



Hereford & Worcester Fire Authority

Policy and Resources Committee

Wednesday, 01 March 2023, 10:30

**Chairman: Mr R J Phillips**

**Vice-Chairman: Mr C B Taylor**

## **Minutes**

**Members Present:** Mr D Chambers, Mrs K Hey, Ms J Monk, Mr R J Phillips, Ms L Robinson, Mr L Stark, Mr C B Taylor, Mr R M Udall, Mr T Wells

### **0214 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Cllr J Hardwick and Cllr D Morehead.

### **0215 Named Substitutes**

There were no named substitutes.

### **0216 Declarations of Interest (if any)**

Cllr R Phillips declared that he was Vice Chair of the Firefighters Scheme Advisory Board (England and Wales), Chair of the Local Government Pension Scheme Advisory Board (England and Wales) and a member of the NJC for Fire Service (Grey Book and Green Book).

### **0217 Confirmation of Minutes**

***RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 15 November 2022 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.***

### **0218 Budget Monitoring 2022/23 – Quarter 3**

The Treasurer informed Members of the current position on the revenue and capital budget for 2022/23.

Members approved the transfer of £0.513m from the Budget Reduction Reserve to fund the forecast Revenue Budget over-spend, which included the impact of the last pay offer to 'Grey Book' staff and which

would be partially offset by a budget surplus in 2023/24 as set out in the Budget and Medium Term Financial Plan approved by the Authority on 13 February 2023.

Members were disappointed to learn that no further funding was available from the Home Office to cover the cost of the increased pay offer.

***RESOLVED that the Committee approved a transfer from the Budget Reduction Reserve to fund the forecast Revenue Budget over-spend of £0.513m.***

#### **0219 Fire Pensions Administration and Payroll Arrangements**

The Treasurer presented a report to seek an exception to Contract Standing Orders in respect of the Fire Pensions Administration and payroll contract.

Members were informed that the current contract with West Yorkshire Pension Fund was due to expire on 31 September 2023. Normally this would be retendered however the present time was not opportune for changing supplier.

Members were in agreement to allow the Treasurer, in conjunction with the Head of Legal Services, to extend the contract based on current arrangements for a further appropriate period.

***RESOLVED that the Committee approves and exception to Contract Standing Orders under paragraph 3.1 (g).***

#### **0220 Property Update**

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer presented an update on the current property programme.

Members were pleased to note the development of the property programme, in particular the Redditch and Hereford fire station builds.

Members also noted that all property related matters were progressing as quickly as resources permitted in order to mitigate the rapidly increasing costs of materials wherever possible.

***RESOLVED that the property update and progress be noted.***

#### **0221 2022-23 Performance Report: Q3 (01 October – 31 December 2022)**

The Assistant Chief Officer of Prevention presented Members with the Service's performance for Quarter 3, 2022-23.

Members noted that there were a total of 2,011 incidents attended in Quarter 3, an increase of 11% on last year, and higher than the five year average of 1,774 incidents. Home Fire Safety checks had increased by 217% which reflected the commitment to increase prevention activity.

Members also noted the increase in calls to false alarms and that this was now the single largest category of calls attended. The Chief Fire Officer explained this was a complex issue and that the Service did not mobilise to known false alarms. The category included good intent calls where people thought there was a fire as well as calls to automated fire alarms. In relation to the latter, there were no multiple repeat offenders. The number of hoax calls received was also extremely low. Officers were nonetheless undertaking a review of false alarm calls and the Chief Fire Officer intended to bring a report on this to a future meeting.

Noticing the proportion of female staff in the Service, Members raised questions about the culture within the organisation in light of revelations in some other Fire and Rescue Services. The Chief Fire Officer indicated that in light of events elsewhere, the Service had now implemented an independent reporting hot-line 'Say-So' for all staff, to supplement the existing staff reporting arrangements. The Chief Fire Officer had also commissioned a firm to undertake an independent cultural review of the organisation.

***RESOLVED that the Q3 2022-23 performance headlines set out in Section 4 of the report, with further details available in Appendix 1, be noted.***

The Meeting ended at: 11:54

Signed:.....

Date:.....

Chairman