Item 26/24

DORSET & WILTSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

DRAFT Minutes of the Swindon Local Performance and Scrutiny Committee held at 10:00am on 26 August 2026 at Westlea Fire Station, The Chesters, Stonehill Green, Westlea, Swindon.

Members present:
Cllr Matthew Courtliff
Cllr Kevin Small

Cllr Paul Oatway (Wiltshire Council Member in attendance)

Officer attendance:
Area Manager (AM), Bradley Stevens
Group Manager (GM), Dave Slawinski
Democratic Services Manager, Alex Cooper
Democratic Services Manager, David Shaw

26/10 Election of Chair

26/10.1 The Democratic Services Manager opened the meeting. The Democratic Services Manager sought nominations for the role of Chair of the committee for the 2026/27 municipal year.

26/10.2 Cllr Kevin Small nominated Cllr Matthew Courtliff for the role of Chair of the Swindon Local Performance and Scrutiny Committee for the 2026/27 municipal year. Cllr Paul Oatway seconded the nomination. There were no further nominations.

26/10.3 RESOLVED: That Cllr Matthew Courtliff be elected as Chair of the Swindon Local Performance and Scrutiny Committee for the 2026/27 municipal year.

26/11 Welcome

26/11.1 The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed Members and Officers. One member of the public was in attendance.

26/12 Apologies

26/12.1 Apologies were received from Cllr Gordon Slade. Apologies were received from Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO) Darren Langdown.

Initials _____

26/13 Code of Conduct and Declarations of Interests

26/13.1 The Chair asked the meeting for any disclosures of pecuniary interests under the Localism Act. There were no disclosures.

26/14 Public questions

26/14.1 There was one member of the public in attendance. No public questions had been received.

26/15 Review and approve minutes of the Swindon Local Performance and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 25 February 2026

26/15.1 The Chair asked Members to review and approve the minutes from the previous meeting.

26/15.2 RESOLVED: That the minutes be confirmed without amendment and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

26/16 Action progress report

26/16.1 The Democratic Services Officer referred to action 374 from the meeting of the Committee held on 25 February 2026 and reported that the action remained in progress due to fewer than 12 months having elapsed since the introduction of a wholetime working pattern at Swindon Fire Station. The Communications Team had been primed to support messaging around improvements in response time for sleeping risk, along with Wiltshire Police and other local partners. Action 374 was to remain in progress.

26/16.2 Regarding action 375, it was reported that the Communications Team would publicise the Knife Amnesty Initiative in the Swindon area when a full 12 months of statistics were available. It had been agreed that a specific incident would be highlighted to provide an illustrative example of a significant positive effect delivered by the Initiative. Action 375 was to remain in progress.

26/16.3 RESOLVED: Members noted that actions 374 and 375 remained in progress.

26/17 Performance monitoring and briefing

26/17.1 Area Manager (AM) Bradley Stevens and Group Manager (GM) Dave Slawinski 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.

Initials _____

It was noted that Performance Monitoring and Briefing was presented to the Committee by way of a Performance Dashboard for each of the priority areas 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 2026 to 30 June 2026 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. It was clarified that the data presented was in minutes and seconds and included a five-year history. The quarterly data was discussed as set out in the dashboard.

26/17.2 **Priority 1 - Help you to make safer and healthier choices**.

26/17.3

Title	Current Year-to-Date	Last Year-to-Date
Number of accidental dwelling fires - Swindon Council	45	36
Number of home fire safety visits Quarterly – Swindon Council	224	Not Applicable
Number of safeguarding referrals from DWFRS - Swindon Council	53	Not Applicable

26/17.4 The Officers reported that there had been, across the entire Service area, 225 deliberate fires within the quarter, which was 38.52% lower than in the same period year on year. This was 18% below the target of 275. The response time to properties with sleeping risk was 09.24 minutes, which was 63 seconds faster than in the same quarter last year and below the 10-minute response standard.

26/17.5 The number of false fire alarm actuations had been 1187, which was 11.88% higher than in the same period last year and 3.13% above the target. On-call optimal availability had been 70.6%, which was 9.4 percentage points below the target of 80%. There had been 229 accidental dwelling fires, which was 19.89% higher than the figure in the same period last year and 45.86% above target.

26/17.6 The Officers reported that there had been a year-on-year improvement in the average response times by the first appliance to properties with sleeping risk to 07.25 minutes from 07.58 minutes. Response times to other properties by the first appliance had risen from 06.51 to 09.07 minutes on average. The average response time to Road Traffic Collisions by the first appliance had risen from 11.55 to 12.13 minutes. There had been an increase in accidental dwelling fires in the Swindon area in the year to date from 36 to 45 year-on-year. The number of deliberate fires recorded in the year to date in the area had fallen from 46 to 33 year-on-year.

26/17.7 It was reported that the number of fire-related injuries and fire-related injuries requiring hospital treatment remained low and in line with previous

Initials _____

trends. The number of Road Traffic Collisions attended in the quarter was 19, a slight rise from the 17 such incidents attended in the same quarter last year. The number of home fire safety visits undertaken was 224 for the quarter. There had been 53 safeguarding referrals made in the quarter, which Officers advised was a positive statistic in that it reflected an increase in the number of people in need that were being referred to the Safeguarding Team as well as heightened awareness of safeguarding amongst staff.

26/17.8 Officers responded to a question from Cllr Kevin Small about the level of safeguarding training provided to operational staff. It was noted that all Firefighters received a minimum of Level 1 safeguarding training, with Group Managers (GMs) receiving Level 2, Area Managers Level 3, and the Safeguarding Team having Level 4 training and certification. Members were advised that, in many instances, crews carried out initial fact-finding and reporting that was essential in escalating safeguarding concerns where necessary.

26/17.9 The Officers advised Members that the Service was moving away from an e-learning focused suite of training on the topic of safeguarding, and towards a more interactive and engaging training schedule.

26/17.10 **Priority 2 - Protect you and the environment from harm**

Title	Current Year-to-Date	Last Year-to-Date
Automatic fire alarms which result in a false alarm Quarterly - Swindon Council	235	186
Automatic fire alarms which result in a false alarm - non domestic premises - Swindon Council (year to date)	47	27
Number of business fire safety checks undertaken by crews - Swindon Council	45	Not Applicable

26/17.11 Members noted that the number of fires in commercial premises in the year-to-date was 4, which was a significant decrease from the 11 fires in the same period last year. This indicated that increased call challenging by Control staff was not leading to greater fire risk.

26/17.12 With reference to business fire safety checks, Officers advised that wholetime Firefighters undertook these checks where time allowed, and that data was retained on those businesses that refused to allow fire safety checks to take place. Where Firefighters were able to undertake these checks, this freed up the Fire Safety Team to focus on the more complex and time-consuming investigations and checks. Crews were also able to

Initials _____

record important administrative information, such as premises details, which further aided the Fire Safety Team.

26/17.13 **Priority 3 - Be there when you need us**

26/17.14 The quarterly data for Priority 3 was discussed as set out in the dashboard.

26/17.15 It was reported that the figures for the number of people rescued from fire-related incidents, from RTCs, and from flooding remained low. The percentage of Breathing Apparatus (BA) competencies in date was 97.09%, the percentage of Incident Command competencies in date was 100%, the percentage of Casualty Care competencies in date was 97.73%, and the percentage of Driving competencies in date was 100%, all of which were measured against a target of 90%. The Officers explained that the requirement for Watch Managers (WMs) to renew their BA competencies had been made voluntary as WMs did not generally wear BA. This change had been made to aid in the retention of WMs, who may not wish to wear BA beyond a certain stage in their career. Officers provided an update on the cancellation of training sessions over the summer, which would see a reduction in the number of training competencies delivered in Q2.

26/17.16 Following discussion, it was agreed that the dashboard information could be improved by the inclusion of narrative to help explain the number of persons rescued from fire-related incidents and RTCs, for example, to illustrate those led to safety.

26/17.17 The Officers confirmed that one of the reasons for not obtaining 100% completion of training competencies could be due to staff sickness, although all competencies exceeded the operational target.

26/17.18 **Demand Summary**

Title	Current Year-to-Date	Last Year-to-Date	
Number of fires attended - Swindon Council	135	136	
Number of special services incidents attended - Swindon Council	150	157	
Number of incidents attended which turned out to be false alarms - Swindon Council	174	250	

26/17.19 The quarterly data for the Demand Summary was discussed as set out in the dashboard.

26/17.20 **Presentation**

Initials _____

26/17.21 The officers provided a presentation on the Service's engagement in quarter 1. This included community engagement, multi-agency exercises and notable incidents attended.

26/17.22 Regarding Home Fire Safety Visits, Cllr Small enquired as to which Officers made the assessment of which risk category a referral fell into, and how risk-averse the Service was in making these assessments. The Officers advised that each referral was currently manually triaged by the Home Fire Safety Team, which provided consistency in terms of case handling. When the current Home Fire Safety Visit assessment model moved out of its pilot phase, this process would be automated. The Service was highly experienced in completing these visits and in assessing cases, and risk ratings were accordingly accurate. The Service was benchmarked on its handling of these referrals by the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC).

26/17.23 Members and Officers discussed an emerging trend in solar panel-related fires, which was being exacerbated by faulty battery energy storage units. This was an area of concern nationally and note was made of the make and model of solar panels so that the information could be fed into incident reporting to the NFCC. It was acknowledged that the tactics for addressing fires caused by solar panels or battery energy inverters were continually evolving.

26/17.24 Cllr Small highlighted concern around the fact that many local authorities offered some form of sponsorship for solar panel installation. The Officers advised that there was a difficult balance to be struck in terms of not discouraging green energy generation and storage and highlighting the potential fire risks of these technologies. It was acknowledged that more data was needed regarding what the typical causes of fires were in relation to these technologies, and how resultant fire risk would be reduced over time. Members noted that there was heightened risk to crews operating in properties where solar installations had been made due to the added weight on the roof.

26/17.25 Cllr Oatway proposed that Fire Authority Members be sent a list of station open days being held throughout the Service, in order that they could attend these events if they wished.

26/17.26 ACTION: That all Fire Authority Members be kept informed of the dates of station open days throughout the Service, in order that they could attend if they so wished.

26/17.27 The Chair enquired about the way in which recent trends on social media that encouraged dangerous driving and other high-risk activity were being addressed by the Service. Officers assured Members that the Service was aware of the trends and was monitoring developments closely. Members noted that the Service had to strike a careful balance between highlighting dangerous activities and promoting them inadvertently. The Officers reported that feedback from schools on the Service's current Go Drive education sessions to children was that they were delivering high impact and engagement on the topic of road safety.

Initials _____

26/17.28 The Chair thanked the Officers for the presentation.

26/17.29 RESOLVED: Members scrutinised and noted the performance for quarter 1 2026.

26/18 Matters raised by Members (agreed with the Chair)

26/18.1 There were no matters raised by Members.

26/19 Date of Next meeting

26/19.1 The Chair confirmed the date of the next Swindon Local Performance and Scrutiny Committee meeting as Wednesday 25 November 2026 at 10:00am to be held in the Lecture Room at Swindon Fire Station, Drove Road, Swindon, SN1 3AD.

The meeting closed at 11:05am.

Signed: ----------

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