

**Minutes of the Annual Meeting of
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority
held on Wednesday, 26 June 2019, at 2.00 pm
at Headquarters, Shrewsbury**

Present

Members

Councillors Adams, Blundell, Carroll, Carter (Chair), Dee, Hartin, Mellings (Vice-Chair), Minnery, Murray, Pardy, Sahota, Thompson and Wynn

Officers

Rod Hammerton	Chief Fire Officer	CFO
Andy Johnson	Deputy Chief Fire Officer	DCFO
Dave Myers	Assistant Chief Fire Officer	ACFO
Jonathan Eatough	Clerk and Monitoring Officer	Clerk
Joanne Coadey	Head of Finance	HoF
Guy Williams	Head of Transformation and Collaboration	HTC
Germaine Worker	Head of HR and Administration	HHRA
Lynn Ince	Executive Support Officer	ESO

External Bodies

Tracey Onslow	West Mercia Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner	DPCC
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The Chair informed the Fire Authority that Councillor Roberts is currently to attend meetings as he is recuperating from back surgery. The Chair then welcomed Councillor Dean Carroll to the meeting. Councillor Carroll has replaced Councillor Roberts on the Fire Authority until Councillor Roberts is recovered. The Fire Authority asked that their best wishes be passed to Councillor Roberts.

1 Election of Chair

It was proposed by Councillor Minnery and seconded by Councillor Wynn that Councillor Carter be elected Chair of the Fire Authority to hold office until immediately after the election of Chair at the next Annual Meeting.

It was proposed by Councillor Hartin and seconded by Councillor Thompson that Councillor Sahota be elected Chair of the Fire Authority to hold office until immediately after the election of Chair at the next Annual Meeting.

A vote was taken on the two nominations with the outcome being 6 votes for Councillor Carter and 6 votes for Councillor Sahota. Councillor Murray abstained from the vote. Councillor Carter, as Chair of the Fire Authority, then used his casting vote in favour of himself which gave him a total of 7 votes.

Resolved that Councillor Carter be elected Chair of the Fire Authority to hold office until immediately after the election of Chair at the next Annual Meeting.

2 Appointment of Vice-Chair

It was proposed by Councillor Dee and seconded by Councillor Pardy

That Councillor Mellings be appointed Vice-Chair of the Fire Authority to hold office until immediately after the appointment of Vice-Chair at the next Annual Meeting.

There being no other nominations, Councillor Mellings was duly appointed as Vice-Chair.

3 Vote of Thanks and Welcome

The Fire Authority gave a vote of thanks to Councillors Hosken, Jones, Phillips and Pinter, who had left the Fire Authority in May.

The Chair welcomed Councillors Blundell and Thompson from Telford & Wrekin Council back to the Fire Authority.

4 Apologies for Absence

Councillor Price. Councillor Milner did not attend the meeting.

5 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

None

6 Public Questions

None

7 Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the Fire Authority meeting, held on 24 April 2019, be agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

8 Audit and Performance Management Committee Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the Audit and Performance Management Committee meeting, held on 11 April 2019, be noted and that the recommendation at item 7, as given below, be agreed.

Item 7 – Code of Corporate Governance 2018/19

Resolved that the Fire Authority formally adopt the Code of Corporate Governance 2018/19.

9 Constitutional Issues

9a Committee Composition and Allocation of Seats to Political Groups

This report outlined the changes to the Committee structure of the Fire Authority and asked the Authority to agree the numbers on its Committees, together with the allocations of seats on those Committee to political groups.

Resolved unanimously that the Fire Authority

- a) Note the report;
- b) Agree the number of Members on its two Committees; and
- c) Agree the allocation of seats to political groups on each of the two Committees and the associated sub-committees, as proposed in the Appendix to the report.

Variation of Agenda

Resolved that the order of the agenda be varied to allow item 20 – Election of Chairs and Appointment of Vice-Chairs to Committees to be considered at Agenda Item 9b – Committee Membership, Appointments and Constitution.

9b Committee Membership and Constitution

This report asked the Fire Authority to confirm appointments to committees and to the Local Government Association Fire Services Commission and to review the constitution of its committees.

The Fire Authority debated whether the appointment of Members to committees could be done in the meeting or if it needed to be done after the meeting. It was decided that the appointment of Members be done in the meeting as this would enable the election of Chairs and appointment of Vice-Chairs to Committees to take place in the meeting. Changes to the membership of committees can be made after the meeting and agreed by the Monitoring Officer under his delegated authority.

The DPCC asked for clarification of the decision making function of the Strategy and Resources Committee. The CFO explained that this had been designed to avoid delays in decision-making and that the thresholds needed to be determined. The Clerk further explained that if responsibility is delegated a Committee then the decision-making process lies with that Committee.

Resolved that the Fire Authority:

- a) Agree the appointment of Members to serve on committees;
- b) Appoint Councillor Carter as its representative on the Local Government Association Fire Services Commission;
- c) Appoint Councillor Pardy as the Equality and Diversity Member Champion;

- d) Appoint Councillor Sahota as the Risk Management and Audit Champion;
- e) Agree the constitutions of its committees, as set out in the Appendix to the report; and
- f) Confirm the delegation to the Monitoring Officer, as detailed in paragraph 5 of the report.

Councillor Sahota left the meeting at this point (2.40 pm)

9c Review of Member Role Descriptions

This report asked the Fire Authority to review and agree its Member Role Descriptions.

Resolved that the Fire Authority, having reviewed the Role Descriptions listed below, agree the proposed amendments to them

- Member
- Chair of Fire Authority
- Vice-Chair of Fire Authority
- Leaders of Main Opposition Groups
- Chair and Vice-Chair of Strategy and Resources Committee
- Chair of Strategic Advisory Group
- Chair and Vice-Chair of Standards, Audit and Performance Committee
- Risk Management and Audit Champion
- Equality and Diversity Champion
- Independent Person, including Skills and Competencies

9d Review of Scheme of Standing Orders

This report reviewed the Fire Authority's Standing Orders for the Regulation of Proceedings and Business, Standing Orders relating to Contracts and the Scheme of Delegation to Officers and asked Members to consider and decide upon the amendments proposed.

The DPCC queried the increase in contract value at section C3 of the Standing Orders relating to Contracts from £1m to £2m. The ACFO explained that this had been done to reduce the number of exemptions that needed to be brought to the Fire Authority for approval.

Resolved on a vote, with 13 Members voting for, and 1 Member voting against, that the amendments, as proposed in the report, be agreed to:

- Standing Orders for the Regulations of Proceedings and Business
- Standing Orders relating to Contracts
- The Scheme of Delegation to Officers

Councillor Hartin left the meeting at this point (2.45 pm)

9e Review of Financial Regulations

This report reviewed the Fire Authority's Financial Regulations and asked Members to consider the proposed amended version.

The HoF presented the report and explained that this Service's Financial Regulations have been aligned to those of Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service to support the work of the Strategic Alliance. Any differences between the two Services are clearly reflected within the document. Any further amendments to the Regulations will be brought back to the Authority for agreement as required.

Resolved that the Fire Authority approve the amended Financial Regulations.

Councillor Hartin returned to the room at this point (2.50 pm)

9f Meeting Schedule 2019

The Meeting Schedule for Fire Authority and Committee meetings from June to December 2019 was brought to the Fire Authority for information. The Meeting Schedule for 2020 will be brought to the October 2019 Fire Authority meeting for agreement.

Resolved that the Fire Authority note the Meeting Schedule for June to December 2019.

10 Statement of Accounts 2018/19

This report set out the key revenue issues, which had arisen from work on the Statement of Accounts 2018/19, and sought approval for use of the General Fund balance in 2019/20.

Members asked if the £128k of additional government grant was standalone or attached to certain funding streams. The HOF confirmed that there were no conditions attached to the extra income.

Members also asked for further information on the major projects that the Service has planned. The HoF explained that the reserve which had been established for the Headquarters Project had been kept open once that project was completed. The Telford Central redevelopment is the next / last major project that is planned so the reserve has now been allocated to that project.

The Chair asked if there had been any further developments with regard to financing contributions from West Mercia Police. The HoF explained that, at present, there was no further information on this issue.

Resolved unanimously that the Fire Authority:

- a) Note the final position of the revenue budget and the General Fund balance in 2018/19; and
- b) Approve use of the General Fund balance in 2019/20.

11 Strategic Planning Process Timetable 2020/21

This report outlined how the Service would continue to align service, financial and improvement planning, the result of which would culminate in the 2020/21 budget, publication of the 2020/21 Annual Plan and a one-year extension of the current 2015-20 Action Plan.

Resolved that the Fire Authority note the contents of the report and agree the timetable set out in the appendix to the report.

12 Service Targets for Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) Extension 2020/21

Following agreement by the Fire Authority to extend the life of the Service Plan by one year, to March 2021, this report made recommendations to Members about the rationale they may wish to use when considering the setting of targets against each of the Plan's Performance Indicators for that extra year. It also asked Members to delegate responsibility for the setting of the actual target for 2020/21, based on the rationale agreed through this report, to the Strategy and Resources Committee at their March 2020 meeting.

The DCFO presented the report and talked through each of the targets in turn. A synopsis of the discussion generated for each target is given below.

Accidental Primary Fires

Members asked if the proposed extension to this target is realistic given that it has not been met over the previous two years. The DCFO responded that it is a 5 year reduction plan and this year is on target, so it is reasonable to extend the period for achieving the 25% reduction however the target is susceptible to fluctuations caused by weather etc.

Accidental Dwelling Fires (ADFs)

Performance against this target in 2018/19 (207 ADFs) was the best in the history of Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service. Performance so far this year has also been good.

Members commented that whilst they accepted the performance against the target, they are aware of increased numbers of chip pan fires etc which may require increased prevention work. The DCFO explained that incidents such as chip pan fires are sensitive to perceived increases due to small numbers of such incidents but the Service is responsive structurally.

Deliberate Fires

There were significant numbers of deliberate fires in 2010-12 which increased the average at the beginning of the 5% year on year reduction plan. There has since been a steady decrease in numbers of deliberate fires but the target is affected by weather.

Members commented that a clear message regarding barbeque safety needs to be delivered to the public with Members keen to see disposable barbeques banned and local councils encouraged to provide permanent public barbeque sites.

The DCFO commented that the Service could provide supporting information to Members on Councils who wish to promote this issue. The DCFO also explained that any incidents caused by barbecues would be counted as accidental primary fires rather than deliberate fires.

Death / Serious Injury

The DCFO explained that the improvement in performance against this target is due to a combination of Prevention campaigns and also better data quality. To date, there has been one fire death this year plus two injuries.

Members commented that there is a drive to move dwellings in rural locations away from solid fuel burning and asked if the Service provides information / support for this. The DCFO explained that the issue is covered in the Service's Safe and Well visits and that the Service is on the verge of an agreement with Shropshire Council to gather data that will enable the targeting of those households which are subject to heat deprivation.

Members commented that they were very aware that this is the most contentious target in terms of sending the wrong message to the public and asked if it was possible to set a target of zero for this indicator. The CFO explained that whilst it may seem perverse to say, the reality is that fire deaths and serious injuries do happen. Agreeing a target of zero for this indicator will set the Service to fail from day one. Setting a 'less than' target indicates the Service's ambition to reduce to zero deaths and serious injuries rather than setting a target that it cannot meet.

Members commented that the number seems high but acknowledged that it may only take one fatal house fire to cause this target to fail. In addition, Members are keen to see the provision of sprinklers in domestic properties being prioritised and were unclear as to why this was not already done. The CFO explained that the Service is more than willing to work with Members on promoting the issue of sprinklers as this an issue that the National Fire Chiefs Council is currently pursuing nationally.

The DPCC highlighted an issue with the correlation of figures between the graph and table on page 7 of the report. The DCFO undertook to investigate and correct this issue.

The DCFO confirmed with Members that they were leaning towards a 'less than' target.

Councillor Adams left the meeting at this point (3.25 pm)

Room of Origin

The DCFO explained that performance needs to be above, not below, the red target line on the graph on page 7 of the report.

Councillor Adams returned to the meeting at this point (3.27 pm)

Members queried if the data for this target included business premises. The DCFO explained that it is mainly domestic properties that are measured and that the 89.5% for 2019/20 is a stretch target.

Members asked about the risks associated with the growth of cannabis farms in domestic properties. The CFO explained that the Service is aware of the risks associated with this and has Standard Operating Procedures in place for such incidents. The Service also works closely with the Police on this issue and the DPCC confirmed that the Police are working with landlords to tackle issues with rental properties.

Members suggested that the stretch target for this indicator should be retained and the issue of sprinklers promoted.

The CFO commented that this is a good strategic oversight indicator which forces the Service to analyse every single incident.

Members asked if the target includes smoke damage as well as fire spread. The DCFO confirmed that it is only fire spread that is measured for this indicator although smoke damage data is collated separately.

Response

The DCFO explained that as SFRS is a rural brigade it does have slightly longer response times than more urban Services.

Members asked if rural roadworks were having any impact on response times. The DCFO responded that a national study was undertaken 7 or 8 years ago which focused on the impact of the amount of traffic on rural roads. This issue will need to be looked at within the IRMP analysis.

Members queried if the response times purely related to fires or to all incidents that the Service responds to, including road traffic collisions (RTCs). The DCFO explained that it is all incidents including RTCs. Response to RTCs is becoming more important for fire and rescue services and will be an element in future IRMPs.

The DPCC asked when response times are measured from and to. The DCFO explained that the response time is measured from the point at which the incident is created on the system by Fire Control. This is because when the five year target was initially set in 2014 it was not possible to get the actual time that the 999 call was received, but these times are now measured separately.

Injuries to Staff

The DCFO explained that the plan is to continue with the year on year reductions, but this would need to be informed by this year's performance.

Members commented that the report shows how well the Service is performing, but noted that it does not include any information on automatic fire alarms (AFAs). The DCFO explained that the Service does monitor AFAs and that this is an issue that has been highlighted by the HMI. SFRS do still respond to these incidents. Other fire and rescue services no longer do so and this might be something that this Service may wish to consider for the future. The DCFO also reported that there has been a decline in the numbers of malicious calls received by the Service.

Resolved that the Fire Authority

- a) Have considered and agreed to the proposed rationale for each of the Performance Indicators to be contained within the Annual Service Plan for 2020/21; and
- b) Delegate responsibility for the setting of the actual targets against each Indicator, based on the agreed rationale, to the Strategy and Resources Committee in March 2020.

13 The Scheme for the Payment of Members Allowances 2019/20

This report asked the Fire Authority to consider and agree its 2019/20 Scheme for the Payment of Members' Allowances.

The HHRA presented this report and explained that the Service has been notified that there are issues with the Shropshire Independent Remuneration Panel and it is unlikely that this Panel will be able to undertake the review of the Fire Authority Member Allowance Scheme in September 2019. Officers therefore suggest the Authority considers using Telford & Wrekin Council's Independent Remuneration Panel for the upcoming review. The Fire Authority agreed that this was a sensible suggestion and the Clerk undertook to take this request to Telford & Wrekin Council.

Resolved that the Fire Authority agree its Scheme for the Payment of Members' Allowances 2019/20 which took effect from 1 April 2019 (attached as an appendix to the report), with the inclusion of investigating the use of Telford & Wrekin Council's Independent Remuneration Panel.

14 Partnership Working

This report provided Members with an overview of the partnership working being undertaken by the Fire Authority and Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service.

The HTC presented this report and talked through the information contained in it, highlighting the following points:

- The Shropshire Council Adult Social Care partnership referred to on page 4 of the report is not yet live but is expected to be so soon
- Scenes of Crime partnership to support provision of facilities to Scene of Crime Officers (SOCOs) though use of fire stations is being explored
- Recommendations have been received from Internal Audit regarding controlled exit strategies for partnerships and protocols for General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and these are being looked at by officers
- Joint training with the Police is also being looked at.

Councillor Murray left the meeting at this point (3.55 pm)

The Chair commented that the information contained in the report provides evidence that the Service is looking to collaborate with West Mercia Police.

Councillor Carroll explained that he is Shropshire Council's portfolio holder for adult social care and noted the partnership detailed in the report.

Members asked about the importance of community help in relation people coming home from hospital. The HTC explained that a combination of independent living and social isolation can mean that people who are coming home from hospital are prone to incidents particularly falls through distraction etc. This makes community awareness of those who have been in hospital and recently come home vital. Councillor Dee commented that she had recently come out of hospital and has experienced the services referred to, which do make a difference.

Members asked for further information about domestic abuse referrals as detailed on page 4 of the report. The HTC explained that the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) process is used for domestic abuse referrals. Under the MARAC process, Police referrals are risk assessed and a joint visit undertaken to those at risk which can include witness protection as well as domestic abuse. In cases of domestic abuse, the Service will provide items such as lockable letterboxes to reduce risk at the premises concerned.

Members also asked whether any equality and diversity work is undertaken with eastern European communities in the county, for example with the Polish community. The HTC explained that this work is undertaken and gave the example of a Romanian firefighter based at Tweedale who undertakes work within the Romanian community.

Resolved, with Councillor Carroll abstaining, that the Fire Authority note the report

15 Corporate Risk Management Annual Report 2017/18

This report informed Members about the corporate risk management work that had been undertaken during the previous twelve months.

Resolved that the Fire Authority note the report.

16 Strategic Fire Alliance Update

This report updated Members on progress in preparing priority projects developed by the Strategic Fire Alliance between Shropshire and Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Services.

The CFO presented this report and gave the following updates on the three main projects, set out in the report:

Fire Control

The delivery of this project has been deferred to November 2019

IRMP / CRMP

National standards are likely to be published which will aid the IRMP 'Response contract' with the public.

ICT

SFRS are providing the HR lead on the recruitment of the Strategic ICT Change Manager. This will be a joint appointment across both Services on a 3 year fixed term contract.

It is anticipated that the three identified projects will be fleshed out and that this will build the change programme across both Services with the aim of matching capacity to the Services' ambition for change.

The DPCC asked what has changed operationally as a result of the establishment of the Strategic Alliance. The CFO responded that there were numerous examples of cashable changes that had led to cost avoidance and improved resilience across both Services. The CFO particularly highlighted the following examples:

- Incident Command - originally it was planned to purchase five new Incident Command vehicles across the area of both Services but this has now been reduced to three vehicles.
- Specialist officer provision, for example National Interagency Liaison Officers (NILOs) is easier across both Services
- Shared training across both Services
- Use of Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service (H&WFRS) drones if needed
- Use of H&WFRS Urban Search and Rescue team if required

Resolved that the Fire Authority note the report and the progress it details.

17 Exclusion of Press and Public

Resolved that, under section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting room for the following items on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information, as defined by the provisions of Part I of Schedule 12(A) to the Act, by virtue of Paragraph 4.

18 Exempt Appendix to Corporate Risk Management Annual Report 2018/19 (Paragraph 4)

Resolved that the exempt Appendix B to report 15 – Corporate Risk Management Summary Annual Report 2018/19 be noted.

19 Election of Chairs and Appointment of Vice-Chairs to Committees

Committee Clerk's Note

This item was considered at item 9b on the agenda with the following Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Committees being elected to hold office until the Fire Authority's Annual Meeting in June 2020.

Strategy and Resources

Chair Councillor Mellings
Vice-Chair Councillor Hartin

Standards, Audit and Performance

Chair Councillor Sahota
Vice-Chair Councillor Dee

The Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the Brigade Managers Employment Panel and the Strategic Advisory Group will be elected at the first meeting of those Committees.

Pensions Panel

Chair to be elected on ad hoc basis, as and when the Panel meets.

The meeting closed at 4.15 pm.

Chair.....

Date.....