



DORSET & WILTSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

Minutes of the Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Authority meeting at 10:00 hours on 11 February 2021. This was an online meeting held in Microsoft Teams and open to all members of the public.

Members present:

Cllr Rebecca Knox (Chair)	Cllr Byron Quayle (Vice Chair)
Cllr Steve Baron	Cllr Pete Barrow
Cllr Richard Biggs	Cllr Ernie Clark
Cllr Malcolm Davies	Cllr Paul Hilliard
Cllr Peter Hutton	Cllr Toby Johnson
Cllr Bob Jones	Cllr Brian Mattock
Cllr Christopher Newbury	Cllr Paul Oatway
Cllr Garry Perkins	Cllr Pip Ridout
Cllr Kevin Small	Cllr Ann Stribley

Officer attendance:

Chief Fire Officer (CFO), Ben Ansell
Clerk and Monitoring Officer, Jonathan Mair
Head of Financial Services and Treasurer, Ian Cotter
Deputy Chief Fire Officer (DCFO), Derek James
Director of People Services, Jenny Long
Director of Community Safety, Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO), Jim Mahoney
Head of Information and Communications, Vikki Shearing
Head of Strategic Planning & Corporate Assurance, Jill McCrae
Area Manager (AM), Service Support, Andy Cole
Democratic Services Support, Stephanie Howard

21/01 Welcome

- 21/01.1 The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed attendees.
- 21/01.2 The Chair acknowledged three members of staff cited in the Queen's New Year Honours list and the recognition given to them for outstanding work within the community. These were: Watch Manager Chris Martin who received the British Empire Medal, Area Manager Andy Cole and Chief Fire Officer, Ben Ansell for both receiving the Queen's Fire Service Medal.

21/02 Apologies

21/02.1 No apologies were received. Due to technical difficulties Cllr Garry Perkins was unable to join at the start of the meeting, he subsequently joined via the telephone conference facility.

21/03 Code of Conduct, Declarations of Interest and notifications of any other business

21/03.1 The Chair asked the meeting for any disclosures of pecuniary interests under the Localism Act. There were no disclosures.

21/04 Review minutes of the Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Authority meeting on 10 December 2020 and any matters arising

21/04.1 The Chair asked Members to review and approve the minutes from the last meeting.

21/04.2 Chief Fire Officer (CFO) Ben Ansell confirmed that all actions had been completed.

21/04.3 **RESOLVED that the minutes be confirmed without amendment and signed by the Chair as a correct record.**

21/05 Receive the minutes of the Finance & Audit Committee meeting on 4 December 2020

21/05.1 Cllr Bob Jones presented the minutes of the meeting of 4 December. He provided a general overview of the meeting and explained that the draft Statement of Accounts for 2019-20 were brought back to this meeting due to national pensions issues and with the accounts being subsequently approved.

21/05.2 **RESOLVED: Members received the minutes of the Finance & Audit Committee meeting of 4 December 2020.**

21/06 Response to Covid-19, an inspection of Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service

21/06.1 Head of Strategic Planning & Corporate Assurance, Jill McCrae took Members through the report and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) letter, which was published in January 2021 and provided an overview of the findings.

21/06.2 Jill McCrae reported that the Inspectorate found a positive and robust response by the Service to the pandemic with no significant areas of concern. Jill McCrae confirmed that there were 66 positive judgements, and two areas of focus. She confirmed that the two areas of focus were associated with securing lasting improvements from ways of working that have been introduced to deal with the pandemic and examining how the Service may further strengthen support provisions for members of staff at higher risk from Covid-19.

21/06.3 Jill McCrae updated Members on the future inspection programme and confirmed that tranche three was likely to commence in February 2022.

21/06.4 **RESOLVED: Members noted the content of this report.**

21/07 Technical rescue review

21/07.1 Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO), Jim Mahoney and Area Manager (AM), Andy Cole presented the report to Members supported by a presentation.

21/07.2 ACFO Mahoney explained that technical rescue was a multi-disciplined and largely non-statutory capability which included large animal rescue, rescue from height, bariatric support to the ambulance service, water rescue, technical search and confined space rescue, and is designed to enhance and support the resolution of key incidents.

21/07.3 Members were informed that the technical rescue provision was currently located at Chippenham, Poole, Stratton, Trowbridge and Weymouth, and that this provision was based on arrangements of the former fire and rescue services with different capabilities, vehicles and equipment. It was reported that existing arrangements are not an efficient or effective way to deliver these technical capabilities across the Service.

21/07.4 ACFO Mahoney confirmed that a comprehensive and evidentially based review had been undertaken which considered a wide range of factors including risk profiles, flood risk maps, historical incident data, current competencies and capabilities, duty systems, and operational cover across the Service area. In addition to this, extensive feedback from staff, and representative bodies was also secured and fully considered. This review was also the subject of two seminars for Members, along with an earlier seminar for chairs of committees and Local Performance and Scrutiny Committees.

21/07.5 AM Cole took Members through data regarding the number of technical rescue incidents and explained the rationale for the two options being presented to the Authority.

- 21/07.6 ACFO Mahoney explained that the outcome of the review would ensure an aligned and a more efficient and effective approach to technical rescue to risk and to facilitate a safe system of work across the Service as a whole.
- 21/07.7 Clerk and Monitoring Officer, Jonathan Mair explained and outlined to Members that two letters of representation had been received, one from Melksham Town Council and one from Melksham Without Parish Council.
- 21/07.8 Members debated at length their concerns and positions on the options presented to them.
- 21/07.9 Several Members felt that the water safety aspects of the technical rescue capabilities would lead to a reduced level of service for dealing with flooding within the west Wiltshire area. Officers indicated that the risks faced from flooding largely warranted a level 2 response and that level 3 capability was infrequently employed and largely used to support the police with body recovery. In addition, the risks of fast flowing flooding needed to reflect the mitigation measures being put in place by other agencies such the Environment Agency. Officers outlined the operational data for responding to flooding and stated that, in their professional opinion, the realignment of technical rescue in its entirety would be better for the Service as a whole, given the growing demands across these range of services.
- 21/07.10 Members also questioned the arrangements for spate flooding conditions questioning the reliance on mutual aid. Officers outlined the existing mutual aid arrangements at a local on a bi-lateral basis and through the Networked Fire Service Partnership as well as those available at a national level. These mutual aid arrangements were drawn upon during the recent Wareham forest fire and the Somerset flooding many years previously. Officers also stated that they were active on a number of cross-border groups to help ensure strategic and tactical coordination between fire and rescue services in the region.
- 21/07.11 One Member put forward the notion of leaving Level 3 water rescue capability at either Trowbridge or Chippenham fire stations. Officers explained that this would not be operationally efficient and that it would be better to support option 2.
- 21/07.12 Many Members felt that the proposed option 1 represented the best use of operational resources for the Service as a whole and strengthened the arrangements across the spectrum of these technical rescue capabilities. They felt that Option 1 represented the best value for money and supported the duty and expectation to review resources in line with changing risks as set out in the national framework for fire and rescue services.
- 21/07.13 During the considerable debate that ensued, a motion was moved by Cllr Newbury and seconded by Cllr Clark to vote in favour of **Option 2**. The outcome of votes recorded were Cllrs Baron, Barrow, Biggs, Davies, Hilliard, Johnson, Jones, Knox, Mattock, Quayle, Small and Stribley voted AGAINST;

Initials _____

Cllrs Clark, Hutton, Newbury, Oatway voted FOR, Cllr Ridout ABSTAINED from voting and Cllr Perkins was unable to vote due to technical issues (12 against, 4 for and 1 abstention).

- 21/07.14 A motion was then moved by Cllr Johnson and seconded by Cllr Small to vote in favour of **Option 1**. The outcome of votes recorded were Cllrs Baron, Barrow, Biggs, Davies, Hilliard, Johnson, Jones, Knox, Mattock, Quayle, Small and Stribley voted FOR; Cllrs Clark, Hutton, Newbury, Oatway, Ridout voted AGAINST, Cllr Perkins was unable to vote due to technical issues (12 for and 5 against).
- 21/07.15 **RESOLVED: Members considered both options within the recommendations in this report. Option 1 was approved by way of a vote, 12 votes FOR and 5 votes AGAINST.**

Ten-minute comfort break taken, meeting re-commenced at 12.44.

Cllr Steve Baron did not attend the second part of this meeting.

21/08 Local Government Association Model Councillor Code of Conduct

- 21/08.1 Clerk and Monitoring Officer, Jonathan Mair presented the report. He explained that the Local Government Association (LGA) recently completed work to develop a new model councillor code of conduct which addresses the minimum standards of behaviour expected of all Members.
- 21/08.2 Jonathan Mair noted that Members might wish to consider the inclusion of a new category of 'other registerable interests' and proposed restrictions on participation when a councillor has such an interest (found in appendix 2).
- 21/08.3 Members debated their opinions and concerns.
- 21/08.4 Cllr Newbury put forward a motion to stay with the current Code of Conduct and this was seconded by Cllr Clark, the outcome of votes recorded were 3 FOR and 13 AGAINST (Cllr Perkins was unable to vote).
- 21/08.5 Members voted on the recommendation and the outcome of votes recorded were 14 FOR and 2 AGAINST (Cllr Perkins was unable to vote). Cllr Newbury requested that his vote against the recommendation be recorded.
- 21/08.6 **RESOLVED: Members agreed that the Authority should adopt the core provisions of the Local Government Association Model Councillor Code of Conduct.**
- 21/08.7 **RESOLVED: Members considered and approved the adoption of those provisions of the Model Code relating to other registerable interests.**

21/09 Budget and Precept Implications 2021-22

- 21/09.1 Ian Cotter, Head of Financial Services and Treasurer introduced the report. He explained that the report sets out the revenue and capital budget needs for 2021-22, recommends the level of fire precept and sets out the new Medium-Term Finance Plan (MTFP). Much of the detail of the report reflected discussion with Members at a series of seminars that had been held in recent months.
- 21/09.2 Ian Cotter confirmed that the Final Local Government Finance Settlement had been published on 4 February 2021 and that there were no changes from the Provisional Settlement. He also confirmed that a 2% referendum principle applied to fire and rescue authorities for the 2021-22 financial year.
- 21/09.3 Ian Cotter reported that the four local billing authorities had confirmed the taxbase and council tax and business rates collection fund positions. The tax base for the Authority was 551,268 which showed a reduction of 0.7% compared to 2020-21. He explained that the Government would provide a one-off grant of £700k to help offset this shortfall, however, there would be potential for the deficit to impact longer term.
- 21/09.4 Ian Cotter explained to Members about the council tax collection fund position which showed that the Authority's share of local deficits was £656k. Ian Cotter confirmed that this would be charged over a three-year period, with £234k charged in 2021-22. He confirmed that the Government would provide a local tax guarantee to fund 75% of irrecoverable council tax and business rates collection deficits, but it was not yet clear what that funding would look like or when it would be received.
- 21/09.5 Ian Cotter commented that the business rates collections fund deficit was only confirmed at the end of January 2021 and this stood at £2.478m or approximately 50% of the Authority's total business rates funding. He confirmed that there would be additional grant funding to offset the impact of this deficit.
- 21/09.6 Ian Cotter referred Members to the 'Total Funding 2021-22' figures in table 2 on page 7, showing the proposed Band D Fire Precept of £77.88 (an increase of £1.52 or just less than 3p per week), local funding of £42.933m and total funding of £57.031m.
- 21/09.7 Ian Cotter then turned to spending requirements and the additional savings which had been made as outlined in the series of Members seminars held in November, December, and January. He drew Members' attention to table 3 on page 9 of the report which showed a breakdown of the agreed savings, with further detail provided within the MTFP, appendix C. The savings had enabled the Authority to set a balanced budget, with a net revenue budget requirement of £57.031m for 2021-22.

- 21/09.8 Ian Cotter then spoke about the MTFP, the detail of which was in appendix C, highlighting the agreed financial principles shown in section 4 of the report which drive the future revenue forecasts, and a potential deficit of £3.1m by 2024-25.
- 21/09.9 Ian Cotter took Members through tables 7 and 8, which highlighted different funding scenarios where either government funding does not reduce, or council tax was allowed to increase by £5 in 2022-23. Both options would make a positive difference to the medium-term forecast.
- 21/09.10 Ian Cotter focussed next on sections 5.3.2 and 5.3.3 of the report, which highlighted a strategy to enhance capital financing reserves. He confirmed this would help reduce future capital financing costs, external borrowing, and the forecast budget deficit.
- 21/09.11 Ian Cotter confirmed that capital investment requirements have also been reviewed, leading to a reduction in anticipated capital spend over the next five years. The capital programme for 2021-22 totals £9.068m as set out in table 9.
- 21/09.12 Members voted on all four recommendations together and the outcome of votes recorded were 16 for, making this a unanimous vote. Cllrs Perkins was unable to vote.
- 21/09.13 **RESOLVED: Members approved the revenue budget of £57.031m and capital budget of £9.068m for 2021-22.**
- 21/09.14 **RESOLVED: Members approved the basic amount of Band D Fire Precept for the Authority at £77.88 for 2021-22.**
- 21/09.15 **RESOLVED: Members authorised the Treasurer to issue precept notices on the Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council, Dorset Council, Swindon Borough Council and Wiltshire Council.**
- 21/09.16 **RESOLVED: Members approved the Medium-Term Finance Plan 2021-22 to 2024-25.**
- 21/10 Treasury Management Strategy 2021-22**
- 21/10.1 Ian Cotter presented the report. He explained that the Treasury Strategy was unchanged from the current year and fully compliant with the CIPFA code.
- 21/10.2 He explained that the Authority was currently in an under-borrowed position, but is expecting this to reduce over the next few years, as reflected in the prudential indicators shown in appendix B. He also reminded Members that helpfully, the Public Works Loan Board borrowing rates had been reset to lower levels following the Spending Review announcement in November 2020.

Initials _____

- 21/10.3 Ian Cotter referred to the policy on Minimum Revenue Provision, explaining that the policy for 2021-22 was unchanged from previous years.
- 21/10.4 Ian Cotter then drew Members' attention to the Capital Financing Requirement on page 1 of appendix B, which showed how much the Authority needed to finance through external borrowing and compared this to predicted debt levels shown by indicator 2.2 on page 3 of appendix B. He highlighted that a change of strategy to use more reserves to support the capital programme would have a positive impact on the prudential indicators.
- 21/10.5 Members voted on all four recommendations and the outcome of votes recorded were 16 for, making this a unanimous vote. Cllr Perkins was unable to vote.
- 21/10.6 **RESOLVED: Members approved the Treasury Management Policy Statement and Practices (including the Annual Investment and Treasury Management Strategy).**
- 21/10.7 **RESOLVED: Members approved the Capital and Treasury Management Prudential Indicators 2021-22.**
- 21/10.8 **RESOLVED: Members approved the Capital Strategy 2021-22.**
- 21/10.9 **RESOLVED: Members approved the Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement as defined in paragraph 3.11.**
- 21/11 Draft Community Safety Plan 2021-24**
- 21/11.1 Head of Strategic Planning and Corporate Assurance, Jill McCrae presented the paper and explained that the draft Community Safety Plan (CSP) was developed in line with the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 and the Fire and Rescue Services National Framework 2018. It takes account of the issues raised in the Strategic Assessment of Risk and is underpinned by the proposed Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP). In addition, the draft plan provides a clear link to the inspection methodology used by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services and the Fire Standards Board's Community Risk Management Planning Standard.
- 21/11.2 Jill McCrae provided Members with an overview of the draft CSP, appendix A. Jill McCrae explained that the plan had been written with the public as the primary audience, providing a non-technical overview of the strategic intent of the Authority and work of its Service.
- 21/11.3 Jill McCrae explained to Members each of the five key priorities, and the structure of the draft plan.

21/11.4 Jill McCrae explained the three main changes being proposed to corporate targets. She recommended a move to improving long term trends determined over a rolling five year rolling average, making response times clearer for the public and able to be benchmarked; and in terms of diversity making the diversity of the entire workforce the key focus supported by additional key performance indicators.

21/11.5 Jill McCrae outlined the proposed consultation process for the draft plan stating that there had been liaison with HMICFRS and other fire and rescue services over the best way to consult during the national pandemic. She confirmed that it would start from 17 February and run for a period of 12 weeks.

21/11.6 Members were very positive about the format of the draft plan.

21/11.7 **RESOLVED: Members considered and approved the draft Community Safety Plan 2021-2024 and the associated consultation process.**

21/12 Pay Policy Statement 2021-22

21/12.1 Director of People Services, Jenny Long presented the paper and explained the requirements to publish a Pay Policy Statement under the Localism Act 2011, which sets out the Authority's position on a range of pay matters including pay reviews, allowance, and pensions.

21/12.2 Jenny Long provided an update on the Public Sector Exit Payments Regulations 2020 which came into force on 4 November 2020 and imposes a cap of £95,000. She explained that due to these regulations, changes were required to the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS). She reported that HM Treasury published guidance on these regulations but further clarity, particularly in relation to the LGPS, was awaited.

21/12.3 Jenny Long drew Members' attention to section 8 of the report and reported the following pay multiples:

- the ratio between the Chief Fire Officer and the lowest paid employee was 8.40
- in relation to the Chief Fire Officer and those employed on Grey Book terms and conditions, the ratio was 4.13
- in relation to those employed on Green Book terms and conditions, the ratio was 5.89

These ratios were a positive reduction to the 2020-21 pay policy statement.

- 21/12.4 **RESOLVED: Members approved the Pay Policy Statement for the financial year 2021-22.**
- 21/12.5 ***Post meeting note:***
On 12 February 2021, HM Treasury issued a direction that the Restriction of Public Sector Exit Payments Regulations 2020 be revoked.
- 21/13 Gender Pay Gap report 2020**
- 21/13.1 Members received a presentation from the Director of People Services, Jenny Long. She reminded Members that the report was based on a snapshot of data from March 2020 and explained the difference between this and equal pay.
- 21/13.2 Jenny Long reported that the Service does not have an equal pay issue and explained that the gender pay gap report is designed to show the difference in pay between men and women in the workforce. She explained that like all fire and rescue services our workforce is predominantly male (81.3%). The operational workforce (excluding fire control) is 95% male; operational and control staff are 8% female and 92% male, and corporate staff are 52.5% female and 47.5% male.
- 21/13.3 Jenny Long took Members through the analysis of the calculations within the report and highlighted the table in section 4.2 with comparisons over the last four years of the hourly pay rates and pay gaps. She reported that the Service's mean and median hourly rate pay gap decreased from 10.81% to 8.61% and from 12.46% to 11.79% respectively.
- 21/13.4 Jenny Long reported the progress the Service made against initiatives to address the gender pay gap, which included, positive recruitment attraction, apprenticeships, female staff networks and improved facilities and enhanced maternity support.
- 21/13.5 Jenny Long reported that the Service was confident that the gender pay gap was not the result of paying men and women differently for the same or equivalent work, rather the result of the roles which attract either gender, and the salaries of those roles.
- 21/13.6 Jenny Long confirmed that a diverse workforce remains a focus for the Service and there are many initiatives and processes in place to both help address this balance and to better support the retention and attraction of more females to the Service.
- 21/13.7 **RESOLVED: Members noted the contents of this report.**

21/14 Local Government Association (LGA) action plan and Member Development Programme

21/14.1 Jill McCrae reported on the LGA action plan (appendix A) which had been approved in previous meetings. She confirmed that the remaining actions, which both related to Member development, had now been completed.

21/14.2 Jill McCrae referred to appendix C, the proposed programme for 2021-22 and confirmed it had been aligned to the recent Members skills audit, which was carried out in January 2020. Following Members' approval, the programme will commence in June 2021.

21/14.3 RESOLVED: Members considered and approved the proposed Member Development Programme for 2021-2022.

21/14.4 RESOLVED: Members approved the closure of the LGA Peer Review Action Plan.

21/15 Date of next meeting

21/15.1 The Chair confirmed the date of the next Authority meeting as 16 June 2021 from 10am.

Meeting ended at 14.44hrs

Signed: _____