



Draft Minutes of the Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Authority meeting at 10:00 hours on 09 February 2022 held at Salisbury Guildhall, Salisbury.

These are draft minutes to be approved by the Fire and Rescue Authority at their next meeting.

Members present:

Cllr Rebecca Knox (Chair)	Cllr Paul Oatway (Vice Chair)	Cllr Steve Baron
Cllr Pete Barrow	Cllr Richard Biggs	Cllr Brian Dalton
Cllr Malcolm Davies	Cllr Millie Earl	Cllr Paul Hilliard
Cllr Russell Holland	Cllr Toby Johnson	Cllr Bob Jones
Cllr Kelvin Nash	Cllr Garry Perkins	Cllr Byron Quayle
Cllr Pip Ridout	Cllr Kevin Small*	

*Note: Cllr Small was not present in the meeting for consideration of item 22/08 and did not vote on this item.

Officer attendance:

Chief Fire Officer (CFO), Ben Ansell
Deputy Chief Fire Officer (DCFO), Derek James
Clerk & Monitoring Officer, Jonathan Mair
Head of Financial Services & Treasurer, Ian Cotter
Director of Community Safety, Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO), Andy Cole
Director of People Services, Jenny Long
Temporary Director of Service Support, Jill McCrae
Head of Corporate Support, Vikki Shearing
Group Manager (GM), Stuart Gillion
Corporate Communications & Engagement Manager, Emily Cheeseman
Executive Support & Democratic Services Manager, Gemma Kelly
Democratic Services Officer, David Shaw

22/01 Welcome

22/01.1 The Chair welcomed attendees, including David Sidwick, Dorset Police and Crime Commissioner, and Adam Lees, Amey Consultancy, who both sat in the public gallery to observe the meeting.

22/01.2 The Chair informed Members that this would be the last Authority meeting to be attended by Cllr Garry Perkins who would not be seeking re-election. On behalf of the meeting the Chair thanked him for his service to the Authority over a significant number of years, including his time as Vice Chair, and wished him well for the future.

22/02 Apologies

22/02.1 Apologies were received from Cllr Ashley O'Neill.

22/03 Code of Conduct, Declarations of Interests

22/03.1 The Chair asked the meeting for any disclosures of pecuniary interests under the Localism Act. There were no disclosures.

22/04 Review minutes of the Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Authority meeting on 15 December 2021 and any matters arising

22/04.1 The Chair asked Members to review and approve the minutes from the last meeting.

22/04.2 Arising out of consideration of item 21/50, the Chair reported that Cllr Steve Baron had been unable to take up an appointment to the Finance & Audit Committee as agreed in resolution 21/50.3. The Chair had subsequently consulted with the Chair of the Finance & Audit Committee and agreed that Cllr Kevin Small be proposed as the new Member to serve on the Finance & Audit Committee. There was no dissent to this proposal.

22/04.3 CFO Ben Ansell stated that in respect of minute 21/56, and the reference to the White Paper on fire reform, publication of the White Paper was still awaited and a seminar for Members would be arranged following its publication. CFO Ansell continued that minute 21/58, Age Discrimination Remedy – Implementing the Immediate Detriment Framework, was included on the agenda for this meeting for consideration (item 22/15 post refers). The remaining actions had been completed.

22/04.4 **RESOLVED:**

- 1. That the minutes of the 15 December 2021 meeting be confirmed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.**
- 2. That Cllr Small be appointed to serve on the Finance & Audit Committee.**

22/05 Public questions

22/05.1 No questions were received from members of the public.

22/06 Budget, Precept and Medium-Term Finance Plan 2022-23

22/06.1 Ian Cotter, Head of Financial Services & Treasurer, presented the report. It was explained that the final Local Government Finance Settlement for 2022-23 had been published on Monday 7 February 2022. The Settlement Funding Assessment and amounts of grants were unchanged from the Provisional Settlement; however, the 2% core council tax referendum threshold had also been maintained, rather than allowing the flexibility to increase by £5 as had been sought. Ian Cotter also confirmed that final information on business rates receipts had been received from the local authorities. This showed that there was an overall collection fund deficit of £1.25m for 2021-22, due to the impact of the pandemic. Much of this related to additional reliefs provided by the Government which meant that additional grant funding would be received to offset the deficit. The Home Office had not yet confirmed any specific grants, including the annual pensions grant.

22/06.2 Ian Cotter continued that current inflationary pressures had impacted budget setting for 2022-23. Additional allowance had been made in 2022-23 and 2023-24 for general inflationary pressures particularly for costs such as fuel, gas and electricity. Pay awards for all staff groups had been assumed at 2%, with anything more than that not affordable given the Authority's funding position. Ian Cotter pointed out that each 1% of pay award variation roughly equated to £0.5m of cost and that this was reflected in the General Reserve risk assessment.

22/06.3 Ian Cotter added that the Authority would see new employer pension contribution rates from April 2023 for the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) and April 2024 for the Firefighters' Pension Scheme (FPS). The potential increase for the FPS represented a significant financial risk.

22/06.4 CFO Ansell added that it was extremely disappointing that the £5 flexibility had not been forthcoming to our Authority, given our excellent record of efficiency, high reliance on council tax and that our fire precept was below the national average.

22/06.5 In reply to a question from Cllr Paul Hilliard, Ian Cotter explained that the possible effects of inflation, currently at 5.4%, was considered against specific budget lines and he was satisfied that the provisions made within the budget were sufficient and that reserves could be used if required. Likely changes in interest rates had been considered and were reflected in the provisions for borrowing and borrowing timescales.

- 22/06.6 Cllr Pete Barrow explored the reasoning why the proposed referendum principles for 2022-23 of a £5 flexibility had only been extended to the eight lowest charging fire and rescue authorities. The Chair and CFO Ansell outlined the extensive representation that had been made to the Government, the Local Government Association and the National Fire Chiefs Council on this matter.
- 22/06.7 In reply to a question from Cllr Millie Earl, the officers explained that the cost of holding a referendum to raise the council tax precept by more than the 2% core referendum threshold could be in excess of £2m.
- 22/06.8 Members expressed their disappointment that the Home Office, Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and HM Treasury had not understood the financial situation that the Authority was moving towards in the next few years. Cllr Paul Oatway proposed an additional recommendation to support CFO Ansell and the Strategic Leadership Team over the £5 threshold flexibility. The proposal was seconded by Cllr Byron Quayle as follows:
- 22/06.9 'Madam Chair, I do not think that the Chief Fire Officer and Strategic Leadership Team should stand alone on this matter, it is my view that we as an Authority have a duty to stand firmly with them and support them in their concerns and frustrations that departments within Government have totally ignored their and our concerns around the request for a £5 precept rise.
- It shows a total lack of responsibility, leadership and understanding on their part of the extremely worrying financial position that this is placing us and the people within the Authority's geographical areas of responsibility in.'
- 22/06.10 The additional recommendation was unanimously supported.
- 22/06.11 **RESOLVED:**
1. **That the revenue budget of £61.05m and capital budget of £4.6m for 2022-23 be approved.**
 2. **That the basic amount of Band D Fire Precept for the Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Authority at £79.43 for 2022-23 be approved.**
 3. **That the Treasurer be authorised to issue precept notices on the Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole Council, Dorset Council, Swindon Borough Council and Wiltshire Council.**
 4. **That the Medium-Term Finance Plan 2022-23 to 2025-26 be approved.**
 5. **That the following additional recommendation be approved:**
'Madam Chair, I do not think that the Chief Fire Officer and Strategic Leadership Team should stand alone on this matter, it is my view that we as an Authority have a duty to stand firmly with them and support them in their concerns and frustrations that departments within

Initials _____

Government have totally ignored their and our concerns around the request for a £5 precept rise.

It shows a total lack of responsibility, leadership and understanding on their part of the extremely worrying financial position that this is placing us and the people within the Authority's geographical areas of responsibility in.'

22/07 Treasury Management Strategy 2022-23

22/07.1 Ian Cotter presented the report which set out the treasury management strategy for 2022-23, including the relevant prudential indicators, the capital strategy and the Authority policy on minimum revenue provision (MRP). He explained that the MRP policy remained unchanged from previous years, with one potential exception related to leasing arrangements, although the implementation of this change may be subject to further delay.

22/07.2 In reply to questions from Cllr Small, Cllr Hilliard and Cllr Richard Biggs, Ian Cotter explained that there would be an increase in the Capital Financing Requirement resulting from the new accounting standard on leasing as some current leases would now be accounted for as assets, for example the lease on the Five Rivers Headquarters site; that the Chief Accountant was Samantha Harris, and that there was no impact on Treasury Management due to changes to the legal framework following exit from the European Union.

22/07.3 **RESOLVED:**

- 1. That the Treasury Management Policy Statement and Practices (including the Annual Investment and Treasury Management Strategy) – (as set out in Appendix A), be approved.**
- 2. That the Capital and Treasury Management Prudential Indicators 2022-23 (as set out in Appendix B), be approved.**
- 3. That the Capital Strategy 2022-23 (as set out in Appendix C), be approved.**
- 4. That the Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement as defined in paragraph 3.11, be approved.**

22/08 National Scheme for External Auditor Appointments

22/08.1 Ian Cotter presented the report which recommended that the Authority join the National Scheme for External Auditor Appointments.

22/08.2 Cllr Quayle, Chair of the Finance & Audit Committee and Cllr Pip Ridout, Vice Chair of the Finance & Audit Committee, spoke in support of the recommendation.

22/08.3 **RESOLVED: That the Authority opts in to the National Scheme for External Auditor Appointments from 1 April 2023.**

22/09 Review of Authority Policies

22/09.1 Jill McCrae, Temporary Director of Service Support, introduced the report. In reply to a question from Cllr Russell Holland, it was confirmed that as part of the approach to Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) inspections, officers did check with other fire and rescue authorities to ensure that the policies were fully comprehensive. CFO Ansell added that the policies had also been the subject of a peer review, which was constructive to ensure that best practice was adopted.

22/09.2 Jill McCrae confirmed in reply to Cllr Biggs' question, that the Asset Management policy would be updated to include the new environmental legislation.

22/09.3 **RESOLVED: That it be approved that there be no fundamental changes to the current policy statements.**

22/10 State of Fire and Rescue 2021

22/10.1 Jill McCrae introduced the report. It was explained that the Authority was also liaising with Dorset Police and Wiltshire Police to learn from their inspections, as they were also subject to assessment by HMICFRS.

22/10.2 In reply to a question from Cllr Holland, the Chair stated that Members could support the inspection process by bringing any matters that they wished to have clarified to the attention of CFO Ansell or the Chair. In reply to a question from Cllr Barrow, CFO Ansell added that it was an inspection of the Service and therefore the inspectors would not be engaging with the Chairs of the Local Performance and Scrutiny Committees.

22/10.3 **RESOLVED: That the report be noted.**

22/11 Pay Policy Statement 2022-23

22/11.1 Jenny Long, Director of People Services, presented the report and in reply to a question from Cllr Small asking if there were any outstanding equality pay issues, responded that the Authority had a job evaluation panel for considering the pay grading of new posts, which included the making of comparisons with other job families. CFO Ansell added that in respect of paragraph 8.10 of the report, it was acknowledged that the pay award for those employed on Green Book terms remained to be agreed, with the national employer's full and final offer of 1.75% rejected by the trade unions, which affected the pay multiple ratio for Green Book staff.

- 22/11.2 **RESOLVED: That the Pay Policy Statement for the financial year 2022-23 be approved.**
- 22/12 Enhanced Redundancy – Review of Multiplier**
- 22/12.1 **RESOLVED:**
- 1. That the redundancy multiplier remains at 1.5.**
 - 2. That the same level of multiplier be applied for compulsory and voluntary redundancy.**
 - 3. That the policy position that redundancy payments should be calculated on the basis of ‘actual’ salary be retained.**
- 22/13 Gender Pay Gap Report 2021**
- 22/13.1 Jenny Long presented the report. It was explained that the report presented data in the four staff groups employed by the Authority: corporate, on-call, fire control and wholtime, and outlined the factors contributing to the gender pay gap and the key initiatives being taken forward to help bridge this gap. The Service had also calculated its ethnicity pay gap and was progressing internal networks and support to females in the organisation to reduce any negative pay gaps. There were no questions arising from Members.
- 22/13.2 RESOLVED: That the report be noted**
- 22/14 Date of next meeting**
- 22/14.1 The Chair confirmed the date of the next Authority meeting as 15 June 2022 from 10:00am.
- 22/15 Update on Age Discrimination Remedy - Implementing the Immediate Detriment Framework (less exempt appendix)**
- 22/15.1 Jenny Long presented the report.
- 22/15.2 In reply to a question from Cllr Small, CFO Ansell explained that the situation was complex. The recommendation to recommence processing the cases of staff about to retire (category 1 cases), in line with immediate detriment principles, would be provided to staff that had indicated that they wished to retire prior to pension scheme changes in April 2022. These staff would need to understand and accept that there may be subsequent changes following legislation. However, to wait until the remedying

legislation was in place, (currently expected in October 2023) could be viewed as being too long a period. Additionally, in response to a question by Cllr Ridout, it was clarified that there were three cases of staff about to retire and 19 who had retired (category 2 cases) that were affected by immediate detriment.

22/15.3

RESOLVED:

1. That the contents and appendix of the report be noted.
2. That the Service recommence processing the cases of staff about to retire (category 1) in line with immediate detriment principles but avoid any payments that would trigger tax complications or incur unfunded costs for the Authority.
3. That further decisions regarding the approach to be taken to immediate detriment, including the timing of when the cases of staff who have retired (category 2) will be processed, are delegated to the Chief Fire Officer in consultation with the Treasurer and the Monitoring Officer.

22/16

To consider passing the following resolution:

In accordance with Section 100A (1, 2 & 3) of the Local Government Act 1972, to exclude the press and public for the business specified below because it is likely that if members of the public were present there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1 & 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Act and the public interest in withholding the information outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information to the public.

22/16.1

RESOLVED: To close the meeting to the press and public.

PART 2

22/17

Update on Age Discrimination Remedy - Implementing the Immediate Detriment Framework (exempt appendix)

22/17.1

The Committee noted the exempt appendix which provided legal advice from the Local Government Association on behalf of authorities on immediate detriment.

22/18 Training Centre Provision

22/18.1 The meeting considered an exempt report which provided options on the purchase for land for the provision of a training centre, prior to a full options paper possibly being considered by Members in June 2022.

22/18.2 The Committee supported the recommendation, subject to the flexibility threshold being increased to 20% to help secure the land purchase in order to ensure that Option 1, a centrally located training facility, and a purchase of land, if it could be afforded, remained available to Members as part of the feasibility study that was being developed.

22/18.3 **RESOLVED:**

- 1. That the purchase of the plot of land, as detailed in Appendix B of the report, be approved.**

- 2. That delegated authority be provided to the Chief Fire Officer, in consultation with the Treasurer and Clerk & Monitoring Officer, to agree the terms on which the plot of land is to be acquired, within the parameters as to price set out in paragraph 3.7 of the exempt report, subject to having the authority and flexibility to agree a purchase price of up to 20% above the sum per acre valuation as set out in the report.**

Meeting ended at 13.00hrs

Signed: _____