



Hereford & Worcester Fire Authority

Full Authority

Wednesday, 25 June 2025, 10:30

Chairman: Mr R Phillips

Vice-Chairman: Mrs H Robson

Minutes

Members Present: Mr D Aubrey, Mr A Bailes, Mr D Boatright-Greene, Mrs J Carwardine, Mr D Davies, Mr M Dunkley, Mr B Hopkins, Miss E Kearsey, Mr J Kenyon, Mr C McSweeney, Mr T Miller, Mr A Monk, Mr D Morehead, Mr R Morris, Mr R Phillips, Mrs H Robson, Mrs J Shaw, Mr R M Udall, Mr T Wells

0531 Election of Chairman

RESOLVED that Cllr R Phillips be elected as Chairman of the Fire Authority for the ensuing year, and unless he ceases to be a Member of the Authority, to hold office until his successor becomes entitled to act.

0532 Election of Vice Chairman

RESOLVED that Cllr H Robson be elected as Vice-Chairman of the Fire Authority for the ensuing year, and unless she ceases to be a Member of the Authority, to hold office until her successor becomes entitled to act.

0533 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllr A Amos, Cllr D Boulter, Cllr O Cleary and Cllr D Toynbee.

Apologies were also received from Cllr M Bayliss, Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner.

0534 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).

0535 Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman welcomed new Members to their first meeting and hoped they would enjoy their time on the Fire Authority.

There was a minute's silence for the two Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service firefighters who had died recently and mention was made to Cllr D Prodger, an ex Fire Authority Chairman, who had died a few months ago. Tributes were also paid to those members of the Council who had lost their seats in the recent Worcestershire elections, in particular to Cllr K Taylor who had been the Chairman of the Fire Authority for the past 4 years.

The Chairman announced the following:

- Hereford Fire Station - the station had now moved to its temporary location and Herefordshire Members would be invited to see it shortly. The Chief Fire Officer assured Members that there were no issues with operational cover at the new location and he had received positive feedback from staff. Hereford Members would see the existing station demolition starting soon. Cllr Kenyon informed the Chief Fire Officer that he had fitted a time delay camera to the pub opposite to watch the demolition and share. The Chief Fire Officer confirmed that the Comms team would be in touch with Cllr Kenyon to share the footage.
- Barbourne Works evacuation - Prohibition Notice had been served to the managing agents First Port and approximately 180 residents had been rehomed. The Chief Fire Officer confirmed that the Prohibition Notice had been issued for their safety due to the cladding and fire not being able to be contained to individual flats. Residents had now moved back onto the ground and first floor areas. Providing required work was completed in the next couple of weeks, the remaining residents would be able to move back.
- A long serving member of support staff had been recognised in the King's Birthday Honours. Sonja Sinclair-Elechi, who had worked for HWFRS for 30 years, had been awarded the **King's Fire Service Medal** for Distinguished Service. In 2005 she spearheaded the formation of a Critical Incident Support Team (CIST) to provide a professional debriefing and trauma support after high-impact events. She now manages, along with two co-ordinators, the CIST team who make a real difference behind the scenes. Latterly she established the Welfare Team, supporting colleagues facing stress, anxiety and a host of wellbeing challenges - all this alongside her role as a payroll officer. This achievement was a true reflection of all the years Sonja had given to helping others thrive. The Chairman commented how grateful the Service were for her, and how proud the Service were to see her honoured in this way.

- Teams were delighted to be shortlisted as finalists for two categories in the Herefordshire & Worcestershire Chamber of Commerce Business Awards 2025. The judges awarded HW Fire a '**Highly Commended**' award in the category of **Commitment to the Community**. The team were then overjoyed to be announced as overall winners in the **Health and Wellbeing in the Workplace** category. Both awards were very well deserved and a huge achievement. The Chairman thanked everybody who had contributed in some way to the Service receiving this recognition.

0536 Public Participation

There was no public participation.

0537 Confirmation of Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Fire Authority meeting held on 5 March 2025 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

0538 Appointment to Committees and Outside Bodies (LGA)

A report was presented by the General Counsel, Clerk and Monitoring Officer to consider the allocation of Committee seats to political groups in accordance with the requirements for political balance, the appointment of Members to those committees and appointments to outside bodies.

RESOLVED that:

i) Committee seats be allocated to political groups as set out at Appendix 2 and the appointment of individual Members be delegated to the Monitoring Officer in accordance with the wishes of Group Leaders;

ii) The Authority determine the allocation of any remaining committee seats to non-aligned Members;

iii) The Authority appoint:

a) Cllr D Boatright-Greene and Cllr D Toynbee as the Chairman and Vice-Chairman respectively of the Policy & Resources Scrutiny Committee; and

b) Cllr E Kearsey and Cllr C McSweeny as the Chairman and Vice-Chairman respectively of the Audit, Scrutiny & Standards Committee.

iv) The Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Authority be appointed as Chairman and Vice-Chairman respectively of the Appointments Committee;

v) Cllr R Udall be appointed as the Member Champion for Culture;

vi) Cllr D Morehead be appointed as the representative on the Health & Safety Committee;

vii) Cllr R Morris be appointed as the Member Champion for the Fire Cadets;

viii) The current practice for representation and voting on the Local Government Association and the LGA Fire Commission, as described in paragraphs 12 and 13 of the report, be continued.

[Cllr E Kearsy and Cllr R Morris left the meeting at 11.01am].

0539 Review of Constitution

The General Counsel, Clerk & Monitoring Officer presented a report to adopt updates to the Constitution that had been considered and recommended by the Audit & Standards Committee.

Members were informed that there had been a comprehensive review of the Authority's existing Constitution. It was still fit for purpose and there were few substantive changes proposed other than updating relevant financial limits/thresholds and adopting a new simplified code of conduct in line with the LGA model form. The opportunity was also taken to ensure the wording of the Constitution more explicitly reflected the HMICFRS' 'characteristics of good'.

Members suggested that the names of the Committees should be changed to include the word 'scrutiny', to better reflect the Committees' purpose. Following discussion it was agreed that the names of the Committees be changed to:

- Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee
- Audit, Scrutiny and Standards Committee

It was also agreed that the Terms of Reference and names of both Committees would be further considered at the next Audit and Standards Committee meeting on 24 September 2025.

RESOLVED that:

i) the updates to the Constitution be adopted;

ii) pending further consideration of the names and Terms of Reference at the next Audit and Standards Committee:

a) the name of the Policy and Resources Committee be changed to Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee; and

b) the name of the Audit and Standards Committee be changed to Audit, Scrutiny and Standards Committee.

0540 Completion of the Audit 2023/24

The Treasurer presented a report to conclude the delayed 2023/24 Statement of Accounts process and consequential Audit arrangements and to confirm that the 2024/25 process was on schedule. The Treasurer reminded Members that all previous years have always had a clean audit.

Members were asked to approve the 2023/24 Statement of Accounts to enable the External Auditor to issue the relevant Audit Opinion as soon as it was ready. On publication the approved Statements would include the Audit Opinion and the already approved Annual Governance Statement.

Members were assured that steps had been taken to ensure that the 2024/25 process will proceed in accordance with normal Regulatory timescales.

RESOLVED that having considered the Audit Completion Report:

i) The Letter of Representation be approved;

ii) The Statement of Accounts 2023/24 be approved;

iii) The Auditor's Annual Report be noted and accepted; and

iv) The additional audit fee be noted.

0541 Provisional Financial Out-turn 2024-25

Members scrutinised the provisional financial results for 2024/25 presented by the Treasurer, and the transfers to and from Earmarked Reserves in accordance with the Reserves Strategy.

Members also noted that the Prudential Indicators for 2024/25 were within the appropriate limits set by the Authority and no matters required further action.

RESOLVED that:

i) the provisional financial results for 2024-25 be noted;

ii) the transfers to and from Earmarked Reserves in accordance with the Reserves Strategy be approved; and

iii) the Prudential Indicators for 2024/25 be confirmed within the limits set by the Authority and no matters required further action.

0542 Annual Governance Statement 2024/25

The General Counsel, Clerk & Monitoring Officer presented a report on the Annual Governance Statement 2024/25 to enable Members to scrutinise the evidence compiled during the self-assessment review, which provided the assurances that sit behind the Annual Governance Statement.

Members noted that there were no areas where the direction of travel had decreased during 2024/25 or where the status was less than satisfactory and approved the Annual Governance Statement 2024/25 for publication.

RESOLVED that the Annual Governance Statement 2024/25 be approved.

0543 Annual Service Review 2024-25

The Chief Fire Officer presented the Annual Service Review 2024-25 for Members' scrutiny and approval.

Members noted that the Annual Service Review provided a look back at the range of work undertaken over the last year, including headline activities and incident statistics. The Service had attended 8,212 incidents during 2024-25, which was a 3% increase on the previous year. There was a 3% rise in special service incident call-outs due to periods of wet weather and storms and there was also a 9% rise in road traffic collisions.

RESOLVED that the Fire Authority approved the Annual Service Review 2024-25 for publication on the Service website.

0544 Annual Service Plan 2025-26

The Assistant Chief Officer - Director of Prevention presented the Annual Service Plan 2025-26 for Members' scrutiny and approval.

[Cllr D Morehead left the meeting at 11.53am, returned at 11.55am].

Members noted that the Annual Service Plan was a look ahead to activities planned for the coming year, with priorities arranged against the overall aims of the CRMP 2021-25 and the research conducted for the 2025-30 CRMP, including the Service's Core Strategies.

RESOLVED that the Fire Authority approved the Annual Service Plan 2025-26 for publication on the Service website.

0545 Collaboration Document 2025

The Assistant Chief Officer - Director of Prevention presented the Collaboration Document 2025 allowing Members the opportunity to scrutinise and consider for publication.

Members noted that the Authority had considerable experience in collaborating both formally and informally with a wide range of organisations, emergency services partners, local authorities and the voluntary sector.

Members were extremely pleased with the document and approved it for publication.

RESOLVED that the Fire Authority approved the Collaboration Document 2025 for publication.

0546 His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabularies and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) Improvement Plan – Q4 Update 2024-25

The Assistant Chief Officer - Director of Prevention presented the HMICFRS Improvement Plan for Members to scrutinise the progress made on actions during Quarter 4 2024-25, following the inspection report dated 29 November 2023.

Members noted that as of Q4 2024-25, the Service had now completed 66% of the actions in the Improvement Plan, which included completion of all actions under Areas For Improvements 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7. The remaining 33% of the actions were in progress.

Members were informed that work was currently underway to prepare for the next inspection in February 2026 which included further analysis of the Areas for Improvement, including those which had been marked as complete to provide assurance that there had been continued progress.

RESOLVED that the Fire Authority noted the progress made on the actions to deliver the HMICFRS Improvement Plan and that further progress had been made up to the end of March 2025 (Q4).

0547 Minutes of the Policy and Resources Committee

The Chairman presented the minutes of the Policy and Resources Committee meeting held on 5 March 2025.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Policy and Resources Committee meeting held on 5 March 2025 be received and noted.

0548 Minutes of the Audit and Standards Committee

The Chairman presented the minutes of the Audit and Standards Committee meeting held on 16 April 2025.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Audit and Standards Committee meeting held on 16 April 2025 be received and noted.

The Meeting ended at: 12:36

Signed:.....

Date:.....

Chairman