

**Minutes of the Meeting of  
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority  
held via Microsoft Teams  
on Wednesday, 10 February 2021, at 2.00 pm**

## **Present**

### **Members**

Councillors Adams, Blundell, Carter (Chair), Hartin, Lavery, Mellings (Vice-Chair), Minnery, Pardy, Price, Roberts, Thompson and Wynn

### **Officers**

Rod Hammerton	Chief Fire Officer	CFO
Simon Hardiman	Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Service Support)	ACFO (SS)
Dan Quinn	Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Service Delivery)	ACFO (SD)
Paul Martin	Deputy Clerk to the Fire Authority	Clerk
James Walton	Treasurer	Treasurer
Joanne Coadey	Head of Finance	HoF
Ged Edwards	Planning and Performance Manager	PPM
Andrew Kelcey	Head of Resources	HoR
Germaine Worker	Head of Human Resources and Administration	HHRA
Lynn Ince	Executive Support Officer	ESO

### **External Bodies**

Tracy Onslow	West Mercia Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner	DPCC
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The Chair welcomed Dan Quinn to his first Fire Authority meeting in the role of Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Service Delivery) and congratulated Simon Hardiman on his permanent appointment as Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Service Support).

## **1 Apologies for Absence**

Councillors Dee, Milner and Sahota

## **2 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**

None

## **3 Public Questions**

None

## 4 Minutes

**Resolved** that the minutes of the Fire Authority meeting, held on 16 December 2020, be agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

## 5 Strategy and Resources Committee Minutes

**Resolved** that the minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting, held on 28 January 2021, be noted and the recommendations at items 5, 7 and 8, as given below, be agreed.

### Item 5 – Financial Performance to December 2020

**Resolved** that the Fire Authority

- a) Note the position of the revenue budget;
- b) Approve virements to the revenue budget, where requested; and
- c) Note performance against prudential indicators to date in 2020/21.

### Item 7 – Capital Programmes 2021/221 to 2025/26, Treasury Management Statement and Capital Strategy

**Resolved** that the Fire Authority:

- a) Approve the Capital Strategy for 2021/22 – 2025/26, as set out in Appendix A to the report;
- b) *Recommendation considered in exempt session*; and
- c) Approve the Treasury Strategy Statement for 2021/22.

### Item 8 - Adequacy of Reserves and Robustness of Budget

**Resolved** that the Fire Authority agree:

- a) The reserves as set out in the Appendix to the report; and
- b) The Treasurer's assurances covering the robustness of the 2021/22 budget and adequacy of its reserves.

## 6 Exclusion of Press and Public

**Resolved** that the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

## 7 Capital Programme from 2021/22 (Paragraph 3)

The Fire Authority received the paper on Capital Programmes from 2021/22 (the appendix to paper 5b on this agenda).

**Resolved** that the Fire Authority agree the recommendation of its Strategy and Resources Committee to:

- b) Confirm the 2021/22 onward programmes, set out in exempt Appendix B, and the associated revenue costs, set out in exempt Appendix C, as part of its final precept deliberations.

## **8 Telford Central Programme Update (Paragraph 3)**

**Resolved** that the Fire Authority note the verbal update given by Officers.

**The meeting reverted to open session at this point (2.20 pm)**

**The Chair varied the order of the agenda to allow item 16 to be considered at this point.**

## **16 Fire Strategic Alliance Update Report**

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

Members commented that this report was very apt and confirmed that the Authority supports the further development of the Alliance.

**Resolved** that the Fire Authority note the report.

## **9 Fire Authority Work Plan 2021/22**

This report reviewed progress against the Fire Authority's 2020/21 Work Plan and put forward a 2021/22 Work Plan for consideration and approval by Members.

**Resolved** that the Fire Authority

- a) Note progress made against the Fire Authority 2020/21 Work Plan, as detailed at paragraph 4 of the report; and
- b) Approve the 2021/22 Work Plan, attached at the appendix to the report, without amendment.

## **10 Revenue Budget 2021/22**

This report incorporated the recommendations made by the Strategy and Resources Committee on 28 January 2021, in relation to the revenue budget for 2021/22. The report also confirmed the use of assumptions for medium-term financial planning.

The HoF presented this paper and talked through the detail set out in it, highlighting the following:

- There have been changes to local funding from council tax base and business rates collection because of the pandemic
- The provisional grant settlement for 2021/22 was released on 17 December 2020 following the Chancellor's announcement that it would be a one-year settlement
- The table on page 3 of the report indicates that the Authority is likely to have a budget deficit from 2022/23 onwards. Officers will therefore continue with scenario planning as in previous years to address this situation
- The Collection Fund balances for council tax and business rates have been confirmed and are as set out on page 3 of the report
- The final Government Finance Settlement is still to be debated in Parliament
- It has been indicated that there will be no 2021/22 pay award for public sector workers (except for those earning less than £24,000) but it is possible that this decision may be reversed. If this is the case, it would necessitate an adjustment to the Authority's revenue budget. The Authority are asked to delegate authority to the Treasurer in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Authority to make the necessary amendments
- The final revenue budget is as set out in the table on page 4 of the report
- The Authority is also asked to approve the Medium Term Financial Plan and Reserves Strategy 2021/22 to 2024/25 which are attached at the Appendix to the report

The Chair thanked Officers for the work and planning that had been put into the budget planning.

The Chair of the Strategy and Resources Committee echoed the Chair's sentiments and commented that the budget setting process has been more challenging this year. He also commented that whilst the predicted deficits from 2022/23 onwards do not look healthy there are uncertainties which may help to eliminate these deficits particularly as the Authority has always been prudent in its financial planning and work will continue to ensure the Authority can meet future challenges.

Members asked if the yield of income from the constituent authorities falls, will this have any material effects for the Fire Authority. The HoF explained that the Collection Fund balance is set as the start of the financial year and this Authority would receive a proportion of any surplus on that figure but would also be expected to contribute to any deficits although the Government will assist if this situation occurs. The Treasurer added that whilst the changes to the Collection Fund rates should level out, they will have impacts for the Authority in the following year.

Members requested further information on the cost of officer uniforms. The HoF explained that the papers being considered at this meeting are strategic level papers with detail on issues such as this being reported to the Strategy and Resources Committee as part of its financial performance monitoring remit.

**Resolved unanimously** that the Fire Authority

- a) approve a revenue budget for 2021/22, and a forward financial projection to 2023/24, as set out in section 6 of the report;
- b) approve the Medium Term Financial Plan and Reserves Strategy 2021/22 to 2024/25; and
- c) delegate any necessary amendments to the revenue budget and the Medium Term Financial Plan to the Treasurer, in consultation with the Chair and the Vice-Chair of the Authority.

## 11 Revenue Budget: 2021/22 Precept

This report sought Fire Authority approval to a budget for 2021/22; Council Tax levels for 2021/22; and precepts on billing authorities and related matters.

**Resolved unanimously** that the Fire Authority approve:

- a) That a net budget requirement be set at £23,473,472 (calculated in accordance with the provisions of Section 42a of the Local Government Finance Act 1992);
- b) A total precept of £17,304,187 to be levied on the billing authorities;
- c) A Council Tax resulting in a basic amount of Council Tax at Band D calculated in accordance with the provisions of the 1992 Act (Section 42b) of £104.20;
- d) Under Section 47 of the 1992 Act:
  - i) The amount of Council Tax calculated for each category of dwelling in each billing authority's area, as follows:

Band	2020/21 Council Tax £ p
A	69.47
B	81.04
C	92.62
D	104.20
E	127.36
F	150.51
G	173.67
H	208.40

- ii) The amount calculated (in accordance with Section 48 of the 1992 Act) as payable by billing authorities for 2021/22, as follows:

Council	Precept £
Shropshire Council	11,846,397
Borough of Telford & Wrekin Council	5,457,790
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	17,304,187

- e) That the Treasurer:
  - i) Issue the necessary precepts and information to the billing authorities in accordance with the provisions of Chapter IV of Part 1 of the 1992 Act and be authorised to make any amendment to the above to reflect the final approved budget, after consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Fire Authority; and
  - ii) Is authorised to make payments required from, and to, reserves and provisions within the approved budget strategy and within the Authority's Financial Rules, in conjunction with the Chair and the Vice-Chair;
- f) Approve the revenue budget and pensions account, illustrated in Appendix A, for budgetary control in accordance with approved standing orders; and
- g) Approve the schedule of reserves and provisions at Appendix B.

## **12 Outline Proposal for Service Strategic Planning and Performance Monitoring**

This report provided Members with an overview and awareness of current strategic planning arrangements and Service targets, with a proposal to review and produce an alternative approach to Service planning and the introduction of new performance measures. This paper was discussed by the Strategic Advisory Group on 20 January 2021 and was brought to the Fire Authority for approval.

The ACFO (SS) presented this report and talked through proposed strategic planning methodology.

Members asked for further details on the tolerances that it proposed be applied to the performance measures and how those tolerances would be constructed, that is would there be a higher and lower figure for each indicator. The ACFO explained that the tolerances would be built around the target figure with a variance of plus / minus 2 or 5%. This will create a red, amber, green (RAG) status for each indicator and allow monitoring of trends rather than measuring performance against a numeric figure.

The CFO further explained that the proposed performance measures are a definite move away from the 5% year on year reduction that the Service has aimed for over the past decade. This is now giving diminishing returns as 10 years of a 5% reduction per annum is not sustainable. The new measures will allow the direction of travel for measures to be identified and an improvement curve developed. Performance reporting can then be done by exception dependent on the RAG status of the indicator which encourages continuous improvement against measures. The Service Management Team (SMT) will also have a greater focus on performance reporting as a separate SMT performance reporting meeting will be established.

**Resolved** that the Fire Authority:

- a) Note the contents of the report;
- b) Adopt the proposed Strategic Planning methodology;
- c) Delegate authority to Strategy and Resources Committee for the approval of the Service Plan;
- d) Delegate authority to the Chief Fire Officer and the Chair of the Fire Authority to agree the Annual Plan; and
- e) Delegate authority to the Strategy and Resources Committee to agree a new set of performance measures.

### **13 Annual Review of Charges for Special Services 2020/21**

This report presented proposed increases in charges made for special services.

The HoF presented this report and advised that the increase to the special service charges is in line with the pay increase awarded to firefighters in 2021/22.

**Resolved** that the Fire Authority agree the proposed charges for special services to be applied from 1 April 2021.

### **14 Proposed Amendments to the Pay Policy Statement 2021/22**

This report set out proposed amendments to the Pay Policy Statement for consideration by the full Authority, as required under the Localism Act 2011 and in accordance with the process agreed by the Fire Authority in February 2012.

The HHRA presented this report and highlighted the amendments as set out in the report.

Members queried the differences in pension contributions as set out in the table on the final page of the Pay Policy Statement. The HoF advised that the differences relate to there being three different pension schemes for Brigade Managers which have different contribution rates.

**Resolved** that the Fire Authority

- a) Note the report;
- b) agree the proposed amendments to the Pay Policy Statement;
- c) task the Brigade Managers' Employment Panel with undertaking a review of Brigade Manager pay; and
- d) with reporting the outcomes of that review to the Fire Authority, including any necessary amendments to the Pay Policy Statement.

## 15 The Scheme for the Payment of Members' Allowances 2021/22

**Resolved** that the Fire Authority note that this report has been deferred to the next meeting of the Fire Authority in June 2021.

The meeting closed at 3.25 pm.

**Chair**.....

**Date**.....