



Hereford & Worcester Fire Authority

Full Authority

Wednesday, 21 June 2023, 10:30

Chairman: Mr C B Taylor

Vice-Chairman: Mr R J Phillips

Minutes

Members Present: Mr D Boatright-Greene, Mr B Brookes, Mr B Clayton, Mr A Ditta, Mrs E Eyre BEM, Mr I D Hardiman, Mr Al Hardman, Mr M Hart, Mrs E Marshall, Ms N McVey, Ms J Monk, Mr R J Morris, Mr R J Phillips, Ms L Robinson, Mr C B Taylor, Mrs D Toynbee, Mr R M Udall

0421 Election of Chairman

RESOLVED that Cllr C B Taylor be elected as Chairman of the Fire Authority for the ensuing year, to hold office until his successor becomes entitled to act.

0422 Election of Vice Chairman

RESOLVED that Cllr R J Phillips be elected as Vice-Chairman of the Fire Authority for the ensuing year, to hold office until his successor becomes entitled to act.

0423 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllr A Amos, Cllr D Chambers, Cllr D Morehead and Cllr T Wells.

0424 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).

0425 Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman welcomed the new Herefordshire Members: Cllrs D Boulter, J Carwardine, D Davies and J Kenyon to the Authority and reminded them that they represent the Authority as a whole and not just their own county.

The Chairman thanked the outgoing Herefordshire Members: Cllrs S Bowen, J Hardwick, K Hey and L Stark for their time on the Authority. It was suggested that a letter be sent to show the Authority's appreciation and the Chief Fire Officer confirmed this had already been completed.

The Vice Chairman announced that it was an honour to attend the recent memorial at Hereford Cathedral paying tribute to two fallen firefighters who had lost their lives fighting one of the most major factory fires in history in Grandstand Road, Hereford on 6 September 1993. A plaque was unveiled in their honour in the Cathedral's Lady Arbour.

0426 Public Participation

There was no public participation.

0427 Confirmation of Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Fire Authority meeting held on 13 February 2023 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

0428 Minutes of the Audit and Standards Committee

The Chairman of the Committee presented the minutes of the Audit and Standards Committee meeting held on 19 April 2023.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Audit and Standards Committee meeting held on 19 April 2023 be received and noted.

0429 Appointments to Committees and Outside Bodies

A report was presented by the Head of Legal Services 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.

Following recent elections to Herefordshire Council, it was noted that Cllrs D Boulter, J Carwardine, D Davies and J Kenyon had now been appointed as Members of the Fire Authority.

Cllr D Toynbee was the only remaining Member of the previous 'Herefordshire Alliance' Group. Since a group must contain at least two

Councillors, that group had now ceased. An updated Appendix was provided to Members at the meeting confirming the membership of each political group. A final copy of the Committee membership would be appended to the Minutes for Members' information.

RESOLVED that:

i) the appointments of Cllrs D Boulter, J Carwardine, D Davies and J Kenyon as Members of the Fire Authority by Herefordshire Council be noted;

ii) the allocation of Committee seats to political groups as set out at Appendix 1 be agreed;

iii) the Chairmanship and membership of Committees, be as set out in Appendix 2;

iv) the following Member Champions be reappointed:

- Cllrs D Boulter, E Marshall, N McVey - Equality, Diversity and Inclusion;***
- Cllr B Clayton - Health & Safety Committee;***
- Cllr R Brookes - Fire Cadets' Member Champion;***

v) the current practice for representation and voting on the Local Government Association as set out in Appendix 2 be continued; and

vi) the place and vote on the Local Government Association Fire Commission continues to be exercised by the Chairman of the Authority.

[Cllr N McVey entered the meeting at 10.44am].

[Cllr R Morris entered the meeting at 10.47am].

0430 Provisional Financial Out-turn 2022-23

The Treasurer presented the provisional financial results for 2022-23.

Members noted the error in the Recommendation - ii) g) should read £29,374 'from' the Capital Building Projects Reserve, not 'to'. Members also noted that in paragraph 17 of the report (b vii) Net Other should read £0.135m.

Following a brief outline by the Treasurer of the reserves held, Members were pleased to approve the transfers to and from Earmarked Reserves in accordance with the Reserves Strategy as detailed in the report.

Members noted the delay in the production of the 2022-23 Statement of Accounts due to the late completion of the 2021-22 Audit. The Treasurer will certify them outside the regulatory time-scale.

There was discussion around the Urban Search and Rescue Grant which had been provided to the Service since 2011. The Chief Fire Officer explained that HWFRS is currently one of 19 teams around the country but at any time this could be removed if deemed not viable as there were several units within close proximity to HWFRS. The £800,000 grant per year is to provide specialist units when required.

Finally the Treasurer confirmed that the Prudential Indicators for 2020-21 were within the limits set by the Authority and no matters required further action.

RESOLVED that the Authority:

- i) Noted the provisional financial results for 2022-23;***
- ii) Approved the transfers to and from Earmarked Reserves in accordance with the Reserves Strategy;***
 - a) £349,251 from the Organisational Excellence Reserve;***
 - b) £324,348 from the On-Call Recruitment Reserve;***
 - c) £78,459 from Fire Control Project Reserve;***
 - d) £76,020 from the ICT Replacement Reserve;***
 - e) £74,046 from the Fire Prevention Reserve;***
 - f) £49,000 from the Taxation Income Guarantee Reserve;***
 - g) £29,374 from the Capital Building Projects Reserve;***
 - h) £23,501 from the Sustainability Reserve;***
 - i) £21,327 from the Protection Grants Reserve;***
 - j) £15,478 from the Pensions Reserve; and***
 - k) £139,843 from the Budget Reduction Reserve.***
- iii) Noted that the production of the 2022-23 Statement of Accounts had been delayed by the late completion of the 2021-22 Audit, that the Treasurer would certify them outside the regulatory time-scale, and that the Audit of the accounts would be undertaken by Grant Thornton LLP; and***

iv) Confirmed that the Prudential Indicators for 2022-23 were within the limits set by the Authority and no matters required further action.

0431 Staff Survey Feedback Presentation

Due to a technical issue Costa Antoniou from People Insight was unable to present Members with a summary of feedback from the staff survey recently undertaken. This would be sent to Members separately.

0432 Cultural Issues in the Fire Service

The Chief Fire Officer informed Members of the current assessment of the Service's culture and behaviours and assured Members of the measures being taken to drive progress in this area.

Members were pleased to note that the results from the staff survey and looking at the feedback from our staff in regard to the performance of managers and the actions taken to address poor behaviours in the last two years had been overwhelmingly positive. This had given some significant degree of assurance that the endemic cultural issues and managerial neglect being found in other organisations did not appear to be present in HWFRS.

Members would be able to attend a bespoke specialist EDI and cultural training programme, which was mandatory for all staff to attend.

The use of Say So had proven successful and allowed a minority of staff to report concerns they may not have otherwise reported, not only in relation to culture and behaviours. Public access to Say So PLUS reporting would be launched in the near future.

Members were pleased to note that overall it appeared that whilst there were some issues and some staff behaviours that fell well below the expected standards at times, the Service does have a positive and mainly good culture with a normally high standard of behaviour in the workplace. Despite this the Service does seem to regularly have to deal with isolated instances of poor behaviour from individuals, as would be expected in any organisation with over 700 employees. Any issues reported are dealt with swiftly and decisively by managers.

[Cllr Udall left the meeting at 11.20am].

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

0433 Annual Service Review 2022-23

The Assistant Chief Officer (Director of Prevention) presented Members with the Annual Service Review 2022-23, which was a look back at the range of work undertaken over the last year, including headline activities and incident statistics, to adopt and approve for publication on the Service's website.

RESOLVED that the draft Annual Service Review 2022-23 be approved for publication on the Service website.

0434 Annual Service Plan 2023-24

The Assistant Chief Officer (Director of Prevention) presented Members with the Annual Service Plan 2023-24, which sets out the Service's key priorities for the coming year arranged under the main CRMP headings of Response, Protection, Prevention, Valuing Our Workforce and Value for Money, to adopt and approve for publication on the Service's website.

RESOLVED that the draft Annual Service Plan 2023-24 be approved for publication on the Service website.

0435 His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabularies and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) Improvement Plan – Update Q4 2022 / 2023

The Assistant Chief Officer (Director of Prevention) updated Members on the HMICFRS Improvement Plan following the inspection report dated 15 December 2021.

Members were pleased to note there had been notable progress made against the Improvement Plan in Quarter 4, particularly in the People pillar which had seen a number of actions progressed to completion. As of the end of Quarter 4 2022/23, the Service had completed 62% of the actions in the Improvement Plan – up from 38.3% in Quarter 3.

HMICFRS were currently undertaking their next inspection.

[Cllr Hart left the meeting at 11.38am].

RESOLVED that the progress achieved towards addressing the HMICFRS Improvement Plan be noted. In particular that 66% of actions were now complete and a further 20% were on track to be completed by the end of Q1 2023/24.

0436 Change Function Support

The Assistant Chief Officer (Director of Prevention) presented a report summarising steps that had been taken to review options to support the Authority's significant change portfolio and propose a collaboration

arrangement with West Mercia Police.

Members noted that to further enhance the Authority's significant change ambitions, West Mercia Police had been identified as a preferred provider to deliver strategic advice, project management office support and project manager/business analyst capability for the change programme at a reasonable cost. Members therefore approved the proposed change management function collaboration.

RESOLVED that the Authority enter into a collaboration arrangement with West Mercia Police to support the delivery of change management within the Service.

0437 Invest To Improve Programme

The Chief Fire Officer informed Members of the progress of the Invest to Improve Programme and assured Members of the measures being taken and the positive impact of this programme.

Members noted the slower progress in some areas had been due to staffing and specific skill requirements, however were pleased to see significant progress in many areas.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

0438 Feasibility of Droitwich Training Centre/Wyre Forest

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Director of Protection and Assets) updated Members on the feasibility to relocate the Training Centre (currently based in Droitwich) to Wyre Forest Fire Station.

Members noted that the existing Training Centre at Droitwich Fire Station was very constrained. It was therefore proposed to investigate the feasibility of relocating the Training Centre to Wyre Forest Fire Station. These proposals would be subject to identifying additional funding and the project would be phased over a number of years.

Sketch proposals had been reviewed and architects were now reviewing comments and preparing preferred layouts. Costs had been identified in preparation to submit a planning application.

Further work was being progressed concerning project costings and the potential to release funds from the existing Droitwich site.

The Treasurer would review the financial predictions to allow a viable plan (phased if necessary) to enable the new Training Centre to be built at Wyre Forest Fire Station.

[Cllr Toynebee left the meeting at 12.06pm and returned at 12.08pm].

RESOLVED that:

- i) the feasibility update and progress be noted; and***
- ii) Members approved the progression of a proposal to potentially sell part of the accommodation on the Droitwich site to fund the Training Centre relocation, if feasible and efficient.***

0439 Environmental Sustainability Plan 2021-2025 Update

The Chief Fire Officer updated Members on the progress in delivering the actions set out in the Environmental Sustainability Plan 2021-2025.

Members noted the substantial progress made in delivering the actions set out in the Environmental Sustainability Plan 2021-2025, approved the completed actions to date be published in a revised Environmental Sustainability Plan 2021-25 to include an updated action plan outlining the remaining/on-going actions be included.

The Vice-Chairman suggested to Members that paper copies of agendas cease being sent out. It was agreed that only under exceptional circumstances could Members request a hardcopy from Committee Services.

RESOLVED that the Authority:

- i) noted the progress to deliver the action plan set out in the Environmental Sustainability Plan 2021-25;***
- ii) approved the updated action plan for 2023-25;***
- iii) approved the publication of the revised actions in an updated Environmental Sustainability Plan.***
- iv) no longer receive a hardcopy of the agendas as standard.***

0440 Minutes of the Policy and Resources Committee

The Chairman of the Committee presented the minutes of the Policy and Resources Committee meeting held on 3 May 2023.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Policy and Resources Committee meeting held on 3 May 2023 be received and noted.

The Meeting ended at: 12:24

Signed:.....

Date:.....

Chairman