



Hereford & Worcester Fire Authority

Full Authority

Tuesday, 13 February 2024, 10:30

Chairman: Mr C B Taylor

Vice-Chairman: Mr R J Phillips

Minutes

Members Present: Mr D Boatright-Greene, Mr D Boulter, Mr B Brookes, Mrs J Carwardine, Mr D Davies, Mr A Ditta, Mrs E Eyre BEM, Mr I D Hardiman, Mr Al Hardman, Mr M Hart, Mr J Kenyon, Mr D Morehead, Mr R J Morris, Mr R J Phillips, Ms L Robinson, Mr C B Taylor, Ms D Toynbee, Mr R M Udall, Mr T Wells

0466 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllr A Amos, Cllr D Chambers, Cllr B Clayton, Cllr E Marshall, Cllr N McVey and Cllr J Monk.

0467 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).

0468 Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman informed Members that the Resource Review was still on-going with the majority of comments received so far being very positive. Members were advised that any emails received from Union Representatives could be forwarded to the Chairman if they had any concerns.

[Cllr Tom Wells entered the meeting at 10.34am].

0469 Public Participation

There was no public participation.

0470 Confirmation of Minutes

RESOLVED that Cllr J Kenyon's name be added to the list of apologies for the meeting held on 12 December 2023 and that the minutes of that meeting otherwise be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

0471 Budget and Precept 2024/25 and Medium Term Financial Plan 2024/25

The Treasurer presented the Budget and Precept 2024/25 and the Medium Term Financial Plan 2024/25.

Members were informed that at the time of writing the paper there were important pieces of information that remained unconfirmed which had now been provided. Members were therefore provided with an updated report at the meeting which included the Formula Grant Settlement, the Home Office Special Grants and the Business Rate Yields.

Members noted that there was an increase in the capital budget for new vehicle replacements due to the additional cost of electric vehicles now being introduced into the fleet.

With regard to Council tax, it was noted that the tax base had not increased as much as had been forecast (the new properties coming onto the tax base had slowed down as well as increases in the amount of Council tax support payable). The recommendation was that the precept be increased up to the referendum limit (2.99%) of £2.82, and thereafter it would be an assumption of 2% increase going forward.

Members thanked the Treasurer for a comprehensive report, particularly with the last minute information received.

RESOLVED that:

- i) The Capital Strategy be approved;***
- ii) The Capital Budget and Programme (Appendix 1) be approved;***
- iii) The Core Net Revenue Budget of £43,587,600 (Appendix 10) be approved;***
- iv) The Medium Term Financial Plan (Appendix 11) be approved;***
 - a. Under the provisions of the relevant sections of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended), in relation to the year 2024/25 the Authority calculates, as set out in Appendix 12, that:***

i. S42A(2)(a): the aggregate expenditure it will incur will be £43,663,400.00.

ii. S42A(3)(a): the aggregate income it will receive will be £15,062,324.56.

iii. S42A(2)(c): the amount to be transferred to financial reserves will be £0.00.

iv. S42A(3)(b): the amount to be transferred from financial reserves will be £260,057.05.

v. S42A(10): the net Collection Fund surplus is £129,705.54.

vi. S42A(4): the net amount of its Council Tax Requirement will be £28,211,312.85.

vii. S42B: the Basic Amount of Council Tax will be £97.22 (Band D).

viii. S47: the proportional tax-bands will be:

- Band A £64.81***
- Band B £75.62***
- Band C £86.42***
- Band D £97.22***
- Band E £118.82***
- Band F £140.43***
- Band G £162.03***
- Band H £194.44***

ix. S48: the precept demands on the individual Billing Authorities are:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <i>• Bromsgrove</i> | <i>£3,694,136.35</i> |
| <i>• Herefordshire</i> | <i>£6,999,836.99</i> |
| <i>• Malvern Hills</i> | <i>£3,212,843.88</i> |
| <i>• Redditch</i> | <i>£2,558,548.43</i> |
| <i>• Worcester</i> | <i>£3,208,454.40</i> |
| <i>• Wychavon</i> | <i>£5,144,320.40</i> |
| <i>• Wyre Forest</i> | <i>£3,393,172.40</i> |

v) The Reserves Strategy (Appendix 13) be approved;

vi) The Investment Strategy be approved;

vii) The fees and charges for 2024-25 (Appendix 7) be approved; and

viii) The Statement of Prudential Indicators and Minimum Revenue

Provision Policy (Appendix 8) as amended be approved.

0472 Pay Policy Statement

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer presented the Pay Policy Statement for 2024-2025 and explained the legal requirement for the Authority to publish such a statement prior to the start of each financial year.

RESOLVED that that the Pay Policy Statement for 2024-2025 be approved and published on the Authority's website.

0473 Fire Alliance Update: Fire Control Project

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer updated Members on progress of the Fire Alliance Fire Control Project.

Members were pleased to note that the development of the new joint fire control system had commenced and that the contract allowed for additional Fire Services to join the hub, if they wished. This could potentially provide greater cost savings as well as further enhance resilience with the addition of compatible Fire Service partners.

The Chief Fire Officer praised the work of Area Commander Maxine Laugher who had run this project with her excellent knowledge resulting in a very resilient tried and tested system that was already being used in the UK.

RESOLVED that Members noted the update, confirming the development of a new joint fire control system in partnership with Shropshire FRS, Cleveland FB and County Durham & Darlington FRS project had commenced.

0474 His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabularies and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) Improvement Plan 2024-25

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer updated Members on the proposed actions relating to each area for improvement following receipt of the 2023 Inspection Report.

Members noted in particular that:

- Of the eleven assessment areas, the Service had achieved four ratings of 'good' and seven ratings of 'adequate'.
- There were no areas rated as 'requires improvement' or 'inadequate'.
- The report identified eleven Areas for Improvement.
- The Improvement Plan set out actions to address the Areas for

Improvement.

RESOLVED that the draft Improvement Plan in response to the Areas for Improvement highlighted in the HMICFRS inspection report 2023 be approved.

0475 Members' Allowances Scheme 2024/25

The Head of Legal Services presented a proposal to increase the allowances paid to Members for 2023/24 in accordance with the previous decision that increases be linked to the National Joint Council annual pay award for 'Green Book' staff.

RESOLVED that:

i) the existing basic and special responsibility allowances paid to Members be increased by 3.88% for 2024/25, in line with the increase to additional allowances agreed as part of the NJC pay award for 'Green Book' Staff for 2023;

ii) the Dependent Carers' allowance be increased to £11.44 per hour in line with the national living wage; and

iii) the revised Members' Allowances Scheme for 2024/25 be approved.

0476 Minutes of the Audit and Standards Committee

The Chairman of the Audit and Standards Committee presented the minutes from the Audit and Standards Committee meeting held on 17 January 2024.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Audit and Standards Committee meeting held on 17 January 2024 were received and noted.

0477 Announcements by the Chief Fire Officer

- Members were informed that following the recent cultural issues in South Wales Fire and Rescue Service, the Welsh Assembly had disbanded the South Wales Fire Authority and replaced its functions with 4 Commissioners.
- Members were also informed that a letter of condolences was sent from the Authority following the death of West Midlands Fire Service's

Chief Fire Officer.

The Meeting ended at: 11:26

Signed:.....

Date:.....

Chairman