5

Minutes of the Meeting of
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority

Strategy and Resources Committee

Held in Oak Room, Headquarters, Shrewsbury
On Wednesday, 22 July 2026 at 1.30 pm

Present:
Councillors Clayton, Evans (Chair), Fejfer and Minnery.

Officers

Simon Hardiman	Chief Fire Officer	CFO
Mark Price	Temporary Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Service Delivery)	ACFO
Jacqui Dungey	Section 151 Officer	S151 Officer
Mary Regan	Head of Finance	HoF
Debbie Thomas-White	Deputy Clerk	DClerk
Aleksandra Zydek	Executive Support Officer	ESTO

1 Apologies for Absence

Cllr Coleman, Callear and Marc Millward (Assistant Chief Fire Officer Corporate Services) and Germaine Worker (Head of HR and Administration)

2 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

None

3 Public Questions

None

4 Member Questions

None

5 Non-Exempt Minutes 18 March 2026

Resolved that the minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee, held on 18 March 2026, be agreed and signed by the Chair.

6 Committee Training

The Committee was asked to consider and agree what training they wish to receive in order to fulfil their role on the Committee effectively.

Resolved that the training programme for 2026/27 be determined by officers and delivered to Members as appropriate.

7 Assurance Framework and Domain Structure

This report sought ratification of the Service Assurance Framework (SAF), which enables Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) to meet its internal assurance obligations under the Code of Corporate Governance 2025/26.

Approval was sought for the framework design, evidence collection process and accountability structure. Following ratification, assurance evidence and confidence statements will be reviewed by the Assurance Board, with identified gaps captured through the Gap Register to support continuous improvement and inform future Fire Authority reporting.

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO) presented the report and explained that the Service introduced a consistent assurance methodology based around four key components: Fire Standards compliance, performance and Corporate Performance Indicators (CPIs), assurance mechanisms and corporate risk. These components are brought together within 24 domains grouped under four pillars: People, Place, Tools and Enablers. The framework would provide a clearer understanding of performance, risk and assurance across the Service and align closely with the standards and themes assessed by HMICFRS.

The ACFO advised that, whilst the framework had established a baseline position across the domains, the Service was currently only able to identify and understand its benchmark position. Future reporting would enable the Service to assess maturity, track improvement and provide confidence ratings across each domain.

Cllr Fejfer asked whether other Fire and Rescue Services were already using a similar system or whether Shropshire was acting as a pilot. The ACFO explained that the framework was a new approach based on Enterprise Assurance Management principles and aligned closely with governance arrangements expected by HMICFRS. Whilst unique to Shropshire at present, it reflected recognised assurance and governance practices.

The Chief Fire Officer (CFO) advised that the framework had evolved from previous quarterly performance reporting arrangements. Feedback had highlighted that traditional CPI reporting provided only a narrow view of organisational performance, whereas the Service Assurance Framework offered a much broader and more holistic assessment. He confirmed that the framework had been considered by the Strategic Advisory Group (STAG) on 13 July 2026 and was now being presented for approval. Monitoring and scrutiny responsibility would ultimately sit with the Performance and Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Evans expressed disappointment that there appeared to be limited Member involvement within the framework's development and governance arrangements. He questioned where authority Members would be able to influence reporting frequencies, performance expectations and scrutiny arrangements. He noted that HMICFRS placed increasing emphasis on the role of Members in challenging and overseeing Service performance.

The ACFO responded that the framework had primarily been designed as an internal Service assurance and governance tool and reflected recent organisational changes. However, he acknowledged that the framework could evolve and be amended following Member feedback.

Councillor Clayton sought clarification on whether the framework was effectively a data collection exercise. The ACFO confirmed that data collection formed part of the process but explained that professional judgement, assurance activity, governance oversight and risk management were equally important elements of the framework.

The CFO added that previous reporting often focused on whether individual indicators met pre-defined targets and remained within tolerance levels. The Service Assurance Framework would provide a more complete picture, enabling Members to understand the Service's confidence levels, emerging risks and areas requiring attention across all domains. He stated that the framework would create greater transparency by presenting assurance alongside performance information rather than performance data alone.

In response to a question from Councillor Clayton regarding HMICFRS targets, the CFO confirmed that the framework was not being introduced solely to satisfy inspection requirements. Its primary purpose was to support delivery of services to the public through a more comprehensive understanding of organisational performance, risk and assurance. The ACFO added that the focus was on achieving positive outcomes for communities rather than simply measuring activity. HMICFRS standards remained an important benchmark but were considered part of the wider assurance picture.

The CFO further advised that many of the improvement areas previously identified through HMICFRS inspections were already being addressed through ongoing Service improvement activity and should be considered part of normal business.

Councillor Clayton commented that the framework reflected approaches often used in the private sector and welcomed the emphasis on analysis, assurance and outcomes rather than solely measuring outputs.

Cllr Minnery commented that, whilst he had not yet seen the framework in its full operational context, it appeared to provide an appropriate mechanism for scrutiny. He stressed the importance of ensuring the respective roles of the

Fire Authority, Strategy and Resources Committee and Performance and Scrutiny Committee remained clear. He noted that Strategy and Resources Committee's role was generally to establish objectives and measures of success, with scrutiny of performance sitting elsewhere.

The CFO reiterated that the framework was intended to capture assurance across the whole organisation and ultimately provide reports to the Performance and Scrutiny Committee. The Fire Authority would receive assurance reports where appropriate.

Cllr Minnery asked whether the framework would feed into dashboards and real-time reporting. Officers confirmed that this was the intention. He also noted that some amendments remained outstanding, including areas marked "To Be Confirmed", as Key Performance Indicator ownership and definitions continued to be developed. Officers advised that the framework should not be viewed as static and would continue to evolve as the Service matured its assurance arrangements.

The CFO stated that the framework would move the Service away from a solely target-driven approach and allow management teams to identify emerging issues more quickly. For example, if performance began to decline in prevention activity, mitigating action could be implemented at an earlier stage.

Members questioned whether the framework would support assurance regarding budget allocation and expenditure. The S151 Officer confirmed that one of the domains related specifically to finance. Whilst statutory financial reporting would continue through existing governance arrangements, the framework would provide greater assurance that investment and resources were supporting intended outcomes. Members noted the importance of demonstrating that funding allocated to specific activities delivered the anticipated benefits.

The ACFO advised that, over time, the Service would develop a clearer understanding of where additional investment might be required. Data quality remained an example where future investment might be necessary. He also highlighted the direct link between the framework and the Corporate Risk Register, enabling assurance and risk information to inform one another.

Councillor Evans asked whether the framework would require approval by the Audit and Standards Committee. The CFO explained that, following discussion, it was proposed that quarterly assurance reports should instead be reviewed by the Performance and Scrutiny Committee in line with its terms of reference.

Councillor Evans also sought clarification regarding financial performance indicators and budget reporting. The S151 Officer explained that CPI definitions were still being refined with support from the Data Team, while detailed financial monitoring and reserve usage would continue to be reported through established Strategy and Resources Committee processes.

Councillor Clayton asked how flexible the framework would be if domains needed to be amended or combined. The ACFO advised that a formal review would be undertaken after 12 months, although an initial six-month review would also be completed. Whilst there was potential for future consolidation of domains, it was important first to understand the impact and consequences of any changes before altering the structure.

The CFO confirmed that Service Management Team would review exception reports every four weeks and undertake wider assurance reviews every two months. Following discussion, Members agreed that references to quarterly reporting should be amended so that reports would be submitted to the Performance and Scrutiny Committee rather than the Audit and Standards Committee.

Resolved that the Committee:

a) Ratified the Service Assurance Framework as the Service's primary internal assurance framework.
b) Approved the Service Assurance Framework structure.
c) Agreed that quarterly Service Assurance Framework reports are submitted to the Performance and Scrutiny Committee and any persistent **Requires Improvement** or **Inadequate** ratings are escalated to the Fire Authority as appropriate.

8 People Strategy End of the Year Report 2025/26

This report provided an update on the achievements made against the People Strategy 2025-28.

The Chief Fire Officer (CFO) highlighted the significant achievements delivered during the first year of the Strategy and thanked the Head of HR and Administration, Germaine Worker, for her leadership and commitment in driving the Strategy forward. He commented that the breadth of achievements outlined in the report was a testament to the work being undertaken across the Service.

The CFO advised Members that HMICFRS would be visiting the following week and looked forward to showcasing the progress that had been made.

In discussing the Health, Wellbeing and Fitness section of the report, Cllr Minnery commented that the fitness testing results were among the best he could remember seeing within the Service. He noted that the investment made in supporting employee health and fitness had clearly delivered positive results and represented a worthwhile investment. The CFO agreed, stating that investment in fitness facilities and infrastructure had played an important role in achieving these outcomes. The report noted that 95% of operational staff were tested, with a 99.8% pass rate achieved.

Referring to the Cycle to Work Scheme, Members noted the continued success of the initiative, which supported nine orders during 2025/26 and has now been running for seven years. Cllr Fejfer questioned whether the Service's culture initiatives fully reflected the needs of whole-time, on-call and support staff. The CFO confirmed that this was the case and explained that the Service aimed to ensure initiatives were inclusive and accessible to all employee groups.

Cllr Fejfer also asked whether increased participation in the Cycle to Work Scheme had resulted in more employees actively cycling to work. The CFO advised that the scheme included provisions requiring employees to demonstrate appropriate use where necessary. Whilst it was difficult to quantify exact usage, there had been a noticeable increase in bicycle ownership and positive engagement with initiatives supporting health, wellbeing and reduced vehicle use.

Cllr Evans referred to the upcoming Awards Evening in September. The CFO said he was looking forward to the event and the opportunity to celebrate staff achievements. Members commented that recognition of staff performance was important and welcomed the continued focus on reward and recognition initiatives outlined within the report.

During discussion regarding employee benefits, Cllr Clayton asked for further information on the Vivup platform. The CFO explained that Vivup provided employees with access to discounts and benefits, whilst also enabling managers to recognise and congratulate staff through a rewards system. Employees could accumulate points which could then be exchanged for rewards.

Councillor Evans expressed disappointment that Members had not been included within the People Strategy, noting that they are also part of the wider Service and should have been considered within the Strategy's scope.

Resolved that the Committee has noted the progress made against the People Strategy 2025-28.

The meeting closed at 2.20 pm.

Chair ____________________________________

Date ____________________________________