

**Minutes of the Meeting of
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority
Telford Central Fire Station, Stafford Park, Telford, TF3 3BW
on Tuesday, 17 February 2026 at 10.30 am**

Present**Members**

Councillors Bentley, Blundell, Clayton, Coleman, Evans, Fejfer, Handley, Hannington, Husemann, Kerr, Mehta, Minnery (Chair), Mosley, Overton (Vice-Chair), Radford, and Waite

Independent Members

Robin Bentley, Yasser Khan and Justine Vaughan

Others

Marc Bayliss, West Mercia Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner

Officers

Simon Hardiman	Chief Fire Officer	CFO
Marc Millward	Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Corporate Services)	ACFO (CS)
Jacqui Dungey	Section 151 Officer	S151 Officer
Anthea Lowe	Clerk and Monitoring Officer	Clerk
Richard Phillips	Clerk and Monitoring Officer	Clerk
Joanne Coadey	Head of Finance	HoF
Germaine Worker	Head of Human Resources and Administration	HHRA
Lynn Ince	Executive Support Supervisor	ESS

1 Apologies for Absence

Councillor Walmsley

2 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

None

3 Public Questions

None

4 Member Questions

None

5 Fire Authority Non-Exempt Minutes

Resolved that the non-exempt minutes of the Fire Authority meeting, held on 17 December 2025, be agreed, and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

6 Committee Recommendations

The Fire Authority considered and approved the recommendations in three items from the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting on 22 January 2026, which required ratification by the Fire Authority.

6a Financial Performance to December 2025

Resolved that the Fire Authority agree the Committee's recommendation to:

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

6b Capital Programmes 2026/27 to 2030/31, Treasury Management Statement and Capital Strategy

Councillor Husemann referred to the Authority's external debt position for 2025/26 and future years. It was noted that funding from borrowing in 2026/27 would result in an increase in debt.

Councillor Coleman queried the significant costs associated with items such as helmets and pumping units. The CFO advised that operational equipment is subject to market influences, as it is a niche market with bespoke requirements. It was noted that £200,000 would equate to approximately 500 helmets, which have a defined lifespan and therefore require replacement. The Light Pumping Unit would replace a 15-year-old vehicle. Councillor Coleman also noted that different fire authorities have varying requirements.

The CFO advised that opportunities for partnership working are considered where appropriate, for example through the Command and Control Project, subject to contract management and procurement regulations. It was also noted that fire engines are often tied to specific suppliers, such as Emergency One.

Councillor Kerr stated that Members needed to understand the costs of borrowing, including the impact on revenue and the minimum revenue provision. The Chair confirmed that this work was necessary, as the Authority had not historically borrowed.

Resolved that the Fire Authority agree the Committee's recommendations to:

- a) approve the Capital Strategy for 2026/27 – 2030/31, as set out in Appendix A to the report;
- b) confirm the 2026/27 onward programmes, as set out in Appendix B to the report, as part of its final precept deliberation; and

- c) approve the Treasury Strategy Statement for 2026/27.

6c Adequacy of Reserves and Robustness of Budget

Councillor Coleman asked about the level of reserves as a percentage of the budget. The HoF advised that non-earmarked reserves were currently approximately 2% of the budget, which was relatively low, but that earmarked reserves were currently approximately £10m. The Reserves Review would consider the Capital Reserve and Capital Programmes.

Resolved that the Fire Authority agree the Committee's recommendations of:

- i. the reserves as set out in the appendix to the report;
- ii. the Treasurer's assurances covering the robustness of the 2025/26 budget and adequacy of its reserves; and
- iii. that officers carry out reserves review during 2026/27.

7 Revenue Budget 2026/27

This report incorporated the recommendations made by Strategy and Resources Committee on 22 January 2026, in relation to the revenue budget for 2026/27. The report also confirmed the use of assumptions for medium-term financial planning.

The HoF presented the report and advised that Members should consider Papers 7 and 8 together.

The HoF advised that the table on page 3 of the report, at section 7, showed that the deficit in 2026/27 was projected to increase in years 2 and 3.

It was noted that the matter had been debated in Parliament, with no further changes made.

Councillor Evans concluded that the Authority should set the maximum precept available, that being 4.18% (£4.99), to ensure it could meet budget requirements in future years.

Councillor Handley asked about station building works. It was advised that the Head of Resources had developed an Asset Management Plan to manage the use of £300,000 across the county to enable works to be undertaken, although it was noted that this may not all be spent.

Resolved unanimously that the Fire Authority:

- a) approve a revenue budget for 2026/27 and a forward financial projection to 2028/29, as set out in section 7 of the report;
- b) approve the Medium-Term Financial Plan 2026/27 to 2028/29; and
- c) delegate any amendments following debate in Parliament to the S151 Officer in consultation with the Chair and the Vice Chair.

8 Revenue Budget: 2026/27 Precept

This report sought Fire Authority approval to a budget for 2026/27; Council Tax levels for 2026/27; and precepts on billing authorities and related matters.

The Authority is required to issue a precept before 1 March 2026 and all items in the “Recommendations” section of this report must be taken together. For ease of reference, the key elements of the budget were set out in the overarching Revenue Budget 2026/27 paper (Agenda Item 7)

Resolved unanimously that the Fire Authority:

- a) approve that a net budget requirement is set at £31,082,751 (calculated in accordance with the provisions of Section 42a of the Local Government Finance Act 1992);
- b) approve a total precept of £22,631,692 to be levied on the billing authorities;
- c) approve 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 £124.44;
- d) approved, under Section 47 of the 1992 Act:
 - a. the amount of Council Tax calculated for each category of dwelling in each billing authority’s area, as follows:

Band	2026/27 Council Tax £ p
A	82.96
B	96.79
C	110.61
D	124.44
E	152.09
F	179.75
G	207.40
H	248.88

- b. the amount calculated (in accordance with Section 48 of the 1992 Act) as payable by billing authorities for 2026/27, as follows:

Council	Precept £
Shropshire Council	15,16,311
Borough of Telford & Wrekin Council	7,468,381
	<hr/>
	22,631,692

- e) approve 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 Regulations, in conjunction with the Chair and Vice-Chair;

9 Governance

9a Fire Authority Work Plan 2026/27

This report put forward the Fire Authority's 2026/27 Work Plan for consideration and approval for Members.

Resolved that the Fire Authority approve the 2026/27 Work Plan, as attached at the Appendix to the report.

Robin Bennett, Yasser Khan and Justine Vaughan left the meeting at this point (10.55 am) whilst the following item was discussed

9b Appointment of Independent Members to the Performance and Scrutiny Committee

This report sought Fire Authority ratification of the appointment of three independent members to sit on the Performance and Scrutiny (P&S) Committee. It also sought permission for a revised terms of reference for the Committee.

The Clerk presented this report and advised that initially the plan had been to establish the P&S Committee with two independent members. However, having interviewed nine applicants, the Clerk and Deputy Clerk identified three strong candidates with different but complementary backgrounds and experience. It is therefore recommended that Committee's Terms of Reference be amended to reflect the inclusion of up to three independent members on the Committee.

Councillor Coleman stated that, with five elected members on the P&S Committee, the appointment of three independent members appeared excessive, and she did not consider this to be acceptable. The Chair stated that it was essential to have independent members and reminded the Authority that they would not be scrutinising Fire Authority members and would not have voting rights.

It was noted that local communities' elect members to the constituent authorities, which in turn appoint members to the Fire Authority. The Fire Authority needs to undertake effective scrutiny and ensure that this is visible, which was why independent members were required.

Councillor Kerr stated that he was pleased to have three volunteers for the independent member roles. He understood Councillor Coleman's point but considered that the appointments would support better decision-making.

Councillor Waite stated that she was interested to hear views from outside the Fire Authority, provided the process was managed appropriately.

Councillor Evans reiterated that the independent members would not scrutinise Fire Authority members but would bring an independent perspective and add value to the P&S Committee.

Councillor Overton agreed with Councillor Evans and supported the appointment of independent members to provide scrutiny of the Fire Authority, particularly as they all had relevant experience.

Councillor Radford noted the link to the Cause of Concern and stated that the independent members would bring valuable experience and added value at low cost. Councillor Husemann agreed with this view and added that the independent members could use their specialisms to provide scrutiny.

Councillor Coleman maintained the view that the appointment of three independent members felt excessive. The Clerk advised that there would be an opportunity to review the provision.

Resolved that the Fire Authority

- a) Adopt the revised terms of reference for the Performance and Scrutiny Committee, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report; and
- b) Agree the appointment of Robin Bennett, Yasser Khan and Justine Vaughan to sit as independent members of the Performance and Scrutiny Committee.

Robin Bennett, Yasser Khan and Justine Vaughan returned to the meeting at this point (11.05 am). The Chair advised that their appointment had been ratified and formally welcomed the independent members to the Fire Authority.

9c Strengthening Positive Employee Relations

This report provided an update on the proposals for refined Trade Union engagement with the Fire Authority as part of the wider review on the Employee Relations Framework.

Fire Authority Members were asked to consider and approve a proposal to include Trade Union representatives as special observers. This will support continued effective employee relations and will be formally supported through the creation of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) co-produced with Trade Union representatives.

The ACFO (CS) presented this report and advised the Fire Authority that good relationships with the Representative Bodies will strengthen and give transparency. The idea is not new to Fire Authorities and will provide representation of the workforce

The Chair stated that it would be helpful to have Representative Bodies present at Fire Authority meetings and welcomed the proposal being implemented.

Councillor Radford sought assurance that the proposed arrangements were consistent with changes in legislation relating to Representative Bodies and considered that the MoU would be vital to how the arrangements would operate, particularly in relation to engagement at meetings. Councillor Husemann stated that he was pleased with the review and its outcome, which should help to manage rumours.

Councillor Overton stressed the need to ensure that the MoU was robust and that Representative Bodies were involved in its development, so that they could recognise its value.

Resolved that the Fire Authority

- a) Note the report;
- b) Approve the attendance of local Trade Union Representatives at Fire Authority meetings as special observers as part of the Employee Relations Framework; and
- c) Delegate authority for the development of a Memorandum of Understanding to the Clerk in conjunction with the ACFO (CS) and the Representative Bodies.

10 Amendments to the Senior Officers' Pay Policy Statement 2026/27

This report set out proposed amendments to the Senior Officers' Pay Policy Statement for the 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 advised that the Pay Policy Statement has been reviewed and approved annually since 2012.

It was noted that section 4 of the report, relating to statutory management functions, had been revised to reflect the Section 151 Officer function now being provided in-house.

Page 8 of the Brigade Order, attached as the Appendix to the report, reflected the review of other fire authorities that had been undertaken. It was noted that Watch Manager B roles and similar posts were subject to different Gold Book and Grey Book conditions.

Senior Officers' pay had been reviewed by the Brigade Managers' Employment Panel in February 2022. Since then, Senior Officers had only received the National Joint Council uplift. There was no intention to review Senior Officers' pay during 2026/27.

Councillor Overton queried the benchmarking used by other fire authorities. The HoF advised that this was based on pay differentials, including ratios, and that further detail would be provided to the next Committee meeting.

Resolved that the Fire Authority:

- a) note the report; and
- b) agree the annual updates to the Senior Officers' Pay Policy Statement for 2026/27.

11 Annual Review 2024-2025

This report presented the draft Annual Review (also known as the Annual Statement of Assurance) for 2024-2025 to the Fire Authority for consideration and approval for publication.

The ACFO (CS) presented the report and advised the Fire Authority that production of the Annual Review had been delayed. He assured Members that a different approach would be taken to the production of the 2025-2026 document.

Councillor Evans asked when the 2025-2026 Annual Review could be expected. The CFO advised that this was likely to be September or October, but that efforts would be made to bring this forward to July.

Resolved that the Fire Authority

- a) Consider the Annual Review 2024-2025; and
- b) Approve the Annual Review for publication.

12 Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service Strategy 2026: Operating Model and Service Goals

This report set out the proposed strategic direction and priorities for Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority for the next 12 months. It builds on the Authority's approved Vision of Making Shropshire Safer and signals how the Service plans, delivers, assures and improves its work.

The ACFO (CS) presented the report and advised that the Service Goals covered Prevention, Protection, Response and Enabling Services, and were aligned to Corporate Performance Indicators and corporate risks. It was noted that the images included in the appendices to the report were for illustrative purposes only.

The CFO advised that a 12-month review of the Community Risk Management Plan was being undertaken, which had identified new and emerging risks and suggested that the Plan should be extended to five years. It was noted that the three-year funding plan showed that most expenditure associated with the Community Risk Management Plan would fall in year three, and that the financial settlement could affect this. The proposal would be considered by the Strategic Advisory Group before being brought to the Fire Authority in June for agreement.

Councillor Coleman asked whether communications could be included as a standing item on the Fire Authority agenda. The CFO advised that the new website was due to be launched imminently and that the matter would be referred to the P&S Committee for consideration and overview.

Councillor Waite suggested that the wording of the Corporate Performance Indicators should move away from the use of targets. The CFO advised that the Strategy and Resources Committee would be delegated authority to agree the indicators, which would then be monitored through the P&S Committee.

Councillor Husemann referred to new and emerging risks, including electric vehicles, battery energy storage sites and climate change. The CFO advised that new risks also included national issues and critical national infrastructure issues.

Resolved that the Fire Authority

- a) Approve the approach that the Service will take to delivery, assurance and improvement; and
- b) Delegate the setting of corporate performance indicators and tolerances to its Strategy and Resources Committee.

13 His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services Cause of Concern and Areas for Improvement Progress Report

This report detailed the Service's progress towards improvement identified by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) Cause of Concern (CoC) recommendations and Areas for Improvement (AFIs).

The ACFO (CS) presented the report and advised that future reports would be considered by the P&S Committee, as it would be able to examine the reported performance in greater detail. The Improvement Board had met the previous week, and the Chair and Vice-Chair of the P&S Committee had provided input into the format of the report presented to Members.

Councillor Coleman asked whether the level of RAG rating was linked to percentages. The ACFO (CS) confirmed that this was the case.

It was queried whether the DCFO would become the risk owner for some targets when back in post. The CFO advised that a temporary internal process was being undertaken, with interviews scheduled for 3 March 2026, to appoint a Temporary Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Service Delivery). The CFO noted the funding issues attached to this but advised that maintaining capacity at Executive Team level was the overriding priority.

It was noted that page 5 of the report showed AFI 2 as 14% complete, which equated to 3 of 22 tasks being marked as completed. Members commented that further information was needed on the direction of travel, particularly where progress appeared unsubstantial.

The ACFO (CS) referred to digital and data improvements affecting dashboards and to the prioritisation of long-standing AFIs. The CFO advised that the matter would be included as a standing item on the P&S Committee agenda, with consideration being given to how reporting would be provided to the Fire Authority, for example through an assurance report.

Councillor Evans referred to completion dates in mid-2025 and commented that an addendum should have been issued following the Improvement Board meeting for external attendees to address issues such as this.

Councillor Minnery noted that there was no completion date for AFI 9.

Councillor Overton stated that the report was important and that the new format was easier to understand. He commented that, as a public document, it needed to demonstrate improvements and progress. He considered that progress appeared slow and that there should be more amber and green ratings in the report. The CFO advised that AFI 10, relating to Business Continuity Planning, was showing zero tasks completed and that the report would be updated and recirculated.

Councillor Coleman asked how the report was produced. The ACFO (CS) advised that this was through a monthly meeting.

The ACFO (CS) advised that previous narratives needed to be included in future reports to enable progress to be tracked.

Resolved that the Fire Authority note the report.

14 Independent Remuneration Panel

This report sought approval to commence the Independent Remuneration Panel process which considers the matter of Member Allowances. It also sought delegated authority to the Clerk to the Fire Authority to take all steps needed to implement the Independent Remuneration Panel before reporting back to the Fire Authority for further consideration.

The Clerk presented the report and advised that the Independent Remuneration Panel was required to meet every four years to review Members' allowances, with its recommendations then being brought back to the Fire Authority for consideration. It was noted that the Panel would comprise three people from the business and/or community sector.

Resolved that the Fire Authority

- a) Note the contents of this report;
- b) Approve the convening of an Independent Remuneration Panel; and
- c) Delegates authority to the Clerk to the Fire Authority to take all necessary steps to implement the Independent Remuneration Panel and report to the Fire Authority for further consideration.

15 Exclusion of Press and Public

Resolved: Members agreed that, under Section 100(A)(4) the Local Government Act 1972, having been satisfied in all the circumstances of the case that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing this information, that it is formally 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 paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

16 Fire Authority Exempt Minutes

16a 17 December 2025 (Paragraphs 1, 2, and 3)

Resolved that the exempt minutes of the Fire Authority meeting, held on 17 December 2025, be agreed, and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

16b 13 January 2026 (Paragraphs 1, 2, and 3)

Resolved that the exempt minutes of the Extraordinary Fire Authority meeting, held on 13 January 2026, be agreed, and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

Chair's Notices

None

The meeting closed at 11.50 am

Chair.....

Date.....