



DORSET & WILTSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

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

Members present:

Cllr Paul Oatway (Chair)	Cllr Clare Weight (Vice Chair)	Cllr Cameron Adams
Cllr Abdul Amin	Cllr Laura Beddow	Cllr Richard Biggs
Cllr Olivia Brown	Cllr Matthew Courtliff*	Cllr Brian Dalton
Cllr Paul Hilliard	Cllr Kelvin Nash	Cllr Lisa Northover
Cllr Byron Quayle	Cllr Paul Sample	Cllr Kevin Small
Cllr Duncan Sowry-House		

* Cllr Matthew Courtliff was not present in the meeting for consideration of items up to 24/58 and was present for all subsequent items.

Officer attendance:

Chief Fire Officer (CFO), Ben Ansell
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
Temporary Assistant Chief Fire Officer (T/ACFO) - Community Safety, Marc House
Assistant Chief Officer (ACO) - Director of People Services, Jenny Long
Assistant Chief Officer (ACO) - Director of Service Support, Jill McCrae
Deputy Assistant Chief Officer (DACO), Corporate Support and Clerk (designate), Vikki Shearing
Head of Corporate Communications & Engagement, Emily Cheeseman
Democratic Services Officer, David Shaw

24/50 Welcome

24/50.1 The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting.

24/51 Apologies

24/51.1 Apologies were received from Cllr Daniel Cave and Cllr Pip Ridout.

24/52 Code of Conduct and Declaration of Interests

24/52.1 The Chair asked the meeting for any disclosures of pecuniary interests under the Localism Act. No disclosures were made.

24/53 Review minutes of the Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Authority meeting on 1 October 2024 and any matters arising

24/53.1 The Chair asked Members to review and approve the minutes from the last meeting.

24/53.2 RESOLVED: That the minutes of the 1 October 2024 meeting be confirmed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

24/54 Receive minutes of the Finance & Audit Committee meeting of 11 September 2024 and a verbal update from the Finance & Audit Committee 4 December 2024 meeting.

24/54.1 Cllr Kevin Small, Chair of the Finance & Audit Committee, presented the minutes of the meeting of 11 September 2024. An update on the meeting of the Committee held on 4 December 2024 was also provided.

24/54.2 RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Finance & Audit Committee meeting of 11 September 2024 be received and the verbal update for the 4 December 2024 meeting be noted.

24/55 Public questions

24/55.1 No questions were received from members of the public.

24/56 Appointments and Disputes Committee – verbal update

24/56.1 The Chair reported that at the meeting of the Appointments and Disputes Committee held on 6 November 2024, Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO) - Director of Community Safety, Andy Cole had been appointed as Chief Fire Officer (CFO) to succeed CFO Ben Ansell, who was to retire on 31 December 2024. The Committee congratulated ACFO Cole on his appointment.

24/57 Treasury Management Mid-Year Report 2024-25

24/57.1 Deputy Assistant Chief Officer (DACO) Financial Services & Treasurer, Ryan Maslen presented the report.

24/57.2 In reply to a question from Cllr Richard Biggs, DACO Maslen explained the background to the £20m of pension related funding received from central government in July 2024. The funding included £9.5m of remedy grant for payments due to members linked to Matthews and McCloud resolution. It is expected that any non-usage of these funds would need to be repaid in time, but the interest from investment returns on the funding in the meantime would remain with the Authority. To date, no claims had been received regarding pension remedy and therefore the pension related funding was sufficient at the present time. If claims were received in excess of the funding received to date this could lead to further government funding in the future.

24/57.3 The Chair referred to paragraph 3.4 of the report that the element of the assumed new borrowing of £9.8m in respect of planned capital expenditure had not been required in 2024-25. DACO Maslen confirmed that this was the case and added that there would be clarity on the new borrowing requirement when the Service commenced the procurement process for the new training centre provision at Devizes and Weymouth in early 2025.

24/57.4 RESOLVED: That the Treasury Management position as of 30 September 2024 be noted.

24/58 Enabling remote attendance and proxy voting at local authority meetings: Government consultation

24/58.1 The Monitoring Officer, Jonathan Mair, introduced the report on government consultation which sought views and set out the potential implications for remote attendance and proxy voting at local authority meetings, which included Combined Fire Authorities. A suggested response from the Authority was provided at Appendix A.

24/58.2 Members debated the positives and negatives of the proposals in the consultation. A number of Members commented that remote attendance should be used in exceptional circumstances and should not become normal practice.

24/58.3 Points made in support of the proposals were the flexibility provided by remote attendance, in that increased attendance might be encouraged, including attending meetings whilst on holiday, through illness, medical conditions, those with childcare responsibilities or in a role as a carer, or during a pandemic. It also assisted towards zero carbon emissions as travel would be reduced.

24/58.4 Points made against the proposals were that there was value in meeting in-person as Members could become familiar with each another as individuals,

which enhanced working relationships; that Member behaviour could deteriorate unless remote attendance meetings were properly chaired and the Code of Ethics adhered to and that there was enhanced public scrutiny if meetings were held in person.

24/58.5 Members supported the report's proposal that the introduction of proxy voting would not be helpful.

24/58.6 In reply to Members' questions, Jonathan Mair clarified that a paper would be brought back to the Authority to consider how the Authority would apply any change. The Authority could also choose to not adopt the proposal if it became legislation. If it did choose to adopt the legislation, Standing Orders would have to be updated. CFO Ansell observed that meeting room audio/visual facilities might also have to be enhanced to facilitate hybrid meetings, which would have a cost implication.

24/58.7 At the conclusion of debate, and following a vote, Members supported the report's recommendation.

24/58.8 RESOLVED: That the response as detailed in Appendix A to the report be agreed.

24/59 Service performance six monthly review 2024-25

24/59.1 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.

24/59.2 The detailed presentation covered the topic areas comprehensively. These included that the number of children receiving safety education was 17,609; the Service had undertaken 3,537 safe and well visits this year to date, which was an increase from this time last year; 3,384 referrals were received from partner organisations; 323 safeguarding referrals had been raised so far this year; that the number of deliberate fires had decreased and showed an eight percent reduction on the five year average; that the number of road traffic collisions attended was 346; that the number of unwanted fire alarms had decreased from the previous year to 2,217 in quarter 2 due the new policy on attending automatic false alarms; that the saving from non-attendance at non-domestic automatic fire alarms provided a non-cashable saving for on-call at £72,366 and in cost avoidance for wholetime watches at 217 hours; there had been significant support to partners with special services; the challenges faced with on-call recruitment and the Service's response, and that there were only nine Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR) incidents, which was low in comparison to the number on incidents attended.

- 24/59.3 In reply to questions from Cllr Clare Weight, DCFO James explained that the detailed review of current and future demand and risk was undertaken on a station-by-station basis and by region to identify where problems, for example accidental dwelling fires, were concentrated so that improvements could take place. DCFO James also replied that data to give an oversight of the Service's activities was difficult to compare between fire and rescue services when comparing indicators to receive government funding, but the data was used to improve internal efficiency.
- 24/59.4 In answer to a question from Cllr Abdul Amin, DCFO James and Assistant Chief Officer (ACO) - Director of People Services, Jenny Long, clarified that the information provided on workforce diversity related to firefighter applications only and not those that were successful in their application. The Annual Equality report, which was submitted to the Finance & Audit Committee, contained the five-year trend analysis. The data displayed on the Culture Dashboard would help monitor these trends. Cllr Paul Sample suggested that the workforce diversity targets should have trends and comparative data to make their context easier to understand. The officers replied that improved data was being established and was tracked on the Cultural Data Dashboard.
- 24/59.5 The officers replied to a further question from Cllr Amin on the comparative cost of training a wholetime firefighter and an on-call firefighter and, if the cost were comparable, whether it provided better value to employ wholetime firefighters who could provide greater availability. ACFO Cole explained that the cost was slightly higher to train wholetime firefighters as they had enhanced skill sets, for example water training. DCFO James continued that the Strategic Fire Cover Review was studying value for money and if the Service needs to be delivered in different ways.
- 24/59.6 Cllr Lisa Northover commented that the Service website could be improved to be clearer on where on-call firefighters were required in the Service area before applications were submitted.
- 24/59.7 The officers replied to Cllr Byron Quayle's enquiry as to whether partner agencies could be recharged where the Service provided assistance, which was not within its statutory requirement, for example providing assistance to those collapsed behind closed doors in support of the Police and the Ambulance Service. Cllr Quayle suggested that the Government might take this into consideration when considering funding.
- 24/59.8 Cllr Richard Biggs observed that from the presentation, vehicle safety had improved and there was a reduction in deliberate fires. The officers also confirmed that the turnaround for the fitting out of new fire appliances had improved. Cllr Biggs suggested that there should be mandatory in-person training on Equality Diversity & Inclusion as well as e-learning.
- 24/59.9 Cllr Duncan Sowry-House commented that the data on absence across staff groups would be enhanced if it were matched against other authorities and

displayed against the national average. DCFO James confirmed that the data was benchmarked and that the learning of other organisations was considered.

24/59.10 Cllr Weight drew attention to non-fire related incidents and the significant increase in suicide/attempted suicide from 2022-23 onwards.

24/59.11 RESOLVED: That the performance of the Service over the past six months be noted.

24/60 Verbal update from Local Performance & Scrutiny Committees

24/60.1 The Committee Chairs of the Local Performance Scrutiny Committees (LPSs) provided an update on the Committees' work. It was noted that the Dorset LPS scheduled for 21 November 2024 had been postponed due to inclement weather.

24/60.2 RESOLVED: That the update from the Committee Chairs be noted.

24/61 Grenfell Tower Inquiry – phase 2 report

24/61.1 Temporary Assistant Chief Fire Officer (T/ACFO) - Community Safety, Marc House introduced the report, which summarised the principal responsibilities and issues for the Service arising from the Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 1 and Phase 2 reports and associated building safety legislation.

24/61.2 CFO Ansell informed Members that a letter had recently been received from the Minister of State (Minister for Policing, Fire and Crime Prevention), The Rt Hon Dame Diana Johnson DBE MP, congratulating the Service on successfully implementing the recommendations within Phase 1 of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry. CFO Ansell added that the Phase 2 report was wider reaching, but also included the role of fire and rescue services.

24/61.3 In reply to a question from Cllr Weight, T/ACFO House provided detail on the proposal to make fire engineering a profession recognised and protected by law, which would provide competency for fire regulators. It was added that the areas of fire protection, fire safety, safe and well and response all had a role in supporting the safety of buildings.

24/61.4 Cllr Matthew Courtliff asked if the Service was resourced to comment on planning applications at the start of the planning process, including applications for houses in multiple occupation. T/ACFO House stated that the Service was a statutory consultee for building regulation consultations and that working with planning authorities on fire safety was a growing area of work that required finance and capacity to deliver.

24/61.5 RESOLVED: That the report be noted

24/62 His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) – Round three inspection report

24/62.1 Assistant Chief Officer (ACO) - Director of Service Support, Jill McCrae introduced the report which provided an overview of the Service's inspection by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS), undertaken between February to April 2024. The Inspectorate's report had previously been disseminated to Members in September 2024 and was available on the Service's website.

24/62.2 Cllr Sample enquired how areas identified by the HMICFRS that required improvement were being progressed. ACO McCrae provided detail on how the Service would progress the improvements, the oversight of this and how this would feed into the and regular quarterly reporting to the Finance & Audit and Local Performance and Scrutiny Committees as well as six monthly to the Authority through the performance presentations.

24/62.3 CFO Ansell assured Members that progress was overseen by the Strategic Leadership Team and reported to Members to provide assurance, as part of a service wide approach.

24/62.4 RESOLVED: That the report be noted

24/63 Service highlights – public video

24/63.1 CFO Ansell introduced the in-house video which was available on the Service's YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bVJRnk705PM>. The video continues to be made available to local councils and others. In view of time restrictions, the video was not shown, and, on this occasion, Members were encouraged to view the video outside of the meeting.

24/63.2 RESOLVED: Members noted the Service highlights – public video.

24/64 Date of next meeting

24/64.1 The Chair confirmed that the next meeting of the Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Authority would take place on 6 February 2025 at 10.00am.

24/65 Thanks to Jonathan Mair and Grace Evans

24/65.1 The Committee expressed their thanks and best wishes to Jonathan Mair and Grace Evans as this would be the last Authority to be attended following their stepping down as Monitoring officer and Deputy Monitoring Officer to the Authority on 31 December 2024.

24.66 Thanks to CFO Ben Ansell

24/66.1 The Committee expressed their thanks to CFO Ansell for his contribution to the Service and the Authority and sent him best wishes for his retirement from the Service on 31 December 2024.

24/67 To consider passing the following resolution:

24/67.1 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

24/67.2 RESOLVED: To close the meeting to the press and public

PART 2

24/68 Interim Monitoring Officer arrangements

24/68.1 The Committee considered an exempt report that detailed the provision of interim Monitoring Officer services to the Authority

24/68.2 RESOLVED: That the recommendations as set out in the report be approved

Meeting ended at 12.55 hrs

Signed: _____