



Hereford & Worcester Fire Authority  
Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee  
Wednesday, 10 September 2025, 10:30

**Chairman: Mr D Boatright-Greene**  
**Vice-Chairman: Ms D Toynbee**

## **Minutes**

**Members Present:** Mr D Boatright-Greene, Mr D Boulter, Mrs J Carwardine, Mr B Hopkins, Mr M Jones, Mr J Kenyon, Mr A Monk, Mr R Phillips, Mrs H Robson, Mrs J Shaw, Ms D Toynbee

### **0304 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Cllr T Miller and Cllr D Morehead.

### **0305 Named Substitutes**

Cllr D Davies substituted for Cllr D Morehead.

### **0306 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).

### **0307 Confirmation of Minutes**

***RESOLVED that the minutes of the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 9 July 2025 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.***

### **0308 Budget Monitoring 2025/26 – Quarter 2**

The Treasurer presented Members with a report on the current position of the revenue and capital budget for 2025/26 and an update on Treasury Management for scrutiny.

The Treasurer explained to Members that the original revenue budget now had a deficit of £0.798m, following the outcome of the national negotiated pay awards which added a further £0.366m to the original figure. Members were pleased to note that the Strategic Leadership Board had agreed a final savings plan to offset this which reduced costs by £0.807m in this year, bringing the budget to an overall small surplus of £0.008m. Members noted that the full year impact of these savings was £1.1m.

The Chief Fire Officer informed Members that a redundancy process would shortly commence, resulting in the loss of fewer than five support staff posts, in order to achieve the necessary budgetary savings for the current year.

Members noted that front-line staff were unaffected but the Chief Fire Officer indicated that it may not be possible to guarantee this if further cuts were required next financial year.

Members queried why the Fire Service did not receive a reduction in business rates on their premises as they are providing a public service. The Chief Fire Officer explained that, following recent communication with the Chair and Vice-Chair, he was liaising with the National Fire Chief's Council for advice and they would lobby on our behalf.

Members noted the three significant variations to the revised budget of £44.669m:

- Facilities Management - £0.070m overdue to the 2024/25 business rates for the fire share of the joint Bromsgrove Fire/Police station which were not notified until August 2025.
- Finance - £0.080m additional income due to the Truck Manufacturers Cartel Compensation Claim which had now been settled.
- Capital financing - due to savings in costs as a result of 2024/25 programme slippage.

Members expressed their concern at the potential impact of the intended 'fair funding review' and instructed officers to continue making every effort to influence government in the hope of avoiding the need for future cuts to services.

***RESOLVED that the Committee:***

***i) Confirmed the revenue budget allocation adjustments;***

***ii) Noted that the budget had now moved from a £125,000 surplus to***

*a small £8,600 surplus;*

*iii) Noted the consequential impact on the MTFP;*

*iv) Noted the changes to the Capital Budget; and*

*v) Expressed concern at the potential impact of the intended 'fair funding review' and instructed officers to continue making every effort to influence government in the hope of avoiding the need for future cuts to services.*

## **0309 Property Update**

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Director of Protection and Assets) provided Members with the opportunity to scrutinise the Property update, specifically reviewing the Hereford Fire Station Update and Project Overview.

Following an explanation of the new Hereford Fire Station build, Members understood why it had taken so long for the project to commence and were pleased that it had finally started. It was noted that working with different partners had caused considerable delays over the years and this would not be recommended for future work. Members were pleased to hear that the crews were quite happy at the temporary Hereford site while the old building was demolished and rebuilt.

Officers were commended for producing such a comprehensive document, which enabled Members to clearly understand how it had all evolved.

A Member queried the invoices that were paid and whether they were completely scrutinised prior to payment. The Treasurer was pleased to confirm that all invoices are thoroughly checked before approving for payment for large projects. The Chief Fire Officer also assured Members that a retention is always held for large projects to get the contractor back to resolve snagging issues before final payment.

It was noted that minor building works could sometimes be paid before the standard of work is quality checked as it was just too expensive to get everything checked prior to payment for small works.

***RESOLVED that having scrutinised the details of the Property update, specifically reviewing the Hereford Fire Station Update and Project Overview, those details were accepted and approved.***

## **0310 Overview of the Fire Control Project**

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Director of Protection and Assets) provided Members with the opportunity to scrutinise the Fire Control Project Overview and progress to date.

The Chief Fire Officer advised that, on 12 September 2018, both Shropshire and Hereford & Worcester Fire Authorities approved the creation of the Strategic Fire Alliance to support a resilient Command and Control function. It was agreed to procure a single system allowing each Authority to retain its own Fire Control to preserve local expertise and knowledge. It was agreed to procure an off-the-shelf system already in use by another Fire Service.

Members noted that Cleveland Fire Brigade and County Durham & Darlington Fire and Rescue Service had expressed interest in joining the procurement. The tender and specification were subsequently amended, with the potential benefits of enhanced resilience and reduced system costs. The collaborative nature of the project had resulted in reduced costs of £14m across the four Authorities.

The Chairman asked whether additional Fire Services could be integrated into the system and was advised that this would be possible, provided they shared similar demographics and operated on-call stations.

Members noted that following a full open competitive tender process, the contract was awarded to Motorola Solutions as they offered the best value for a robust, cloud-hosted mobilising system that met the collective needs of all four Services.

The project was deemed a great success and the new Command and Control System is scheduled to be live in all four Services during 2026.

***RESOLVED that Members note the Fire Control Project Overview, including the eleven referenced background papers, and decisions that have been made by the Fire Authority to date: noting the contract sign-off date of 14 December 2024, and project progress to date.***

#### **0311 Fire Cadets Annual Review – 2024/2025**

The Assistant Chief Officer (Director of Prevention) provided Members with the opportunity to scrutinise the Fire Cadets activity for 2024/2025.

Following an introduction to the role of the Fire Cadets, which operates out of Droitwich Fire Station, a Member queried value for money for the £8,000 budget that was provided yearly to maintain its function. It was queried whether more than 18 Fire Cadets could be accommodated, however it was explained that safeguarding requirements necessitate an

appropriate adult to child ratio, which is challenging to maintain when relying on volunteers to give up their time.

A Member enquired about establishing a unit at Hereford. It was noted that this would depend on the availability of volunteers and would be considered again once the new station was built.

Members were pleased to learn that the Fire Cadets programme continues to thrive, offering young people valuable skills, experiences and opportunities for personal development as well as delivering meaningful contributions to the Service's Prevention agenda.

***RESOLVED that having scrutinised the report, it be agreed that the Fire Cadets programme continues to thrive, delivering meaningful contributions to the Service's Prevention agenda and offering young people valuable skills, experiences and opportunities for personal development.***

#### **0312 Quarter 1 Performance Report**

The Assistant Chief Officer (Director of Prevention) provided Members the opportunity to scrutinise the Service's performance for Quarter 1 2025 to 2026.

Members attention was drawn to the Prohibition Notice that had been issued at a block of flats in Worcester as the premises were noted under the Cladding Safety Scheme. After interim works were agreed, residents from the ground and first floors had returned to their homes. The Prohibition Notice remained in force for the second and third floor flats whilst remediation works were being investigated.

A Member queried the attendance times from the temporary Hereford Fire Station site and was pleased to note that no additional delays had occurred.

The Fire Authority Chairman expressed concern over the extremely dry summer and the high number of fires in the open. He had requested a report for the December Fire Authority meeting outlining how the Service responded and identifying best practice.

Discussion took place regarding farmland fires and whether advice is provided following incidents involving bonfires or machinery. The Chief Fire Officer confirmed that crews always offer advice post incident, although it is not always followed.

A Member queried delays in registering arrival at incidents. The Chief Fire Officer explained that while occasionally it can be overlooked, crews

cannot register arrival until they are physically at the scene.

A query was raised regarding charging for false alarms. The Chief Fire Officer confirmed that Fire Services are legally prohibited from charging for attendance at such calls.

***RESOLVED that having scrutinised the details of the Q1 2025 to 2026 performance, those details be accepted and approved and that the following headlines, in particular, be noted:***

***i) A total of 2,115 incidents were attended in Q1 2025 to 2026 which was an increase of 3.6% (+73) compared to Q1 2024 to 2025;***

***ii) Fire incidents (665) increased by 54.7% (+235) when compared to Q1 2024 to 2025 and were higher than the five-year average of 477;***

***iii) Special Services (614) decreased by 2.5% (-16) when compared to Q1 2024 to 2025. Road Traffic Collisions (RTCs) decreased by 18.5% (-35) compared to Q1 2024 to 2025; and***

***iv) False Alarms (836) decreased by 14.9% (-146) compared with Q1 2024 to 2025.***

The Meeting ended at: 12:26

Signed:.....

Date:.....

Chairman