



Draft Minutes of the Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Authority meeting at 10:00 hours on 6 February 2025 at 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 Clare Weight (Vice Chair)	Cllr Richard Biggs
Cllr Abdul Amin	Cllr Laura Beddow	Cllr Matthew Courtliff
Cllr Olivia Brown	Cllr Daniel Cave	Cllr Peter Miles
Cllr Brian Dalton	Cllr Paul Hilliard	Cllr Pip Ridout
Cllr Kelvin Nash	Cllr Byron Quayle	Cllr Duncan Sowry-House
Cllr Paul Sample	Cllr Kevin Small	

Officer attendance:

Chief Fire Officer (CFO), Andy Cole
Deputy Assistant Chief Officer (DACO), Financial Services & Treasurer, Ryan Maslen
Deputy Assistant Chief Officer (DACO), Corporate Support and Clerk, Vikki Shearing
Monitoring Officer, Lisa Kirkman
Deputy Chief Fire Officer (DCFO), Derek James
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
Head of Corporate Communications & Engagement, Emily Cheeseman
Democratic Services Officer, David Shaw

25/01 Welcome

- 25/01.1 The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting. Lisa Kirkman, Monitoring Officer, was welcomed. Cllr Peter Miles was also welcomed to his first meeting to replace Cllr Lisa Northover representing Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) Council. It was noted that this would be the last Authority meeting to be attended by Cllr Kelvin Nash, and the Chair thanked Cllr Nash on behalf of the Authority for his service.

25/02 Apologies

25/02.1 Apologies were received from Cllr Cameron Adams.

25/03 Code of Conduct, Declarations of Interests

25/03.1 The Chair asked the meeting for any disclosures of pecuniary interests under the Localism Act. There were no disclosures.

25/04 Review minutes of the Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Authority meeting on 10 December 2024 and any matters arising

25/04.1 The Chair asked Members to review and approve the minutes from the last meeting.

25/04.2 RESOLVED: That the minutes of the 10 December 2024 meeting be confirmed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

25/05 Public questions

25/05.1 No questions were received from members of the public.

25/06 Revenue Budget and Precept Implications 2025-26

25/06.1 Deputy Assistant Chief Officer (DACO) Financial Services & Treasurer, Ryan Maslen presented the report.

25/06.2 DACO Maslen provided a presentation and referred to report 25/06 which covered the revenue budget precept requirements for 2025/26 and Medium-Term Financial Plan and report 25/07 which outlined the Treasury Management Strategy and Capital Strategy.

25/06.3 It was noted that the final Local Government Finance Settlement was released on 5 February 2025. After taking into consideration the various funding streams, the Authority would have a 2.6% increase in funding as part of the settlement, with the average across the sector being 2.8%. The council tax base had been increased further in 2025/26 by the council tax premium on second homes, an option approved locally by Dorset and BCP Councils. The £5 precept flexibility (equivalent to a 5.75 percentage increase) provided an additional £1.8m of income to be generated from precept compared to previous assumptions. This boost to funding has been eroded by the £1.8m of grants that were received in 2024/25 which had now ceased completely in 2025/26. This has resulted in a net zero position and there was no overall improvement in the full financial position. The overall income generated from council tax revenue was just under £54m. The council tax premium on second homes would generate an additional £814K of income in 2025/26. The total

revenue budget for the current year that Members were asked to approve was £76.4m.

- 25/06.4 The other significant changes were linked to the employer National Insurance contribution rates; the Government had confirmed that they would provide funding of £498k for this in 2025/26. Future risks included pay awards, the funding of pension contributions and ongoing inflationary pressures.
- 25/06.5 Cllr Kevin Small, Chair of the Finance and Audit Committee, spoke in support of the £5 council tax flexibility and echoed the comments of the Chair on the assumption of a two percent pay award and the financial pressures that would result if pay settlements were in excess of this, which would impact on reserves. However, it was a balanced budget that did not have to use reserves to support it.
- 25/06.6 DACO Maslen explained that reserves could be used as a temporary buffer in relation to the budget funding reserve and provided more than £3m in relation to being able to ensure that next year's budget could be funded. Also, if higher pay awards were agreed the capital programme could be reviewed and the work of the Resourcing and Savings programme could be re-visited as part of the wider station reviews that are ongoing.
- 25/06.7 The £5 council tax flexibility for all standalone fire and rescue authorities was recommended to be approved by Members and although the financial projection had improved over earlier forecasts, there remained risks around future pay awards, inflation and capital financing. The financial situation in respect of balances and reserves was reasonable and a sufficient level of capacity was built in within the budget, which would also be closely monitored.
- 25/06.8 The Chair commented on the continued need to lobby the Government for longer term funding arrangements to provide financial stability. Chief Fire Officer (CFO) Andy Cole confirmed that in the financial settlement announcement on 5 February 2025, the Government confirmed that they would be producing a multi-year settlement from 2026/27 onwards. As part of the National Fire Chief's Council's work the Service was in the process of putting together a submission for that multi-year settlement.
- 25/06.9 In reply to a question from Cllr Duncan Sowry-House, the £5 council tax flexibility and the budget would be communicated to the public and the context around it explained by way of a press release and responding to media enquiries.
- 25/06.10 DACO Maslen replied to a question from Councillor Abdul Amin on the variations in funding formula between different fire authorities and from Cllr Pip Ridout on the assumptions made for future pay awards, national insurance payments and inflation rates, which might be more than anticipated.
- 25/06.11 Cllr Byron Quayle mentioned the situation with Dorset Council and BCP Council agreeing to double the council tax premium on second homes

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properties and Wiltshire and Swindon Councils intention not to do so and whether this raised a discrepancy. The Chair commented that he would contact Cllr Richard Clewer, leader of Wiltshire Council, in person as to why the Wiltshire Council has not done similar.

25/06.12 RESOLVED:

- 1. That the revenue budget of £76.427m for 2025-26 be approved.**
- 2. That the Financial assumptions shown in Section 4.2 and the resulting Medium-Term Finance Plan 2025-26 to 2028-29 be approved.**
- 3. That the basic amount of Band D Fire Precept for the Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Authority at £91.95 for 2025-26 be approved.**
- 4. That the Treasurer be authorised to issue precept notices on the Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council, Dorset Council, Swindon Borough Council and Wiltshire Council.**

25/07 Treasury Management Strategy and Capital Strategy 2025-26

- 25/07.1 DACO Maslen presented the report which set out the Treasury Management Strategy for 2025-26, including the relevant prudential indicators, the capital strategy and the Authority policy on minimum revenue provision (MRP).
- 25/07.2 DACO Maslen highlighted that the planned expenditure programme over four years was £43m. External borrowing would be minimised wherever possible.
- 25/07.3 There were no Member questions arising and that Chair extended the thanks of the Authority to DACO Maslen and the Finance Team.

25/07.4 RESOLVED:

- 1. That the Treasury Management Policy Statement and Practices (including the Annual Investment and Treasury Management Strategy) 2025-26 – (as set out in Appendix A), be approved.**
- 2. That the Capital and Treasury Management Prudential Indicators 2025-26 (as set out in Appendix B), be approved.**
- 3. That the Capital Strategy 2025-26 (as set out in Appendix C), be approved.**
- 4. That the Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement as defined in paragraph 3.11, be approved.**

25/08 Pay Policy Statement 2025-26

- 25/08.1 Jenny Long, Assistant Chief Officer (ACO) - Director of People Services, presented the report. There were no Member questions arising.

- 25/08.2 RESOLVED: That the Pay Policy Statement for the financial year 2025-26 be approved.**
- 25/09 Gender Pay Gap report 2024**
- 25/09.1 ACO Long presented the report by way of a detailed presentation. The report highlighted the differences in gross pay hourly rates and bonus payments related to females as compared with male employees as of March 2024, highlighting any imbalance in the comparison of hourly rates by gender. Reference was also made to the numerous initiatives in place to address an imbalance and to support the attraction, recruitment and retention of more females within the Service. These initiatives were monitored at strategic level and reported to the Finance & Audit Committee.
- 25/09.2 Cllr Daniel Cave questioned the use of the term ‘dominant’ when referring to the balance of employees. In reply, ACO Long stated that this term was appropriate in the sense that there was a dominance of one group over another and that the Authority was seeking to ensure a better balance within its staff composition through its extensive equality, diversity and inclusion programme. Cllr Duncan Sowry-House and Cllr Paul Sample welcomed the growing awareness of the importance of equality, diversity and inclusion awareness within the organisation.
- 25/09.3 RESOLVED: That the report be noted**
- 25/10 Proposed changes to the Members’ Handbook and Seminar Programme 2025-26**
- 25/10.1 Deputy Assistant Chief Officer (DACO), Corporate Support and Clerk, Vikki Shearing introduced the report. DACO Maslen referred to the financial aspects of the Members’ Handbook.
- 25/10.2 It was noted that Member Seminars were generally held at the conclusion of Authority meetings, rather than preceding them as stated on page 5 of the report.
- 25/10.3 DACO Maslen replied to questions from Cllr Richard Biggs regarding procurement rules and the replacing of European Union rules and whether this would result in additional work and cost to the Authority which needed to be monitored. DACO Maslen explained that expressions of interest could be received from any country. There was a significant increase in relation to the transparency that would need to be demonstrated and recorded in terms of notifying the market about the progress and the points at which each process had reached. It would be an additional burden on the Service and additional staff recruitment had taken place. In addition, there would be a requirement to demonstrate that the Authority was working with small organisations and

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statistics would need to be maintained as to how the Service had engaged and worked with local suppliers.

25/10.4 RESOLVED: That the proposed amendments as set out in the report be approved.

25/11 Enhanced Redundancy – Review of Multiplier

25/11.1 ACO Long presented the report.

25/11.2 In reply to a question from Cllr Small, ACO Long clarified that when considering enhanced redundancy for operational staff, including on-call, it had been discussed with the unions to consider all earnings across an average over a 52-week period to achieve equality, rather than considering actual week's pay or statutory pay.

25/11.3 Due to on-going financial constraints, the Authority agreed to support the review of the redundancy multiplier in February 2026.

25/11.4 RESOLVED:

- 1. That the redundancy multiplier remains at 1.5.**
- 2. That the policy position be retained that redundancy payments should be calculated on the basis of 'actual' salary.**
- 3. That the policy position be retained that the same level of multiplier be applied for compulsory and voluntary redundancy.**
- 4. That the redundancy multiplier principle extends to any appropriate restructures affecting operational staff.**
- 5. That the redundancy multiplier be next reviewed in February 2026.**

25/12 Date of next meeting

25/12.1 The Chair confirmed the date of the next Authority meeting as 11 June 2025 from 10:00am.

Meeting ended at 12.05hrs

Signed: _____

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