;

A Fire Fighters' Pension Scheme – Financial Arrangements B Risk Management

The Chief Fire Officer, Clerk to the Authority and Finance Officer submitted a joint report (copy circulated). The Committee were advised that the report was to inform Members that detailed presentations were about to be provided covering both the financial arrangements, amendments to the 1992 scheme and the parameters of the new scheme. A presentation would also be provided on risk management.

In the first instance, the Finance Officer delivered a presentation outlining the new arrangements for firefighter pensions including budgetary implications. Members noted the key features of the pensions fund.

Secondly, The Assistant Chief Officer presented amendments to the 1992 pension scheme compared with the conditions attached to the new pension scheme. The main benefits of the new scheme were then reinforced to Members that employee contributions were 8.5% with the new scheme, as opposed to 11% with the old scheme. A further benefit with the new scheme was that unmarried partners were entitled to a share. However, the retirement age was higher with the new scheme.

Mr. D. Francis the Insurance Risk Manager from Sunderland City Council and Mr. I. Bathgate then delivered a presentation on Corporate Risk Management. The presentation provided Members with a generic definition of risk management and outlined how risk management was tackled in the public and private sector. The presentation went on to address strategic and operational risks; corporate risk management roles and responsibilities; and the role of Members in relation to CPA KLOE and Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Authority.

Members commented that the presentations were informative and thanked the Finance Officer, Assistant Chief Officer, Mr. Francis and Mr Bathgate for their contributions.

Members having been informed of the new firefighters pension arrangements and risk management issues, it was: -

4. RESOLVED that:-

- (i) the presentations be received and noted;
- (ii) each presentation be delivered to the next scheduled main authority meeting.

(Signed) P. GIBSON,
Chairman.