

RESOURCES COMMITTEE

(Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Authority)

14 September 2009

Present:-

Councillors Horsfall, Hughes OBE, Smith, Turner, Woodman and Yeomans

Apologies:-

Councillor Gordon

***RC/1. Election of Chair**

RESOLVED that Councillor Gordon be appointed as Chair of the Committee until the first meeting after the Annual Meeting of the Authority in 2010.

***RC/2. Election of Vice Chair**

In view of the absence of Councillor Gordon, it was agreed to move item 5 for consideration at this point in the meeting, whereupon it was

RESOLVED that Councillor Yeomans be appointed Vice Chair of the Committee until its first meeting after the Annual Meeting of the Authority in 2010.

In the absence of Councillor Gordon, it was:

RESOLVED that Councillor Yeomans would take the Chair for this meeting.

***RC/3. Minutes**

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 4 February 2009 be signed as a correct record.

***RC/4. Declarations of Interest**

Members were invited to consider whether they have any **personal/personal and prejudicial interests** in items as set out on the agenda for this meeting and declare any such interests.

No interests were declared.

RC/5. Budget Monitoring Report 2009/10

The Committee considered a report of the Treasurer (RC/09/4) that set out projections of income and expenditure for the first four months of the financial year (to the end of July 2009) against the approved Revenue Budget for 2009/10 and which detailed significant variations against individual budget lines. The report also contained details of proposed virements within the approved budget and provided a summary of the Authority's forecast performance against its financial targets and its anticipated year end reserve position.

At this stage, it was reported that projected spending would be £0.588million less than the approved budget (equivalent to 0.81%) and that this was attributable largely to the 2009 pay award for uniformed staff which had been settled at 1.25% instead of 2.3% as assumed in the setting of the 2009/10 revenue budget. There was also a number of vacancies held and activity levels for retained firefighters had been lower than anticipated. The Treasurer urged caution at this stage, however, as it was early in the financial year and the position may change.

RESOLVED

- (a) That the current projection of an underspend of £0.588m, against the current year revenue budget be noted;
- (b) That, in accordance with Financial Regulations, budget virement 2 as set out in the table at paragraph 6.1 of report RC/09/4 be approved;
- (c) That, in accordance with Financial Regulations, the Authority be recommended to approve budget virement 1 as set out in the table at paragraph 6.1 of the report
- (d) That the performance against 2009/2010 financial targets, be noted.

***RC/6. Capital Programme Monitoring 2009/10 to 2011/12**

The Committee considered a report of the Head of Physical Assets (RC/09/5) that set out the current monitoring position for the capital programme for 2009/10 to 2011/12 as approved by the Authority on 16 February 2009.

The Committee was advised that the revisions to the Programme had occurred largely due to slippage on the 2008/09 programme as a result of factors such as late approvals and delays in external factors beyond the Service's control. These revisions did not affect the budgets for individual schemes (which remain as originally approved) but represent a rescheduling in terms of the approved Programme.

Reference was made to the discussions held with the Capital Programme Working Party on 31 July 2009. This provided an opportunity for the Service to engage with Members in respect of the detail on capital schemes at an early stage. It was noted that the Minutes of the meetings would be submitted to the Resources Committee for information in the future.

RESOLVED

- (a) That the revised capital programme as set out in Appendix B of report RC/09/5 be approved.
- (b) That, subject to (a) above, the report be noted.

***RC/7. Specialist Rescue - Payments**

The Committee considered a report of the Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Operations) (RC/09/6) on the current position, following discussions, in relation to the proposed introduction of financial recognition for staff undertaking specialist rescue work at Level 3.

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Operations) advised that, nationally, whilst there was clarity that specialist rescue work at Levels 1 and 2 was part of the firefighter role map (and hence did not attract any additional payment), there was at present uncertainty as to whether or not Level 3 was incorporated in the role map.

Pending clarification of this and to enable the Service to progress specialist rescue capability to level 3, a suggested solution (as discussed with representative bodies) was presented which proposed an additional payment to those firefighters undertaking level 3 specialist rescue activities to recognise the technical, physiological and psychological nature of the work. The report outlined the financial implications of implementing this proposal which could be contained from within existing resources in the current financial year but would represent a commitment on the base budget for 2010/11 and beyond should the payments be continued. The proposal had been instigated as a result of decisions taken by other fire and rescue services in the region to recognise additional work at level 3 undertaken in relation to Safety at Height and Confined Space (SHACS) activities.

Following a debate on this issue, Members questioned the requirement for the Service to undertake and fund Level 3 activities, particularly in the light of the lack of clarity regarding inclusion of this in the role map. Councillor Hughes moved (and was seconded by Councillor Mrs Turner):

“that further clarification be sought from the National Joint Council (NJC) as to whether specialist rescue responsibilities (at Level 3) were included within the Role Map for firefighter”.

Upon a vote (6 for, 0 against), the motion was **CARRIED**.

RESOLVED that further clarification be sought from the National Joint Council (NJC) as to whether specialist rescue responsibilities (at Level 3) were included within the Role Map for firefighter.

***RC/8. Treasury Management Performance 2008/09 and 2009/10 (to July 2009)**

The Committee received for information a report of the Treasurer (RC/09/7) that provided details of the Authority's borrowing and investment activities during 2008/09 and which compared this performance against the approved Treasury Management Strategy. The report also included details of performance relating to the first four months of 2009/10 (to the end of July 2009).

The Authority's treasury management adviser, Mark Swallow, was in attendance at the meeting to present the report and he highlighted two points, namely:

- That the Authority's debt was being managed well, with a reduction in the cost of borrowing having been achieved through reprofiling during the year;
- An average investment outturn for 2008/09 of 3.84% (from a benchmark return of 3.69%) had been achieved. This was more than the average return for 7 day short term investments and therefore a positive position for the Authority given the current market.

*** DENOTES DELEGATED MATTER WITH POWER TO ACT**

The meeting started at 10.00hours and concluded at 12.50hours.