



**Draft Minutes of the Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Authority meeting at 10:00 hours on 28 September 2023 held at the Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters, Salisbury.**

These are draft minutes prepared by Officers in conjunction with the Chair and Vice Chair to be approved by the Fire and Rescue Authority at its next meeting.

Members present:

Cllr Rebecca Knox (Chair)	Cllr Cameron Adams	Cllr Abdul Amin
Cllr Pete Barrow	Cllr Richard Biggs	Cllr Daniel Cave
Cllr Matthew Courtliff	Cllr Brian Dalton	Cllr Richard Herrett
Cllr Paul Hilliard	Cllr Lisa Northover	Cllr Kelvin Nash
Cllr Byron Quayle	Cllr Pip Ridout	Cllr Kevin Small
Cllr Clare Weight		

Officer attendance:

Chief Fire Officer (CFO), Ben Ansell  
Clerk & Monitoring Officer, Jonathan Mair  
Head of Financial Services & Treasurer, Ian Cotter  
Designate Head of Financial Services & Treasurer, Ryan Maslen  
Deputy Chief Fire Officer (DCFO), Derek James  
Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO) - Director of Community Safety, Andy Cole  
Assistant Chief Officer (ACO) - Director of People Services, Jenny Long  
Head of Corporate Support, Vikki Shearing  
Corporate Communications & Engagement Manager, Emily Cheeseman  
Democratic Services Officer, David Shaw

**23/33 Welcome**

23/33.1 The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting.

**23/34 Apologies**

23/34.1 Apologies were received from Cllr Bob Jones (Vice Chair), Cllr Paul Oatway and Assistant Chief Officer (ACO) - Director of Service Support, Jill McCrae.

**23/35 Code of Conduct and Declarations of Interests**

Initials \_\_\_\_\_

23/35.1 The Chair asked the meeting for any disclosures of pecuniary interests under the Localism Act. No disclosures were made.

**23/36 Review minutes of the Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Authority meeting on 14 June 2023 and any matters arising**

23/36.1 The Chair asked Members to review and approve the minutes from the last meeting.

**23/36.2 RESOLVED: That the minutes of the 14 June 2023 meeting be confirmed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.**

**23/37 Receive minutes of the Finance & Audit Committee meeting of 26 July 2023 and verbal update from the Finance & Audit Committee 13 September 2023 meeting.**

23/37.1 Cllr Kevin Small presented the minutes of the meeting of 26 July 2023 and provided a general overview of the meeting. He also provided an update on the meeting of the Committee held on 13 September 2023.

23/37.2 In response to comments raised by the Chair, Members noted the potentially significant rise in external audit fees following the Public Sector Audit Appointments procurement process. The Head of Financial Services & Treasurer, Ian Cotter, confirmed that the scale of fees was awaited, but the risk was known and budget provision had been made.

**23/37.3 RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Finance & Audit Committee meeting of 26 July 2023 be received and the verbal update for the 13 September 2023 meeting be noted.**

**23/38 Public questions**

23/38.1 The meeting noted a public question submitted by Mr M Barton regarding an assessment of the safety of the Bibby Stockholm barge, Portland Port. Details of the question and the answer provided at the meeting are contained in the appendix attached to the minutes.

**23/38.2 RESOLVED: That the question and reply be noted (see Appendix) and that a copy of the reply be sent to the provider of the public question, Mr M Barton.**

**23/39 Treasury Management Annual report 2022-23**

23/39.1 Ian Cotter presented the report which set out the details of treasury management performance for 2022-23 and the position at the end of the financial year.

- 23/39.2 The officers replied to questions from Cllr Richard Biggs and Cllr Pete Barrow, as to whether delays in capital expenditure for the purchase and replacement of long-term assets, such as buildings and vehicles could put the Service at risk. It was explained that for ICT projects the risk could be reduced as contracts could be extended, that for buildings the risk of higher costs was being evaluated and that for vehicles the Fleet and Equipment Manager was in regular contact with the Finance Team. A purchase profile for eight new fire appliances across 2024-25 and 2025-26 had recently been agreed between the Service and its vehicle supplier.
- 23/39.3 RESOLVED: That the Treasury Management Annual Report 2022-23 be noted.**
- 23/40 Annual report 2022-23 and Annual Workforce Equality Report**
- 23/40.1 Chief Fire Officer (CFO) Ben Ansell introduced the report and highlighted to Members the significant headlines within Appendix A – Annual Report 2023-23. These included conducting 9,712 safe and well visits in people's homes, 118 rescues from fires and 365 rescues from road traffic collisions.
- 23/40.2 Assistant Chief Officer (ACO) - Director of People Services, Jenny Long, referred to the increase in average sickness levels, as referenced in the strategic performance against corporate targets as set out on page 45 of the Annual Report and outlined that these were explained predominantly by absences due to musculoskeletal issues and mental health which was generally attributed to individuals under management process, or grievance. These factors were reported to the Finance and Audit Committee.
- 23/40.3 Members discussed the strategic performance against corporate targets on page 45 of the Annual Report. It was questioned whether the target 'we will reduce the number of road traffic collisions compared to the average attended during the last five years' was termed correctly, as reduction was out of the Service's direct control. A Member commented that the Service's attendance at road traffic collisions was to utilise the capability that was at its disposal. Some Members stated that the target should instead acknowledge the outcomes of what the Service could provide and the impact of not meeting that target, in order to better understand the cause, effects and trends. CFO Ansell explained that the Authority did not have a statutory duty to undertake prevention in road safety, but that the Service acted in partnership with other organisations through the Road Safety Partnerships in areas including education, enforcement and engineering. The Chair suggested that the information could be presented in the best way that aligned with the Authority's statutory duties to evidence where the Service assisted. The Clerk & Monitoring Officer, Jonathan Mair observed that it was not necessary to report the target if the reasons for not reporting were made clear, although it was included the Community Safety Plan. At the conclusion of debate, it was agreed that the target be retained for 2023-24 as set out within the Annual Report and that it be revisited as part of the consideration of the refreshed Community Safety Plan from 2024-25.

- 23/40.4 ACO Long, introduced the Annual Workforce Equality Report (Appendix B of report 23/40 refers). A presentation was provided to highlight key areas to the meeting.
- 23/40.5 ACO Long highlighted that the highest numbers of employees were in the 36 - 45 year age group and that the average age of an employee was 43. The number of disciplinary and grievance cases and appeals for all staff was 20, which was 25% higher than the previous year and that the number of bullying and harassment cases was nine, and one additional formal grievance. This could indicate that staff were more comfortable to report such issues, but it could also indicate that there were cultural issues from behaviour of staff, a matter which was under present consideration.
- 23/40.6 In reply to a question from Cllr Lisa Northover, ACO Long explained that facilities and uniforms for female operational staff were given consideration. Female staff had been consulted through the Operational Women's Group when replacing uniform and a current stakeholder panel was currently reviewing this. Separate facilities were provided at workplaces for females, although due to the limitations of the estate, this was sometimes the accessible facility. The Service looked to provide separate facilities in new build schemes as part of its capital programme. In addition, mobile welfare facilities were available when attendance was required at protracted incidents and it was part of incident command training to be aware of such considerations.
- 23/40.7 In reply to Cllr Abdul Amin's question on the methods employed to increase the ethnicity of the workforce, including learning from ethnically diverse towns and cities, ACO Long gave details of the local actions that were taken to meet with community leaders and to build relationships.
- 23/40.8 Cllr Daniel Cave commented on the methods employed to reach out to communities for recruitment and the reasons why more females were leaving the Service than joining. ACO Long explained that a range of approaches were taken towards recruitment and the reasons for female staff leaving were being analysed, including pay structures for corporate staff and working patterns for fire control staff. A reason for more females leaving was due to timing between an individual leaving and their replacement starting and mainly applied to corporate staff.
- 23/40.9 In reply to a question from Cllr Small about the proportionally high number of leavers in LGBTQIA+ staff, ACO Long stated that the reasons for this were being considered. Cllr Small also asked about the gap between the length of service between male and female employees, which ACO Long would clarify for the Member.
- 23/40.10 RESOLVED: Members approved the Annual report as set out in Appendix A and noted the Annual Workforce Equality Report 2022-23 as set out in Appendix B.**

## **23/41 Statement of Assurance 2022-23**

23/41.1 Deputy Chief Fire Officer (DCFO), Derek James, presented the report.

23/41.2 Cllr Clare Weight enquired about the nature of the Key Performance Indicator for the Modern Slavery Statement relating to: 'percentage of assessed suppliers, for competitive tenders above £100k, that have a Modern Slavery Statement, if required'. DCFO James stated he would seek clarification for the Member.

**23/41.3 RESOLVED: That the Service Statement of Assurance 2022-23 and the Modern Slavery statement be approved.**

## **23/42 HMICFRS – verbal update**

23/42.1 DCFO James, gave a verbal update on His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) inspection timetable.

23/42.2 The inspections were in relation to: Misconduct – thematic inspection in December 2023; Revisit – three diagnostics (three areas of the People Pillar – Promoting Values and Cultures, Ensuring Fairness and Promoting Diversity and managing Performance and Developing Leaders) possibly in Spring 2024, and Round Three Full Inspection in November 2024.

23/42.3 The Committee acknowledged the challenges in undertaking these additional inspections, which followed a full inspection of the Service in February 2023, and also responding to the additional Spotlight report. Following comments by the Chair, discussion took place on the national support that was provided to fire and rescue services that were found to require improvement. Cllr Paul Hilliard suggested that the good work that the Service did undertake, for example its community work and attendance at open day events, should be promoted in the Annual Report.

**23/42.4 RESOLVED: That the verbal update on the HMICFRS inspection timetable be noted.**

## **23/43 Service highlights – public video**

23/43.1 CFO Ansell introduced the in-house video which was available on the Service's YouTube channel: <https://youtu.be/Xoa2zzwhr2I>. The video continues to be made available to local councils and others.

**23/43.2 RESOLVED: Members noted the Service highlights – public video.**

## **23/44 Date of next meeting**

23/44.1 The Chair confirmed that the next meeting of the Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Authority would take place on 12 December 2023 at 10.00am.

*Initials* \_\_\_\_\_

**Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Authority meeting – 28 September 2023****23/45 Public Question**

23/45.1 The following question had been received from Mr M Barton regarding the Bibby Stockholm barge.

23/45.2 Has the Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service carried out an assessment of the safety of the Bibby Stockholm barge and, if so, what was the outcome of that assessment?

Do members of the Fire and Rescue Authority agree with the assessment of the Fire Brigades Union that the Bibby Stockholm is a 'death trap' and that it poses a fire risk to staff and residents of the barge as well as to employees of the Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service who would be called upon to deal with any incident.

23/45.3 The following reply was read by Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO) - Director of Community Safety, Andy Cole at the meeting:

Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service continues to liaise with partner agencies, the Bibby Stockholm's operator and the Home Office through the Multi Agency Forum and relevant subgroups.

Responsibility for planning, implementing and managing the safety of barge residents rests with the Responsible Person, as defined in fire safety legislation, in conjunction with the master of the vessel.

In respect of areas within the scope of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order, Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service undertook an audit of the vessel on 10 August 2023 and at that time there were a number of areas requiring improvement. These were communicated in a fire safety matters letter. A follow up visit was undertaken on 21 September 2023 and the areas noted had all been addressed. A letter outlining the expectations for the ongoing management of the fire safety arrangements was issued on 26 September 2023. We continue to provide advice and comment in relation to fire safety arrangements to both Home Office and the operators of the vessel during our familiarisation and pre-occupation visits and continue to liaise through the Multi Agency Framework (MAF) process.

The fire risk assessment is the appropriate mechanism for determining the planning, organisation, management, and control of the fire safety measures, and responsibility rests with CTM and Landry & Kling as the vessel operator - under their contract with the Home Office - to produce and keep this document under review.

We do not conduct fire risk assessments or provide an approval process prior to occupation of a premises but will exercise our enforcement powers (either formal or informal) to address any significant areas of non-compliance where necessary.

Meeting ended at 12.20hrs

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_