

**Minutes of the Meeting of  
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority  
Standards, Audit and Performance Committee  
Held in the Oak Room, Headquarters  
On Tuesday, 30 September 2025 at 2.00 pm**

**Present:**

Councillors Karen Blundell, Susan Coleman, Stephen Handley (Chair), Peter Huseman, Duncan Kerr, Rosie Radford and Beverly Waite.

**Officers**

|                    |                                                   |      |
|--------------------|---------------------------------------------------|------|
| Simon Hardiman     | Chief Fire Officer                                | CFO  |
| Karen Gowreesunker | Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Corporate Services) | ACFO |
| Joanne Coadey      | Head of Finance                                   | HoF  |
| Scott Hurford      | Head of Transformation & Collaboration            | HoTC |
| Aleks Zydek        | Executive Support Officer                         | ESO  |

**External Bodies**

|                  |                                 |    |
|------------------|---------------------------------|----|
| Richard Anderson | Grant Thornton (External Audit) | EA |
|------------------|---------------------------------|----|

**1 Apologies for Absence**

Councillor Hannington, Deputy Chief Fire Officer Sam Burton and Head of HR and Administration Germaine Worker.

**2 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**

None

**3 Public Questions**

None

**4 Minutes**

It was noted that the minutes of the meeting held approximately four months ago were only issued yesterday. The Committee agreed that minutes should be circulated to members within two weeks of the meeting date going forward.

**Action:** Chief Fire Officer to take this forward.

Councillor Coleman has retained notes and requested clarity on certain points.

**Action:** Chief Fire Officer to liaise with Cllr Coleman outside of the meeting to address these queries.

Cllr Blundell emphasised the importance of ensuring all members are involved and informed.

The Committee agreed to accept the minutes on the basis that outstanding questions are addressed, and responses are shared with all members.

**Resolved** that the minutes of the Standards, Audit and Performance Committee, held on 10 July 2025 be agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record on the understanding that the Chief Fire Officer will liaise with Councillor Coleman regarding the proposed amendments and subsequently circulate the revised minutes to all members.

## **5 Corporate Risk Management Summary**

This report, presented by Assistant Chief Fire Officer, updated Members on the status of risks on the Corporate Risk Register. The new risks were agreed at the Committee meeting in July, and updates reflect both July and August status for 2025.

In 2024, His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) identified a Cause of Concern regarding the Service's corporate risk management. A comprehensive review led to the agreement of new corporate risks by Members at the Standards Audit and Performance Committee on 10 July 2025, aligned with the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) and strategic goals for 2025–2028. Additional corporate risk focused on Leadership and Culture is included in Appendix A and awaits Committee approval for inclusion in the Corporate Risk Register. Appendix B includes Heat Map of Corporate Risks and Appendix C contains latest updates on respective risks.

Assistant Chief Fire Officer expressed desire to incorporate more specific information and forward-looking projections into future reporting and discussions. She reported that most workstreams are progressing on schedule. However, 3 risks remain outside of tolerance as some actions remain in early development stages, and risk ratings will not be reduced until implementation is further advanced.

Amber Risks are actively managed and currently considered within tolerance. Financial pressures continue to be a trigger for concern and are being closely monitored.

Cllr Coleman raised concerns about the Staff Engagement mitigating factors actual effectiveness and impact of staff engagement forums. Questions were raised regarding how staff are being engaged across different formats, including in-person sessions, hybrid meetings, and remote participation. Members sought clarity on attendance levels, feedback mechanisms, and how these engagement methods differ from previous approaches.

It was noted by the Officers that workshops, facilitated by external organisation called FutureWorks, have begun, with positive initial feedback. Attendance has been good (e.g., 27 in Bridgnorth, 25 in Shrewsbury). The final workshops in the current series are scheduled for early October. Feedback from all sessions will be gathered and reviewed, with a proposed way forward to be presented by the end of October.

Cllr Kerr asked if the Service plans to rerun All Staff Survey. Officers confirmed that a rerun is planned.

Cllr Kerr emphasised that the Leadership and Culture risk should not be viewed as solely the responsibility of Officers, but rather as a shared accountability that must involve Fire Authority members. This collaborative approach is essential to demonstrate the behaviours and governance standards the organisation aims to uphold.

It was noted that Cultural transformation is a long-term programme requiring sustained effort and transparency. Cllr Radford highlighted the importance of long-term staff engagement as part of the Service's cultural change programme. She emphasised the value of both qualitative and quantitative data, suggesting that regular engagement through these methods would provide meaningful insights. While the programme is strategic in nature, Cllr Radford noted that it should also include practical and relatable elements—such as whether staff enjoy working for the Service or would recommend the Service as a place to work.

Assistant Chief Fire Officer suggested that the Committee consider taking a deep dive into one of the corporate risks during a future reporting period. This would enable members to gain a clearer understanding of the impact and progress associated with that risk. She confirmed she would be happy to support and provide the necessary information for such a session.

It was noted that the Service has trialled new approaches, including forums focused on key service topics, with staff invited to submit questions. Feedback from these sessions has been valuable, and future forums are being shaped to encourage more listening and open dialogue from senior management.

Concerns were raised regarding the current medium rating of the Cybersecurity and ICT infrastructure risk, with suggestions that it may need to be increased due to escalating threats and system vulnerabilities. Officers noted that a cyber exercise is scheduled to support reassessment, and the rating can be amended. Officers reported that progress on the Digital and Data Strategy has been delayed following the retirement of the ICT Manager, which impacted leadership continuity. Mitigation measures have been put in place, including interim leadership arrangements and a Service Level Agreement with West Midlands Fire Service. A new Head of Digital and Data commenced in September and implemented a 3-month plan to address challenges and allow for prioritisation.

Cllr Kerr suggested that it would be useful to present risks rating in two stages—without mitigation and with mitigation—to provide a clearer understanding of the organisation's risk landscape and direction of travel. He also raised a question about risks that are out of tolerance level, asking what it means when a risk consistently exceeds its tolerance level and whether tolerance thresholds remain meaningful in such cases.

Chief Fire Officer responded by highlighting examples of intolerable risks, such as pay awards and potential industrial action, which require business continuity arrangements. Assistant Chief Fire Officer added that in such cases, the focus shifts from mitigation to managing the impact to reduce disruption as much as possible.

It was raised that ongoing recruitment and retention challenges continue to impact service delivery, with the Workforce Capacity and Capability risk remaining outside of tolerance. The limited capacity to implement strategic actions has contributed to the elevated risk level. To mitigate the impact, the Service is benchmarking roles and maintaining critical functions through third-party support, ensuring continuity while longer-term solutions are developed.

Members also questioned the continuity planning for key roles, particularly in light of recent senior management team changes, and emphasised the need for clear succession and resilience strategies.

The Chair noted that reports presented to the Committee are often lengthy and filled with abbreviations, making them difficult to understand. Chief Fire Officer acknowledged this challenge and shared that a proposal is being developed by Portfolio Manager to present key information in a more concise and engaging format. Cllr Coleman commented that the current reporting style feels outdated and assumes a high level of specialist knowledge, which Members may not necessarily possess. This can make it difficult to fully engage with or interpret key documents and discussions, particularly for those without a technical or operational background. She noted Shropshire Council reports as example of good practice.

Chief Fire Officer confirmed that new Service Level Agreement (SLA) for Monitoring Officer services is due to begin on 1 October. He also noted that that corporate risk training, previously delivered to Fire Authority members, will be re-run for new members with support from Zurich, ensuring continued understanding and oversight of the corporate risk register.

Assistant Chief Fire Officer summarised the key actions moving forward, including the addition of Fire Authority Members in the new corporate risk focused on leadership and culture. She also proposed a deep dive into this risk either within the Committee or through Scrutiny Committee to support understanding and oversight. Further actions include a review of the cybersecurity risk rating based on Members feedback, and continued development of the cultural transformation programme, which will be supported by a planned multi-year approach. She also noted the importance

of simplifying language and reducing acronyms in future reporting to improve accessibility and engagement.

**Resolved** that the Committee:

- a) Noted the report on the basis that the Officers will raise the risk score for cyber-related threats, set a specific target and allow Members for deep dive into risk around Staff Engagement and risk scores will be presented both with and without mitigation measures for comparison.
- b) Approved the Leadership and Culture Risk as outlined in Appendix A on the understanding that Officers will review the description of the risk to include CFA Members.

Cllr Coleman queried the identity of a man seated in the public gallery. The individual introduced himself as David Tooley, a reporter who has attended previous Fire authority related meetings.

Cllr Coleman expressed that the Chair should have acknowledged his presence. The Chair responded that, as this was a public meeting and Mr. Tooley had attended previously, it was assumed his identity was known.

## **6 Annual Governance Statement Improvement Plan 2024/25**

This report, presented by Head of Finance, summarised the progress made to date against the improvements contained in the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) Improvement Plan 2025/26.

Head of Finance, noted the draft Statement of Accounts 2024/25 likely will be brought for Members consideration at December meeting. She added that the Statement of Accounts includes, as an appendix, the Annual Governance Statement (AGS), which outlines the effectiveness of the Authority's internal control systems in managing risk. Areas identified for improvement within these systems are detailed in the AGS, and an associated Improvement Plan for 2025/26 has been developed to address them.

Key areas reviewed included:

### **People/ On-Call sustainability**

The On-Call Sustainability Project has concluded, with remaining actions integrated into the 2025/26 Departmental Plans. Alerters Project post-implementation review led to four recommendations, all approved by the Service Programme Board.

### **People- Fitness Facilities**

All stations now have fitness equipment. Rollout of remaining fitness pods delayed due to staffing changes; work to resume in early 2026.

### **Process – Digital Transformation**

Automation of workflows is a strategic goal for 2025–2028. Digital and Data Strategy will support this as a priority for all areas of the Service. Investment in skills and systems is proposed to support transformation.

### **Systems/ Infrastructure**

Managed Detection and Response (MDR) solution implemented providing Service with access to a 24/7 Security Operations Centre (SOC). Enhancements to Fire Service Rota workflows are ongoing.

### **Building Facilities**

Security upgrades (windows/doors) are being coordinated with access control project. Training facilities under review to align with Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP); a Project Initiation Document is being developed.

### **Appliances / Equipment**

Fleet strategy review completed; recommendations include reducing aerial and pumping appliances and increasing water carrier investment. Final proposals approved following consultation with staff and public.

### **Collaboration – Command & Control (C&C) System**

Go-live date revised to August 2026 due to Data Network Systems Platform (DNSP) infrastructure delays. Mobile Data Terminal (MDT) project aligned with C&C system rollout. Contract updates and partner collaboration ongoing.

### **Operations – Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) Implementation**

CRMP launched April 2025, guiding strategic priorities through 2028.

Initial focus areas: wildfire response, rescue from height/confined spaces, flood asset deployment, and attendance standard development.

**Resolved** that the Committee note the progress made on the 2024/25 Annual Governance Statement Improvement Plan.

## **7 External Audit Progress Report and Sector Update September 2025**

This report, presented by External Auditor, provided an update on progress in external auditor responsibilities. This paper also included a series of sector updates in respect of emerging issues which the Committee may wish to consider.

External Auditor brought Members attention to page 5 of the report and noted the following:

### **Financial Statements Audit:**

No changes have been made to the risk assessment since the Audit Plan was presented in July.

Three significant risks have been identified across all areas:

- Management override of controls.
- Valuation of land and buildings (Property, Plant & Equipment).
- Valuation of the pension fund net liability.

The presumed risks of fraud in revenue and expenditure recognition have been rebutted. Draft accounts were received on 11 July 2025, shortly after the statutory deadline of 30 June. Initial reviews are underway, with audit fieldwork scheduled to commence in October. The Audit Findings Report is expected to be presented at the December Committee meeting.

**Value for Money (VfM):**

No changes to the VfM risk assessment; five areas of significant risk remain as listed on page 5 of the report.

Work is ongoing, with meetings held with the Section 151 Officer, Chair of the Authority, and a scheduled meeting with the Monitoring Officer next week. A substantial amount of information has been gathered. The draft VfM report is expected mid-November, with the final report to be presented in December.

External Auditor then brought Members attention to Sector Update on page 10 of the report and noted that the Local Authority Backstop date is 27 February 2026. This has no direct impact on the Authority, which remains ahead of the national position.

He also reported that Grant Thornton is planning to hold a webinar for Committee Members on 27<sup>th</sup> January 2026.

Cllr Coleman questioned the reasons why annual report such as a draft of the Statement of Accounts was submitted after the deadline. Head of Finance reported that this was due to capacity constraints. A letter explaining the delay was issued to the auditors. She acknowledged that as the area for improvement for the following year.

Cllr Kerr was not present in the room and therefore abstained from the decision.

**Resolved** that the Committee note the auditor's report.

Cllr Kerr rejoined the meeting at this point.

**Performance**

**8a Corporate Performance Indicators including On Call Duty System Performance – April to June 2025**

This report presented a summary of the Service's performance from April to June 2025.

The Head of Transformation and Collaboration presented the report and highlighted the following points to the Committee.

## **Corporate Performance Indicator (CPI)**

### **CPI 1 – All Fires: 323**

Performance is outside of tolerance in this quarter due to significant increases in secondary fires attended by the Service. Those are predominantly refuse related.

### **CPI 2 – Accidental Dwelling Fires: 51**

Performance is within the tolerance in this quarter. Misuse of equipment/appliances and articles placed too close to combustibles were highlighted as two top causes of fires.

### **CPI 3 – Deliberate Fire: 98**

It was noted that the number of incidents recorded—currently at 98—is higher than the set tolerance level.

Cllr Kerr queried whether target figure was based on an annual average, and Officers clarified that it is calculated over a six-year period, with tolerance levels applied accordingly.

Members raised concerns about the use of the term “target,” suggesting it may imply an acceptable level of incidents, which is not appropriate in the context of fire-related harm.

Officers agreed to replace the word “target” with “forecast” in future reporting to better reflect predictive modelling rather than desired outcomes. This change aims to avoid misinterpretation and ensure clarity, particularly in sensitive areas such as incident rates and harm reduction.

Head of Transformation and Collaboration added that early work is underway on next year’s Corporate Performance Indicators (CPIs), with a focus on clearer language and structure. He also noted increases in arson incidents and identified hotspot areas such as Stoke Heath Prison, which, while outside the Service’s governance, still require operational response.

The Chair expressed surprise at the high number of arson incidents and asked who the Service is working with on this. Officers noted that the Service works with other agencies like Police and Councils. It was explained that in areas like Brookside, rubbish is often dumped and set alight, especially during school holidays. The Chair asked if arson includes more than just buildings, and Officers confirmed it can involve things like refuse

Members raised an increase in refuse-related fires. Officers explained that prevention teams are working with councils to remove rubbish and tackle fly-tipping. Officers added that external factors like refuse charges or recycling centre closures may contribute. Crews report fly tipping via an app, helping both Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin councils respond.

#### **CPI 4 – Fire Related Deaths and Serious Injuries: 2**

It was clarified that there is no target set for fire-related deaths or injuries, as even a single incident is significant. The report noted one death and one injury, both resulting from separate incidents, each subject to full investigation. The fatality involved a member of the public and is currently under review by the coroner's court to determine the cause of the fire. Cllr Waite queried whether the incident raised with her earlier in the year is not included here. Chief Fire Officer explained that incident numbers are recorded at the time they occur, but if the cause of death is unrelated to fire, it is not included in the Service's statistics. A recent death in a ward near a councillor's area was noted to have occurred in a different quarter and therefore was not reflected in the current report.

#### **CPI 5 – Fires Confined to Room of Origin: 81.3%**

During the reporting period, there were 9 domestic fires not confined to the room of origin—a relatively small number. Year-to-date performance remains below target tolerance, with 18.7% of fires spreading beyond the room of origin.

#### **CPI 6 – Injuries Sustained to Staff Through Operational Activity: 8**

None were RIDDOR-reportable (Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations).

Discussion followed on whether this Corporate Risk Indicator covers Mental Health or only physical injuries. Members wanted to know if post-traumatic impacts are being tracked. Officers confirmed that it covers only physical injuries.

Chief Fire Officer noted mental health is now the leading cause of workplace absence, overtaking physical issues like back pain, and reported that the Service is combining Health & Safety with Occupational Health through newly created role of Health and Wellbeing Manager. He also highlighted that admin staff are also exposed to distressing content, such as fire death reports, and need support. Members agreed on the importance of identifying psychological “hot spots” and supporting all staff, not just frontline crews.

#### **CPI 7 – Response Standard: 94%**

The average Response Standard at the end of June 2024 was 94%, comparable to last year's 93%. In Q1, the target wasn't met on 16 occasions—mostly due to travel distance or access issues. A new system (FARDAP) is being introduced to improve data recording. All three response areas exceeded the 85% target, showing strong overall performance.

#### **CPI 8 – Fires in Regulated Buildings: 32**

Members raised a question about a recent article on a farm shop destroyed by fire, asking whether the Service audits farms. Chief Fire Officer clarified that it depends, but farms are not routinely inspected. He explained that inspections depend on legislation—if a shop has five or more employees, it may be subject to audit. However, Crown-owned sites like prisons or Ministry of

Defence properties are restricted; if Service is asked to leave, the Service must comply.

Members asked if there were any moves to change this, but Chief Fire Officer confirmed there are none. He noted a grey area with privately run prisons, raising questions about responsibility. Members raised concerns about fire personnel attending prisons and asked if guards are required to ensure safety during inspections. Chief Fire Officer explained that the Service does attend fires in prisons and that prison staff are well trained. He reported that cell fires with trapped individuals are a regular occurrence.

### **CPI 9 - Establishment, Diversity and Firefighter Competence**

Officers pointed duplicated graphs. They add that while the data gives insight into the organisation, it relies on staff voluntarily sharing personal details, which limits accuracy. HR was asked to encourage staff participation.

Members noted low ethnicity declaration rates and highlighted the importance of explaining why the data is needed to staff.

On competencies, Officers confirmed that competency of staff in most categories remain at 90% or higher, except for incident command.

Members questioned if completion rates are affected by staff availability or courses availability. Officers confirmed there are enough courses and flexibility to accommodate staff and its predominantly individuals availability that affect completion rates.

### **On Call Duty System Performance**

Church Stretton maintained 100% on-call coverage—an excellent result. Other stations like Ludlow also performed strongly.

Cllr Coleman shared an example of a young on-call firefighter who applied for a full-time role but was unsuccessful due to lack of understanding of the interview process. She felt more support should be given to those showing interest.

Officers explained that the Service is currently testing fixed-term contracts to develop internal transfer models, allowing on-call staff to move into full-time roles more easily. There's still a selection process, but some steps can be skipped if already completed by individual in the course of their On Call training. Members questioned if there is interest from staff and Officers noted strong interest in these contracts from staff, especially from those that are currently self-employed.

Cllr Waite raised concerns about upcoming changes to employment law. Officers confirmed that Head of HR and Administration is overseeing the developments in this area.

**Resolved** that the Committee accept reassurance provided the report and agreed to remove the term “target” from Corporate Performance Indicators.

The term “forecast” will be used instead, as it more accurately reflects the nature and intent of these measures.

## **8b HMICFRS Cause of Concern Report**

This report, presented by Head of Transformation & Collaboration, detailed the Service’s progress towards improvement identified by the HMICFRS Cause of Concern (CoC).

The Committee received an update on the five workstreams under the HMICFRS Cause of Concern action plan. It was noted that four of the five strands are on schedule, with one currently behind schedule.

The area behind schedule relates to access to accurate data and analysis to support performance management. Two key elements are contributing to the delay:

- Delivery of the Digital and Data Strategy
- Development of a Resource and Staffing Plan

These delays were attributed to changes in strategic ownership following the retirement of the ICT Manager. The Service has since appointed Chris Haigh as the new Head of Digital and Data, who joined in September 2025. His arrival has helped stabilise the team and initiate a 3-month plan to support management, prioritise work, and address succession planning and skills gaps.

Chris is currently reviewing foundational elements to support future development, including a planned external data audit in October and the implementation of the Digital Strategy following data confidence work.

The Committee acknowledged the importance of succession planning, particularly given the uncertainty experienced by the Service during the interim period. Assurance was provided that progress is being made and that the team is now better positioned to support the Service’s improvement journey.

It was also noted that HMICFRS had recently revisited the Service to assess progress. While they will not be enhancing the Cause of Concern, they will review progress as part of the next scheduled inspection. This was seen as a positive reflection of the work undertaken to date.

The Committee requested that the Digital and Data workstream be brought to the Fire Authority for further oversight and assurance.

**Resolved** that the Committee accept reassurance provided the report.

## 8c HMICFRS Areas for Improvement Report

This report, presented by Head of Transformation & Collaboration, detailed the Service's progress towards improvement identified by the HMICFRS Areas For Improvement (AFI).

Head of Transformation & Collaboration noted the following points:

- 22 of 30 AFIs are actively being progressed and monitored through the Service's action plan.
- The remaining 8 AFIs are marked for *future review* and are being prioritised by relevant teams.
- The vast majority are on schedule, with only a few behind due to resource or system constraints.

Head of Transformation & Collaboration reported that key themes impacting progress fit into 3 categories:

- Digital & Data Systems  
Improvements expected via dashboard development and strategic ICT recruitment. New Head of Digital and Data started with the Service in September.
- Workforce Planning  
Recruitment and capacity building are ongoing, led by HR and the Training.
- Organisational Assurance Framework  
A draft evaluation strategic document is under consultation to support quality assurance and learning.

Head of Transformation & Collaboration noted that progress on Areas for Improvement is reviewed every 4 weeks at the Cause of Concern (CoC) meetings with the Executive and Senior Management Team meetings.

Members raised concerns about the AFIs dependent on 3 categories listed above with special attention to those related to Health & Safety. Head of Transformation & Collaboration reassured Members that once organisational framework is in place, further progress can be made. He emphasised that teams should not develop their own separate approaches, to ensure consistency across the Service. He also added that recruitment for a Health & Wellbeing Manager is underway, and progress in this area will be reassessed once the post is filled.

Members raised concerns about the lack of clear timelines for implementation. Simon Hardiman noted that while some areas may progress earlier, the full framework is likely to be in place by Spring 2026. The Committee requested that specific dates be added to future reports to support effective monitoring and scrutiny.

Head of Transformation & Collaboration noted that an action plan with sign-off dates had previously been approved by the Fire Authority in December 2024.

The Committee stressed the importance of having clear milestones, particularly ahead of the next inspection, and agreed that AFI progress should be monitored through Scrutiny Committee once established. Members requested that future reports include an additional column with expected implementation dates to improve transparency and accountability.

**Resolved** that Committee accept reassurance provided the report on basis that deadlines for completions of AFI are provided in future reports.

## **8d HMICFRS Standards of Behaviour and Misconduct Progress**

This report, presented by Assistant chief Fire Officer on behalf of Head of HR and Administration, detailed the Service progress against the 15 recommendations made to the sector in the His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) Standards of behaviour: The handling of misconduct in the fire and rescue services report.

These recommendations have varying timelines for completion, ranging from immediate to 1 November 2025.

Assistant chief Fire Officer brought Members attention to summary table on page 2 of the report provided an overview of progress to date and noted that:

- 4 recommendations remain in progress, with active work underway to meet the November 2025 deadline.
- The Service continues to report against these recommendations and associated Areas for Improvement (AFIs) via the HMI Assurance Portal on a quarterly basis.
- Recommendation 13 Appels: Review of the disciplinary policy, with particular focus on the appeals process taken place. It was confirmed that appeals against dismissal are now heard by both the Chief Fire Officer and an Independent Person. Appels Training has been delivered, and further sessions are planned for both Officers and Fire Authority members.
- Recommendation 1 Core Code of Ethics: Staff awareness and integration into policies is underway. Cultural transformation work is ongoing through FutureWorks until December 2025.
- Recommendation 15 Sharing Learning from Misconduct Cases: Internal mechanisms are in place. Awaiting national system development. Plans for wider learning reports are progressing.

It was noted that once all recommendations are finalised, the action plan will be formally closed. In some areas, the Service has chosen to exceed the minimum standard set by HMICFRS, reflecting its commitment to continuous improvement.

Assistant Fire Chief Officer also acknowledged the review of the Workplace Charter, which will be undertaken with staff input, and the importance of embedding the Core Code of Ethics across policies and practices.

The Service is using the Organisational Assurance Framework to support learning from meetings, debriefs, and confidential observations. An annual report will be produced to share wider learning with the Fire Authority.

**Resolved** hat the Committee accept reassurance provided the report.

## **Pensions Board**

### **9 Pensions Board Minutes**

**Resolved** that the Committee receive and note the minutes of the Pension Board meeting held on 24 June 2025.

### **10 Pensions Board Annual Report**

This Annual Report to Standards Audit and Performance Committee from Chair of Pensions Board provided assurance on effectiveness and efficient governance and administration of Firefighters pension Schemes.

Assistant Fire Chief Officer presented the paper and reported that the Public Service Pensions Act (PSPA) 2013 introduced the requirement to have a Local Pension Board to assist in the governance of the Scheme. The Board has no remit as a decision-making body but is established to assist the Scheme Manager to fulfil its functions which cover all aspects of governance and administration of the Firefighters' Pension Scheme (FPS).

The Board met three times during the year, fewer than planned due to unforeseen circumstances mainly due to capacity.

- One new employer representative was appointed, ensuring appropriate Board composition.
- A dedicated Pensions Officer was appointed, enhancing governance and administrative support.
- Pension services continue to be delivered by West Yorkshire Pension Fund (WYPF).
- Monthly contract meetings have been established to monitor performance and address issues.
- McCloud/Sargeant Remedy: Delays in issuing Annual Benefit Statements (ABS) and Remedial Service Statements (RSS) led to two breaches, reported to The Pensions Regulator.
- Matthews Second Options Exercise: 231 benefit statements issued; 237 expressions of interest received, representing 60% of eligible members.
- Risk & Breaches -four breaches recorded:  
Two related to missed statutory deadlines (ABS and RSS). One due to late submission of a leaver form (now resolved with a tracking system in place). One due to missing prior scheme data from another FRS. Risk register reviewed quarterly, with high focus on red and amber risks.
- Discretionary Decisions: six decisions made by the Scheme Manager, including: counting unpaid leave as pensionable service, acceptance of nominated partner status under exceptional circumstance and retrospective scheme opt-in approvals.

Assistant chief Fire Officer recommended that Pension Officer Daren Bowe is invited to attend future Committee Meetings.

Cllr Coleman questioned if outcomes of Scheme Manager decisions and Discretions could be available to Members. Assistant chief Fire Officer stated that it is possible for Members to have that information.

Cllr Coleman questioned if there is any engagement from the Service regarding pensions with current and retired employees to encourage people to think about this subject. Chief Fire Officer confirmed that Pensions Officer hold regular engagement sessions with retired members and wider staff to improve understanding and communication.

**Resolved** that the Committee accept reassurance provided by the report on basis that Members will be informed on outcomes of Scheme Manager Decisions and Discretions.

The Chief Fire Officer acknowledged the recent incident in Manchester where a firefighter was injured following a building collapse.

Members expressed their concern and agreed to hold the individual in their thoughts during this difficult time. A minute of silence was observed as a mark of respect and reflection.

It was noted that communications regarding the incident will be picked up as a matter of priority. The Committee expressed hope for the firefighter's recovery and extended support to colleagues affected.

The meeting closed at 16.33 pm.

**Chair** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_