

**Minutes of
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority
Strategy and Resources Committee
held in the Oak Room, Headquarters
on Thursday, 22 January 2026 at 10.30 am**

Present

Members

Councillors Clayton, Evans, Mehta and Minnery

Officers

Simon Hardiman	Chief Fire Officer	CFO
Jacqui Dungey	Section 151 Officer	
Joanne Coadey	Head of Finance	HofF
Richard Philips	Deputy Clerk and Monitoring Officer	DCMO
Chris Haigh	Head of Digital and Data	HofD&D
Jo Pritchard	Executive Support Officer	ESO
David Tolley	Press	

1 Apologies for Absence

Councillors Bentley, Fejfer and Overton
Assistant Chief Fire Officer Marc Millward

2 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

None

3 Public Questions

None

4 Non-Exempt Minutes

Resolved that the non-exempt minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee, held on 20 November 2025, be agreed, and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

5 Financial Performance to December 2025

This report provided information on the financial performance of the Service, and sought approval for action, where necessary.

There has been 75% spent at the end of the third quarter.

HofF explained the table programme has been broken down by 'pay and no pay'.

We have introduced new roles into the back end of 2025. Most of the positions are now filled;

- Section 151 Officer (filled)
- Procurement Officer (recruiting in first quarter of 2026).
- Various ITC posts (in the process of being recruited now)
- H&S Manager (in the process of being recruited now)

Debt charges – Further savings to be had.

Diesel – Reduction in costs.

Digital and Data – HofD&D has done a full review and made adjustments to cover costs.

Service delivery – There a currently a number of secondments in place.

On call pay – We have introduced banding for on call firefighting. Costs are now higher than anticipated. We are working with colleagues regarding this and this is currently under review.

Increase in incident levels – Currently investigating why these have increased and we're considering making a contribution from reserves.

Pension costs; There has been a rise in costs and this is being investigated.

There has been a £152k overspend in this quarter but previous quarters have seen an underspend. These will form the balance on the General Fund at the end of the year.

Clarification was provided around business rates for Telford Central and the rest of the estate. Whilst an increase of £400k has been identified and reported, an efficiency of £100k was also identified and this will be recored on the Authority's Efficiency & Productivity Plan. Appeals are ongoing due to the rates at Telford fire station. HofF to find out when the deadline is for this appeal. **AP**

Capital program – We are progressing well in a few areas with a number of procurements underway and orders placed.

We are working within Prudential indicators. There is £7m invested with counterparties.

Resolved that the Committee recommend that the Fire Authority:

- a) Note the position of the revenue budget;
- b) Approve virements to the revenue budget, where requested;
- c) Approve amendment to capital scheme, and
- d) Note performance against prudential indicators to date in 2025/26.

6 Revisions to the 2026/27 Revenue Budget

This report presented a final revenue budget package for 2026/27 for consideration by the Committee, and recommendation to the Fire Authority, taking into account latest information.

The HofF reminded members that modelling had been done both by officers and by the NFCC, with the NFCC modelling more pessimistic.

The settlement on 17th December confirmed we have our £5 precept and our funding floor in place and was slightly better than NFCC modelling had predicted.

Confirmed we have more reliance on council tax funding rather than grants.

We have previously received a grant to cover costs from the increase in Pension contributions following the 2020 valuation but have not received confirmation that this will continue.

Collection funds – These have not been confirmed; HofF will confirm in next meeting. **AP**.

Business rates – an efficiency of £100k has been identified following appeals on business rates across the estate. This will be reported as part of the Efficiency & Productivity Plan.

It is proposed that £100k is added to the revenue budget to cover ongoing commitments in digital and data.

We have a multi year settlement which means we have to monitor funds post this period.

The position of the revenue budget over the multi year planning period was shown, with a £310k deficit in year one to come from reserves. This is based on a precept increase of £5.

The Committee was asked to consider different increases in precept.

We may have a three year floor but we may find funding drops afterwards so we're very unsure what will happen after the three year period, with the potential of a new government and other governmental reasons.

Multi-year settlement is more favourable but perhaps not enough based on staff growth etc.

There will be more burden on tax payers so more debate on how much will come from each council, going forward.

Recommend a £5 precept increase.

Councillor Clayton asked is the funding calculation based on the number of houses in the area. HofF confirmed it was and we would expect an increase on this year on year and more developments appear.

Councillor Clayton asked if there is documentation on how many houses are planned to be built to determine how much funding we can expect to receive. HofF confirmed the grant is around £2m and we have always received around 70% in council tax funding.

It was asked if there is a correlation between more population increase and more fires. Chief confirmed not necessarily due to improvement in technology.

Councillor Minnery expressed his disappointment in the potential drop of funding and the lack of Shropshire council support. He proposed we go for the maximum of £5 precept increase. All agreed.

Resolved that the Committee recommend that the Fire Authority approve:

- a) a precept increase for 2026/27, based on one of the options in Section 7; and
- b) a revenue budget in line with the precept increase approved above.

7 Capital Programmes 2026/27 to 2030/31, Treasury Management Statement and Capital Strategy

This report presented the capital programmes for 2026/27 to 2030/31, for consideration by the Committee in the context of Prudential Guidelines.

HofF explained to members the main elements of the program.

The programme is determined by strategic priorities and fleet replacement programme.

We need to consider creating a balanced budget and the capital programme should be reviewed in terms of prudential indicators over the next three years.

Earmarked capital reserves are now depleted. We are looking at borrowing to fund the capital programme going forward.

We need to borrow to fund the capital programme and this will be discussed with the Treasury.

The Treasury Management Strategy requires us to present a mid year and year end treasury review.

It was confirmed that no borrowing has been undertaken but borrowing will be required going forward.

Councillor Minnery questioned figures for the replacement aerial ladder platforms (ALP). CFO confirmed we're looking at a review of both ALPs and confirmed that in the meantime one of the existing ALPs has been refurbished at a cost of £130k. The HoF informed Councillor Minnery that the costs in the current capital programme related to replacement of both ALPs.

Councillor Evans mentioned seeing a 'risk' fire chart for the whole of Shropshire, he once viewed. CFO says our community risk management plan holds this information. What we are seeing from all data sets is that there is actually an increased fire risk in urban areas. The *severity* of fires are more in rural areas.

HofD&D confirms they're building a live database to contribute towards all data for the above, for use within the service.

Resolved that the Committee recommend that the Fire Authority:

- a) Approve the Capital Strategy for 2026/27 – 2030/31, set out in Appendix A;
- b) Confirm the 2026/27 onward programmes, set out in Appendix B as part of its final precept deliberations, and
- c) Approve the Treasury Strategy Statement for 2026/27

8 Adequacy of Reserves and Robustness of Budget

This report, undertakes a full analysis of reserves, provides an assurance on the adequacy of reserves, and gives an assurance on the robustness of the budget.

We have built up a number of reserves over the years, as a backup for uneven cashflows etc.

Reserves have decreased from last year.

HofF confirmed that reserves are being depleted and she asked members to review the reserves and see if there can be any movement. HoF will carry out this review and report back. **AP**

Prioritising projects are key in terms of our CRMP.

Resolved that the Committee recommend to the Fire Authority:

- i. The reserves as set out in the appendix to the report; and
- ii. The Treasurer's assurances covering the robustness of the 2026/27 budget and adequacy of its reserves; and
- iii. That officers carry out a reserves review during 2026/27.

The next meeting of this Committee will be held on 19 March 2026.

The meeting closed at 11.20am.

Chair _____

Date _____