



DORSET & WILTSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

Minutes of the Dorset Local Performance and Scrutiny Committee held at 10:00am on 21 August 2025 at the Poundbury offices, Conference Room, Peverell Avenue West, Poundbury, Dorset

Members present:

Cllr Duncan Sowry-House (Chair)

Cllr Laura Beddow

Cllr Richard Biggs

Others in attendance:

Cllr Clare Weight (Chair of the Authority)

Officer attendance:

Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO), Response, Darren Langdown

Area Manager (AM), Bradley Stevens

Group Manager (GM), Dave Adamson

Democratic Services Officer, David Shaw

25/10 Welcome

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

25/11 Apologies

25/11.1 Apologies were received from Cllr Byron Quayle

25/12 Code of Conduct, Declaration 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 There were no members of the public present and no public questions had been received.

25/13.2 RESOLVED: Members noted that there were no public questions.

25/14 Review and approve minutes of the Dorset Local Performance and Scrutiny (LPS) meeting on 20 February 2025

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

25/14.2 The Chair drew attention to points he had raised at the meeting held on the 20 February 2025 where details for the top six incidents for the Service in Dorset and how did the Service assure itself that it could manage concurrent incidents and maintain business as usual response had been requested of the officers, which had not been minuted.

25/14.3 Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO), Response, Darren Langdown provided a reply to these questions, as set out below:

25/14.4 The top 6 incident types that Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Services had attended in the year 2024-25 were Alarms (all types); Assist Other Agencies: fire in the open (small); Special Services; Fire Domestic and Road Traffic Collisions (other).

25/14.5 Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service (DWFRS) assures itself through robust business continuity planning and strong collaborative arrangements. Our business continuity (BC) plans are specifically designed around the management of two concurrent major incidents, ensuring that we can continue to provide a proportionate response to all other incidents across the Service. These plans are scalable and flexible, with three tiers (BC1, BC2, BC3) that enable us to adjust our response according to the type, scale, and severity of incidents while maintaining core business-as-usual operations. Our officer rota is also structured to reflect the requirement to manage two major incidents simultaneously.

25/14.6 Alongside this, DWFRS benefits from strong partnership arrangements. As a member of the Networked Fire Services Partnership (NFSP), we operate borderless mobilising with Hampshire & Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) and Devon & Somerset FRS. This means all three control rooms can mobilise each other's assets, enhancing resilience and providing seamless support during periods of high demand.

25/14.7 For FRSs outside the NFSP, we maintain 13/16 mutual support arrangements under the Fire and Rescue Services Act, which ensures assistance between neighbouring services when required. At a national level, we also access specialist capability through the National Resilience arrangements, as demonstrated recently at the Holt Heath incident. This includes support from the National Resilience Control Centre, which coordinates the mobilisation of assets across the country for as long as needed.

25/14.8 Arising out of consideration of ACFO Langdown's reply, the Chair asked for clarification for occasions when the Service would be deployed to assist

other agencies. The officers stated that in the case of the ambulance service it would be when life was at risk and in the case of the police, to provide a rescue team to support an incident.

25/14.9 It was agreed that the minutes be amended to include the above questions and answers as minute 25/07.21a

25/14.10 RESOLVED: That subject to the inclusion of minute 25/07.21a, as set out above, the minutes be confirmed and be 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 20 February 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 quarter 1

25/16.1 ACFO Darren Langdown, Area Manager (AM), Bradley Stevens and Group Manager (GM) Dave Adamson 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 - Dorset Council	40	34

	Number of safe and well visits Quarterly – Dorset Council	505	Not Applicable
	Number of safeguarding referrals from DWFRS- Dorset Council	63	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	The officers highlighted that the average response time to other properties by the first appliance had increased over the last year. Demand analysis had shown that this was largely attributed to the 85 calls to Guy Marsh prison, Shaftesbury, that had taken place. Work was being undertaken with the prison authorities to enhance prison practices in fire prevention and to provide education to prisoners with firesetter tendencies. The Chair mentioned that the prison worked with a drama group called unlock drama which worked to transform lives through the power of applied theatre and might be able to assist.		
25/16.6	Cllr Richard Biggs enquired about firefighter availability at stations. The officers explained how availability was linked to recruitment and retention of firefighters and how 24-hour cover was provided to key stations assessed through risk and demand. This involved staffing rotas and the use of wholetime and on-call firefighters to pool staff to provide a crew. Appliances were also moved between stations to enhance availability and Fire Control would make decisions on the make-up of the crew, for example to provide a driver, incident commander and two breathing apparatus operatives.		
25/16.7	The Chair referred to the recent heathland fires and asked if they were accidental or deliberate. The officers explained that they worked with Dorset Police in undertaking investigations as to the cause. Prevention work was undertaken by liaising with local landowners, undertaking patrols and the use of Public Space Restriction Orders.		
25/16.8	The Chair spoke of the Service liaising with Dorset Wildlife Trust at Upton Heath to encourage proactive action and to be 'Firewise'. The Chair continued that in cases of deliberate fires the police should have the capacity to ascertain the causation of the fire. The Chair added that Wessex Rescue was awaiting funding and could provide drones.		
25/16.9	The Officers provided additional detail on their work with the police, including gold level meetings and the input of data into incidents. Members' comments on the use of social media content creators in reporting fires would be raised with the resilience team at the Local Resilience Forums as part of horizon scanning to see if it represented a new threat in the strategic assessments of risk.		

25/16.10 The Committee discussed the issues raised by fires in lithium-ion batteries and also their recycling. The officers stated that if they were charged at night, it should not be in a domestic dwelling. Incidents with lithium-ion batteries were followed up with residents in the local area to raise awareness and national campaigns were promoted. The Chair observed that working with the housing associations might be beneficial and the officers noted that this could be part of the community approach if it added value to the work of the Service.

25/16.11 Priority 2 - Protect you and the environment from harm

25/16.12	Title	Current Year-to-Date	Last Year-to-Date
	Automatic fire alarms which result in a false alarm - non domestic premises - Dorset Council (year to date)	45	83
	Automatic fire alarms which result in a false alarm Quarterly - Dorset Council	300	257
	Number of business fire safety checks undertaken crews - Dorset Council	54	Not Applicable

25/16.13 Arising out of consideration for the dashboard data for Priority 2, the officers replied to the Chair's question if the fall in the number of accidental fire alarms was a result of a reduction in smoking and increased safety in cooking methods. The officers reiterated the concerns about lithium-ion batteries, which were extremely difficult to extinguish, and the educational messages to recharge batteries separate from the domestic dwelling and to keep evacuation routes clear.

25/16.14 Priority 3 - Be there when you need us

25/16.15 The quarterly data for Priority 3 was discussed as set out in the dashboard. There were no Member questions arising.

25/16.16 Demand summary

25/16.17	Title	Current Year-to-Date	Last Year-to-Date
	Number of fires attended - Dorset Council	303	222
	Number of incidents attended which turned out to be false alarms - Dorset Council	414	335
	Number of special services incidents attended - Dorset Council	256	349

25/16.18 Presentation

25/16.19 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.

25/16.20 The Chair stated that he had been impressed with the Service's communications and community engagement at Chairity events and in increasing the Service's profile.

25/16.21 The Chair thanked the officers for the presentation.

25/16.22 RESOLVED: Members scrutinised and noted the performance for quarter 1 2025.

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

25/17.1 The Chair referred to the Memorandum of Understanding between the Service and South West Ambulance Service Foundation Trust (SWASFT) and SWASFT's intention to withdraw from the scheme and the potential effect of this on a preventable death; that improved communication from the police would be welcomed when it was established that arson was the cause of wildfires; that there would be advantages in training local groups, for example Dorset Wildlife Trust, to be heathland rangers and be 'Firewise' aware, and that the Dorset Local Plan had been published with some settlements allocated for 1,500 new homes with consultation closing on the 13 October 2025.

25/18 Date of Next Meeting

25/18.1 The Chair confirmed the date of the next Dorset Local Performance and Scrutiny Committee meeting as 20 November 2025 at 10:00am at Conference Room at the Poundbury offices, Peverell Avenue West, Poundbury, Dorset.

The meeting closed at 12:15

Signed: _____