

# **Dorset Fire Authority**

Minutes of meeting held at Dorset Fire and Rescue Service  
Headquarters, Poundbury, Dorchester on 23 September 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 Spencer Flower, Mr Trevor Jones and Mr Christopher Rochester.

## **Officers present:**

Mr Darran Gunter (Chief Fire Officer), Mr Richard Bates (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), Hillary Harrold (HR Manager (Resourcing & Talent Management)) and Louis Minchella (Temporary Group Manager).

(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 **4 December 2015**.)

## **Apologies for Absence**

65.1 Apologies for absence were received from Mr Philip Eades, Mr Colin Jamieson, Mrs Susan Jefferies and Mr John Wilson.

65.2 The Chairman suggested that she send the Authority's best wishes for a speedy recovery to both Mr Jamieson and Mr Wilson. This was agreed.

## **Resolved**

66. That the Chairman, on behalf of the Authority, send best wishes for a speedy recover to both Mr Jamieson and Mr Wilson.

## **Code of Conduct**

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

## **Minutes**

68. The minutes of the meeting held on 16 June 2015 were confirmed and signed.

## **Matters Arising**

### **Minute 48.2 – Quarterly Performance Monitoring Report – Road Safety**

69.1 The Chairman drew attention to a resolution passed by the Audit and Scrutiny Committee on 18 September 2015. The Chairman of the Committee explained that there had been concern over a number of years about the number of road traffic accidents on Dorset's roads and there had been a recent spike. The resolution asked the Chairman of the Authority to write to the Chairman of the Dorset Strategic Road Safety Partnership to develop a business case for pooling resources in order to deliver road safety education to support a balanced road safety strategy in a more cohesive, efficient and effective way. The Committee had also asked that this work be completed by 31 March 2016.

69.2 The Authority endorsed this approach.

**Resolved**

70. That the Audit and Scrutiny Committee's resolution 49 be endorsed.

**Combination Progress Update**

71.1 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.

71.2 The Chief Fire Officer explained that a detailed report on progress had been considered by the Shadow Policy and Resources Committee the previous week and could be provided on request. It was now only six months until the launch of the Combined Authority. He then gave a detailed explanation of progress under the six work streams and concluded that good progress was being made.

71.3 In response to questions members noted that the awareness DVD for partners would be edited to become a public information tool, that critical timelines were being met, and their attention was drawn to the pressure put on staff across Dorset and Wiltshire and Swindon Fire Authorities by work to progress the combination.

71.4 With regard to the next meeting of the Shadow Fire Authority on 23 October 2015, members were asked to note that a seminar to discuss future governance arrangements would precede this meeting. The Chairman would send a reminder to members about the arrangements.

**Resolved**

72.1 That the report be noted.

72.2 That the Chairman send a reminder to members about the arrangements for the next Shadow Fire Authority and seminar being held on 23 October 2015.

**Consultation – Enabling Closer Working Between the Emergency Services**

73.1 The Authority considered a report by the Chief Fire Officer on a recent Government consultation on "Enabling closer working between the Emergency Services". The consultation would run from 11 September to 23 October 2015.

73.2 The Chairman sought members' views on the recent Government consultation in order to draft a response.

73.4 Members discussed the consultation document and commented:-

- Dorset and Wiltshire Fire Authorities had recognised the difficult financial situation and had taken action to increase resilience, maintain high quality services at a reduced cost through combination.
- The consultation was irrelevant to Dorset and Wiltshire because the two Authorities were well advanced with combination.
- It was difficult to see how one Police and Crime Commissioner could look after the combined Dorset and Wiltshire Fire Authority.
- It would be more costly to undo the work already done towards combination, given that it would be launched on 1 April 2016. There would be no savings at all and potentially there would be less collaboration than there was currently.
- Dorset and Wiltshire Fire Authorities knew how to make savings and work collaboratively as demonstrated by the planned combination and would work beyond that to embed the benefits from having a sound business case.
- The consultation assumed that its way ahead was the approach the Fire Authority wanted to go when plans for the combined authority were well advanced.

- Work was on-going to ensure the new Combined Authority would be launched on 1 April 2016. This was based on a sound business case which would lead to improved resilience and provide efficiencies at a reduced cost and improve community safety.
- Whilst other authorities might need to be encouraged to work more closely with emergency services, this would provide a distraction to the combination process which was given a clear mandate through the public consultation process. The mandate given to the Police Crime Commissioners by the public through the election process was far less.
- The Authority should take advantage of any opportunities to be creative and continue to develop and change, whilst also enhancing co-operation and collaboration opportunities.
- There were now four different governance models across England which delivered vital services, and the consultation would seem to be adding another one.
- Would the consultation result in savings?
- The consultation seemed to be a fait accompli.
- The consultation did not include partner organisations like local authorities, who would be affected by the proposals.

73.5 The Chairman referred to an email she had received from Mr Eades which indicated his opposition to the proposals within the consultation document.

73.6 The Chief Fire Officer added that the Authority had a statutory duty to collaborate but the consultation had not included health or local authorities as part of the proposed collaboration duty process. He was disappointed that the comprehensive business case for combination, which had included an opportunity to merge with the Police, had not been considered. He highlighted that in his view economies would only be achieved by creating one large single entity, the different legislative powers and responsibilities that the Police had, and that under the consultation document there would be two Police and Crime Commissioners involved when the Combined Authority was launched. He advised members that any response to the consultation should be detailed and that a joint response across the Dorset, Swindon and Wiltshire and Combined Authorities might be more powerful and have more impact. He also added that the timescales of this particular consultation did not accord with the Government's own guidance.

73.7 Members were concerned that their local authorities had not been included in the consultation. The Clerk explained that once the response had been drafted and sent to local authorities, they too would be able to respond.

#### **Resolved**

74.1 That the Chairman and Chief Fire Officer draft a response to the consultation based upon comments outlined in minute 73.

74.2 That the draft response be sent to members for their comment and approval, prior to being shared with local authorities and submission.

#### **First Quarter Financial Performance Report**

75.1 The Authority considered a report by the Chief Fire Officer which provided an analysis of the financial position as at 31 July 2015 based upon profiled projections and actual data to date. It also highlighted a potential underspend of £693k on the revenue budget and included an update on the capital programme.

75.2 The Head of Financial Services presented the report highlighting a number of underspends on pay budgets, ill health payments, the additional receipt in relation to Icelandic Bank investments and the revised total for the capital programme for 2014/15 of

£3.6m. He did not anticipate any need for external borrowing. The Chief Fire Officer added that he did not think that the replacement of aerial appliances would be decided by the end of the current financial year and, if this was the case, funding would be carried forward to the next financial year.

75.3 With regard to Medium Term Financial planning, although business continued as usual, a member highlighted the need to plan for the next three years and beyond. The Chief Fire Officer explained that this would be considered in depth following the Spending Review announcement in November 2015.

75.4 A member asked that the last column on the Revenue Budget Summary be reviewed to ensure the correct references were included. This was agreed.

### **Noted**

### **Quarterly Performance Monitoring Report**

76.1 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 or good practice exhibited for the first quarter from 1 April to 30 June 2015.

76.2 Officers set out the performance against the strategic aims of prevention; protection, response; and people. The report's graphs illustrated fire related injuries, accidental dwelling fires, deliberate fires and the number of fires in non-domestic properties with all of these showing a continuing downward trend over a five year period. The significant improvement in sickness absence levels and key corporate indicators which were likely to meet year end targets were highlighted.

76.3 Members were pleased that the Co-responder scheme was being extended to include Gillingham and Swanage, but asked whether progress was moving as fast as anticipated. The Chief Fire Officer explained that pace of progress was dictated by South Western Service Ambulance NHS Foundation Trust. It was noted that Swindon and Wiltshire Fire Authority also had a Co-responder scheme, albeit slightly different from the Dorset model, and the Fire Brigade Union was now engaged with employers with regard to the scheme's development.

76.4 There was some discussion about road accident causes and injuries which were scrutinised by the Dorset Strategic Road Safety Partnership and the Road Reduction Overview Panel. It was highlighted that some time ago there had been an agreement that investigation key findings would be shared but this did not appear to have been the case. Officers highlighted that the majority of road deaths in Dorset were in rural areas and it had been concluded that resources should be aimed at driver education and improving their behaviour. Members asked officers to contact the Police to see whether this key findings could be shared with local authorities.

### **Resolved**

77. That officers contact the Police to establish whether investigation key findings could be shared with local authorities.

### **Corporate Statement of Assurance**

78.1 The Authority considered a report by the Chief Fire Officer on the Corporate Statement of Assurance.

78.2 The Statement had been discussed in detail by the Audit and Scrutiny Committee on 18 September 2015.

**Resolved**

79. That following its consideration by the Audit and Scrutiny Committee on 18 September 2015, the Statement of Assurance be approved.

**Annual Accounts 2014/15**

80.1 The Authority considered a report by the Treasurer on the Annual Accounts for 2014/15.

80.2 The annual accounts 2014/15 had been reviewed by the Audit and Scrutiny Committee on 18 September 2015 when the External Auditors had issued an unqualified audit opinion on the both the accounts and in relation to value for money. The Committee Chairman confirmed that no issues were raised at that meeting. There had been some discussion about property valuation and a report on this would be considered by the Shadow Policy and Resources Committee in November 2015.

**Noted****Meeting Our Equality Duties**

81.1 The Authority considered a report by the Chief Fire Officer which fulfilled the Authority's obligations under the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011.

81.2 The report illustrated how the Authority had met its statutory duties under the National Framework and that the "Excellent" standard had been maintained.

81.3 One member asked that the Community Mapping section be reviewed to ensure it reflected the Authority's values, for relevance and include information about who the Authority was collaborating with. This was agreed.

**Resolved**

82.1 That the progress made against the issues outlined in the penultimate Meeting Our Equality Duties Report be noted.

82.2 That the report be reviewed as set out in minute 81.3 above.

**Command Support Unit**

83.1 The Authority considered a report by the Chief Fire Officer which provided an update on the current status of the command support unit and enhancements being made to improve existing capability.

83.2 It was noted that the command support unit had been involved in an accident in June 2015 and was damaged beyond repair. Steps were taken to maintain command support resilience and enhancements to existing capabilities were explained. Command support would be considered at some point in the future in a wider Devon, Dorset, Hampshire, Somerset and Wiltshire partnership context.

83.3 Members suggested that "black box" monitoring technology be fitted in all vehicles. Officers agreed to explore costings and ensure that any vehicles purchased were fitted with this and forward facing cameras.

**Noted****Wholetime Firefighter Recruitment**

84.1 The Authority considered a report by the Chief Fire Officer which provided an update on the Wholetime Firefighter Recruitment process to be undertaken with Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service, including a draft timetable. Copies of a supplementary report by the Chief Fire Officer were provided at the meeting.

84.2 The Chief Fire Officer reported that the wholetime firefighter recruitment process was underway and was based on tried and tested models which met agreed national standards. He explained steps were being taken to raise opportunities for under-represented groups but these applicants would go through the same process as other applicants. Ms Hillary Harrold outlined steps taken to raise awareness within under-represented groups through a variety of media.

84.3 Members were asked to consider whether the recruitment catchment area should be limited to those living in Dorset and Wiltshire and military personnel. The Clerk advised that he supported the proposed postcode restriction. Whilst the proportion of the population in Dorset from black and minority ethnic (BME) groups is lower than that in the UK as a whole the Chief Fire Officer had outlined the positive action being taken to target recruitment from BME groups within Dorset. The Chief Fire Officer added that any applications received would go through the same process, being blind marked and scored and proceeding on merit.

84.4 With regard to whether on-line applicants could falsify their applications, it was explained that measures were in place to ensure that only one attempt could be made and that random sampling was also carried out. A further update would be provided later in the year.

**Resolved**

85.1 That the arrangements being put in place for wholetime firefighter recruitment be supported.

85.2 That applications from those living in the Dorset and Wiltshire catchment area and military personnel should be progressed.

85.3 That a further update be provided for the meeting on 4 December 2015.

Meeting duration: 10.35am to 12:25pm.

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Chairman  
4 December 2015