



Hereford & Worcester Fire Authority
Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee
Wednesday, 09 July 2025, 10:30

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

Minutes

Members Present: Mr D Boatright-Greene, Mr B Hopkins, Mr T Miller, Mr D Morehead, Mr R Phillips, Mrs H Robson, Mrs J Shaw, Ms D Toynbee

0293 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllr D Boulter, Cllr J Carwardine, Cllr M Jones and Cllr A Monk.

0294 Named Substitutes

There were no named substitutes.

0295 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).

Cllr J Shaw declared that her husband was employed by Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service and a member of the Firefighters Pension Scheme.

[Cllr D Morehead entered the meeting at 10.32am].

0296 Confirmation of Minutes

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

0297 Efficiencies 2025-2027

The Chief Fire Officer presented a report outlining financial challenges in the current year 2025/26, anticipated further budgetary reduction in 2026/27 and plans to mitigate the impact of these.

[Cllr T Miller entered the meeting at 10.36am].

Members were informed that this current year 2025/26 the Authority saw a significant reduction in funding from central government. Based on the Treasurer's forecast there would most likely be similar reductions in real terms funding next year, alongside other cost pressures such as annual inflation, wage increases and a rise in Employer National Insurance costs. It was anticipated that over the next two years the Authority would need to manage a reduction in funding of over £1m. This would be managed by reducing some annual revenue budgets and annual spending where possible, not filling vacant posts and posts created by leavers and some minor departmental restructuring, which could result in potential redundancies.

The Chief Fire Officer gave assurances that within this year only (2025/26) it was his intention not to reduce firefighter posts on fire stations, or the front-line staffing for delivery of Prevention or Protection services. The Chief Fire Officer believed the Service might be able to achieve up to circa £1m of efficiencies without needing to reduce front-line staffing, however this assurance could not be given around any future savings in 2026/27 or other years.

Members noted that staff had been communicated with and advised of the challenges faced and the Chief Fire Officer had communicated the issues faced and potential solutions, alongside early engagement with staff and the trade unions. The Service would continue to keep staff and their representatives updated as this matter progressed.

Members thanked the Chief Fire Officer for providing clear documentation and approved the plans to address the impact of financial challenges during 2025/26 and 2026/27.

RESOLVED that the Committee approved the plans to address the impact of financial challenges during 2025/26 and 2026/27.

0298 Budget Monitoring 2025/26 – Quarter 1

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

Following scrutiny and discussion, Members accepted the revenue budget allocation adjustments and noted the changes in the budget and the consequential impact on the Medium Term Financial Plan.

Members noted that the Authority was significantly under-borrowed to the extent of around £10m. This shortfall was funded by disinvesting the large cash balances held in relation to the ear-marked revenue reserves and monies statutorily set aside for future repayment of loans. As the Invest to Improve programme progressed this cash would be used up and additional long-term borrowing would be required. The cost of which is already included in the MTFP.

RESOLVED that the Committee:

i) Confirmed the revenue budget allocation adjustments;

ii) Noted that the budget had now moved from a £359,000 deficit to a small £125,000 surplus;

iii) Noted the consequential impact on the MTFP; and

iv) Noted the changes to the Capital Budget.

0299 Update on the Attendance Performance Measure (APM)

The Assistant Chief Officer - Director of Prevention presented Members with the opportunity to scrutinise and consider the Attendance Performance Measure (APM) process.

Following scrutiny of the report, noting that the APM was significantly lower for water rescue mobilisations, Members agreed that wholetime crews should be assessed against On-Call response zones due to the time it took crews to don Personal Protective Equipment when responding to water rescue incident types. It was also noted that when the APM is not met, officers are asked to submit a response explaining why the attendance time was not met and for any actions that could be undertaken to improve in the future.

RESOLVED that Members approved the following proposed changes to the APM process:

i) The response zones (isochrones) should be re-evaluated in the financial year 2025-26;

ii) When responding to water rescue incident types, wholetime crews should be assessed against On-Call response zones due to

the time taken to don Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) prior to mobilisation; and

iii) Further work would be undertaken to establish the impact on response times for On-Call staff to don the same water response PPE, and a future report with any recommendations would be submitted.

0300 Pensions Board Update (Fire Pension Schemes)

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer presented an update on the establishment and activities of the Pensions Board.

Members were reminded of the Matthews Remedy and the McCloud/Sargent Remedy, which was useful for new Members, and were reassured that these were part of a national issue and not a failure of Hereford & Worcester Fire Authority.

RESOLVED it be noted that the Pensions Board continued to be compliant with the Public Services Pensions Act 2013.

0301 Modern Slavery & Human Trafficking Statement 2024 / 2025

The Assistant Chief Officer - Director of Prevention presented the Modern Slavery & Human Trafficking Statement 2024/2025 for Members' scrutiny and approval.

Members were pleased to note that there was no evidence of modern slavery in Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service or supply chains and approved the Statement for publication on the Service website.

RESOLVED that Members approved the updated Modern Slavery & Human Trafficking Statement 2024/2025 for publication on the Service website.

0302 Update from the Joint Consultative Committee

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer presented a report to inform and allow the Committee to scrutinise the activities of the Joint Consultative Committee since the last update provided on 20 November 2024.

Members noted the current and existing issues under discussion with employee representatives.

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

- i) Resource Review Update***
- ii) HMICFRS Action Plans***
- iii) Community Risk Management Plan Update***
- iv) Budgets and Finance Update***
- v) Policies (noted and discussed)***
- vi) Promotion Processes***
- vii) Property Update***
- viii) Projects Update***

0303 Performance Report Quarter 4 2024 to 2025 (01 Jan to 31 Mar 2025)

The Assistant Chief Officer - Director of Prevention provided Members with an opportunity to scrutinise the Service's performance for Quarter 4 2024 to 2025.

Members noted the performance data for Quarter 4 2024/25 including the total number of incidents attended had decreased by 0.2% to 1,837 compared to the same quarter of 2023/24, 1,713 Home Fire Safety Visits had been completed and 354 Protection inspections had been undertaken. Members commented that the visual graphics were very easy to understand however the percentages shown for Days/Shifts Lost per Person could be explained better. Members were assured that this would be looked at for future reports.

[Cllr D Toynbee left the meeting at 12.26pm].

RESOLVED that the Committee noted the details of the Q4 2024 to 2025 performance headlines, in particular that:

- i) A total of 1,837 incidents were attended in Q4 2024 to 2025 which was a decrease of 0.2% (-4 incidents) compared to Q4 2023 to 2024.***
- ii) Fire incidents (364) increased by 26% (+75 incidents) when compared to Q4 2023 to 2024 and were higher than the five-year average of 337.***
- iii) Special Services Incidents (614) decreased by 10% (-66 incidents) when compared to Q4 2023 to 2024. Road Traffic Collisions (RTCs) decreased by 16% (-31 incidents) compared to Q4 2023 to 2024.***

iv) False alarms (859) decreased by 1% (-13 incidents) compared with Q4 2023 to 2024.

The Meeting ended at: 12:33

Signed:.....

Date:.....

Chairman