



Minutes of the Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Authority meeting at 10:00 hours on 16 June 2021.

Members present

Cllr Steve Baron	Cllr Pete Barrow	Cllr Richard Biggs
Cllr Russell Holland	Cllr Toby Johnson	Cllr Bob Jones
Cllr Rebecca Knox	Cllr Kelvin Nash	Cllr Ashley O'Neill
Cllr Paul Oatway	Cllr Byron Quayle	Cllr Pip Ridout
Cllr Kevin Small	Cllr Ann Stribley	

Officer attendance:

Chief Fire Officer (CFO), Ben Ansell
Clerk & Monitoring Officer, Jonathan Mair
Head of Financial Services and Treasurer, Ian Cotter
Deputy Chief Fire Officer (DCFO), Derek James
Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO), Jim Mahoney
Director of Community Safety, Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO), Andy Cole
Director of People Services, Jenny Long
Head of Corporate Support, Vikki Shearing
Corporate Communications and Engagement Manager, Emily Cheeseman
Senior Executive and Democratic Services Manager, Gemma Kelly
Democratic Services Support, Steph Howard

21/16 Welcome

21/16.1 The Clerk & Monitoring Officer, Mr Jonathan Mair, opened the annual meeting of the Fire and Rescue Authority and welcomed Members.

21/17 Apologies

21/17.1 Apologies were received from Cllr Garry Perkins and Cllr Brian Dalton. Cllr Russell Holland arrived at 10:22.

Initials _____

21/18 Election of Chair

21/18.1 Jonathan Mair asked for nominations for the role of Chair of the Authority for 2021-22. Cllr Rebecca Knox was nominated by Cllr Ann Stribley and seconded by Cllr Pip Ridout. Members unanimously agreed this nomination, and Cllr Rebecca Knox was duly elected.

21/18.2 **RESOLVED: Cllr Rebecca Knox was elected as Chair of the Authority for the year 2021-22.**

21/19 Election of Vice Chair

21/19.1 Cllr Knox asked for nominations for the role of Vice Chair of the Authority. Cllr Paul Oatway was nominated by Cllr Pip Ridout and seconded by Cllr Knox.

21/19.2 **RESOLVED: Cllr Paul Oatway was elected as Vice Chair of the Authority for the year 2021-22.**

21/20 Code of Conduct and Declaration of Interests

21/20.1 The Chair asked Members for any disclosures of pecuniary interests under the Localism Act. No disclosures were made.

21/20.2 The Chair welcomed new Members to the Authority and thanked outgoing Members for their service.

21/20.3 The Chair also thanked ACFO Jim Mahoney for his service, his legacy in the fire and rescue service and presented him, upon his retirement, a shield in recognition of this.

21/21 Review minutes of Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Authority meeting on 11 February 2021 and any matters arising

21/21.1 The Chair asked Members to review and approve the minutes from the last meeting.

21/21.2 Chief Fire Officer (CFO) Ben Ansell referred to pages 8 and 9 and confirmed the draft Community Safety Plan consultation has concluded and is a separate agenda item.

21/21.3 CFO Ansell referred to section 21/12 of the previous meeting minutes regarding the Pay Policy Statement 2021-22. CFO Ansell updated Members regarding HM Treasury issuing a direction to revoke the Public Sector Exit Payments regulations on 12 February 2021. The direction to revoke was recorded as a post meeting note at 21/12.5.

21/21.4 **RESOLVED that the minutes be confirmed without amendment and signed by the Chair as a correct record.**

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21/22 Receive the draft minutes of the Finance & Audit Committee meeting on 3 March 2021

21/22.1 The Chair of the Finance & Audit Committee, Cllr Bob Jones, presented the minutes to Members and provided a general overview of the meeting.

21/22.2 Cllr Jones referred to the procedural error at the March meeting where the Quarter 3 Financial Performance report was not fully covered by Members. He explained that whilst Members had agreed in March to hold a separate meeting before the June Authority meeting, following subsequent discussion involving the Chair, Monitoring Officer and Treasurer, this option was not practical as the Quarter 3 information would be out of date by that time and would not work logistically.

21/23 Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Authority Appointments 2021-22

21/23.1 Jonathan Mair introduced the paper and reminded Members that appointments were based on the political proportionality of Members on the Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Authority.

21/23.2 Jonathan Mair further highlighted paragraph 2.3 of the report in relation to the proportionality of Members appointed to the Finance & Audit Committee. He confirmed the Liberal Democrat Group had become an alliance with one Independent Member and following this confirmed the alignment of proportionality had changed to five appointments from the Conservative Group and three from the Liberal Democrat Alliance.

21/23.3 Jonathan Mair asked for nominations for Chair and Vice Chair of the Finance & Audit Committee. A nomination for Chair was received for Cllr Byron Quayle from Cllr Rebecca Knox and seconded by Cllr Ann Stribley. A nomination for Vice Chair was received for Cllr Pip Ridout from Cllr Byron Quayle and seconded by Cllr Toby Johnson. Cllrs Byron Quayle and Cllr Pip Ridout were duly elected Chair and Vice Chair respectively.

21/23.4 Members from the Conservative Group to be appointed to the Finance & Audit Committee were:
Cllr Malcolm Davies
Cllr Kelvin Nash
Cllr Byron Quayle
Cllr Pip Ridout
Cllr Anne Stribley

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- 21/23.5 Members from the Liberal Democrats Alliance Group to be appointed to the Finance & Audit Committee were:
Cllr Pete Barrow
Cllr Richard Biggs
Cllr Paul Hilliard
- 21/23.6 Jonathan Mair consulted with Members and confirmed the following appointments to further committees, groups and additional bodies.
- 21/23.7 **Local Pension Board**
Cllr Rebecca Knox and Cllr Richard Biggs were unanimously appointed to the Local Pension Board. In the absence of a nomination, Members delegated the appointment of a substitute to Jonathan Mair to be appointed outside of the meeting.
- 21/23.8 **Local Government Association (LGA)**
Cllr Kevin Small, Cllr Pip Ridout and Cllr Rebecca Knox were unanimously appointed to the Local Government Association.
- 21/23.9 **LGA Fire Commission**
Cllr Rebecca Knox and Cllr Paul Oatway were unanimously appointed to the LGA Fire Commission.
- 21/23.10 **South West Councils**
Cllr Rebecca Knox was unanimously appointed to South West Councils.
- 21/23.11 **South West Councils Employers' Panel**
Cllr Rebecca Knox was unanimously appointed to South West Councils Employers' Panel.
- 21/23.12 **Wiltshire Public Service Board**
Cllr Rebecca Knox was unanimously appointed to the Wiltshire Public Service Board.
- 21/23.13 Constituent Authority **Community Safety Partnerships** were unanimously agreed as follows:
Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole – Cllr Steve Baron
Dorset - Cllr Pete Barrow
Swindon – Cllr Russell Holland
Wiltshire – Cllr Paul Oatway
- 21/23.14 Jonathan Mair asked Members to note the arrangements detailed in the paper in relation to Member Champions and the Member Buddy Scheme.
- 21/23.15 **ACTION: The Clerk and Monitoring Officer to appoint a substitute to the Local Pension Board outside of this meeting.**
- 21/23.16 **RESOLVED: Eight Members were appointed to the Finance & Audit Committee.**

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- 21/23.17 **RESOLVED: Members elected the Chair of the Finance & Audit Committee as Cllr Byron Quayle and the Vice Chair as Cllr Pip Ridout.**
- 21/23.18 **RESOLVED: Members made appointments to the Local Pensions Board, the Local Government Association, the LGA Fire Commission, South West Councils, South West Councils Employers' Panel, Wiltshire Public Service Board and the four constituent authority Community Safety Partnerships.**
- 21/23.19 **RESOLVED: Members noted the arrangements detailed in the paper in relation to Member Champions and the Member Buddy Scheme.**

21/24 Annual Service Performance review 2020-21 - presentation

- 21/24.1 Deputy Chief Fire Officer (DCFO), Derek James introduced himself to Members and provided narrative and context to the performance slides, key points are as follows:
- 21/24.2 DCFO James gave an overview of the previous year, highlighting the assistance the Service have provided during the pandemic to partner agencies in many different ways including face fit tests, assisting at the vaccination centre in Salisbury, driving ambulances, the formation of a mortuary facility in Poole and laptops for school children.
- 21/24.3 DCFO James referenced the five priorities of the Service and explained how these align to Local Performance and Scrutiny Committees and the Finance & Audit Committee.
- 21/24.4 In terms of the first priority and making safer and healthier choices, DCFO James presented the Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOEs) 1 and 2 where performance in the last year is good. With safe and well activities being adapted during the pandemic whilst continuing to visit those most in need.
- 21/24.5 With regards to road safety initiatives, this has received national recognition and the way in which these initiatives are delivered is becoming more efficient, bringing societal savings.
- 21/24.6 In relation to priority 2, Fire Safety has not seen any change in demand during the pandemic and demand remains steady. Due to a change in operational procedures, there has been a 17% reduction in unwanted automatic fire alarms, over the last year, and the long term trend is positive. He reported that non-cashable savings from this are £72,029.
- 21/24.7 In terms of priority 3, DCFO James reported that performance is on track, with operational demand with the notable Wareham Forest fire being a key feature of the past year. Demand is steadily rising, and the number of fires has increased slightly which is in line with national trends. Long term trends in terms of special service incidents are increasing as the Service works even closer with the police and ambulance services.

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- 21/24.8 High rise procedures have been strengthened since the Grenfell Tower fire, in areas such as fire survival guidance procedures and the positive use of fire escape hoods.
- 21/24.9 With regards to priority 4, audits have been positive and all independent governance review actions are discharged. Business continuity arrangements are positive and have been tested over the last year. Nineteen new appliances have been ordered along with new 4x4 vehicles and good progress is being made to attain the British Standard in asset management.
- 21/24.10 DCFO James confirmed that the financial position of the Authority remains a significant strategic concern. Although the Service has below average costs in England, reliance on council tax is higher than for most, and greater flexibility of the fire precept would help to ensure financial sustainability. The financial outlook shows that reserves are projected to be exhausted within the coming two to three years.
- 21/24.11 DCFO James updated that in relation to priority 5 wholetime recruitment has been positive with 22 new recruits, however the corporate target for recruitment from under-represented groups is 11.4% below target.
- 21/24.12 The on-call duty system remains a strategic challenge in terms of attraction and retention of on-call staff. However pleasingly, since 2017 there were four less on-call firefighters than over the previous three years.
- 21/24.13 The wellbeing of staff has been adapted and staff well supported over the last year. Absence management has reduced over the last year for most staff groups and the long term trend remains a positive one.
- 21/24.14 Incident command has been strengthened over the last year with advances in technology and the trialling of body worn cameras. The competence recording system has also improved. Training has adapted and continued throughout the year of the pandemic.
- 21/24.15 DCFO James concluded that partnership arrangements have been strengthened over the last year partially down to the joint responses to the pandemic. The Service is in a good place in terms of performance and the upcoming inspections.
- 21/24.16 Cllr Paul Oatway asked in relation to body worn cameras how long the evidence is retained if evidential. Vikki Shearing, Head of Corporate Support confirmed that the Data Protection Impact Assessment has been carried out and would provide specific details outside of the meeting.
- 21/24.17 Cllr Richard Biggs queried if the procurement and contract savings are also delivering quality and performance. DCFO James confirmed that value for money arrangements are being further strengthened and an evaluation process is being utilised.

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- 21/24.18 Cllr Paul Hilliard commended the online developments over the last year have been very positive.
- 21/24.19 Cllr Pete Barrow queried how certain the Service were in relation to the reduction of 5% in the Government grant. CFO Ansell confirmed this is an assumption the Authority is working to while awaiting confirmation via the forth-coming Government spending review. CFO Ansell also highlighted that the current financial year assumption of a 1% increase in pay, had been exceeded by a national pay award offer of 1.5% to both corporate and operational staff. So far this had been accepted by operational staff, but corporate negotiations were continuing at a national level.
- 21/24.20 Ian Cotter, Treasurer to the Authority, confirmed that any reduction in the Government grant will not be known for sure until the Government spending review is concluded. This will be confirmed in the autumn and more detail will be provided to the Authority in December.
- 21/24.21 The Chair added that the current Minister has indicated he wants to see more than a one-year settlement to ensure some certainty and that the Authority needed to be prudent in its estimations.
- 21/24.22 Cllr Kevin Small queried the 1.5% increase for staff. CFO Ansell confirmed that this is offered by the employers' side of the respective national joint committee.
- 21/24.23 Cllr Holland queried whether there any commercial opportunities arising from lower insurance premiums arising from the prevention activities. CFO Ansell confirmed that there is a provision to charge where services are not legislated. However, a commercial view will need creation of a commercial arm and consideration of profit. CFO Ansell confirmed that the Service resourced to risk and not purely on demand and therefore savings will not necessarily follow a reduction in demand and commercialisation is a complex and often not profitable exercise.
- 21/24.24 Cllr Knox commended the inclusion of societal savings and hoped this would become more generalised reporting practice in other organisations that she was a member of. She acknowledged that measuring prevention is a challenge and was being discussed nationally.
- 21/24.25 **RESOLVED: Members noted the Annual Service Performance review.**
- 21/25 Local Performance & Scrutiny Feedback (verbal)**
- 21/25.1 Local Performance & Scrutiny Committee (LPS) Chairs, were invited to update the meeting about recent activity at their meetings
- 21/25.2 Cllr Barrow confirmed positive performance and engagement of Members at a local level and that no issues needed to be reported to the Authority for Dorset LPS.

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- 21/25.3 Cllr Oatway confirmed the Wiltshire LPS committee noted positive performance at a local level.
- 21/25.4 Cllr Ann Stribley noted from the Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole LPS there are no particular issues to report, the Service is held in high regard and involvement and assistance for partner agencies is commended. Cllr Stribley confirmed good support from officers and no exceptions to report.
- 21/25.5 Cllr Knox took the opportunity to also thank Cllr Brian Mattock, Chair of the Swindon LPS and Vice Chair of the Finance & Audit Committee, who sadly passed away earlier this year.
- 21/25.6 Cllr Holland reported that the Swindon committee LPS meeting was equally positive and informative with no issues to draw to the attention of the Authority.

21/26 Community Safety Plan 2021-24

- 21/26.1 DCFO James confirmed the draft Community Safety Plan (CSP) was approved in February and is subject to a changing financial environment. The 12-week consultation sought feedback both internally and externally. A total of 144 responses were received and were overwhelmingly positive. Many respondents agreed that the plan was clear and easy to understand. The Home Office commented positively on the draft plan, whilst neighbouring chief fire officers, and those across the region also commented positively on the CSP.
- 21/26.2 Minor insertions and clarifications were made to the document following the consultation and the opportunity has been taken to remove jargon as much as possible.
- 21/26.3 **RESOLVED: Members approved the Community Safety Plan 2021-24 with no amendments.**

21/27 Proposed changes to the Members' Handbook

- 21/27.1 Jonathan Mair confirmed the recommendations for Members relate to general updates and minor amendments to the code of conduct, contract and procurement standing orders, public questions and the relationship between the Chair and the Chairs of Local Performance and Scrutiny Committees (LPSs). This better aligns to the terms of reference and was an oversight when the handbook was last reviewed. It also positions the Authority well with the on-going debate on operational independence that will be the subject of the imminent white paper on fire reform.

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- 21/27.2 The remainder are associated with the scheme of delegation. The financial threshold was proposed to be amended from £100,000 to £250,000 which has not been increased since predecessor authorities and the new figure reflects the combination of the two former services. Jonathan Mair drew Members' attention to a typographical error within paragraph 2.1 of the report which should read '4.3 If authority to act has been reserved to the full Authority or a committee then *no officer* may exercise delegated authority'.
- 21/27.3 Ian Cotter provided some context around the threshold change and the subsequential changes to the financial regulation aligned to the financial delegation.
- 21/27.4 Jonathan Mair also noted the arrangements for deputations, which are to be amended in standing orders as well as clarifying the process for public questions.
- 21/27.5 Cllr Stribley queried the wording of paragraphs, 3.2, 3.3 and 4.1 within the report. Jonathan Mair will re-word the structure of the sentence.
- 21/27.6 Cllr Small raised a concern regarding the threshold being raised with a 150% increase and suggested the threshold should be lower.
- 21/27.7 Jonathan Mair confirmed that this is a large percentage increase. However, this should have been increased at the point of combination.
- 21/27.8 CFO Ansell appreciated the size and scale of the increase and confirmed that, compared to other authorities he is aware of, the increase is broadly proportionate.
- 21/27.9 Cllr Ridout was in support of Cllr Small's proposal and proposed an increase to £200,000, Cllr Quayle seconded the proposal.
- 21/27.10 This amendment was rejected with a minority vote by Members.
- 21/27.11 The Chair proposed Members vote for recommendation 5 separately. Members voted in favour of the recommendation with a clear majority.
- 21/27.12 Members considered the remainder of the recommendations together and voted in favour of these with a clear majority.
- 21/27.13 **RESOLVED: Members noted the general amendments to the Members' Handbook and approved the recommendations to the Scheme of Delegation to Officers, Financial Regulations and Standing Orders.**
- 21/27.14 **ACTION: The Clerk and Monitoring Officer will review the wording of the Scheme of Delegation to Officers section in the handbook to make this comprehensible.**

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21/28 State of and Rescue Fire 2020 and imminent White Paper on Fire Reform

21/28.1 The Chair introduced the paper and advised Members that the publication of the white paper on fire reform was imminent.

21/28.2 CFO Ansell outlined the report and provided an update regarding the inspection regime of HMICFRS which was cut short due to the pandemic in the second round. The covid-related inspection letter for the Service was positive and identified only two areas of focus which the Service has addressed. The 2019 national recommendations are continuing. CFO Ansell explained to Members that the fire reform white paper is expected to include areas of governance. Publication has been delayed and is expected at the end of June or in early July. It was proposed to hold a Members' briefing on 28 July to coordinate Members views for the consultation submission which will be delegated to the Chair.

21/28.3 Cllr Stribley queried if there was a requirement to lobby MPs in relation to this. The Chair acknowledged this may happen as individuals but as an Authority this should wait until a collective view is formed.

21/28.4 **RESOLVED: Members note the position with regards to the State of Fire and Rescue report and agreed to the proposal for collectively responding to the imminent White Paper on Fire Reform by attending a briefing on 28 July**

21/29 Wareham Forest - one year on (verbal)

21/29.1 Assistant Chief Officer (ACFO), Andy Cole introduced the Wareham Forest video which was produced by the Service, in partnership with agencies involved in the incident to reinforce the devastating impacts of the fire and promote the fire safety prevention messages.

21/29.2 Cllr Knox encouraged Members to share the video and this prevention message. Cllr Knox also updated that a substantial amount of the costs incurred by the Service were reimbursed by the Home Office.

21/29.3 **ACTION: Democratic Services to share the link to the Wareham Forest video with Members.**

21/30 Service Highlights - public video

21/30.1 CFO Ansell introduced the in-house video which is available on the Service's YouTube channel.

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21/31 Date of next meeting

21/31.1 The Chair confirmed the next meeting of the Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Authority will take place on 30 September at 10.00am.

21/32 To consider passing the following resolution:

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

21/32.1 **RESOLVED: To close the meeting to the press and public.**

**21/33 PART 2
Review of Insurance Arrangements**

21/33.1 Ian Cotter, talked through the paper and discussed the benefits of the approach to insurance arrangements. There is a significant but detrimental financial difference between the Fire and Rescue Indemnity Company (FRIC) and the current approach. Ian Cotter proposed to continue with the current insurance arrangements and further proposed an audit to ensure the balance between risk and premiums.

21/33.2 Cllr Jones agreed that following his engagement in the deliberations that FRIC does not represent value for money at this time.

21/33.3 **RESOLVED: Members agreed the recommendation that the Authority maintains its existing approach to insurance.**

Meeting closed at 13:05hrs

Signed: _____

Initials _____