

**Minutes of the Meeting of
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority
Strategy and Resources Committee
Held in Oak Room, Headquarters, Shrewsbury
On Wednesday, 18 March 2026 at 1.30 pm**

Present:

Councillors Bentley, Clayton, Evans (Chair), Minnery and Overton

Officers

Simon Hardiman	Chief Fire Officer	CFO
Jacqui Dungey	Section 151 Officer	S151 Officer
Richard Phillips	Deputy Clerk and Monitoring Officer	Clerk
Zoe Gittins	Human Resources Officer	HRO
Callum Read	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Officer	EDIO
Lynn Ince	Executive Support Team Leader	ESTL

1 Apologies for Absence

Councillors Fejfer (Vice Chair) and Mehta
Marc Millward, Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Corporate Services)
Germaine Worker (Head of Human Resources and Administration)

2 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

None

3 Public Questions

None

4 Non-Exempt Minutes

Resolved that the minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee, held on 22 January 2026 be agreed and signed by the Chair.

5 Strategy and Resources Committee Work Plan 2026/27

This report put forward the Strategy and Resources Committee's Work Plan 2026/27 for consideration and approval by Members.

Resolved that the Committee approve the 2026/27 Work Plan, as attached at the Appendix to the report, without amendment.

6 Review of Member Role Descriptions

This report asked Members to consider the Terms of Reference of the Strategy and Resources Committee, following the annual review conducted by officers.

Resolved that the Committee

- a) Having reviewed the Terms of Reference of the Strategy and Resources Committee;
- b) Does not consider any further amendments to the Terms of Reference to be necessary; and
- c) Recommends the Strategy and Resources Committee Terms of Reference, as attached at the Appendix to the report, to the Fire Authority for agreement.

7 Review of Member Role Descriptions

This report asked Members to review the Role Descriptions for the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Strategy and Resources Committee.

Resolved that the Committee

- a) Having reviewed the Role Descriptions for the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Strategy and Resources Committee;
- b) Does not consider any further amendments to the Terms of Reference to be necessary; and
- c) Recommends the Strategy and Resources Member Role Descriptions, as attached at the Appendices to the report, to the Fire Authority for agreement.

8 Gender Pay Gap Report 2026

This report outlined Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service's (SFRS) obligations under the Equality Act 2010 (Gender Pay Information Regulations 2017) and detailed its annual gender pay gap figures for 2025 and the differences in average earnings between our male and female employees.

The HRO presented this report and explained that the gender pay gap is an equality measure that identifies the difference in average earnings between men and women. Statistics generally show that on average, men occupy higher paid roles than women. The gender pay gap is not about women being paid less than men for doing the same role. Equal pay deals with pay differences between men and women who carry out the same or similar jobs, or jobs of equal value. The overall UK average gender pay gap is determined by data received by the Office of National Statistics and is published annually on the government website. The 2025 figure for all employees is 12.8%.

The Service's data for 2025 shows that on average, across the Service male employees earn 0.61% more than female employees, which equates to 11p

per hour more, giving a significant reduction of 40p per hour compared to 2024. The data also shows that roles in the lower pay bands have been the biggest contributor to the reduction of the gender pay gap

Even though the Service's gender pay gap continues to compare favourably with the national position, the Service remains committed to reducing it further and has several new initiatives in place to support reducing the gender pay gap, such as the cultural transformation programme, and these are detailed in Section 5 of the report.

The Committee recognised the work that has been undertaken to address the gender pay gap and the positive impacts of it, as set out in the report. The Committee also expressed that their hope that the gender pay gap will at some point be reduced to 0%.

Resolved that the Committee note the contents of the 2026 report (for 2025 data) for publishing on the Service website and the Government website www.gov.uk

9 Progress on Implementation of the Equality Action Plan

This report updated Members on progress on the key actions identified in the Equality Scheme Action Plan from March 2025 to February 2026.

The EDIO presented this report and talked through the equality, diversity and inclusion work and initiatives that have been undertaken both internally and externally over the past year, as set out in Section 5 of the report.

Councillor Overton asked how the Service interviews and recruits neurodivergent people. The EDIO explained that various adjustments are made within recruitment processes to accommodate neurodiversity issues. One example is that all candidates attending interviews are given 30 minutes preparation time immediately before their interview during which they have access to a written copy of the interview questions, giving them time to prepare and adjust to the interview setting. The CFO added that we are probably in the minority of fire and rescue services that are doing this and that it is received well by interview attendees.

Councillor Evans asked for an update on what is happening with the Cultural Statement of Intent. The CFO explained that this piece of work needed to be done with staff rather than it coming from the organisation and work on it is currently ongoing. It was agreed that an update on this work would be brought to a future meeting of the Committee.

Councillor Evans also queried the specific completion dates that are given in the Equality Scheme Action Plan that is attached at the Appendix to the report. The EDIO explained that there will be a re-evaluation of the activities within the Action Plan to ensure that it is in line with the Service's Cultural Transformation Programme and that this will include a review of the completion dates for activities.

Resolved that the Committee has considered and noted the report

10 Equality Monitoring Statistics

This report provided Members with an overview of the Service's Equality Monitoring Statistics and how this data is used.

The EDIO presented the report and explained that the Equality Act 2010 Public Sector Equality Duty, requires the Fire Authority to publish equality statistics for its workforce. These statistics are also necessary to monitor the comparability between the composition of the Service's workforce and the communities that it serves.

The published equality monitoring statistics are broken down by age, disability, ethnicity, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation; however, the numbers of employees for some of these areas, such as ethnicity and sexual orientation, are so low that analysing them by employment area may allow identification of individuals. This would be in contravention of good employment practice and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and for these reasons, the Service may choose to not report on all the data fields.

The collected equality data is used to analyse the composition of the Service's workforce, in order to identify protected characteristics that are under-represented in comparison to the makeup of the communities that it serves. This enables planning for positive action and other appropriate initiatives to address imbalances.

The Workforce Statistics for 2025 are set out in Appendix A to the report and in comparison with the wider community profiles of both Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin areas, there are low numbers of employees from Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities; lesbian, gay, and bisexual + (LGB+) people; and a disproportionate under-representation of women in the operational workforce.

Councillor Evans noted the work that has been undertaken to encourage staff to accurately report their personal details, which includes explaining why the data is collected and how it is used by the Service, and acknowledged the notable increase in employee disclosure rates across many categories of the data. The Committee thanked the EDI and Human Resources teams for their work on this.

Resolved that the Committee has considered and noted the information contained in the report

11 Reasonable Adjustments Update 2026

This report provided Members with an overview of the reasonable adjustments made to support employees in their work roles.

The EDIO presented this report and advised that the Service is required, under the Equality Act 2010, to make reasonable adjustments to enable employees who have a disability to carry out their work. The Service currently has 49 live reasonable adjustment cases and has supported a total of 206 people to date.

Employees are referred to appropriate experts, such as Occupational Health or Access to Work, for advice on adjustments to work processes and/or equipment that may be provided to enable them to carry out their role. Once the assessment is completed, the employee meets with their manager and the EDIO to discuss and agree an action plan which incorporates those actions that are deemed necessary.

The costs of reasonable adjustments can be funded through Access to Work who will only contribute towards tuition and a percentage of equipment or software costs; they do not support the cost of professional assessments. In urgent cases, support may be provided before funding is confirmed due to Access to Work having a long waiting list for assessment.

Councillor Overton commented that he fully supports anything that the Service does to help those who require reasonable adjustments and asked how employees are identified as potentially needing help in this way. The EDIO explained that it is always at the front of manager's minds so meetings with employees are invaluable as are Access to Work's recommendations.

Councillor Clayton asked if reasonable adjustments overlap with care leavers and if there are any communications with agencies that support care leavers. The EDIO advised that they are not sure about the specifics of this particular issue, but which reasonable adjustments are a specific legal term there is some flexibility attached to them.

Resolved that the Committee has considered and noted the report.

12 Occupational Health Provision: Annual Update 2026

This report provided an overview of the Service's Occupational Health (OH) provision, covering both fitness testing, health surveillance and wider health-related activities.

The HRO presented this report and explained that the Service's OH provision is divided into two contracts which are both contracted out to external agencies.

Fitness testing for firefighters is provided under contract with the University of Worcester McClelland Centre. This contract is valued at £51,630 per year and a one-year extension has been applied to the contract meaning that it is in place until 31 March 2027. The contract covers annual fitness assessments for firefighting staff plus an extended service to support those staff who fall into the Amber category for fitness.

The OH function is contracted to Health Partners under a contract to 31 March 2027, at a cost of £80,263 per annum. This function delivers medical assessments, referrals, reviews, pre-employment assessments and management of OH records.

Section 4 of the report provides a summary of OH activity to date. A total of 462 fitness assessments have been conducted with all staff, except one, achieving a green score which means they are fully fit for operational duties and re-test in 12 months. One employee recorded an amber result meaning they are considered fit for operational duties but with advice from the Fitness Advisor. They will then be re-tested within 12 weeks with a view to reaching the green category. No employees were in the red category which is where employees are considered unfit and are removed from operational duty.

Under OH activity, 314 routine firefighter medicals comprising cardiovascular screening, respiratory evaluation, hearing and vision checks, musculoskeletal checks, and a OH physician review, were booked. Of these only 125 were completed with 189 employees recorded as “did not attend”. Whilst this figure appears high, it does not account for individual who were absent from the workplace during the assessment period, including those on long-term sick or extended annual leave. Feedback has been gathered on the reasons for non-attendance at appointments and various work is being undertaken to improve engagement with the medical assessment process, as detailed in Section 4.2 of the report.

Of the 132 appointments with the OH nurse or doctor, 104 were appointments where a diagnosis of employee absence was given. The other 28 OH appointments related to return to work recommendations or reviews of employees on a phased return to work. The primary diagnosis for the appointments attended is split fairly equally between mental health; musculoskeletal, and other (i.e. all other issues not related to either of the two previous categories) with musculoskeletal having the highest level of diagnosis.

Employees have access to a range of services to assist with early intervention and preventative measures which are designed to help them to remain in work and reduce levels of absence. Section 4.3 of the report gives more detail on the range of services available.

Councillor Overton asked if any analysis has been done on the data that is shown on the graphs in the report. The CFO explained musculoskeletal injuries tend to be more prevalent in the summer months as there tends to be more practical and/or outdoor training undertaken then. Training in the winter months tends to be more theory based.

Resolved that the Committee has considered and noted the report.

Councillor Minnery left the meeting at this point (2.20 pm)

Councillor Evans asked about return to work interviews. The HRO confirmed that all employees have a return to work interview following sickness absence.

Councillor Evans referred to the OH Doctor and Nurse appointments that were not attended and queried if there is a cost to the Service for these. The HRO explained that work is being done to make OH appointments more accessible to all employees such as the On Call service. For example, routine medical assessments are done at Headquarters, so the option of going out to core On Call stations is being explored to reduce travel time for those attending.

13 Discipline and Grievance Annual Update and Learning Report 2025

This report provided an annual overview of misconduct and grievance cases for 2024/2025, meeting His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) requirement to share anonymised organisational learning. Case levels remain low, with around 2% of staff involved in misconduct and 2.5% raising grievances, but the learning gained continues to highlight important themes around behaviour, communication, policy adherence, and timelines.

The CFO presented this report to Members and advised fifteen of the sixteen HMICFRS recommendations have been completed, with the one remaining action embedded within wider cultural transformation work.

This report is being brought to Committee as part of the measures to address recommendation 15 which relates to a process being put in place for sharing learning from misconduct cases that have been resolved while preserving the confidentiality of all parties involved.

Councillor Evans asked if all the recommendations met their proposed timescales. The CFO confirmed that he is comfortable to provide assurance that they all were, with the exception of the one outstanding recommendation that is tied in with the ongoing cultural work.

Resolved that the Committee has considered and noted the report.

The meeting closed at 2.40 pm

Chair _____

Date _____