



Draft Minutes of the Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Authority meeting at 10:00 hours on 1 October 2024 held at the Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters, Salisbury.

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

Members present:

Cllr Paul Oatway (Chair)
Cllr Olivia Brown
Cllr Kelvin Nash
Cllr Pip Ridout
Cllr Duncan Sowry-House

Cllr Clare Weight (Vice Chair)
Cllr Brian Dalton
Cllr Lisa Northover
Cllr Paul Sample

Cllr Richard Biggs
Cllr Paul Hilliard
Cllr Byron Quayle
Cllr Kevin Small

Officer attendance:

Chief Fire Officer (CFO), Ben Ansell
Clerk & Monitoring Officer, Jonathan Mair
Deputy Assistant Chief Officer (DACO) 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
Corporate Communications & Engagement Manager, Emily Cheeseman
Democratic Services Officer, David Shaw

24/37 Welcome

24/37.1 The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting including new Authority Member Cllr Olivia Brown who had replaced Cllr Richard Herrett representing Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council.

24/38 Apologies

24/38.1 Apologies were received from Cllr Cameron Adams, Cllr Laura Beddow, Cllr Daniel Cave and Cllr Matthew Courtliff.

24/39 Code of Conduct and Declarations of Interests

24/39.1 The Chair asked the meeting for any disclosures of pecuniary interests under the Localism Act. No disclosures were made.

24/40 Review minutes of the Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Authority meeting on 12 June 2024 and any matters arising

24/40.1 The Chair asked Members to review and approve the minutes from the last meeting.

24/40.2 Chief Fire Officer (CFO) Ben Ansell reported on minute 24.26. The Fire and Rescue Services Minimum Service Levels regulations were now in force for the fire and rescue service in England. However, following the general election, the new Minister of State (Minister for Crime, Policing and Fire) in the Home Office had stated that the regulations would be repealed by the new government.

24/40.3 CFO Ansell reported that in respect of Minute 24.27, following its approval at the 12 June 2024 meeting, the Community Safety Plan 2024-28 had now been published on the Authority's website.

24/40.4 RESOLVED: That the minutes of the 12 June 2024 meeting be confirmed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

24/41 Receive minutes from the Finance & Audit Committee meeting of the 7 March 2024, the meeting of the 24 July 2024 and verbal update from the Finance & Audit Committee 11 September 2024 meeting.

24/41.1 Cllr Kevin Small (Finance & Audit Committee Chair) presented the minutes of the meetings of the 7 March 2024 and 24 July 2024. An update was also provided on the meeting of the Committee held on 11 September 2024.

24/41.2 RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Finance & Audit Committee meetings of 7 March 2024 and the meeting of 24 July 2024 be received and the verbal update for the 11 September 2024 meeting be noted.

24/42 Public questions

24/42.1 The meeting noted a public question read out by the Chair on behalf of Cllr Paul Kimber, Dorset Council and also a public question submitted and read out by the Chair on behalf of Firefighter Liam Jackson, the Branch Secretary, Poole - Fire Brigades Union, regarding the Resourcing and Savings

programme. Details of the questions provided and the Chair's replies are contained in the appendix attached to the minutes (minute 24/49 post refers).

24/43 Treasury Management Annual report 2023-24

- 24/43.1 Deputy Assistant Chief Officer (DACO) Financial Services & Treasurer, Ryan Maslen presented the report which sets out the details of treasury management performance for 2023-24 and the position at the end of the financial year.
- 24/43.2 In reply to Members' questions, DACO Maslen explained that funding maintained for immediate liquidity purposes were invested in money market funds and banks overnight.
- 24/43.3 Cllr Richard Biggs observed that the rate of inflation for purchasing new fire appliances and for building construction costs may be higher than borrowing costs and therefore it might be advantageous to undertake new borrowing for these items in the short term. DACO Maslen replied that the rate of inflation was a concern in relation to those specific projects, but officers regularly consulted with the Authority's Treasury Management advisors, and it was anticipated that interest rates would fall over the next 12-18 months and now was therefore not a beneficial time to borrow.
- 24/43.4 DACO Maslen replied to a question from Cllr Brian Dalton on whether interest rates from the Public Works Loan Board (PWLb) fluctuated. It was explained that there was a range of products offered twice a day by the PWLB. Rates would fluctuate between days but at the point borrowing was undertaken the rate would then be fixed.
- 24/43.5 CFO Ansell provided a summary of meetings held with local Members of Parliament and constituent councils' leaders to discuss the Authority's funding situation. The meetings had focused on three key areas: government grant, precept flexibility to generate additional council tax income and capital funding.
- 24/43.6 RESOLVED: That the Treasury Management Annual Report 2023-24 be noted.**

24/44 Annual report 2023-24 and Annual Workforce Equality Report 2023-24

- 24/44.1 CFO Ansell introduced the report and highlighted to Members the significant headlines within Appendix A – Annual Report 2023-24. CFO Ansell updated the meeting that since publication of the Annual Report, two deaths had been confirmed by His Majesty's Coroner, which were caused by fire, with four other cases awaiting consideration by the coroner.
- 24/44.2 In respect of the Annual Report, Cllr Duncan Sowry-House enquired how the quality of the relationship with the Urban Heath Partnership was monitored and

how their funding for land management was provided. CFO Ansell replied that there were large areas of heathland within the Authority area and the funding of local authorities and the Urban Heath Partnership was challenging. Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO) - Director of Community Safety, Andy Cole added that significant partnerships were monitored by officers including any organisational learning from community engagement through the Culture Development Committee.

- 24/44.3 Cllr Biggs enquired about the cost to the Service of providing waterborne rescue, which was a discretionary service. The officers confirmed that flood rescue was not a statutory duty for the Authority, although the Pitt review of the summer 2007 floods had recommended that it should be. The Service held assets, for example at Poole, Stratton and Weymouth, to assist in wide area flood search coordination in conjunction with other agencies and also provided advice within its prevention function.
- 24/44.4 Assistant Chief Officer (ACO) - Director of People Services, Jenny Long, introduced the Annual Workforce Equality Report 2023-24 (Appendix B of report 22/44 refers). A presentation was provided to highlight key areas to the meeting.
- 24/44.5 In reply to a question from Cllr Clare Weight, ACO Long explained that the firefighter development programme had been streamlined, including a reduction in the number of assessment questions and a consistency in its application.
- 24/44.6 ACO Long replied to Cllr Lisa Northover's question that the progress on the provision of single sex toilets and changing facilities was not included in the report. It was stated that improvements on these were included within the Culture Action Plan and CFO Ansell added detail on the steps that had been taken towards improvement.
- 24/44.7 Cllr Paul Sample commented on the ethnic diversity figures and the number of females employed by the Service and asked how these compared with other authorities and whether targets should be set to achieve an increase. ACO Long replied that targets were not set and there was a need to improve on under-represented groups whilst employing on merit the best people for the role. CFO Ansell added that the imagery used in the Authority's publicity, including the Annual Report, was helpful in encouraging under-represented groups to join the Service. Cllr Sowry-House supported the use of good graphics in recruitment and assisting towards cultural change. In reply to a question from Cllr Pip Ridout, ACO Long stated that figures on ethnicity and sexual orientation were compared to figures both locally and nationally.
- 24/44.8 Cllr Small enquired about the difference between the number of job applicants interviewed (6%) and those appointed (2.3%) and also observed that 28.8% of the workforce was between 46 and 55 years of age. ACO Long agreed that it would be desirable to contact those unsuccessful in job interviews to provide a positive impression of the Service. ACO Long added those approaching

retirement age, including on-call and corporate staff were considered by service planning to ensure service resilience.

24/44.9 ACO Long provided reasons to Cllr Weight as to why the women's local network 'Our Time' had been brought in-house. Female operational staff were under-represented and were paired with a colleague from within the organisation to aid their development; this had been beneficial towards six promotions. There were also financial savings from this approach.

24/44.10 RESOLVED: Members approved the Annual Report as set out in Appendix A and noted the Annual Workforce Equality Report 2023-24 as set out in Appendix B.

24/45 Statement of Assurance 2023-24 and Modern Slavery Statement 2024

24/45.1 Assistant Chief Officer (ACO) - Director of Service Support, Jill McCrae, presented the report. There were no questions arising.

24/45.2 RESOLVED: That the Statement of Assurance 2023-24 and the Modern Slavery Statement 2024 be approved.

24/46 HMICFRS thematic review – Standards of behaviour, the handling of misconduct in fire and rescue service

24/46.1 ACO McCrae, presented the report. The Service's round three full inspection would be reported to December 2024's Authority meeting.

24/46.2 CFO Ansell and ACO Long replied to a number of questions from Cllr Small.

24/46.3 It was explained that for report recommendation 7.2, the Authority's misconduct process for grey and green book staff was consistent, but this was not the case at all fire and rescue services.

24/46.4 That for report recommendation 6, the service position was amber on a programme of training being in place for all supervisors and managers on how to manage staff performance and welfare and how to raise an issue, as the leader development training was prepared but remained to be delivered as Human Resources were revisiting a number of the training modules.

24/46.5 CFO Ansell and ACO Long continued that for report recommendation 15.1, putting in place a process for sharing learning from misconduct cases that had been resolved while preserving the confidentiality of all parties involved, the national system had not yet been established.

24/46.6 In reply to Cllr Paul Hilliard's question, CFO Ansell and ACO Long explained that progress on the report's recommendations would be included in the six-monthly review by the Finance & Audit Committee.

- 24/46.7 CFO Ansell replied to Cllr Weight's questions regarding report recommendation 3, that chief fire officers should make sure their workforce plans allow staff to be moved from a wholetime watch to a different watch or station, within their contractual requirements, proactively and reactively as required.
- 24/46.8 In reply to the Chair's question regarding report recommendation 11, that staff who carry out investigations receive adequate training to carry out the task, ACO Long explained that training would be provided by external trainers and would extend to undertaking effective investigations and being part of a hearing panel.
- 24/46.9 RESOLVED: That the HMICFRS thematic review – Standards of behaviour, the handling of misconduct in fire and rescue service be noted.**
- 24/47 Service highlights – public video**
- 24/47.1 CFO Ansell introduced the in-house video which was available on the Service's YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wHP0Q6ToS2s>. The video continues to be made available to local councils and others.
- 24/47.2 RESOLVED: Members noted the Service highlights – public video.**
- 24/48 Date of next meeting**
- 24/48.1 The Chair confirmed that the next meeting of the Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Authority would take place on 10 December 2024 at 10.00am.

Meeting ended at 12.25 hrs

Signed: _____

Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Authority meeting – 1 October 2024

24/49 Public Questions

Cllr Paul Kimber, Dorset Council

- 24/49.1 “Would the Chair of the Wilts and Dorset Fires Authority agree that the removal of a Fire Tender from Portland Fire Station will put lives at risk? The Fire Service on Portland has given our local Portland community great service over the years backing up the Portland Harbour Authority when there have been fires and emergencies into the Port and on ships, now with several cruise ships coming into the port this does need support.

Additionally, local wildfires are becoming a more frequent hazard due to climate change, local tenders need to attend with great speed”

Statement from Chair of the Fire and Rescue Authority – 1 October 2024 - Response to public question from Cllr Paul Kimber

The Fire and Rescue Authority are assured by the approach taken by the Chief Fire Officer to conduct a comprehensive fire cover review in order to identify proposals to address the financial position of the Authority.

Acting under his delegated authority, the Chief Fire Officer has made evidence-based decisions which the Authority is assured will allocate resources effectively, aligned to the evolving risk profile across the Service area and community need.

No decision has been made about the removal of the second fire engine at Portland fire station. The proposal will be reviewed early in 2025.

Firefighter Liam Jackson, Branch Secretary, Poole - Fire Brigades Union

- 24/49.2 Question REF: Poole09.24.01

“This fire authority voted on and approved the current Community Safety Plan (CSP) for Dorset and Wiltshire for 2024-2028. Councillors will be aware of its contents, specifically reference to upgrading Amesbury fire station to having Wholetime firefighters present during the daytime.

Councillors will be aware that Amesbury has already been upgraded, being done so in January 2024, before this CSP was approved. It is right the public was informed of this upgrade, albeit already completed, yet the CSP fails to inform the public of fire engines being cut and now removed already, at Sturminster Newton, Wareham, Corsham and Marlborough. The service continues to pursue further cuts with Poole’s 2nd full time fire engine and

downgrading Christchurch to day time only guaranteed availability. Staggeringly, more cuts will potentially be made at Wimborne, Portland and Sherborne.

Why was it deemed suitable that the public should be informed and consulted on, with an already existing upgrade to Amesbury, yet it was felt irrelevant to seek the publics and stakeholders' opinions on removal of fire engines from the multiple aforementioned stations? So do councillors agree that there should now be a new CSP drafted, voted on, consulted and written, allowing the public and stakeholders, to voice their opinions on changes that are so potentially damaging to Service resilience and public and firefighter safety?"

Statement from Chair of the Fire and Rescue Authority – 1 October 2024 - Response to public question from Firefighter Liam Jackson, Branch Secretary, Poole - Fire Brigades Union

The Community Safety Plan 2021-2024 was approved by the Fire Authority in June 2021, on page 29 it states that **"we plan to"**:

- Seek to strengthen the emergency response arrangements in Amesbury area by repositioning existing operational resources to approve availability and meet increasing community risk

The changes to Amesbury came into place in February 2024.

The most recent version of the Community Safety Plan, covering the period 2024-2028 was approved by the Fire Authority in June 2024. On page 27 of this plan it states **'what we are doing'**

- introducing a day duty crewing system at Amesbury Fire station on seven days a week, with an on-call firefighting team available throughout the nighttime hours, improving fire engine availability and meeting an increasing community risk

This clearly documents the position that these changes were planned in the 21/24 plan and confirmed to be happening in the 24/28 plan.

Additionally in relation to the work associated with the wider Resourcing and Savings Programme (RSP), in the 24/28 Community Safety Plan it is stated under the **'What we plan to do'** section on page 28:

- review the efficiency and productivity of our fire stations, including the number and type of response vehicles needed, in relation to the risks, demand, and future financial sustainability
- review the shift systems our firefighters are working considering demand, risk, and future financial sustainability whilst maximising productivity

On this basis and taking into account the 12 week public consultation process that took place in early 2024, I do not agree there is a requirement for the latest version of the community safety plan to be updated or for any further consultation to take place.

Secondly in relation to the requirement for public consultation, Members are responsible for setting the strategic policy and budget framework within which the Chief Fire Officer (CFO) is able to exercise operational independence, enabled by the scheme of delegation.

The current changes within the RSP programme – including duty system changes and second away removal are matters that fall within the CFO's delegated powers to take all operational decisions in relation to the Service.