



**DORSET & WILTSHIRE
FIRE AND RESCUE
AUTHORITY**

Minutes of the Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Local Performance and Scrutiny Committee held on 20 August 2025, 10.00am at Room 206 at the Civic Centre, BCP Council Civic Centre, Bourne Avenue, Bournemouth.

Members present:

Cllr Paul Hilliard (Chair)
Cllr Cameron Adams
Cllr Olivia Brown
Cllr Clare Weight

Officer attendance:

Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO), Response, Darren Langdown
Area Manager (AM), Bradley Stevens
Democratic Services Officer, David Shaw

Others in attendance:

Councillor Sue Aitkenhead - Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) Council
Andrew Corden – Station Manager, Fire Brigade Union Brigade
Secretary - Operations South

25/10 Welcome

25/10.1 The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed Members and officers.

25/11 Apologies

25/11.1 No apologies were received.

25/12 Code of Conduct and Declarations of Interests

25/12.1 The Chair asked the meeting for any disclosures of pecuniary interests under the Localism Act. There were no disclosures

25/13 Public questions

25/13.1 The meeting noted a public question submitted and read out by the Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Councillor Sue Aitkenhead regarding Poole Fire station. Details of the question provided and the Chair's reply are contained in the appendix attached to the minutes (minute 25/19 post refers).

25/14 Review and approve minutes of the Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Local Performance and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 18 March 2025

25/14.1 The Chair asked Members to review and approve the minutes from the previous meeting.

25/14.2 RESOLVED: That the minutes be confirmed without amendment and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

25/15 Action progress report

25/15.1 The Democratic Services Officer reported that no actions had been taken at the meeting on 18 March 2025 and that there were none outstanding from previous meetings.

25/15.2 RESOLVED: Members noted that there were no actions outstanding.

25/16 Performance monitoring and briefing

25/16.1 Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO), Response, Darren Langdown and Area Manager (AM), Bradley Stevens presented to Members the Performance Monitoring and Briefing for quarter 1, which covered the three priority areas overseen by this Committee:

Priority 1 Help you to make safer and healthier choices.

Priority 2 Protect you and the environment from harm, and

Priority 3 Be there when you need us.

A link to the presentation can be found [here](#) .

It was explained to the Committee that Performance Monitoring and Briefing would be in future presented to Members in a new format. A performance dashboard for each of the priority areas would be presented supported by a presentation of the highlights of the service provision for the quarter. The data for year to date referred to quarter 1 – 1 April to 1 June and was compared with the corresponding quarter in the previous year. When necessary, officers would provide additional detail to the Committee on an exception basis. The quarterly data was discussed as set out in the dashboard.

25/16.2 **Priority 1 - Help you to make safer and healthier choices.**

25/16.3	Title	Current Year-to-Date	Last Year-to-Date
	Number of accidental dwelling fires - BCP Council	71	54
	Number of safe and well visits Quarterly – BCP Council	480	Not Applicable
	Number of safeguarding referrals from DWFRS- BCP Council	52	Not Applicable

25/16.4 Arising out of consideration for the dashboard data for Priority 1, Members asked the following questions which were answered by the officers.

25/16.5 Cllr Cameron Adams enquired if a reduction in Safe and Well visits had contributed to an increase in sleeping risk fires. The officers explained that the figures across the BCP area were an average and Cllr Adams enquired if that, in future, demand summary by particular stations could be identified so that Members could be assured that there were no particular concerns. The officers also explained how available firefighters could be combined between stations to crew appliances in order to provide an effective response.

25/16.6 **Priority 2 - protect you and the environment from harm**

25/16.7	Title	Current Year-to-Date	Last Year-to-Date
	Automatic fire alarms which result in a false alarm - non domestic premises - BCP Council (year to date)	59	117
	Automatic fire alarms which result in a false alarm Quarterly - BCP Council	320	382
	Number of business fire safety checks undertaken crews - BCP Council	30	Not Applicable

25/16.8 Arising out of consideration for the dashboard data for Priority 2, the officers replied to Cllr Clare Weight's questions on business fire safety checks, providing details on how the Service undertook prevention in relation to businesses located in close proximity to wildfire risks.

25/16.9 **Priority 3 - Be there when you need us**

25/16.10 The quarterly data for Priority 3 was discussed as set out in the dashboard. There were no Member questions arising.

25/16.11 **Demand Summary**

25/16.12	Title	Current Year-to-Date	Last Year-to-Date	
	Number of fires attended - BCP Council	344	207	
	Number of incidents attended which turned out to be false alarms - BCP Council	468	567	
	Number of special services incidents attended - BCP Council	267	233	

25/16.13 **Presentation**

25/16.14 The officers provided a presentation on the Service's engagement in quarter 1. This included community engagement, exercises attended, notable incidents attended, training exercises and multi-agency exercises.

25/16.15 The officers replied to Members' questions relating to the Service's work with young persons in community engagement; work with known arsonists within prisons; Safe and Well checks within tower blocks and the crewing of the new Unimog vehicle (a specialist wildfire vehicle) for fighting recent heathland fires.

25/16.16 The Chair thanked the officers for the presentation. Members supported the new style presentation of the dashboard and supporting presentation. It was commented that an overarching description would be of benefit when there were new Members on the Committee and that the average attendance time of the second appliance should be included.

25/16.17 RESOLVED: Members scrutinised and noted the performance for quarter 1 2025

25/17 Matters raised by Members (agreed with the Chair)

25/17.1 There were no additional questions raised by Members.

25/18 Date of Next meeting

25/18.1 The Chair confirmed the date of the next Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Local Performance and Scrutiny Committee meeting as 19 November 2025 from 10.00am.

The meeting closed at 11.30.

Signed: _____

Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Authority BCP Local performance and Scrutiny Committee meeting – 20 August 2025

25/19 Public Questions

25/19.1 **Cllr Sue Aitkenhead, BCP Council (Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council) submitted to the committee questions (below in bold and italics) and reply was provided by Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO), Response, Darren Langdown**

25/19.2 ***“I understand that recent cuts to Poole fire station removed a fire engine and downgraded the fire engine designed for wildfires, to part time. I have seen statistics that show Dorset and Wiltshire Fire Service has 99 less firefighters between 2018 and 2024.”***

Response: The heavy off-road capable wildfire vehicle (18P4) remains located at Poole fire station. Both Wholetime and On-Call firefighters are trained and competent to respond in that appliance. Based on incident information, either Wholetime or On-Call crews may take the vehicle, with the decision made by the Officer in Charge at the station or by Fire Control. Regarding the reference to “99 fewer firefighters (2018–2024)”, this does not align with the data we hold; we would welcome the source so we can review it and provide an accurate comparison.

25/19.3 ***“I am concerned that during the recent heath fire, there were not enough firefighters to use all of Poole’s fire engines, and some were left parked idle at the fire station while the fire raged, and other engines were brought from as far as Merseyside, Essex and Lancashire. The damage caused to the environment and biodiversity will take significant time to repair, if not lost forever. Wildfires cause damage to property and risk to life.”***

Response: We declared two concurrent Major Incidents, one for Holt Heath and one for the exceptional demand across the Service area. For Holt Heath, the Officer-in-Charge requested the number of fire engines required, and those appliances were mobilised and arrived. Given the exceptional demand and the fact that crews had been dealing with multiple incidents, including another heath fire that had been ongoing for a week, we activated pre-arranged national support plans. These are established arrangements used across the country during major incidents and were necessary to maintain safe crewing, protect firefighter welfare, and sustain emergency cover for other life-risk calls. Where a locally based appliance was not immediately deployed, this reflected crew availability and the need to balance reliefs and wider risk, not a lack of intent to use local resources. We attend every incident we are called to attend, and there is an ongoing view that a number of the incidents were started deliberately; those matters are being progressed via the appropriate channels.

Initials _____

25/19.4 ***“I understand there was also an occasion Friday 8th August, where Poole fire station essentially closed down because there were not enough firefighters to crew the fire engines.”***

Response: Poole fire station did not close. There was a crew of five Wholetime firefighters available for both the day and night shifts, ensuring an immediate response on that date. For the On-Call element, there were 9 hours with sufficient crew to maintain a fire engine, and a further 10 hours with sufficient crew to maintain the wildfire ranger or the Operational Support Unit; 5 hours of the 24-hour period had no On-Call cover at Poole. The Major Incident was declared on 9 August; 18P1 (the first standard fire engine to leave the station in the event of an incident) and 18M1(a light off road capable firefighting vehicle which is a Ford Ranger) attended on the 9th, and 18P4 (a heavy offroad capable fire engine) attended the incident on the 10th. On 9th August, 15 hours had sufficient On-Call crew to maintain a fire engine, and the remaining 9 hours had sufficient On-Call crew to maintain the wildfire ranger or Operational Support Unit, with zero hours without On-Call availability.

Poole On Call since the start of Newton Heath (Inc Newton Heat & Holt Heath) to date – 86.97 hours. (Newton Heath – 41.79hrs/ Holt Heath – 27.24hrs)

Poole On Call without Newton & Holt Heath to date – 17.94 hours (20 Incidents attended)

Poole Fire Station attended 499 Incidents (435 18P1 & 18P4/ 64 18R2 & 18R3) during Q1 2025/26 April to June.

(18R2 & 18R3 are technical rescue vehicles which respond to incidents such as rescues from swift water and flooding, rescues from height, large animal rescues and bariatric rescues)

25/19.5 ***“KLOE 4 for this committee asks, ‘How effective are we at responding to fires and other emergencies.’ I feel that the above evidence should be considered by the committee under this KLOE, but this matter is too urgent to wait. The people of my ward need to be confident that their fire station is fully operational now.”***

Response: We continue to consider our response effective, as reflected in our most recent His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) inspection findings. We maintain business continuity plans that enable us to respond to two concurrent Major Incidents, supported by both our appliance mobilisation arrangements and the structure of our flexi-duty officer rota. We also have well-rehearsed plans to call upon national assets during periods of exceptional demand. These measures proved effective in concluding the recent incident safely while providing necessary rest periods for crews who had been responding to sustained activity.

25/19.6 ***“Please can the committee ask the fire service to either reverse the frontline cuts at Poole, reinstating the transferred full-time staff immediately or give residents of Poole confidence that there are enough firefighters to get full use out of our local fire engines?”***

Initials _____

Response: The changes to appliance distribution followed our Fire Cover Review and a comprehensive project assessing impacts on the Service and wider community. We have balanced operational response across the whole Service based on that evidence, redeploying posts into other BCP stations to increase overall resilience of appliance availability, and we have increased Wholetime firefighter posts by eight. We are not proposing to reinstate firefighter posts at Poole fire station; our current configuration is designed to optimise cover and resilience across the area and provide confidence that resources are available and appropriately deployed.