



## **BEDFORDSHIRE AND LUTON COMBINED FIRE AUTHORITY**

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### **REPORT OF THE BEDFORDSHIRE AND LUTON COMBINED FIRE AUTHORITY FROM ITS MEETING ON 22 FEBRUARY 2012 TO CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL**

#### **MEETINGS**

Bedfordshire and Luton Combined Fire Authority (CFA) held a meeting on 22 February 2012 at Dunstable Community Fire Station. The major issues discussed at the meeting are summarised below:

#### **1. DRAFT FIRE AND RESCUE NATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR ENGLAND**

Members noted the main provisions of the Draft Fire and Rescue National Framework for England which had been released on consultation on 13 December 2011. The consultation period was to end on 19 March 2012.

To some degree, the framework restated responsibilities which were already enshrined in the Fire and Rescue Service Act 2004 and the Civil Contingency Act 2004, but further clarification was to be sought with regard to independent assurance to be provided to communities and the Government.

There was a necessary tension between the Government's wish to have local accountability within fire and rescue authorities while providing national resilience. It was suggested that the response to consultation should support the general balance within the Framework, but cover the points made in the report. Additionally, clarification was required as to what was meant by 'agreed strategic governance arrangements'; and it was to be pointed out that, although resilience was a national issue, the Framework only covered England.

#### **2. REVENUE BUDGET AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING**

Members noted the budget monitoring position as at 31 December 2011. The overall forecast outturn was an underspend of £650,000.

#### **3. TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY AND PRACTICES**

Subject to review by the Corporate Services Policy and Challenge Group, Members agreed the following updated documents:

- Treasury Management Strategy Statement;
- Minimum Revenue Provision Policy and Annual Investment Strategy; and
- Treasury Management Practices.

The key update of the Treasury Management Strategy Statement was a move from investing in AAA countries to AA-. This was to ensure that, should this country's rating drop, the Authority could still invest in the United Kingdom.

#### **4. UPDATE TO THE AUTHORITY'S FINANCIAL REGULATIONS AND STANDING ORDERS RELATING TO CONTRACTS**

Members approved updated Financial Regulations and Standing Orders Relating to Contracts and agreed that further minor changes should be delegated to the Head of Finance and Asset Management in consultation with the Treasurer.

#### **5. 2012/13 REVENUE BUDGET AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME**

It was agreed that for 2012/13:

- A Revenue Budget requirement be set at £29.055M;
- In meeting this Budget requirement, the Authority's Precept be set at £17.577M and that, as a consequence, a council tax increase of 2% be approved equivalent to £84.09 per Band D property; and
- In order to meet the Precept requirement, the Secretary of the Authority be authorised to issue Precepts in the necessary form to each of the unitary councils.

Members also approved a Medium-Term Revenue Plan; Medium-Term Capital Programme; Medium-Term Financial Strategy; and noted the Treasurer's statement on the robustness of the estimates included in the Budget and the adequacy of the Reserves.

#### **6. COMMUNITY RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN (CRMP) 2012-16**

Members agreed a revision of the Draft CRMP which reflected recent consultation and the proposals contained in the Draft Fire and Rescue National Framework for England.

#### **7. LOCALISM ACT 2011 - STANDARDS**

The Secretary reported on the provisions of the Localism Act 2011 relating to standards of conduct by Members, including the requirement to:

- Adopt a Code of Conduct;
- Make arrangements to investigate allegations against Members, to include an independent person;
- Make arrangements for the Registration of pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests; and
- Make Member arrangements to deal with standards matters, including complaints.

Members requested that further reports be submitted to enable the Combined Fire Authority to adopt a Code of Conduct, and to approve investigation procedures (including the appointment of an independent person) in accordance with the Act. They also requested that further consideration be given to matters relating to standards being incorporated into the role of the Audit Committee.

#### **8. LOCALISM ACT 2011 – PAY POLICY STATEMENT**

Members agreed a pay policy statement for 2012/13 in accordance with the Localism Act 2011 which required English and Welsh local authorities to produce and publish a pay policy statement for 2012/13 and for each subsequent financial year.

#### **9. NAME OF AUTHORITY AND SERVICE**

The current name of both the Authority and Service no longer represented their constituent bodies following the Local Government Review in 2009 which had created the two new

unitary authorities of Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire and abolished the County Council.

Members were in favour of a change of name for the Authority and Service on a low cost incremental basis and agreed that the names of the Authority and Service should be changed on an incremental basis to reflect the ceremonial county name of Bedfordshire, as noted below, from a date to be agreed in 2012/13:

- Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority; and
- Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service.

Members also requested that the constituent Councils be approached for their views on the proposed revised name of the Authority prior to formal application to the Secretary of State.

#### **10. INFORMATION BULLETIN**

Members received a Bulletin containing information on various matters relating to the Fire and Rescue Service.

**COUNCILLOR DAVID McVICAR  
VICE CHAIR OF THE COMBINED FIRE AUTHORITY**