



**DORSET & WILTSHIRE  
FIRE AND RESCUE  
AUTHORITY**

**Draft Minutes of the Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Authority meeting at 10:00 hours on 12 December 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 Bob Jones (Vice Chair)	Cllr Cameron Adams
Cllr Pete Barrow	Cllr Richard Biggs	Cllr Matthew Courtliff
Cllr Brian Dalton	Cllr Richard Herrett	Cllr Paul Hilliard
Cllr Lisa Northover	Cllr Kelvin Nash	Cllr Paul Oatway
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  
 Assistant Chief Officer (ACO) - Director of Service Support, Jill McCrae  
 Head of Corporate Support, Vikki Shearing  
 Corporate Communications & Engagement Manager, Emily Cheeseman  
 Democratic Services Officer, David Shaw

**23/45 Welcome**

23/45.1 The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting.

**23/46 Apologies**

23/46.1 Apologies were received from Cllr Abdul Amin, Cllr Daniel Cave and Cllr Byron Quayle.

**23/47 Code of Conduct and Declaration of Interests**

23/47.1 The Chair asked the meeting for any disclosures of pecuniary interests under the Localism Act. No disclosures were made.

**23/48 Review minutes of the Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Authority meeting on 28 September 2023 and any matters arising**

23/48.1 The Chair asked Members to review and approve the minutes from the last meeting.

23/48.2 The Chief Fire Officer (CFO), Ben Ansell reported that minute 23/40.3, regarding targets in respect of road traffic collisions, would be covered in the summary of the past six months' performance against the Authority's strategic priorities report, and that in respect of minute 23/42.2, His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) Round Three Full Inspection was now expected in Spring 2024 and that the Misconduct – thematic inspection had commenced.

**23/48.3 RESOLVED: That the minutes of the 28 September 2023 meeting be confirmed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.**

**23/49 Receive the Finance & Audit Committee minutes from 13 September 2023 and a verbal update from the 6 December 2023 meeting.**

23/49.1 Cllr Kevin Small presented the minutes of the meeting of 13 September 2023 and gave a verbal update on the 6 December 2023 meeting. Cllr Small highlighted key outcomes from the December meeting.

**23/49.2 RESOLVED: Members received the minutes of the Finance & Audit Committee held on 13 September 2023 and the verbal update of the of 6 December 2023 meeting.**

**23/50 Public questions**

23/50.1 No questions were received from members of the public.

**23/51 Independent Review report and management response**

23/51.1 CFO Ansell, Assistant Chief Officer (ACO) - Director of People Services, Jenny Long, and Head of Corporate Support, Vikki Shearing presented the report.

- 23/51.2 In reply to a question from Cllr Bob Jones, it was agreed that the names and contact details of the Members nominated to meet with senior officers and the independent committee member on the Culture Development Committee, as set out in paragraph 7.4 of the covering report, be published on the Authority's website.
- 23/51.3 In reply to a question from Cllr Pete Barrow, if the proposals in the report would encourage staff to report inappropriate behaviour, ACO Long explained the initiatives that intended to help build trust and confidence in staff reporting. These included speak up guardians, an independent confidential helpline, increased transparency in cases and outcomes and a staff portal to improve the way staff were able to raise concerns and their understanding of what to expect from each procedure.
- 23/51.4 Cllr Richard Biggs enquired about the role of the Finance and Audit Committee in undertaking scrutiny and challenge of the action plan. CFO Ansell explained that the Finance and Audit Committee provided an oversight of current Service performance in relation to all aspects of Priority 5: Supporting and developing our people. ACO Long added that progress would be reported on the independent review through a detailed action plan and the role of the Finance and Audit Committee was to monitor, provide assurance and give greater transparency, for example reporting on the number of complaints received and providing additional detail and analysis on these from the culture dashboard.
- 23/51.5 In reply to a question from Cllr Pip Ridout regarding the status of the panel to improve oversight arrangements, as referred to in action 29 of the Culture Action Plan in Appendix A, ACO Long explained this was a separate panel to provide the officers with greater oversight arrangements within the Human Resources team and to balance risks. The Chair added that the Culture Development Committee referred to in paragraph 7.4 of the covering report had the Member Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion lead, Cllr Lisa Northover, and also an independent person from outside of the organisation, the appointment of which was in the process of being agreed.
- 23/51.6 Cllr Paul Hilliard referred to paragraph 6.1 of the covering report, staff engagement. It was asked how staff engagement could be embedded, checked and monitored. ACO Long stated that the 'how's my team doing' dashboard was monitored by station managers. Exit interviews were now mandatory and that there was a one-to-one review process held at least once per annum. Vikki Shearing provided details on the question-and-answer sessions that took place and also the Bitesize Leader sessions, which included exploring how the plan could be embedded.
- 23/51.7 The Chair commented that culture was important at a national level and the experiences of the Authority were sought by other fire and rescue services. This encouraged transparency and the exchange of national best practise to be learned from.

23/51.8

**RESOLVED:**

- 1. That the Independent Review report and management response, the initiatives set out in this paper including those in Appendix A (Culture Action Plan) be welcomed and endorsed.**
- 2. That the proposed Member oversight arrangements for delivery of the Culture Action Plan be approved.**

**23/52**

**Treasury Management Mid-Year Report 2023-24**

23/52.1

The Head of Financial Services and Treasurer, Ian Cotter presented the report.

23/52.2

Ian Cotter updated the meeting that treasury management activity was now reported quarterly to the Finance and Audit Committee. He reported that outstanding borrowing stood at just over £16.2m at the end of September 2023 and it was likely that some new short-term borrowing would be required before the end of the financial year to support cashflow. He also reported that Appendix B of the report, detailed current investments which totalled £6.9m.

23/52.3

**RESOLVED: That the Treasury Management position as at 30 September 2023 be noted.**

**23/53**

**Service performance 6 monthly review 2023-24**

23/53.1

Deputy Chief Fire Officer (DCFO), Derek James, provided a summary of the past six months' performance against the Authority's strategic priorities set out in the Community Safety Plan. A link to the presentation slides was provided within the covering report. It was explained that the review provided a quarter 1 and quarter 2 annual comparison and considered seasonal trends.

23/53.2

The detailed presentation covered the topic areas comprehensively. These included that the Service had completed 5,083 safe and well visits this year to date with a societal saving of £2mn; that the number of children receiving safety education was 14,953; that 256 safeguarding referrals had been raised with the majority involving adults with care and support needs, along with mental health concerns; that the number of deliberate fires was showing a 10% reduction on the five year average, and was on track; that the number of road traffic collisions attended was 642 showing a 16% increase on the five year average and that a more performance focused target was being developed as part of the review of the Community Safety Plan; that the number of unwanted automatic fire alarms attended was slightly above target at 2,786 in quarters one and two; that the saving from non-attendance at non-domestic automatic fire alarms provided a non-cashable saving for wholetime at £141,418 and in cost avoidance for on-call at £78,517; the number of incidents attended was 7,451, with the rise largely due to supporting partners

with non-fire related incidents; the challenges faced with on-call recruitment and retention and the Service's response, with the average length of service for on-call staff reducing from 9.21 years in quarter 1 to 6.52 years in quarter 2; that there were only six Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) incidents which was low in comparison to the number on incidents attended, and further details of discipline, grievance and bullying and harassment investigations and their outcomes.

- 23/53.3 The Chair referred to the Cultural Dashboard and asked that it be accessible to Members to allow questions to be raised at the Local Performance and Scrutiny Committees.
- 23/53.4 In reply to a question from Cllr Biggs, the officers explained the challenges of operating an on-call service and the alternative models available, including increasing wholetime. On-call was a challenge at a national level and the Service's work on prevention was of help by reducing the number of incidents. It was noted that 46 out of the Service's 50 stations had an on-call element and during the reporting period there had been three more on-call joiners than leavers.
- 23/53.5 In reply to a question from Cllr Barrow, DCFO James stated that there was mutual learning regarding on-call recruitment from organisations such as HM Coastguard and the Royal National Lifeboat Institution and that the inability to have a robust and financially sustainable on-call duty system to meet the needs of the Service was registered as a strategic risk.
- 23/53.6 In answer to a question from the Cllr Kelvin Nash, the officers replied that suggestions on road safety at a local level could be fed into our two road safety partnerships, which considered education, enforcement and engineering solutions. The performance targets on attendance by the Service were being considered as part of the review of the Community Safety Plan, and consideration of local points of road safety concern could be raised at the Local Performance and Scrutiny Committees.
- 23/53.7 In reply to a question from Cllr Cameron Adams, DCFO James stated that it was difficult to provide national benchmarking figures on, for example deliberate fires and road safety, as they were measured in different ways by services, but this could be considered. The Chair commented that the Home Office was also considering benchmarking.
- 23/53.8 The officers answered Cllr Northover's questions on whether road traffic congestion, inconsiderate vehicle parking and the introduction of 20 miles per hour speed limits affected emergency response performance.
- 23/53.9 The Chair concluded that on-call provision could be the subject of a Members' Seminar and referred to the societal savings made by the Service and the savings also made for partner agencies through its support.

- 23/53.10**      **RESOLVED: That the performance of the Service over the past six months be noted.**
- 23/54**            **Verbal update from Local Performance & Scrutiny Committees**
- 23/54.1        The Committee Chairs of the Local Performance Scrutiny Committees (LPSs) provided an update on the Committees' work. In the absence of its Chair, Cllr Abdul Amin, Cllr Small reported on the work of the Swindon LPS, which had met informally due to it being inquorate.
- 23/54.2**        **RESOLVED: That the update from the Committee Chairs be noted.**
- 23/55**            **Service highlights – public video**
- 23/55.1        CFO Ansell introduced the in-house video which was available on the Service's YouTube channel:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Y9oocgxH2o>. The video continues to be made available to local councils and others.
- 23/55.2        **RESOLVED: Members noted the Service highlights – public video.**
- 23/56**            **Date of next meeting**
- 23/56.1        The Chair confirmed that the next meeting of the Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Authority would take place on 8 February 2024 at 10.00am.
- 23/57**            **To consider passing the following resolution:**
- 23/57.1        In accordance with Section 100A (2, 3 & 4) 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 Paragraph 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
- 23/57.2**        **RESOLVED: To close the meeting to the press and public.**
- PART 2**
- 23/58**            **Strategic Projects - procurement and funding**
- 23/58.1        The Committee considered an exempt report that detailed the project costs and progress on the provision of future training facilities, and also the replacement of the mobilising system, as detailed in the Not for Publication report.

**23/58.2 RESOLVED:**

- 1. That the increased capital spend for the two strategic projects – training centre investment and mobilising system, be approved.**
- 2. That delegation to the Chief Fire Officer and Treasurer, in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair, to award contracts for works, for the training centre project, following the procurement process, subject to the overall project cost not exceeding the upper cost range identified in paragraph 2.14, be approved.**
- 3. That delegation to the Chief Fire Officer and Treasurer, in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair, to award a contract for the new mobilising system, following the procurement process, subject to the overall cost not exceeding the upper cost range identified in paragraph 3.4, be approved.**

Meeting ended at 12.35 hrs

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