

# Dorset Fire Authority

Minutes of meeting held at Dorset Fire and Rescue Service  
Headquarters, Poundbury, Dorchester on 16 June 2015.

## **Present:**

Mrs Rebecca Knox (Chairman)

Mrs Ann Stribley (Vice-Chairman)

Mr Mark Anderson, Mr Les Burden, Mr Mike Byatt, Mr Ronald Coatsworth, Mr Malcolm Davies, Mrs Beverley Dunlop, Mr Philip Eades, Mr Colin Jamieson, Mr Trevor Jones, Mr Christopher Rochester and Mr John Wilson.

## Officers present:

Mr Darran Gunter (Chief Fire Officer), Mr Richard Ironside (for the Treasurer), Mr Jonathan Mair (Clerk) and Mrs Helen Whitby (Principal Democratic Services Officer).

## Officers attending for items as appropriate:

Mr Ian Cotter (Head of Financial Services), Mr Ben Ansell (Assistant Chief Fire Officer – Service Delivery), Mrs Karen Gibson (Assistant Pensions Benefits Manager, Dorset County Council), Mrs Jenny Long, (Director of People Services), Mrs Jill Warburton (Community Engagement and Inclusion Manager) and Mrs Lisa Pharoah-Workman (Deputy Clerk).

(Note: These minutes have been prepared by officers as a record of the meeting and of any decisions reached. They are to be considered and confirmed at the next meeting of the Authority to be held on **23 September 2015**.)

## **Election of Chairman**

### Resolved

34. That Mrs Rebecca Knox be elected Chairman for the year 2015/16.

## **Election of Vice-Chairman**

### Resolved

35. That Mrs Ann Stribley be elected Vice-Chairman for the year 2015/16.

## **Apologies for Absence**

36.1 Apologies for absence were received from Mr Spencer Flower, Mrs Susan Jefferies and Mr Richard Bates (Treasurer). Mr Richard Ironside represented the Treasurer at the meeting.

36.2 The Chairman welcomed Mr Mark Anderson and Mr Malcolm Davies to their first meeting of the Dorset Fire Authority.

## **Code of Conduct**

37. No declarations were made by any members of any disclosable pecuniary interests under the Code of Conduct.

## **Queen's Fire Service Medal**

38. The Chairman reported that the Chief Fire Officer had recently been awarded the Queen's Fire Service Medal. She congratulated him on behalf of the Authority.

## **Minutes**

39. The minutes of the meeting held on 10 February 2015 were confirmed and signed.

**Matters Arising****Minute 21.1 – Dorset FRS and Wiltshire FRS Joint Command and Control Centre**

40.1 The Chief Fire Officer reported that Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service would transfer to the Joint Command and Control Centre at Potterne on 1 July 2015, with the Dorset Fire and Rescue Service following on 26 August 2015. At that point there would no longer be a Command Centre in Dorchester. A small opening ceremony was anticipated during the first week in September 2015 which would provide visibility of the new combined service and branded uniform.

40.2 The Chairman drew attention to the changes faced by Dorset's Fire Control staff over recent months and that their efforts to maintain the service despite them. It was agreed that she write to Fire Control staff to show appreciation for the efforts they had made to maintain the service.

**Resolved**

41. That the Chairman write to Fire Control staff to show appreciation for the efforts they had made to maintain the service.

**Audit and Scrutiny Committee**

42.1 The Authority received the minutes of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 13 March 2015.

42.2 The Chairman of the Committee highlighted that efforts were being made to streamline the work of the Committee to free up resources to support the combination. A decision as to whether the January 2016 meeting would go ahead would be made following the meeting.

42.3 With regard to minute 25.2 and whether Dementia Friendly or Dementia Champion Training had been offered for members, the Chairman explained that the Fire Service was Dementia Friendly, had signed up to the Charter and embraced dementia training for both officers and volunteers. Member involvement be addressed under the item on "Meeting our Equality Duties Report" later on the agenda. It was highlighted that the new Combined Authority should also embrace being Dementia Friendly or Dementia Champions.

42.4 In response to a question about minute 26.5 and whether ICT requirements for the Combined Authority had been completed, the Chief Fire Officer reported that this had been addressed through workstream 6 and was reported under the Combination Update report later on the agenda.

**Noted****Appointments to Committees of the Fire Authority and Other Bodies 2015-16**

43.1 Members considered a report by the Clerk seeking agreement from the Authority to the proposed nominations for appointments to Committees of the Fire Authority and other bodies during 2015/16, this being complemented by a list of all proposed nominations.

43.2 The Clerk advised that as the Shadow Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Authority Board would be meeting the following week, there was no longer a need for appointments to be made to the Joint Committee. The Authority noted that the Shadow Authority would at that time be appointing members to sit on a Shadow Policy and Resources Committee. The Clerk suggested that the Authority identify six members for the Shadow Authority to consider for these appointments. The Chairman suggested the current Joint Committee membership with the addition of Mr Mike Byatt become that for the Shadow Policy and Resources Committee.

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43.3 The Chairman explained that although she had identified members to fill the majority of conservative seats on Committees and outside bodies, there were still some vacancies to be filled, particularly for reserve members. She would fill these vacancies outside of the meeting.

43.4 It was noted that the Group Leader for the Liberal Democrat Group would be Mr Phil Eades with immediate effect and that he would take the seat on the Local Government Association General Assembly.

**Resolved**

44.1 That the appointment of members to Committees of the Authority and other bodies during 2015/16 in accordance with the nominations submitted by leaders of political groups, as set in the Annexure to these minutes, be approved.

44.2 That the Shadow Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Authority be asked to appoint Mr Mike Byatt, Mr Spencer Flower, Mr Trevor Jones, Mrs Rebecca Knox, Mr Christopher Rochester and Mrs Ann Stribley to a Shadow Policy and Resources Committee.

**Combination Progress Update**

45.1 The Authority considered a report by the Chief Fire Officer which provided an overview of progress towards establishing the new Authority and Service on 1 April 2016.

45.2 The Chief Fire Officer summarised progress to date and stated that both internal and external auditors had confidence in the process to be followed for the de-commissioning of the existing Authority and the start up of the new one. The Joint Committee had set strategic objectives and success factors at its meeting in January 2015 and these were currently on track. He then gave an update on each of the six workstreams in the Combination programme.

45.3 With regard to the lack of member involvement in workstream 6 (ICT and information management) and whether independent expertise was required, the Chief Fire Officer welcomed member interest in this workstream and explained that their involvement would be discussed by the Shadow Authority on 23 June 2015. He confirmed that a structured approach was being taken on workstreams with specialists being engaged when they were necessary to sign off activities and he highlighted areas where such expertise was required.

45.4 In response to whether there was any indication that staff were leaving the Authority, the Chief Fire Officer confirmed that this was the case - some because of the uncertainty, some because they had obtained jobs with other local organisations and some because they had obtained jobs with better pay grades.

45.5 One member thought it useful for members to have timelines for the next six months and asked where consideration would be given to the future of the new Authority. The Chief Fire Officer explained that the vision for the new Authority (workstream 2) would need to be challenging but not overwhelming and that officers were looking beyond the initial transition issues. He reminded members that generally the strategic direction of Authorities was reviewed every three years and the new Authority would need to be reviewed by 2018 and the right structure, resources and ambition needed to be put in place to satisfy any such review. The Chairman highlighted that there was a vacancy for a member of the Shadow Policy and Resources Committee to sit upon workstream 2 (Strategic and Organisational Development) and Mr Mike Byatt expressed an interest in this.

45.6 The Chief Fire Officer drew attention to the fact that workstream 1 (corporate governance) would have to address the operational differences between Dorset and Wiltshire Fire Authorities and that the new Authority would need to be receptive and respond to local priorities.

### **Noted**

#### **2014/15 Fourth Quarter Financial Performance**

46.1 The Authority considered a report by the Chief Fire Officer on the provisional revenue budget outturn position for 2014/15.

46.2 The Head of Financial Services explained that the outturn was currently being finalised but no significant changes were anticipated. A projected underspend of £639K on the revenue budget was predicted with £180k of this being allocated to carried forward items or new commitments. The capital expenditure outturn was £1.175m against a revised budget of £1.957m. This was due to a number of projects not being completed in 2014/15 and £755k had been carried forward to meet these costs. He then drew attention to implications of a recent Pension Ombudsman's decision, intervention costs, reserves and general balances. He asked for agreement to £100k from cost centre balances to be used to fund a further contribution to SafeWise for the RoadWise project and the construction of a sub-surface technical rescue training facility and for any remaining underspend to be used to reduce the level of unfinanced capital expenditure. The Authority noted that the Treasurer supported this use of the remaining underspend.

46.3 With regard to the contribution to RoadWise, the Chief Fire Officer explained that the Safety Centre at Weymouth would in future become an Authority asset and that the contribution of £100k would enhance the current facilities on site. Members also noted that plans to build a similar safety centre in Wiltshire were being considered.

46.4 Members then discussed the value that SafeWise and RoadWise provided as a means of fire and accident prevention. One member was concerned about Council Tax payer's money being used to support the charity, other members recognised the good work and value for money it provided and supported the contribution. The Chief Fire Officer added that once a Safety Centre had been established in Wiltshire, members could consider its operating mechanism, whether it was effective and provided value for money. The Chairman offered to send members a copy of the SafeWise Annual Statement as a means of providing assurance.

46.5 Another concern was expressed that Council Tax payer money was being used unnecessarily to pay off long term debt and revenue underspends used to support capital expenditure. The Head of Financial Services explained that funds were being used to reduce the amount of unfinanced capital and the need to borrow.

46.6 Reference was made to the work of the Princes Trust and whether anything could be done to help support its work. The Chief Fire Officer explained that the Fire Service was commissioned by partners to run the Princes Trust and that currently only one scheme could be run at a time. The Chairman asked for consideration to be given to providing any additional help for the Princes Trust.

### **Resolved**

47.1 That the provision outturn be noted.

47.2 That the transfer of £180k from cost centre balances to fund expenditure commitments carried forward from 2014/15 and the four year licence fee for the Cycle performance management system be approved.

47.3 That the transfer of £100k from cost centre balances to fund a further contribution to SAfeWise for the RoadWise project and the construction of a sub-surface technical rescue training facility be approved.

47.4 That the use of any remaining underspend to make an additional capital financing contribution and reduce the level of unfinanced capital expenditure be approved.

47.5 That the carry forward of capital projects totalling £755k be approved.

47.6 That the Chairman arrange for members to be provided with a copy of the SafeWise Annual Statement.

### **Quarterly Performance Monitoring Report**

48.1 The Authority considered a report by the Chief Fire Officer which identified specific areas in the quarterly monitoring of the Authority's Community Safety Plan 2014-19 where performance issues had been identified and good practice exhibited for the quarter from 1 January to 31 March 2015.

48.2 The Assistant Chief Fire Officer – Service Delivery presented the report in detail setting out performance against the strategic aims of prevention; protection; response; and people. Of particular mention were the four fatalities on Dorset's roads this year; that although the highest number of home safety checks had been undertaken the target had not been met; that although there had been an increase in the number of primary fires set the target had been achieved; the increased number of false alarms; that overall there had been good performance with response times but there was still room for improvement; the upward trend for sickness absence; and the ten key performance indicators met and six which were unmet.

48.3 The Authority was interested to see that some of the false alarms recorded related to temporary buildings at Lytchett Minster School. Members noted that the temporary buildings would not be retained once building work had been completed. Although sprinklers had not been fitted in the new buildings at the School, the Fire Service had insisted on improvements to firefighting water access on the site. There was some discussion about the need for sprinklers to be included in any new schools and the Chairman asked members to try to influence planning decisions to include sprinklers and highlight the benefits of sprinklers to their Governor Services section. The Clerk added that the County Council as policy included sprinklers in any new build schools but as schools became academies it was being increasingly marginalised. The Assistant Chief Fire Officer added that it was a question of the Fire Service being able to influence plans at an early stage.

48.4 One member commented that given that the Fire Service was undergoing a massive transitional period as it moved towards combination, he expected performance to dip before it improved. The Chief Fire Officer explained that Wiltshire Fire Authority did have different targets but he hoped that a similar performance management framework would be introduced for the combined authority but this was still under discussion.

48.5 Reference was made to a previous discussion the Authority had about charging for call outs to false alarms and whether any progress had been made on this. The Chief Fire Officer explained that it would be for the new combined authority to consider this and address any policy differences between the two Fire Authorities.

48.6 Members asked officers to split sickness absence figures into long and short term and operational and non-operational staff in future. It was explained that the Audit and Scrutiny Committee currently considered detailed information about staff absence and that long term trends had not improved. The Chief Fire Officer added that it would also be for the new combined authority to introduce policies to address this issue.

**Noted****Treasury Management Annual Review and Actual Prudential Indicators 2014/15**

49.1 The Authority considered a report by the Treasurer which reviewed treasury activities for the year ended 31 March 2015 in accordance with the requirements of the CIPFA Code of Practice for Local Authorities adopted by the Fire Authority on 17 September 2002.

49.2 The Treasurer's representative presented the report highlighting key points. These included that a further payment in relation to Heritable Bank was expected in August 2015, the interest earned from Treasury Management operations (£67k), long term debt scheduled repayments (£172k), interest paid (£377k) and the total of outstanding loans and investments (£6.9m). The Authority had not breached any of the compliance limits set, and was fully compliant with the Code of Practice. A member stated that it would be helpful to have information about other similar sized authorities for comparison purposes. Officers agreed to progress this.

**Resolved**

50.1 That the Treasury Management Annual Report be received.

50.2 That the actual Prudential Indicators for 2014/15 be noted.

50.3 That members be provided with comparison information for similar sized authorities.

**Retained Firefighters' Union (RFU) Recognition**

51.1 The Authority considered a report by the Chief Fire Officer which outlined the background to the National Joint Council's position on consultation and negotiation arrangements, provided an overview of legal impacts on trade union recognition when in a transfer situation and outlined the options available to the Dorset Fire Authority in order to resolve this issue in the interim.

51.2 The Director of People Services presented the report highlighting the need to consult and negotiate with trade unions on the transition arrangements and the request from the RFU for parity of recognition. It was noted that they already received such recognition from Wiltshire Fire Authority. Members noted that other trade unions were likely to seek parity of recognition if the RFU's request was agreed.

**Resolved**

52. That the request from Dorset RFU for parity of recognition be approved.

**Retirement and Re-employment of Uniformed Employees**

53.1 The Authority considered a report by the Chief Fire Officer on a draft retirement and re-employment protocol.

53.2 The Chief Fire Officer explained how the draft policy would work in practice and enable the Authority to retain key skills including for the transition to the new combined authority. The Chairman added that there was a need to align practices with Wiltshire who had a policy in place and, given the possibility of losing expertise in the short term, there was a need to have a policy in place so that staff could be re-engaged.

53.3 In response to the concern that ex-staff would be re-employed and receive both a pension and a payment, the Chief Fire Officer explained that they would be employed on a fixed term contract based on business need and they would not be able to receive any remuneration above that which they received prior to retirement.

**Resolved**

54. That the retirement and re-employment protocol as set out in the Chief Fire Officer's report be approved.

**Pensions Board – Firefighters' Pension Scheme 2015**

55.1 The Authority considered a report by the Chief Fire Officer which provided an update on progress regarding a local firefighters' Pension Board in Dorset.

55.2 It was noted that Mr Mike Byatt and Mr Ronald Coatsworth were the Authority's members on the new Pension Board and that training for Pension Board members would be provided on 28 July 2015.

**Noted****Pensions Discretions for the Firefighters' Pension Scheme 2015**

56. The Authority considered a report by the Chief Fire Officer which sought agreement to the Fire Authority's policy/position statement on pensions' discretions for the Firefighters' Pension Scheme 2015.

**Resolved**

57.1 That the pensions discretions set out in Section 2 of the Chief Fire Officer's report be agreed.

57.2 That the draft discretions policy be adopted.

**Wholetime Duty System Firefighter Recruitment**

58.1 The Authority considered a report by the Chief Fire Officer which provided an update on Wholetime Duty Service (WDS) workforce and succession planning arrangements and timelines for wholetime firefighter recruitment.

58.2 The Chief Fire Officer presented the report highlighting current and future staff vacancy levels; redeployment of some Fire Control staff to the WDS establishment; the option of offering apprentices permanent places upon completion of their apprenticeship programme; and forward planning arrangements.

58.3 One member whilst welcoming the recruitment of firefighters to fill vacancies, was disappointed that the firefighter apprentices would not automatically be offered positions and there was no indication that more firefighter apprenticeships would be offered. The Chief Fire Officer explained that the apprenticeship was a two year programme. With regard to future apprenticeships, this decision would be taken later as part of the arrangements for the new Combined Authority.

58.4 One member suggested that a recommendation be made to the Shadow Authority that it consider employing firefighter apprentices as an approach to recruitment. This was agreed.

**Resolved**

59. That the decision to carry out a joint wholetime duty system recruitment campaign with the Wiltshire and Swindon Fire Authority as set out in section 5 of the Chief Fire Officer's report be supported.

**Recommended**

60. That the Shadow Authority be asked to consider employing firefighter apprentices as a recruitment approach.

**Meeting Our Equality Duties Report 2015**

61.1 The Authority considered a report by the Chief Fire Officer which presented the annual “Meeting our Equality Duties 2015” report for approval.

61.2 The Community Engagement and Inclusion Manager explained that publication of the report fulfilled the obligations of the Authority under the Specific Duties Regulations. It highlighted good practice and progress made. The Chief Fire Officer added that the Authority had attained the “Excellent” standard and was one of the first Fire Authorities to do so. The Chairman added that the “Excellent” standard reflected the professional attitude of staff and was maintained within the limited resources available.

61.3 With regard to the complaints in 2013/14 relating to driving, the Chief Fire Officer confirmed that each incident was fully investigated.

61.4 In relation to dementia training referred to a minute 42.3, the Authority was informed that dementia training could be arranged along with an update on the Authority’s dementia projects and programmes. The Chairman added that members may well have received this training from other authorities, but training could be arranged through the Principal Democratic Services Officer. One member asked for an update on how firefighters dealt with dementia and it was agreed that an update report would be provided for a future meeting.

**Resolved**

62.1 That the contents of the Meeting our Equality Duties 2015 report be approved.

62.2 That dementia training be arranged in due course.

62.3 That an update report be provided for a future meeting.

**Exempt Business****Exclusion of the Public****Resolved**

63. That under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for minute number 64 because it was likely that if members of the public were present, there would be a disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in the paragraph indicated of Part 1 of Schedule 12A and the public interest in withholding the information outweighed the public interest in disclosing that information.

**Approvals of Premature Retirements and Sick Leave (Paragraph 2)**

64.1 The Authority considered an exempt report by the Chief Fire Officer which set out delegated approvals made by him on premature retirements and sick leave during the period 2014/15.

64.2 The Director of People Services summarised information contained in the report. It was confirmed that the medical doctor was involved in any premature retirement decisions and that the Treasurer was consulted because of the financial implications for the Authority.

**Noted**

Meeting duration: 10.35am to 13:15pm.

## Annexure

**Representation on Fire Authority Committees****Appeals Committee (5 + 5 Reserves)**

<u>Conservative</u> (4)	<u>Liberal Democrat Group</u> (1)
Mrs Beverley Dunlop	Mrs Susan Jefferies
Mr Spencer Flower	
Mrs Rebecca Knox	
Mr Christopher Rochester	Mr Trevor Jones

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Mr Les Burden  
Mr Ronald Coatsworth  
Mr Malcolm Davies  
Mrs Ann Sibley

**Dorset Fire Authority Nominations for the Shadow Policy and Resources Committee (6)**

Mrs Rebecca Knox, Mr Mike Byatt, Mr Spencer Flower, Mr Trevor Jones, Mr Christopher Rochester and Mrs Ann Sibley.

**Disciplinary Committee (5 + 5 Reserves)**

<u>Conservative</u> (4)	<u>Liberal Democrat Group</u> (1)
Mr Les Burden	Mr Trevor Jones
Mr Colin Jamieson	
Mrs Ann Sibley	Mr Phil Eades
Mr John Wilson	

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Mr Ronald Coatsworth  
Mrs Beverley Dunlop  
Mr Spencer Flower  
Mr Christopher Rochester

**Appointments, Complaints and Disputes Committee (5 + 5 Reserves)**

<u>Conservative</u> (4)	<u>Liberal Democrat Group</u> (1)
Mr Malcolm Davies	Mr Trevor Jones
Mrs Rebecca Knox	
Mrs Ann Sibley	
Mr John Wilson	Mrs Susan Jefferies

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Mr Ronald Coatsworth  
Mrs Beverley Dunlop  
Mr Spencer Flower  
Mr Christopher Rochester

**Audit and Scrutiny Committee (7 + 4 Reserves)**

<u>Conservative</u> (5)	<u>Liberal Democrat Group</u> (1)	<u>Labour</u> (1)
Mr Les Burden	Mr Trevor Jones	Mr Mike Byatt
Mr Malcolm Davies		
Mr Colin Jamieson		
Mr Christopher Rochester		
Mr John Wilson	<u>Mr Phil Eades</u>	
<u>Mr Ronald Coatsworth</u>		
Mrs Beverley Dunlop		
Mr Spencer Flower		

**Budget Working Group (6 + 6 Reserves)**

<u>Conservative</u> (5)	<u>Liberal Democrat Group</u> (1/1)	<u>Labour</u>
Mr Les Burden	Mr Phil Eades	Mr Mike Byatt
Mrs Beverley Dunlop	-	
Mr Spencer Flower		
Mr Colin Jamieson	<u>(R) Mrs Susan Jefferies</u>	
<u>Mr Mark Anderson</u>		
Mrs Rebecca Knox		
Mrs Ann Stribley		
Mr John Wilson		

**Fire Resourcing and Reform Programme Board**

Chairman of the Fire Authority  
 Chairman of the Budget Working Group  
 Chairman of the Community Risk Management Group  
 Chairman of the Audit and Scrutiny Committee

**Community Risk Management Group (7 + 2 Reserves)**

<u>Conservative</u> (5)	<u>Liberal Democrat Group</u> (1)	<u>Labour</u> (1)
Mr Ronald Coatsworth	Mr Phil Eades	Mr Mike Byatt
Mrs Beverley Dunlop		
Mr Colin Jamieson	<u>Mrs Susan Jefferies</u>	
Mr Christopher Rochester		
Mrs Ann Stribley		
<u>Mrs Rebecca Knox</u>		

## Dorset Fire Authority – 16 June 2015

**Political Group Leaders**

<u>Conservative</u> Mrs Rebecca Knox	<u>Liberal Democrat</u> Mr Phil Eades
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**Lead Members**

Community Safety	-	Mr Colin Jamieson
Finance and Assets	-	Mr Spencer Flower
People Services	-	Mrs Susan Jefferies
Health and Safety	-	Mr Christopher Rochester

**Member Champions**

Climate Change	-	Mrs Susan Jefferies
Equality and Diversity	-	Mrs Rebecca Knox
Road Safety	-	Mr Ronald Coatsworth

**Appointments to Various Bodies****Local Government Association – General Assembly**

<u>Conservative</u> Chairman of Fire Authority Vice-Chairman of Fire Authority	<u>Liberal Democrat</u> Mr Phil Eades
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**LG Group Fire Services Commission**

Chairman of Fire Authority  
Deputy: Vice-Chairman of Fire Authority

**Bournemouth Community Safety Partnership Board**

Malcolm Davies

**Safer Poole**

Mr Les Burden

**Dorset Community Safety Partnership**

Mr Mike Byatt

**South West Councils**

Chairman of Fire Authority