

**Highland and Islands Fire Board
Policy and Finance Working Group**

Minutes of Meeting of the **Policy and Finance Working Group** held in the **Chamber, Inverness Town House, Inverness**, on **Friday, 15 January 2010** at **11.15 a.m.**

Present:

Representing the Highland Council

Mr R Durham
Mr D Flear
Mrs M Paterson

Mr J Gray
Mr J Ford

Representing Comhairle nan Eilean Siar Mr N M Macleod

Representing Orkney Islands Council Mr A Drever

Representing Shetland Islands Council Mr A Duncan (substituting)

Also in attendance:

The Highland Council: Mr D Fallows
Dr A Sinclair

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar: Mr I Mackenzie

Orkney Islands Council: Mr R Leslie

Officials in attendance:

Mr T Johnson, Temporary Deputy Chief Fire Officer
Mr M Jenks, Head of Corporate Services, Highland and Islands Fire and Rescue Service (HIFRS)
Mr S Ross, Performance and Best Value Manager, HIFRS
Mrs M Grigor, Treasurer's Office
Mrs R Moir, Assistant Clerk

Mr R Durham in the Chair

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Ms M Smith of the Highland Council and Mr A Cooper of Shetland Islands Council.

2. Revenue Budget 2010/11

At its meeting held on 27 November 2009, the Highland and Islands Fire Board had approved the Revenue Budget for 2010/11.

In this context, there had been circulated and was **APPROVED** Report No. PFWG1/10 by the Treasurer comprising a revised requisition table relating to the approved budget.

3. Highlands and Islands Fire and Rescue Service Draft Service Plan – 2009/10-2011/12

There had been circulated Report No. PFWG2/10 dated 8 January 2010 by the Chief Fire Officer on the Highlands and Islands Fire and Rescue Service Draft Service Plan for 2010/11, together with, as an appendix, copy of the draft Plan.

The Performance and Best Value Manager explained that the format of the draft Plan had been changed following a comparative study of a range of Plans from other organisations, seeking good examples of best practice, clarity and accessibility. He confirmed that some points of detail remained to be finalised nearer to the publication date. Members welcomed the revised style.

During general discussion, the importance of partnership working with other organisations in the Highlands and Islands - and also, where appropriate, in neighbouring areas - was emphasised, particularly in relation to emergency planning issues. There was some discussion on relative arrangements for information sharing in the various constituent authorities, with particular reference to recent extreme weather conditions.

The need to achieve best value in addition to strong performance management was recognised. It was suggested that the scope for shared services should be examined.

After discussion, the Working Group **NOTED** the terms of the report and **AGREED** to recommend to the Board that it approve the draft Service Plan for 2010/11 – 2012/13.

4. Distribution of Fire Capital Grant

There had been circulated for information copy letter dated 17 December 2009 from the Minister for Community Safety to the Chair of the Scottish Fire Conveners Forum confirming approval of the Forum's recommendations in relation to Fire Capital Grant for 2010-11, together with copy letter dated 11 December 2009 from the Forum Chair to the Minister setting out those recommendations.

The correspondence confirmed a total capital allocation (formula distribution share plus top slice allocation) to this Board of some £2.8m, plus a possible further £300,000, should additional monies become available to Government. The Convener expressed his satisfaction both with this outcome and also with the success of the process followed, which he suggested would reinforce for the future the role of the Fire Conveners Forum in these matters.

The Working Group **NOTED** the position.

5. Pay Adjustments

i. Part-Time Workers

There had been circulated to Members only Report No. PFWG3/10 dated 8 January 2010 by the Chief Fire Officer on the potential budgetary impact of an

agreement in principle reached recently by the NJC relating to the terms and conditions of Part-time Workers.

In speaking to the report, the Temporary Deputy Chief Fire Officer drew attention to the particular impact these developments would have on this Board, given the high proportion of retained fire fighters in the Highlands and Islands.

The Working Group **NOTED** the terms of the report and **AGREED** to recommend to the Board that the Service, in consultation with the Convener, approach Ministers to seek additional financial support.

ii. Retained Fire-fighters

There had been circulated to Members only Report No. PFWG4/10 dated 8 January 2010 by the Chief Fire Officer on an issue relating to pay for retained fire-fighters.

The Working Group **NOTED** the terms of the report and **AGREED** to recommend to the Board that the Service negotiate with the representative bodies on this issue and that relevant additional payments so agreed be approved.

The meeting ended at 12.20 p.m.