



Hereford & Worcester Fire Authority

Full Authority

Monday, 13 February 2023, 14:00

**Chairman: Mr C B Taylor**

**Vice-Chairman: Mr R J Phillips**

## **Minutes**

**Members Present:** Mr A Amos, Mr D Boatright, Mr B Brookes, Mr D Chambers, Mr B Clayton, Mr A Ditta, Mrs E Eyre BEM, Mr I D Hardiman, Mr Al Hardman, Mr J Hardwick, Mr M Hart, Mrs E Marshall, Ms J Monk, Mr D Morehead, Ms L Robinson, Mr L Stark, Mr C B Taylor, Mrs D Toynbee

**Also in attendance:** Mr Marc Bayliss, West Mercia Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner

### **0406 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Cllr S Bowen, Cllr K Hey, Cllr D Morehead, Cllr R Morris, Cllr N McVey, Cllr R Phillips and Cllr R Udall.

### **0407 Declarations of Interest (if any)**

There were no declarations of interests.

### **0408 Chairman's Announcements**

On behalf of the Authority, the Chairman expressed condolences to the family and friends of Scottish Firefighter Barry Martin who had died following serious injuries sustained at a fire in the Jenners Building in Edinburgh on Monday 23 January.

The Chairman congratulated Mr. A. Elliott on his promotion to Assistant Chief Fire Officer and Mrs. A Davidson on her promotion to Assistant Chief Officer (Prevention).

Members were informed of the revised pay offer made by the NJC for Fire & Rescue Services ('Grey Book'). The FBU were consulting their membership on the offer with a recommendation that the offer be accepted. The outcome of the consultation was expected on 6 March 2023.

**0409 Public Participation**

There was no public participation.

**0410 Confirmation of Minutes**

***RESOLVED that the minutes of the Fire Authority meeting held on 12 December 2022 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.***

**0411 Budget And Precept 2022/23 And Medium Term Financial Plan 2023/24**

The Treasurer presented the Budget and Precept 2023/24 and the Medium Term Financial Plan

Further details showing the impact on the MTFP of the latest pay offer were presented to Members at the meeting. Members were advised that if the precept for 2023/24 was increased by the maximum permitted £5.00, as recommended, then there would be a projected underlying deficit in 2026/27 of £640,000. The Chief Fire Officer indicated that he would bring forward proposals to a future meeting for an efficiency plan to address that deficit.

Members thanked the Treasurer for the clarity of the report. In response to a question from Members, the Treasurer explained that if the Government provided additional funding to cover the cost of the increased pay offer then, if the Authority increased its precept for 2023/24 by the recommended £5, that would result in a balanced budget in the MTFP. However, there was no realistic expectation of any such further funding from Government beyond the Council tax flexibility that had already been announced.

***RESOLVED that the:***

***a. Capital Strategy (paragraphs 10-23) be approved.***

***b. Capital Budget and Programme (Appendix 1) be approved.***

***c. Core Net Revenue Budget of £39,396,800.00 (Appendix 3) be approved.***

***d. Medium Term Financial Plan (Appendix 4) be approved.***

***e. Authority calculates that under the provisions of the relevant sections of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended),***

**and, in relation to the year 2023/24 as set out in Appendix 5 that the:**

**i. Aggregate expenditure it will incur [S42A(2)(a)] will be £39,472,600.00.**

**ii. Aggregate income it will receive [S42A(3)(a)] will be £12,944,593.00.**

**iii. Amount transferred to financial reserves [S42A(2)(c)] will be £763,900.00.**

**iv. Amount transferred from financial reserves [S42A(3)(b)] will be £46,000.00.**

**v. Net collection fund surplus [S42A(10)] is £29,679.00.**

**vi. Net amount of its Council Tax Requirement [S42A(4)] will be £27,216,228.00.**

**vii. Basic amount of Council Tax [S42B] will be £94.40 (Band D).**

**viii. Proportional tax-bands [S47] will be:**

- Band A £62.93**
- Band B £73.42**
- Band C £83.91**
- Band D £94.40**
- Band E £115.38**
- Band F £136.36**
- Band G £157.33**
- Band H £188.80**

**ix. Precept demands on the individual Billing Authorities [S48] are:**

- Bromsgrove £3,579,733.94**
- Herefordshire £6,708,561.77**
- Malvern Hills £3,103,164.45**
- Redditch £2,483,282.63**
- Worcester £3,110,987.68**
- Wychavon £4,950,103.16**
- Wyre Forest £3,279,394.37**

**f. Reserves Strategy (paragraphs 71-79 and Appendix 6) to be approved.**

**g. Investment Strategy (paragraphs 80-85) to be approved.**

*h. Fees and charges for 2023-24 (Appendix 7) to be approved.*

*i. Statement of Prudential Indicators and Minimum Revenue Provision Policy (Appendix 9) to be approved.*

*j. Authorises the Treasurer to make appropriate adjustments to the use of the budget reduction reserve to balance any changes to the final grant settlement when this is confirmed.*

**0412 Pay Policy Statement**

The Assistant Director of Prevention presented the Pay Policy Statement for 2023-2024 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 2023-2024 be approved and published on the Authority's website.***

**0413 Core Strategies**

The Chief Fire Officer summarised steps that had been taken to review the Core Strategies to ensure these strategies remained focused, effective and complied with relevant standards and developments.

***RESOLVED that the Fire Authority note that steps have been taken to review the three Core Strategies.***

**0414 His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabularies and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) Improvement Plan – Update Q3 2022 / 2023**

The Assistant Director of Prevention updated Members on the HMICFRS Improvement Plan following the inspection report dated 15 Dec 2021.

Members welcomed the confirmation that HMICFRS had now discharged the previous 'cause for concern' in respect of prevention activity.

It was noted that a number of actions relating to 'people' were scheduled for completion during the final quarter of 2022/23. Officers provided assurance that significant progress was being made and it was still anticipated these would be completed by the year end. Training on the Core Code of Ethics was being included as part of the equalities, diversity & inclusion training that was being rolled out to all staff in March

***RESOLVED that the Authority notes the actions agreed to address the HMICFRS Improvement Plan.***

**0415 Members' Allowances Scheme 2023/24**

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 4.04% for 2023/24, in line with the increase to additional allowances agreed as part of the NJC pay award for 'Green Book' Staff for 2022;***

***ii) the Dependent Carers' allowance be increased each year in line with the national living wage; and***

***iii) the revised Members' Allowances Scheme for 2023/24 be approved.***

**0416 Fire Authority And Committee Dates 2023/24**

The Head of Legal Services presented the proposed meeting dates for 2023/24 for approval. Ordinarily the Authority would hold at least one meeting each year in Hereford but this had not been possible due to the on-going repairs at the Shire Hall.

The Head of Legal Services undertook to look for an alternative venue and re-schedule on the meetings in Herefordshire if at all possible.

**RESOLVED that the meeting dates for 2023/24 be agreed.**

**0417 Minutes From A&S 18/01/23**

The Chairman of the Audit and Standards Committee presented the minutes from the Audit and Standards Committee meeting held on 18 January 2023. Members' attention was drawn to the recommendation therein with regard to the adoption of amended contract standing orders.

**RESOLVED that the minutes of the Audit and Standards Committee meeting held on 18 January 2023 were received and the recommendations therein were approved.**

**0418 Exclusion of the Press and Public**

***It was RESOLVED that the press and public be excluded from the meeting during any discussion of:***

***a) the appendix to Item 13; and***

***b) item 14***

***on the grounds that these are likely to disclose information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority).***

**0419 Urgent Decision - Redditch Fire Station**

The Head of Legal Services advised Members of an urgent decision that had been taken since the last meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee in relation to the redevelopment of Redditch Fire Station.

*[Cllr Boatright joined the meeting at 2:45pm]*

***RESOLVED that the decision taken under the Urgent Decisions Procedure to further increase the budget allocation for the redevelopment of Redditch Fire Station, be noted.***

**0420 Business Continuity Briefing Session**

The Chief Fire Officer briefed Members on the business continuity arrangements that would apply during any periods when the normal availability of resources might be reduced, such as due to industrial action or extreme weather conditions. In such circumstances the Authority would still be able to provide an effective fire & rescue service although response times may be longer.

*[Cllr M Hart and Mr M Bayliss left the meeting at 3:04pm]*

In response to member questions, the Chief Fire Officer expressed confidence that the high proportion of on-call firefighters within the Service would help to maintain an effective response throughout the two Counties.

Members were reassured by the information provided.

The Meeting ended at: 15:22

Signed:.....

Date:.....

Chairman

