Item 26/25

DORSET & WILTSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

DRAFT Minutes of the Dorset Local Performance and Scrutiny Committee held at 10:00am on 20 August 2026 at the Poundbury offices, Conference Room, Peverell Avenue West, Poundbury, Dorset

Members present:
Cllr Laura Beddow
Cllr Richard Biggs
Cllr Mike Parkes

Cllr Clare Weight (Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Member in attendance)

Officer attendance:
Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO), Response, Darren Langdown
Area Manager (AM), Bradley Stevens
Group Manager (GM), Dave Adamson
Democratic Services Manager, Alex Cooper
Democratic Services Manager, David Shaw

26/11 Election of Chair

26/11.1 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.

26/11.2 Cllr Clare Weight nominated Cllr Duncan Sowry-House for the role of Chair. Cllr Richard Biggs seconded the nomination.

26/11.3 Cllr Laura Beddow nominated Cllr Mike Parkes for the role of Chair. Cllr Mike Parkes seconded the nomination.

26/11.4 There were an equal number of votes for both Cllr Sowry-House and Cllr Parkes to be appointed as Chair of the Dorset Local Performance and Scrutiny (LPS) Committee. Accordingly, the Democratic Services Manager drew lots for the role of Chair, in line with Standing Order 48.2. As a result of the drawing of lots, Cllr Duncan Sowry-House was elected as Chair of the Committee for the 2026/27 municipal year.

26/11.5 Cllr Sowry-House was not present at the meeting, which necessitated the election of a Chair for the duration of the meeting. Cllr Clare Weight

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nominated Cllr Biggs and Cllr Beddow seconded the nomination. With all Members in favour, Cllr Biggs was elected as Chair of the Committee for the duration of the meeting.

26/11.6 RESOLVED: That Cllr Duncan Sowry-House be elected as Chair of the Dorset Local Performance and Scrutiny Committee for the 2026/27 municipal year.

26/11.7 RESOLVED: That Cllr Richard Biggs was elected as Chair of the Committee for the duration of the meeting.

26/12 Welcome

26/12.1 The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed Members and Officers.

26/13 Apologies

26/13.1 Apologies were received from Cllr Duncan Sowry-House.

26/14 Code of Conduct, Declaration of Interests

26/14.1 The Chair asked the meeting for any disclosures of pecuniary interests under the Localism Act. There were no disclosures.

26/15 Public Questions

26/15.1 There were no members of the public present, and no public questions had been received.

26/16 Review and approve minutes of the Dorset Local Performance and Scrutiny (LPS) meeting on 19 February 2026

26/16.1 The Chair asked Members to review and approve the minutes from the previous meeting.

26/16.2 RESOLVED: That the minutes be confirmed and be signed by the Chair as a correct record.

26/17 Action Progress Report

26/17.1 The Democratic Services Manager reported that no actions had been recorded at the meeting of 19 February 2026, and that no actions were outstanding.

26/17.2 RESOLVED: Members noted that there were no actions outstanding.

26/18 Performance Monitoring and Briefing

26/18.1 Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO), Response, Darren Langdown, Area Manager (AM) Bradley Stevens, and Group Manager (GM) Dave Adamson

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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 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 the 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.

26/18.2 **Priority 1 - Help you to make safer and healthier choices.**

26/18.3

Title	Current Year-to-Date	Last Year-to-Date
Number of accidental dwelling fires - Dorset Council	57	40
Number of home fire safety visits Quarterly – Dorset Council	436	Not Applicable
Number of safeguarding referrals from DWFRS - Dorset Council	52	Not Applicable

26/18.4 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.

26/18.5 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 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. It was again noted that these figures related to the entire Service area.

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26/18.6 It was reported that the average response time to sleeping risk by the first appliance within the Dorset area was 11.16 minutes within the current year-to-date, compared to 11.28 minutes for last year-to-date. The response time to other properties by the first appliance within the area was 12.18 in the current year-to-date, compared to 13.15 minutes in the previous year-to-date. The response time to road traffic collisions (RTCs) by the first appliance within the area had slipped slightly to 11.59 minutes in the year-to-date, from 11.53 minutes last year at the same stage in the year.

26/18.7 The Officers provided an update on the number of accidental dwelling fires in the year-to-date, which was 57, an increase over the 40 accidental dwelling fires in the same period last year. There had been 54 deliberate fires in the year-to-date, down from 74 in the last year at this point. The number of fire-related injuries remained low, with five such injuries requiring hospital treatment, and a further two fire-related injuries requiring hospital treatment as the result of accidental dwelling fires.

26/18.8 In response to a question from Cllr Mike Parkes regarding the recording of incidents in which people were sent to hospital with minor injuries, the Officers informed Members that the Service recorded any instance in which people were given oxygen, where previously it had only been recorded where they were sent to hospital in an ambulance. Cllr Parkes further enquired as to the proportion of the figures recording injuries requiring hospital treatment in which crews had only given oxygen prior to the ambulance service transporting the member of the public to hospital. Officers responded that this information would be available within the incident reporting system. ACFO Langdown advised Members that the Service did see benchmarking reports from other services that allowed it to determine how other services captured and reported this data.

26/18.9 Within the Dorset area, the Service had attended 57 RTCs in Q1 of this year, which was an increase on the 55 such incidents attended in the same period last year. The Officers reported that this was consistent with national figures, which showed a consistent rise in RTCs. The Service was working with partner organisations to address this trend.

26/18.10 The Service was seeing an upward trend in the number of safeguarding referrals made. Officers advised that this was a positive statistic as it reflected an increase in the number of people in need being referred to the safeguarding team as well as heightened awareness of safeguarding amongst staff.

26/18.11 **Priority 2 - Protect you and the environment from harm**

26/18.12

Title	Current Year-to-Date	Last Year-to-Date
Automatic fire alarms which result in a false alarm Quarterly - Dorset Council	300	300

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Automatic fire alarms which result in a false alarm – non-domestic premises - Dorset Council (year to date)	63	45
Number of business fire safety checks undertaken by crews - Dorset Council	31	Not Applicable

26/18.13 The Officers advised Members that the Service was reducing the number of non-domestic properties that were attended in response to automatic fire alarms by utilising call challenging to ensure that there was a suitable reason for a crew to attend. There had been a drop in the number of fires in non-domestic properties from 25 last year at this stage to 19 in the current year-to-date. The Officers advised Members that this reduction in the number of fires in non-domestic premises was evidence that call challenging for automatic fire alarm calls was not leading to an increase in fire risk.

26/18.14 With reference to business fire safety checks, Officers advised that 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 record important administrative information, such as premises details, which also aided the Fire Safety Team. The Officers advised Members that only Firefighters working at wholetime stations carried out these checks.

26/18.15 Cllr Parkes enquired as to how business fire safety checks on those station grounds that were not covered by wholetime crews were carried out. The Officers advised that checks on these station grounds were carried out by the Protection Team.

26/18.16 Members were advised that one prohibition notice had been issued within the quarter in the Dorset area. The Service was now undertaking a number of prosecutions, following a national push for all fire services to pursue prosecutions, in addition to serving prohibitions and enforcement notices.

26/18.17 In response to a query from Cllr Weight regarding the way in which the Service would have pursued prosecutions historically, prior to the more recent national push to increase the number of prosecutions, the Officers advised that Station Managers (SMs) were trained to carry out this work to an extent but that this was now taken on by a dedicated team.

26/18.18 **Priority 3 - Be there when you need us**

26/18.19 The quarterly data for Priority 3 was discussed as set out in the dashboard.

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26/18.20 It was reported that the number of people rescued from fire-related incidents was zero, from RTCs was 37, and from flooding was 5 in the current year-to-date. The percentage of Breathing Apparatus (BA) competencies in date was 87.46%, the percentage of Incident Command competencies in date was 97.94%, the percentage of Casualty Care competencies in date was 96.05%, 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 changed to being voluntary as WMs do 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.

26/18.21 **Demand summary**

26/18.22

Title	Current Year-to-Date	Last Year-to-Date
Number of fires attended - Dorset Council	259	304
Number of special services incidents attended - Dorset Council	285	275
Number of incidents attended which turned out to be false alarms - Dorset Council	237	414

26/18.23 The quarterly data for the Demand Summary was discussed as set out in the dashboard. In response to a question from Cllr Parkes regarding the funding model underlying the Service's response to flooding, given the increased risk of these events posed by climate change, the Officers advised that work was ongoing within the National Fire Chiefs Council to deliver a modern and suitable funding model to support this work.

26/18.24 Members were provided with an update on the number of special services incidents that the Service had attended within Dorset in Q1. It was noted that South Western Ambulance Service Trust (SWAST) had declared a major incident in Q1 and that the Service had provided support to them over a four-day period. During this time, crews had responded to "collapsed behind closed doors" calls, without any triaging work having been undertaken by SWAST prior to crews attending the call. The Officers advised that co-responding was taking place from four fire stations.

26/18.25 Cllr Weight enquired about the impact on neighbouring services when the Service had declared a major incident during the summer. Officers advised

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that the Service had not stopped attending any incidents but had reduced the number of appliances attending certain incident types in some cases.

26/18.26 Responding to questions from Cllrs Richard Biggs and Parkes, the Officers advised that there were no drones in use with the Service currently, but that government funding as part of the national resilience programme may make some drones available when the need arose. It was noted that licensing and training staff to operate drones had historically presented a significant barrier to their implementation, though it was anticipated that these issues would be resolved in the coming years.

26/18.27 Cllr Weight asked about the accumulation of flammable material as a major source of cooking fires. Officers explained that an example of such an instance would be where fat or grease had built up in an oven and then ignited.

26/18.28 **Presentation**

26/18.29 GM Adamson provided a presentation on the Service's engagement in Quarter 1. This included community engagement, multi-agency exercises attended and notable incidents attended.

26/18.30 The Officers advised Members, in response to a question from Cllr Parkes, that the decision as to where personnel and equipment were sent away from the Service area was made through the national resilience framework, which identified specifically the services that required assistance and the level of assistance required. The cost recuperation process for equipment breakages whilst crews were deployed on national resilience duties was set out in the terms of the national resilience agreement. Officers also confirmed that the Service was able to refuse requests for equipment if it felt that this could compromise service delivery within Dorset and Wiltshire.

26/18.31 Members and Officers discussed the level of availability from on-call staff during the major incident, and the current culture surrounding on-call availability within the Service. The Officers advised Members that they were involved in conversations with on-call staff about the impact that small changes in the timing of available hours could make to the ability for the Service to respond to incidents when they are predominantly occurring.

26/18.32 Members were provided with an update on recruitment following the station reviews process, and the increased number of applicants that had come forward for on-call Firefighter positions in Dorset as a result. The turnaround time for an applicant to become fully certified and begin turning out with their crew was hoped to be shortened by the response team running introductory training courses in a wider variety of locations. This would also have the effect of lessening demand on the training centres.

26/18.33 In response to a query from Cllr Laura Beddow regarding current trends in deliberate fire setting, the Officers informed Members that they were aware of a number of TikTok driven trends that raised fire risk within the Service

area. These trends were being monitored closely, including by partner agencies.

26/18.34 The Chair thanked the Officers for the presentation.

26/18.35 RESOLVED: Members scrutinised and noted the performance for quarter 1 2026.

26/19 Matters raised by Members (agreed with the Chair)

26/19.1 There were no additional matters raised by Members.

26/20 Date of Next Meeting

26/20.1 The Chair confirmed the date of the next Dorset Local Performance and Scrutiny Committee meeting as 19 November 2026 at 10:00am to be held at the Conference Room, Poundbury offices, Peverell Avenue West, Poundbury, Dorset.

The meeting closed at 11:53.

Signed: _____

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