



Draft Minutes of an extraordinary meeting of the Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Authority held at 10:00 hours on 31 March 2026 at the Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters, Salisbury.

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

Members present:

Cllr Clare Weight (Chair)	Cllr Paul Oatway (Vice Chair)	Cllr Richard Biggs
Cllr Andrew Davis	Cllr Michelle Dower	Cllr Paul Hilliard
Cllr Paul Sample	Cllr Kevin Small	Cllr Duncan Sowry-House

Officer attendance:

Assistant Chief Officer (ACO), Director of Financial Services & Treasurer, Ryan Maslen
Assistant Chief Officer (ACO), Director of Corporate Services and Clerk to the Fire and Rescue Authority, Vikki Shearing
Monitoring Officer, Lisa Kirkman
Assistant Chief Officer (ACO) - Director of Service Support, Jill McCrae
Democratic Services Manager, David Shaw

26/15 Welcome

22/15.1 The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting.

26/16 Apologies

26/16.1 Apologies were received from Cllr Abdul Amin, Cllr Boaz Barry, Cllr Olivia Brown and Cllr Byron Quayle and Chief Fire Officer, Andy Cole. Cllrs Laura Beddow, Cllr Matt Bragg, Cllr Matthew Courtliff, Cllr Brian Dalton and Cllr Peter Miles were not in attendance.

26/17 Code of Conduct and Declaration of Interests

26/17.1 The Chair asked the meeting for any disclosures of pecuniary interests under the Localism Act. No disclosures were made.

26/18 Process for dealing with Code of Conduct complaints

- 26/18.1 Assistant Chief Officer (ACO), Director of Corporate Services and Clerk to the Fire and Rescue Authority, Vikki Shearing, introduced the report.
- 26/18.2 ACO Shearing explained that it was a requirement of the Authority to have in place a process for handling Code of Conduct complaints for alleged breaches of the Member Code of Conduct. Specifically, that an Independent Person was required as part of this process. If adopted, the Members' Handbook and the Terms of Reference of the Appointments and Disputes Committee would be updated to reflect the adoption.
- 26/18.3 In reply to Members' questions, ACO Shearing and the Monitoring Officer, Lisa Kirkman, stated that the proposed Member Code of Conduct was a robust model that had been adopted by other Fire and Rescue Services. There were no powers to suspend a Member that was the subject of a serious breach, but in such cases the Police could become involved. In serious cases, and if the facts made it relevant, a Member could be asked to not enter Authority premises. Guidance was also provided on whether a complainant could have a choice of anonymity.
- 26/18.4 Lisa Kirkman stated in response to further questions that in the case where a Member, who was the subject of a complaint, resigned from the Authority, the matter could still be processed in accordance with the process for dealing with complaints. The outcome though, in a finding of breach, would be limited to reporting the finding to the Monitoring Officer of their respective constituent council. Any action taken would be proportionate to the context of the allegation. In respect of timescales for action, it was advised that Members should take time to fully consider the content of their initial written representation to the Monitoring Officer, within the 10 working days of being advised of the complaint. In some cases an apology and acknowledgement of poor behaviour could be sufficient to bring the complaint to a close where this was deemed proportionate. The Monitoring Officer could also initially discuss the nature of the complaint with the complainant to assist in understanding.
- 26/18.5 Consideration would be given to the term of office of the Independent Person, usually 4 years, and Cllr Richard Biggs observed that the quality of advice of the Independent Person would be important in providing assurance to the Appointments and Disputes Committee. The officers remarked that the Independent Person might be provided from one of the constituent councils, from another neighbouring council, or through advertisement and interview. Recent processes for these roles had become more vigorous with full job descriptions and interview processes to ensure suitability. Members would be advised of the appointment and invited to partake in the interview process, where this was necessary.
- 26/18.6 The Authority unanimously approved the recommendations.

26/18.7 **RESOLVED: That the process for dealing with Code of Conduct complaints be approved and authority be delegated to the Clerk to appoint an Independent Person, either directly through a process of advertisement and interview or through partner local authority arrangements.**

26/19 Date of next meeting

26/19.1 The Chair confirmed that the next meeting of the Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Authority would take place on Tuesday 30 June 2026 at 10.00am at Salisbury City Hall.

Meeting ended at 10.35 hrs

Signed: _____