

WILTSHIRE & SWINDON FIRE AUTHORITY

REPORT REFERENCE NO.	14
MEETING	Fire Authority
MEETING DATE	9 December 2015
SUBJECT OF REPORT	Dissolution of the Authority
LEAD OFFICERS	Keith Strickland, Acting Clerk to the Authority Simon Routh-Jones, Chief Fire Officer Phil Chow, Treasurer
RECOMMENDATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) To note this report. b) To agree a programme of formal meetings of the Authority for the period 1 January to 31 March 2016. c) To note how the final accounts for the current financial year will be dealt with. d) To authorise the Chief Fire Officer, Treasurer and Acting Clerk severally to take such action as may be required which is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive or incidental to, the dissolution of the Authority.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	This paper looks at what business there is likely to be for formal consideration by the Authority and its committees between now and 1 April 2016 and asks members to consider a programme of meetings. It also recommends officers being explicitly authorised to deal with the administrative aspects of the Authority's dissolution.
APPENDICES	None

Introduction

1. The purpose of this paper is to consider what, if any, formal decisions it may be necessary for the Authority to take prior to its dissolution after 31 March 2016, and to invite members to agree a final programme of meetings between now and then. It also recommends officers being explicitly authorised to deal with the administrative aspects of the Authority's dissolution.

Statutory background

2. In accordance with the provisions of the Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Authority (Combination Scheme) Order 2015, on 1 April 2016:
 - The statutory basis for this Authority (i.e. the Wiltshire and Swindon Fire Services (Combination Scheme) Order 1996) will be revoked. The Authority will cease to exist. It will not have any residual functions.
 - The statutory responsibility for fire and rescue services in the geographical area hitherto covered by this Authority will be assumed by Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Authority (DWFRA).
 - All employees in post on 31 March 2016 will be transferred to the employment of DWFRA.
 - All property, rights and liabilities held or incurred by this Authority will be transferred to DWFRA.

Commentary

3. No decisions of the Authority are required to give effect to the above events. No resolutions of a “winding-up” nature are needed.
4. It is likely, therefore, that member involvement in the final three months of the Authority’s existence will be limited, in contrast to the amount of administrative and “back-office” work involved if a smooth dissolution of this Authority and transition to DWFRA is to be achieved. The volume of such work and the consequent pressures on officers should not be under-estimated. Members too will continue to have additional demands on their time due to their shadow DWFRA work and responsibilities. It would therefore seem to be in everyone’s interest that, between now and 1 April 2016, only meetings of this Authority which have a real purpose are held.

Dates of Authority meetings currently in the diary

5. The following meetings were shown in the schedule attached to the minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Authority held in June this year.

Staffing Committee

6. 21 January and 3 March. Though at the moment there is no certainty of any business, it may be advisable to retain these dates in case unexpected issues arise.

Ethics Committee

7. 10 March. At the Committee’s last meeting, this date was changed to 17 February. The meeting will be held only if there is business to be transacted.

Finance Review and Audit Committee

8. 17 March. Business for this meeting will include the usual budget monitoring report and reports from the internal and external auditors.

Programme and Scrutiny Board

9. 28 January. None of the three workstreams has fixed further meetings. The Board intends to hold one more meeting, the purpose of which would be to deal with any monitoring matters which would otherwise fall within the remit of the individual workstreams, to receive an update on the combination process and to undertake a final review of the strategic risk register. This being so, late February or the beginning of March would be more timely than January.

The full Authority

10. 31 March. This would be a final meeting to receive the minutes of the above committees/board.

11. Any unforeseen issues requiring the Authority's urgent consideration which may arise in the interim could be dealt with by the Urgency Committee or at an extraordinary meeting of the full Authority.

Programme of formal meetings

12. On the basis of the above dates, the programme for the period 1 January to 31 March 2016 would be:

- 21 January – Staffing Committee (provisional)
- 17 February – Ethics Committee (provisional)
- 3 March – Staffing Committee (provisional)
- 17 March – Finance Review and Audit Committee
- ?? late Feb / early March – Programme and Scrutiny Board
- 31 March – full Authority

End of year accounts

13. As this Authority's accounts for 2015/16 cannot, of course, be finalised and audited before 1 April 2016, responsibility for their preparation and approval is a liability which will pass to DWFRA. The accounts will be considered by that Authority in accordance with the normal timescales.

Authorisations to officers

14. Reference has already been made to the administrative work being undertaken to prepare for the Authority's demise and the transfer of functions to DWFRA. Notwithstanding this Authority's scheme of delegations to officers, it is recommended that for the avoidance of doubt, officers are explicitly authorised to take such action as may be required which is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive or incidental to, the dissolution of the Authority.

Policy implications

15. None arising from this report.

HR, equality and diversity implications

16. None arising from this report.

Environmental implications

17. None arising from this report.

Financial and legal implications

18. None other than those mentioned in the report.

Combination implications

19. None other than those mentioned in the report.

Recommendations

20. The Authority is invited:

- a) To note this report.
- b) To agree a programme of formal meetings of the Authority for the period 1 January to 31 March 2016.
- c) To note how the final accounts for the current financial year will be dealt with.
- d) To authorise the Chief Fire Officer, Treasurer and Acting Clerk severally to take such action as may be required which is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive or incidental to, the dissolution of the Authority.

Keith Strickland Acting Clerk to the Authority	Simon Routh-Jones Chief Fire Officer & Chief Executive	Phil Chow Treasurer
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Unpublished documents used in the preparation of this report:

None.

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