



**DORSET & WILTSHIRE
FIRE AND RESCUE
AUTHORITY**

Minutes of the Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Authority meeting held at 10:00 hours on 12 February 2020 at the Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters, Salisbury.

Members present: Cllr Rebecca Knox (Chair); Cllr Byron Quayle (Vice Chair); Cllr Abdul Amin; Cllr Steve Baron; Cllr Pete Barrow; Cllr Richard Biggs; Cllr Ernie Clark; Cllr Malcolm Davies; Cllr Paul Hilliard; Cllr Peter Hutton; Cllr Bob Jones; Cllr Brian Mattock; Cllr Christopher Newbury; Cllr Paul Oatway; Cllr Garry Perkins; Cllr Pip Ridout; Cllr Ann Stribley.

Officer attendance: Chief Fire Officer (CFO), Ben Ansell; Head of Financial Services and Treasurer, Ian Cotter; Clerk & Monitoring Officer, Jonathan Mair; Deputy Chief Fire Officer (DCFO), Derek James; Director of Community Safety, Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO) Jim Mahoney; Director of People Services, Jenny Long; Director of Service Support, ACFO, Byron Standen; Head of Strategic Planning & Corporate Assurance, Jill McCrae; Head of Information Knowledge and Communications, Vikki Shearing; Head of Response Support, Response Development, Resourcing & Review, Area Manager (AM), Andy Cole; Senior Communications Officer, Emily Cheeseman; Media Officer, Hannah Tompkins; Control Watch Manager, Kate Dewey.

20/01 Welcome

20/01 The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed attendees.

20/02 Apologies

20/02.1 Apologies were received from Cllr Toby Johnson.

20/03 Declarations of Interest and notifications of any other business

20/03.1 The Chair asked the Members for any disclosures of pecuniary interests under the Localism Act. There were none. The Chair reminded Members to keep their Register of Interests up to date.

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20/04 Minutes of the Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Authority meeting on 18 December 2019.

20/04.1 The Chair asked Members to review and approve the minutes from the last meeting. Cllr Malcolm Davies pointed out that his attendance at the meeting had not been recorded and Cllr Garry Perkins noted that he was shown in attendance and as an apology. He had sent his apologies for the meeting. It was agreed that the minutes should be amended to reflect these two points.

20/04.2 CFO Ben Ansell confirmed that the actions in paragraphs 55.10, 57.2 and 57.3 had all been discharged. He reported that the Service had received positive feedback on the Podcast and that it would continue to be circulated to constituent authorities after Members had viewed it at Authority meetings.

20/04.3 The Chair asked Members whether they wished to discuss the exempt minutes of the last meeting which had been sent to them confidentially. Members confirmed that they did not wish to discuss these and that the Chair could sign them as a correct record.

20/04.4 **RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting be confirmed, subject to the two amendments recorded in paragraph 20/04.01 and signed by the Chair as a correct record.**

20/04.5 **RESOLVED: that the minutes of the exempt item covered in Part 2 of the meeting of 18 December 2019 be confirmed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.**

20/04.6 **ACTION: Democratic Services to correct the minutes of the meeting of 12 December 2019 regarding the attendance of two Members, as stated in paragraph 20/04.1.**

20/05 Budget and Precept Implications 2020-21

20/05.1 Ian Cotter, Head of Financial Services and Treasurer introduced the report. He referred Members to section 2, relating to funding, which had been written on the basis of the provisional finance settlement of 20 December 2019. He confirmed that there were no changes to report as a result of the final settlement, which had been announced on 6

February 2020. He reported that all fire and rescue authorities had received the same 1.6% increase in Government funding settlement.

20/05.2 Ian Cotter confirmed that this funding position was the same as that discussed at the Members' Seminar in December, and that we do not know what the funding position looks like going beyond 2020-21. He

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confirmed that we have continued to lobby for freedoms and flexibilities to increase the Fire Precept by the £5 per year de-minimis.

- 20/05.3 Ian Cotter referred Members to table 2 of the report – ‘Total Funding 2020-21’, showing the proposed Band D Fire Precept of £76.36, which will generate £42.577m, providing a total funding of £57.064m, when including the small collection fund surplus and the £14.3m Government funding settlement.
- 20/05.4 Members were referred to the assumption included in the plan for a 2% pay award for all staff groups. Ian Cotter said that this was an area of financial risk, as any 1% variance from this would cost approximately £450k per year. He went on to say that the grant funding for pensions for the coming year had been confirmed as the same amount received in 2019-20, however, funding beyond 2020-21 was not yet known.
- 20/05.5 Ian Cotter referred Members to table 3, showing the Budget Requirement for 2020-21 of £57.064m. He reminded Members that the Medium-Term Finance Plan (MTFP) is based on the Financial Principals which the Authority had previously approved and on the Strategic Assessment of Risk; headlines of which were detailed on pages 8 and 9. He reported that an assumption of a £250k base budget increase had been factored into the MTFP from 2021-22 as the minimum required to cover these items.
- 20/05.6 Ian Cotter explained table 4 showing a balanced budget for 2020-21, going into deficit from 2021-22 onwards, with the deficit rising to over £2.8m by 2023-24. He then explained how the table showed the potential impact of losing the pensions grant and how this could have a significant detrimental impact on the MTFP. He also took Members through table 6 which showed the significant positive effect of a £5 Fire Precept increase.
- 20/05.7 Ian Cotter reported that reserves and balances, as detailed in appendix C, are in a reasonable position, but are forecast to shrink, depending on the funding position going forward.
- 20/05.8 Members were then referred to the Capital Programme, detailed in table 7 and Ian Cotter explained that, although reserves and balances can be used to finance some costs, borrowing will be necessary, and that officers are keeping a close watch on this.
- 20/05.9 A Member highlighted the need to keep the Authority’s estate under review to ensure that plans fit the needs and are future proofed. CFO Ben Ansell reminded Members that the plans for the estate are prudent and that the vast majority of the costs were related to repair and maintenance work. He confirmed that the Service works collaboratively with partners wherever possible.

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- 20/05.10 In answer to a Member's question, the Chair gave a national perspective on reserves and balances and explained that differences across authorities is an issue being raised nationally. She confirmed that the HMICFRS inspection process in England has, and will, highlight any significant inequality in terms of reserves and pointed out that differing governance structures do not help the sector in having a united front.
- 20/05.11 A Member asked about the cost of borrowing and how it would be funded. He also asked about the £5 increase in Fire Precept which was being lobbied for and whether the assumption was something that should be relied upon in the plans.
- 20/05.12 Ian Cotter explained that there was more detail on borrowing in the Treasury Management report later on in the agenda, but as Treasurer, he kept a close eye on the cost of borrowing. He referred to appendix A, which set out the capital financing and leasing costs in the revenue budget. Ian Cotter then explained that in the current year, the Authority was under-borrowing and that the related cost is still very low. He reported that he was comfortable with the level of borrowing, which is linked to the life of the related assets. In terms of the Capital Programme, it was explained that it is kept under review.
- 20/05.13 A Member pointed out that it was important that Members understand why we want to borrow the amount we want to borrow and what the options and implications were going forward.
- 20/05.14 CFO Ben Ansell reminded Members that the Service is one of the three Home Office reference brigades and that the Authority had made significant savings at, and since combination. He added that a Comprehensive Spending Review was expected later this year and if the £5 assistance is not received, there will be a need to look at making savings going forward. The Chair added that she will keep Members informed of any updates from a national perspective as and when they arise. Members were also informed that the National Fire Chiefs Council is putting a Comprehensive Spending Review Team together to enable the Sector to articulate its value and put a case forward for future funding. This is being supported by the Authority and Service.
- 20/05.15 A Member suggested that the Authority and Service should keep local Members of Parliament (MPs) up to date on the financial situation for Fire and campaign for them to understand and support where necessary. The Chair confirmed that she and the Chief Fire Officer had been meeting with local MPs and would continue to do this on an organised basis.
- 20/05.16 A Member advised that it was important the public knew what the 1.99% Fire Precept increase for 2020-21 meant. The Chair confirmed that a press release had been drafted in preparation for whatever decision the Authority made.

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- 20/05.17 These items were proposed by Cllr Bob Jones, seconded by Cllr Peter Hutton and unanimously agreed by Members.
- 20/05.18 **RESOLVED: Members approved the revenue budget of £57.064m and capital budget of £10.394m for 2020-21.**
- 20/05.19 **RESOLVED: Members approved the basic amount of Band D Fire Precept for the Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Authority at £76.36.**
- 20/05.20 **RESOLVED: Members authorised the Treasurer to issue precept notices on the Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council, Dorset Council, Swindon Borough Council and Wiltshire Council.**
- 20/05.21 **RESOLVED: Members approved the Medium-Term Finance Plan 2020-21 to 2023-24.**
- 20/15.22 *Post meeting informative note:
In calculating the amount of precept income to be received by the Authority we use information on the taxbase that is provided to us by each of the four constituent authorities. In performing the calculations for 2020-21, an error was made in the calculation for Dorset Council. The taxbase figure used was a draft figure of 150,764.90. The final figure that should have been used, as advised by Dorset Council, was 148,410.80. The overall impact of the error is that the total amount of precept income to be received by the Authority for 2020-21 is £42,396,682.43, and not the amount of £42,576,441.50 shown in Appendix B to paper 20/05. The total difference is £179,759.07.
The reduction in the total amount of precept income means that the revenue budget requirement must also be corrected. The revenue budget approved was £57.064m, and following correction, the revenue budget reduces to £56.884m.*

20/06 Treasury Management 2020-21

- 20/06.1 Ian Cotter presented the report. He explained that the Service uses Link Asset Services Treasury Solutions as its external treasury management advisor. He reported that the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) had increased borrowing rates by 100 basis points overnight in October 2019. This means that PWLB is not necessarily the most cost-effective place to borrow from, resulting in a need to manage internal processes to ensure we have time to investigate the market appropriately when borrowing is required.
- 20/06.2 He explained that bank rates are still quite low, and we therefore expect returns on investments to remain low. The Authority was in an under-borrowed position at the start of year, but is expecting this to reduce over the next few years, as reflected in the prudential indicators shown in appendix B.

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- 20/06.3 Ian Cotter explained that Money Market Funds have been added into the investment strategy from next year to provide more options for investing surplus cash and that there is a small change in the terms of our counterparties to tighten control.
- 20/06.4 Ian Cotter drew Members' attention to the Capital Financing Requirement on page 1 of appendix B, which shows how much the Authority needs to finance through capital borrowing.
- 20/06.5 In answer to a Member's question, CFO Ben Ansell confirmed that where possible, opportunities for grant funding are explored and taken, but pointed out that these are one-off and do not go into the base budget.
- 20/06.6 These items were proposed by Cllr Bob Jones, seconded by Cllrs Pip Ridout and Brian Mattock and unanimously agreed by Members.
- 20/06.7 **RESOLVED: Members approved the Treasury Management Policy Statement and Practices (including the Annual Investment and Treasury Management Strategy).**
- 20/06.8 **RESOLVED: Members approved the Capital and Treasury Management Prudential Indicators 2020-21.**
- 20/06.9 **RESOLVED: Members approved the Capital Strategy 2020-21.**
- 20/06.10 **RESOLVED Members approved the Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement as defined in paragraph 3.11.**
- 20/07 Gender Pay Gap Report 2019**
- 20/07.1 The Authority 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 2019 and explained the difference between this and equal pay.
- 20/07.2 Jenny Long reported that the Service does not have an equal pay issue and explained that the gender pay gap is designed to show difference between men and women in the workforce; being about the roles that men and women occupy and the salaries these attract. She explained that the Authority's mean hourly rate pay gap was 10.81%, a slight difference from 10.38% the previous year. This was well below the national average of 17.3% with no one clear factor being the reason.
- 20/07.3 Jenny Long explained the improvements the Service is making, for example, female networks, training plans for equality, diversity and inclusion and improving workplace facilities for women. She added that officers were also focussing on structural opportunities; talent management and making the work as flexible as possible.

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20/07.4 The Chair thanked Jenny Long for an excellent paper and the work she is doing to make improvements to this area.

20/07.5 **RESOLVED: Members noted the contents of the report.**

20/08 Pay Policy Statement 2020-21

20/08.1 Jenny Long presented the paper and explained the requirements to publish a Pay Policy Statement under the Localism Act 2011.

20/08.2 She drew Members' attention to section 8 of the report and reported the following pay multiples:

in relation to those employed on Grey Book terms and conditions, the ratio is 4.36

in relation to those employed on Green Book terms and conditions, that ratio is 6.23

the ratio between the Chief Fire Officer and the lowest paid employee is 8.46.

20/08.3 In answer to a Member's question, Jenny Long confirmed that recruitment had been an issue on occasions due to the market for attracting certain technical posts, competing with the private and public sectors on pay and the proximity of Salisbury to London. She explained that market forces supplements can be invoked but are only used where necessary.

20/08.4 Item proposed by Cllr Pip Ridout, seconded by Cllr Peter Hutton and unanimously agreed by Members.

20/08.5 **RESOLVED: Members approved the Pay Policy Statement for the financial year 2020-21.**

20/09 Enhanced Redundancy – Review of Multiplier

20/09.1 Jenny Long presented the report and explained the regulation and discretion around the redundancy multiplier and its role as a workforce planning tool. She added that the Authority had last reviewed the multiplier in January 2018, when it was agreed to review it again in two years' time.

20/09.2 She referred Members to section 2 of the report, confirming that the Authority, when compared to its neighbours, is currently in a mid-range position but that there is a need to be mindful of the financial environment we are operating in and to be financially prudent going forward.

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- 20/09.3 In response to a question from a Member, Jenny Long confirmed that it is debatable whether having the same multiplier for both voluntary and compulsory redundancy would result in fewer voluntary redundancies, although she said that the conversation tends to be voluntary. She confirmed that only one authority she knew of had differing rates for compulsory and voluntary redundancy.
- 20/09.4 Jenny Long confirmed that on individual salaries, the financial impact would not be a large sum.
- 20/09.5 CFO Ben Ansell explained that the Service was committed to minimising the potential for compulsory redundancies but needed to recognise that the financial position was becoming considerably more challenging.
- 20/09.6 Members asked whether the cost of the redundancy multiplier was well balanced with workplace satisfaction and morale. Jenny Long explained that the position would have an impact on morale, but that the financial position is changing.
- 20/09.7 Members discussed the recommendations and reflected on their earlier discussions about finance and that other staff benefits had not been reviewed and so terms and conditions remained fairly generous.
- 20/09.8 Items proposed by Cllr Bob Jones, seconded by Cllr Byron Quayle and unanimously agreed by Members.
- 20/09.9 **RESOLVED: Members agreed to reduce the redundancy multiplier from 1.75 to 1.5 and to review it again in two years.**
- 20/09.10 **RESOLVED: Members supported the recommendation that the same level of multiplier be applied for both compulsory and voluntary redundancy.**
- 20/09.11 **RESOLVED: Members agreed to retain the policy position that redundancy payments should be calculated on the basis of 'actual' salary.**
- 20/10 HMICFRS - Annual assessment of fire and rescue services in England**
- 20/10.1 Deputy Chief Fire Officer (DCFO), Derek James presented the report. He explained that all fire and rescue services had now been inspected and that Sir Thomas Winsor's annual State of Fire and Rescue report highlights the findings and national messages resulting from the inspections. He reminded Members that the Service was one of the few that had achieved a 'Good' rating against each of the three pillars but that it was not complacent. DCFO Derek James reported that the Service was working hard to make sure that this performance is sustainable. He then

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took Members through the four overarching recommendations in the annual report.

- 20/10.2 The Chair explained that there was likely to be a response to the report from the National Fire Chiefs Council, to which the Service would contribute and there would be discussions at the Local Government Association Fire conference in March and at the Fire Services Management Committee.
- 20/10.3 Members agreed that this was an important report and that the Authority and Service should continue to ensure that any necessary improvements were being fully considered and actioned as appropriate.
- 20/10.4 In answer to a question from a Member, CFO Ben Ansell confirmed that the balance between the Authority and himself in terms of operational independence was currently 'about right' and that the distinction between Policy being set by the Authority and Delivery through the Service was a helpful one as set out in proposed terms of reference. He explained that combination had provided a helpful opportunity to review the Scheme of Delegation. He further explained that as finances get tighter, tensions can arise and that the next agenda item, a review of policy statements and Authority terms of reference, might be a helpful exercise in the clarification of the roles of the Chief Fire Officer and Members.
- 20/10.5 **RESOLVED: Members noted the content of the report.**

20/11 Review of Policy Statements and Authority Terms of Reference

- 20/11.1 DCFO Derek James reminded Members of the work the Service had done to align and mainstream its performance and planning arrangements with the inspection methodology. This would help to reduce the inspection burden and ensure improved clarity. He explained that the Authority's policies were the driver for the operational delivery of the Service with a clear line of sight, providing good governance.
- 20/11.2 DCFO Derek James reported that the proposed policies had been reviewed to ensure that they reflect the three pillars of HMICFRS's inspection methodology (Effectiveness, Efficiency and People) and aligned to the sub-diagnostics. He explained that the proposed revised policies had not resulted in any change in direction but were for realignment purposes against the HMICFRS methodology to show a clear line of sight from policy through to on-the-ground delivery. The one exception to this realignment work related to the Health and Safety Policy, which is aligned to the British Standard, as previously agreed.
- 20/11.3 DCFO Derek James further explained that this approach to policies will help provide a better structure for the Statement of Assurance required under the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England.

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- 20/11.4 To support this work and as a result of the Local Government Association's review of the Authority's governance arrangements conducted in 2019, DCFO Derek James drew Members' attention to appendix B, the proposed Authority Terms of Reference which had been reviewed accordingly.
- 20/11.5 Members discussed the report and suggested the following amendments to the policy statements:
- That as the policies were owned by the Authority, the prefix of 'we' should be replaced with 'The Authority'
 - On page 3, paragraph 3 'reduce burden of automatic fire alarms' should be amended to 'reduce the burden of unnecessary automatic fire false alarms'
 - A reference to internal and external audit should be included in both the Corporate Governance and Financial Management policies
 - A small number of grammatical errors should be corrected.
- 20/11.6 Items proposed by Cllr Ann Stribley, seconded by Cllr Brian Mattock and unanimously agreed by Members.
- 20/11.7 **RESOLVED: Members endorsed the proposed Policy Statements, subject to the amendments detailed in paragraph 20/11.5.**
- 20/11.8 **RESOLVED: Members considered and approved the proposed revised Authority Terms of Reference.**
- 20/11.9 **ACTION: Democratic Services to ensure the amendments are made to the Policy Statements in accordance with 20/11.5 and ensure they are published on the website.**
- 20/12 Member Podcast**
- 20/12.1 CFO Ben Ansell introduced the Member podcast.
- 20/12.2 **ACTION: The Head of Communications & Information, Vikki Shearing to provide Members with a link to the Member Podcast.**
- 20/12.3 **ACTION: Democratic Services to provide a link to the Podcast to the four constituent Authorities for access to Councillors.**

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20/13 Date of next meeting

20/13.1 The Chair confirmed the date of the next Authority meeting as 18 June 2020 at Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters, Five Rivers Health and Wellbeing Centre, Hulse Road, Salisbury SP1 3NR, from 10am.

Meeting closed at 12:23hrs

Signed: _____