



Hereford & Worcester Fire Authority

Policy and Resources Committee

Wednesday, 20 November 2024, 14:00

Chairman: Mr R J Phillips

Vice-Chairman: Mr C B Taylor

Minutes

Members Present: Mr D Boulter, Mr D Chambers, Mr D Davies, Mr A Ditta, Mr D Morehead, Mr R J Phillips, Ms L Robinson, Mr C B Taylor, Mr R M Udall, Mr T Wells

0277 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllr J Carwardine and Cllr J Monk.

0278 Named Substitutes

There were no named substitutes.

0279 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).

0280 Confirmation of Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Policy and Resources Committee meeting held on 11 September 2024 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

0281 Budget Monitoring 2024/25 – Quarter 2

The Treasurer informed Members of the current position on the revenue and capital budget for 2024/25 and provided an update on Treasury Management. Members' attention was drawn to an error in the second recommendation, which should have read 'overspending' rather than

'underspending'.

Members noted the following budget variations:

- Wholetime Pay – a predicted overspend of £0.396m, mostly relating to the challenges with wholetime crewing arrangements that were outlined in detail in the recent Resource Review.
- Unfunded pension costs – a saving in LGPS back-funded costs reflecting the relatively well funded position at the last valuation.
- Potential saving in additional costs of administering the FFPS reflecting the long term approach adopted by the Service a number of years ago.
- Small savings in the capital financing budget. Members were advised that the annual underspendings that had previously occurred as a result of scheme slippage were ear-marked to fund the final costs of the Hereford Fire Station replacement.

Members also noted that at the time of drafting the report the April 2024 pay award for "Green Book" (support staff) had not been settled, but was being forecast at the employers final offer which gave a small saving. The Treasurer was pleased to announce that this had now been agreed and was as forecast.

There was discussion around the government's announcement of increased national insurance and the impact this would have on the Service's budget. The Treasurer confirmed that this mostly affected the Service in relation to Oncall firefighters and although the government had indicated that they wanted to mitigate government bodies, it was unsure if there would be a rebate to Fire Services or if the grant would be increased to compensate.

Members requested that the minor schemes in the capital budget be reviewed and the Chief Fire Officer confirmed that this would be undertaken and reported back to the Committee.

Members noted that the grant settlement was expected on 19 December 2024.

RESOLVED that:

i) the revenue budget allocation adjustments be confirmed;

ii) the current projection of a £0.197m (0.5%) revenue overspending be noted; and

iiii) the changes to the Capital Budget be noted.

0282 Unwanted Fire Signals (UwFS)

The Chief Fire Officer presented a progress update regarding a new policy introduced to reduce attendance at Unwanted Fire Signal (UwFS) incidents, following the implementation of a risk-based call filtering methodology in September 2024.

Members noted that HWFRS implemented new UwFS procedures on 30 September 2024, following completion of a policy, ARC agreements, and extensive internal and external communications and engagement.

Members were informed that early indications showed that the roll out had been successful and the new procedures were on track to meet the estimated 332 (13.5%) annual reduction in attendance at UwFS incidents. The new policy had realised benefits to Prevention, Protection and Response activities, whilst also addressing an area for improvement, highlighted by HMICFRS. Quality assurance procedures had been implemented with reporting arrangements in place for both the Strategic Leadership Board and the Fire Authority.

RESOLVED that Members noted the implementation and impact of the Unwanted Fire Signals policy in particular that:

- ***Early indications were that the roll out had been successful and the new procedures were on track to meet the estimated 332 (13.5%) annual reduction in attendance at UwFS incidents.***
- ***The new policy had realised benefits to Prevention, Protection and Response activities.***
- ***Quality assurance procedures had been implemented and reporting arrangements were in place for both the Strategic Leadership Board and the Fire Authority.***

0283 Quarterly Performance Report: Quarter 2, 01 July 2024 to 30 September 2024

The Assistant Chief Officer - Director of Prevention presented a summary of the Service's performance for Q2 2024 to 2025.

Members noted that the total number of incidents attended in Quarter 2 of 2024/25 had increased by 7% to 2,217 compared to the same quarter of 2023/24. Members also noted that 1,894 Home Fire Safety Visits (HFSVs) were completed in Q2 of 2024/25 (a decrease of 3% when compared to the same period last year). 471 (25%) were delivered by

Prevention Technicians and 1,423 (75%) were delivered by operational crews.

The number of HFSVs completed had decreased by 3% (-55) compared to the same period last year.

Concern was expressed for the On Call availability at Pershore. The Chief Fire Officer assured Members that this was due to staff turnover. Pershore is being targeted with support from the recruitment and marketing team who have been successful in other locations recently.

There was also concern with the increase of RTC incidents and officers were asked whether this was a national trend. The Chief Fire Officer stated that the Fire Service were not called out to all RTCs and therefore comparative data may not be accurate. It was noted though that in preparation for the next CRMP RTC data had been looked at in depth and it had found that classified B roads of a speed limit of 60 in urban towns were the most dangerous roads in our two counties and preventative work was currently being researched to target age groups over the next few years. This would form part of the CRMP for 2025-2030.

RESOLVED that the details of the Q2 2024 to 2025 performance headlines be noted, in particular that:

i) A total of 2,217 incidents were attended in Q2 2024 to 2025 which was an increase of 7% (+154 incidents) compared to Q2 2023 to 2024.

ii) Fire incidents (459) were 9% greater (+39 incidents) than in Q2 2023 to 2024 but below the five-year average of 540.

iii) Special Services (690) were 15% higher (+90 incidents) than in Q2 2023 to 2024 with road traffic collisions (RTCs) up by 16% (+26 incidents) compared to Q2 2023 to 2024.

iv) False alarms (1,068) were 2% higher in number (+25 incidents) compared with Q2 2023 to 2024.

0284 Update from the Joint Consultative Committee

The Assistant Chief Officer - Director of Prevention informed Members of the activities of the Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) since the last update provided on 8 May 2024.

Members were informed that the Joint Consultative Committee had met on 2 occasions since the previous update delivered to the Committee - 11 July and 2 October 2024. Future meetings were scheduled on

19 November and 18 December 2024. Proposed meetings at six weekly intervals had been arranged for 2025. Recent JCC meetings had received updates concerning the recent Resource Review, the Service's HMICFRS Action Plan updates presented to the Fire Authority, the on-going CRMP process and discussions on budgets and finance.

A question was asked whether there should be a Member role at the JCC meetings, which had happened in previous years, and it was agreed that this would be considered.

RESOLVED that the following new and existing items currently under discussion by the Joint Consultative Committee be noted:

- i) Statement of Particulars***
- ii) Fitness and Attendance Management Policies***
- iii) Resource Review Update***
- iv) Culture and Ethics Steering Group***
- v) National Operational Guidance (NOG) and Intel Projects***
- vi) Property Updates***
- vii) HMICFRS Action Plan***
- viii) Updates: Flexible Duty System for Fire Control, Fire Control Crewing, Culture Statement of Intent, and Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 2 Report***
- ix) CRMP Update***
- x) Finance Update***

The Meeting ended at: 14:50

Signed:.....

Date:.....

Chairman