



HEREFORD & WORCESTER Fire Authority

Full Authority

AGENDA

Wednesday, 13 October 2021

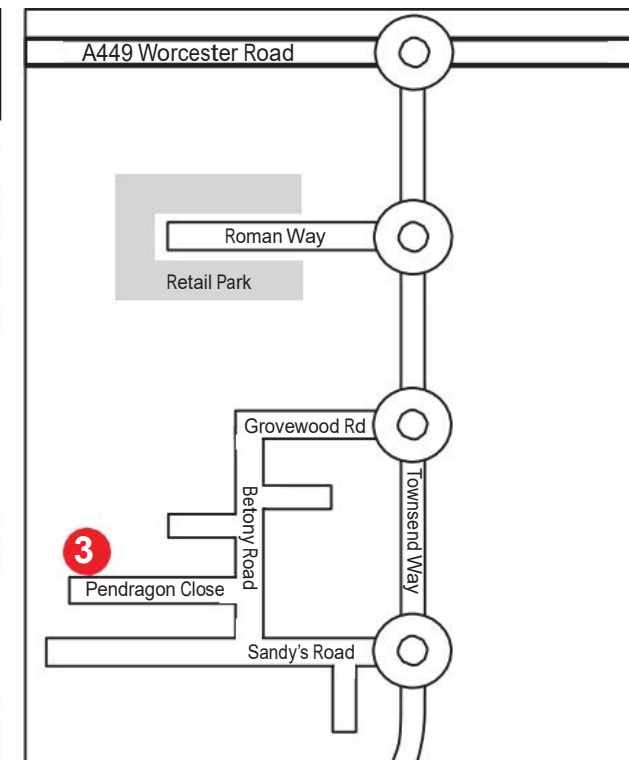
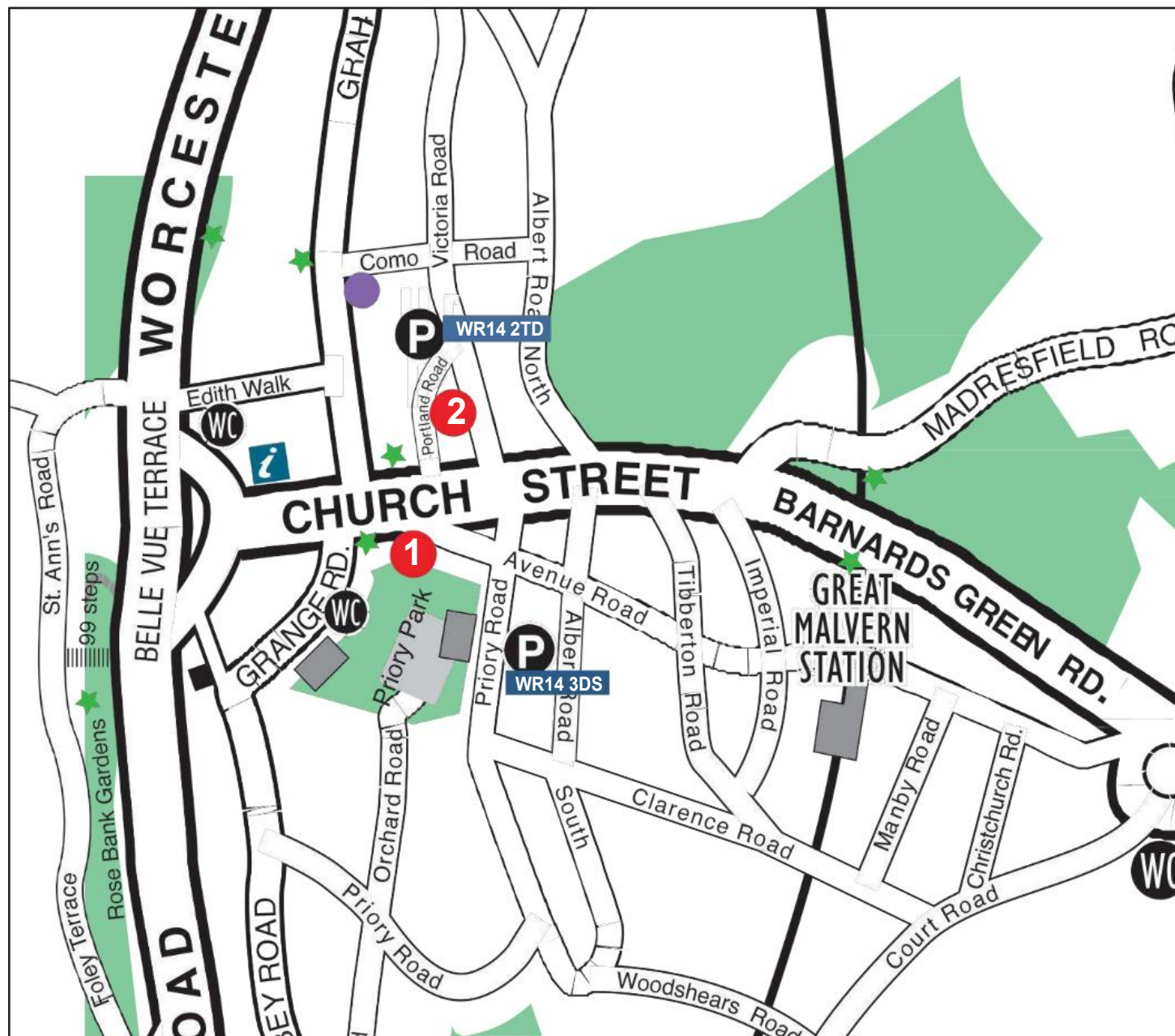
10:30

**Malvern DC Council Chamber
Malvern District Council, Avenue Road, Great Malvern,
Worcestershire, WR14 3AF**

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Malvern Hills District Council - How to find us

Malvern Hills District Council, Council House, Avenue Road, Malvern, WR14 3AF



Key

- 1** The Council House and The Council Chamber
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- 2** Brunel House
Brunel House, Portland Road, Malvern WR14 2TB
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- the right to inspect minutes of the Authority and Committees for up to six years following the meeting (available on our website: <http://www.hwfire.org.uk>); and
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WELCOME AND GUIDE TO TODAY’S MEETING. These notes are written to assist you to follow the meeting. Decisions at the meeting will be taken by the **Councillors** who are democratically elected representatives and they will be advised by **Officers** who are paid professionals. The Fire and Rescue Authority comprises 25 Councillors and appoints committees to undertake various functions on behalf of the Authority. There are 19 Worcestershire County Councillors on the Authority and 6 Herefordshire Council Councillors.

Agenda Papers - Attached is the Agenda which is a summary of the issues to be discussed and the related reports by Officers.

Chairman - The Chairman, who is responsible for the proper conduct of the meeting, sits at the head of the table.

Officers - Accompanying the Chairman is the Chief Fire Officer and other Officers of the Fire and Rescue Authority who will advise on legal and procedural matters and record the proceedings. These include the Clerk and the Treasurer to the Authority.

The Business - The Chairman will conduct the business of the meeting. The items listed on the agenda will be discussed.

Decisions - At the end of the discussion on each item the Chairman will put any amendments or motions to the meeting and then ask the Councillors to vote. The Officers do not have a vote.



Hereford & Worcester Fire Authority

Full Authority

Wednesday, 13 October 2021, 10:30

Agenda

Councillors

Mr R J Phillips (Chairman), Mr A Amos, Mr S Bowen, Mr B Brookes, Mr D Chambers, Mr B Clayton, Mr A Ditta, Mrs E Eyre BEM, Ms K S Guthrie, Mr I D Hardiman, Mr Al Hardman, Mr M Hart, Mrs K Hey, Mrs E Marshall, Ms N McVey, Ms J Monk, Mr D Morehead, Mr R J Morris, Mr J Robinson, Ms L Robinson, Mr L Stark, Mr C B Taylor, Mrs D Toynbee, Mr R M Udall, Mr T Wells

No.	Item	Pages
1	Apologies for Absence To receive any apologies for absence.	
2	Declarations of Interest (if any) This item allows the Chairman to invite any Councillor to declare an interest in any of the items on this Agenda.	
3	Chairman's Announcements To update Members on recent activities.	
4	Public Participation To allow a Member of the public to present a petition, ask a question or make a statement relating to any topic concerning the duties and powers of the Authority. Members of the public wishing to take part should notify the Head of Legal Services in writing or by email indicating both the nature and content of their proposed participation to be received no later than 2 clear working days before the meeting (in this case 8 October 2021). Further details about public participation are available on the website. Enquiries can also be made through the telephone numbers/email listed below.	

5	Confirmation of Minutes	1 - 11
	To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 17 June 2021.	
6	Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) Update	12 - 15
	To inform Members of the current position on the MTFP and limited information available on future budgets	
7	Public Consultation on a revised Attendance Performance Measure	16 - 20
	To seek permission from the Fire Authority to undertake public consultation on a new Service Attendance Performance Measure to align with Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service as outlined in the 2021-25 Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP).	
8	Arrangements for Appointment of External Auditors	21 - 31
	To approve arrangements for the appointment of external auditors following the conclusion of the 2022/23 audit year.	
9	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabularies and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) Improvement Plan – Update September 2021	32 - 42
	To provide Members with a final update on the implementation of the HMICFRS Improvement Plan following the inspection report dated 20 December 2018.	
10	Strategic Fire Alliance Board Update	43 - 47
	To update the FRA on progress against the programme of priority projects developed by the Strategic Fire Alliance between Hereford & Worcester and Shropshire Fire and Rescue Services.	
11	Minutes of the Audit and Standards Committee	48 - 52
	To receive the minutes of the meeting held on 28 July 2021.	



Hereford & Worcester Fire Authority

Full Authority

Thursday, 17 June 2021, 10:30

Chairman: Mr C B Taylor

Vice-Chairman: Mr R J Phillips

Minutes

Members Present: Mr A Amos, Mr S Bowen, Mr B Brookes, Mr B Clayton, Mrs E Eyre BEM, Mr I D Hardiman, Mr A I Hardman, Mr M Hart, Mrs K Hey, Ms E Marshall, Ms N McVey, Ms J Monk, Mr D Morehead, Mr R J Morris, Mr R J Phillips, Mr J Robinson, Ms L Robinson, Mr L Stark, Mr C B Taylor, Mr R M Udall, Mr T Wells

Also in attendance: Mr John Campion, West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner

320 Election of Chairman

RESOLVED that Mr 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.

321 Election of Vice Chairman

RESOLVED that Mr 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.

322 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllr D Chambers, Cllr K Guthrie, Cllr A Hardman and Cllr D Toynbee.

323 Declarations of Interest (if any)

There were no interests declared.

324 Chairman's Announcements

There were no announcements received from the Chairman.

325 Public Participation

There was no public participation.

326 Confirmation of Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Fire Authority meeting held on 24 February 2021 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman at an appropriate time.

327 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.

RESOLVED that:

i. following the recent elections to Worcestershire County Council, the following changes to the membership of the Authority be noted:

Retirements

Cllr. R. Adams

Cllr. P. Agar

Cllr. T. Baker-Price

Cllr. A. Fry

Cllr. C. Hotham

Cllr. F. Oborski

Cllr. K. Pollock

Cllr. J. Potter

Cllr. P. Tuthill

Cllr. J. Raine

New Appointments

Cllr. R. Brookes

Cllr. D. Chambers

Cllr. A. Ditta

Cllr. N. McVey

Cllr. E. Marshall

Cllr. J. Monk

Cllr. D. Moorhead

Cllr. J. Robinson

Cllr. L. Robinson

Cllr. T. Wells

ii. the formation and membership of political groups, as set out in Appendix 1, be noted;

iii. in accordance with the requirements for political balance, Committee seats be allocated to political groups as set out in Appendix 1;

iv. the Authority appoints:

a. Cllr R Phillips and Cllr C B Taylor as the Chairman and Vice-Chairman respectively of the Policy & Resources Committee; and

b. Cllr M Hart and Cllr A Amos as the Chairman and Vice-Chairman respectively of the Audit & Standards Committee.

v. it be delegated to the Monitoring Officer to make appointments to the remainder of those Committee seats in accordance with the wishes of the respective Group Leaders; details at Appendix 2.

vi. Cllr S Bowen be appointed as the Member Champion for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion;

vii. Cllr B Clayton be appointed as the representative on the Health & Safety Committee;

viii. the current practice for representation and voting on the Local Government Association, as set out in Appendix 1, be continued;

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

x. Cllr R Phillips continues as the Authority's nominee on the Board of Place Partnership Ltd and as the Member representative on the Shareholder Group.

The Treasurer presented Members with a report to receive the provisional financial results for 2020-21, approve final transfers to/from reserves, approve the reallocation of reserves and review the Treasury Management activities for 2020-21 and confirm compliance with the Prudential Code indicators.

Members were informed that the Provisional Financial Results, Treasury Management and Prudential Indicators normally come under the Terms of Reference of the Policy and Resources Committee, however because they required attention between meetings of that Committee, they were considered by the Full Authority.

Members were also informed that the Audit and Standards Committee would consider the full Statement of Accounts later in the year, ordinarily this would be at the July meeting prior to the 31st July deadline; however again there had been a temporary change to the Account and Audit Regulations this year.

Following a brief outline by the Treasurer of the reserves held, the Chief Fire Officer presented Members with details of the re-allocation following a review of the reserves that had identified areas where they could be used effectively to give significant organisational impacts.

Members were pleased to note the details of the reserves and approved the reallocation as stated in the report.

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. Notes the provisional financial results for 2020-21;***
- ii. Notes the transfers between reserves previously approved in accordance with the Reserves Strategy, or approved by Policy & Resources Committee 2nd December 2020 as below;***
 - a. £0.310m to the Sustainability Reserve;***
 - b. £0.201m to the Protection Grants Reserve;***
 - c. £0.164m from the Day Crew Plus (DCP) Change Reserve;***
 - d. £0.098m from the Property Maintenance Reserve;***

- e. *£0.067m from the Alliance Reserve;*
 - f. *£0.048m from the Safety Initiatives Reserve;*
 - g. *£0.048m from the Development Reserve;*
 - h. *£0.040m from the Fire Control (C&C) Reserve;*
 - i. *£0.019m from the Broadway Fire Station Reserve;*
 - j. *£0.011 from the Fire Prevention Reserve; and*
 - k. *£0.001m from the Equipment Reserve.*
- iii. *Approves the transfers to Earmarked Reserves as set out below:*
- a. *£0.054 to the Pension Reserve;*
 - b. *£0.130m to the Taxation Guarantee Grant (TIG) Reserve;*
 - c. *£0.602m to the Budget Reduction (Covid) Reserve; and*
 - d. *£1.185m to the Budget Reduction Reserve.*
- iv. *Approves the reallocation of Earmarked Reserves to amend the balances to those shown in Appendix 4 Column 7 involving the following net transfers:*
- a. *£1.040m to a new Organisational Excellence Reserve;*
 - b. *£0.300m to the Fire Control (C&C) Reserve;*
 - c. *£0.500m from the ESMCP Reserve;*
 - d. *£1.000m to a new On-Call Recruitment Reserve;*
 - e. *£1.200m to a new ICT Replacements Reserve;*
 - f. *£0.900m to a new Capital Projects Reserve;*
 - g. *£0.837m from the 2017 Pay Award Reserve to close it down;*
 - h. *£0.250m to the Property Maintenance Reserve;*
 - i. *£3.353m from the Budget Reduction Reserve;*
 - j. *£0.121m from the Alliance Reserve to merge with Development Reserve and to close the former; and*
- v. *Approves the release of reserves by the Chief Fire Officer after consultation with the Authority Chair, the Chair of Policy &*

Resources Committee and the Treasurer.

vi. Notes that the Treasurer will certify the 2020-21 Statement of Accounts, in accordance within the regulatory time-scale, provided relevant information is received from all Billing Authorities;

vii. Notes that the Audit of the accounts will be undertaken by Grant Thornton LLP; and

viii. Confirms that the Prudential Indicators for 2020-21 were within the limits set by the Authority and no matters require further action.

329 Annual Service Review 2020-21 and Annual Service Plan 2021-22

The Chief Fire Officer presented Members with the Annual Service Review 2020-21 and the Annual Service Plan 2021-22 to adopt and approve for publication on the Service's website.

Members were informed that these were two new-style reports; the Annual Service Review looks back at the Service's work over the last year and the Annual Service Plan sets out the Service's key priorities for the coming year.

RESOLVED that the Annual Service Review 2020-21 and the Annual Service Plan 2021-22 be approved for publication on the Service website, subject to any final minor changes as agreed by the Chief Fire Officer in consultation with the Chairman.

330 Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabularies and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) Improvement Plan – Update April 2021

The Chief Fire Officer presented Members with an update on the progress in implementing the HMICFRS Improvement Plan following the inspection report dated 20 December 2018.

Members were informed that any outstanding actions would now be moved into the new action plan following the recent inspection on 1 April, the results of which will be available later in the year.

RESOLVED that the Authority notes progress on actions to deliver the HMICFRS Improvement Plan.

331 Property Services Update

The Head of Legal Services updated Members on the dissolution of Place Partnership Ltd, the new arrangements with the Police and Crime Commissioner for delivery of property services and an update on the

current property programme.

Members were informed that PPL ceased trading on 31st March 2021 and each of the partners have now taken their property functions back in-house or in the case of the Fire Authority, have entered into an arrangement for a joint property service provided by the Police and Crime Commissioner for West Mercia.

A Member was concerned about the delay of signing contracts for Redditch Fire Station. The Head of Legal Services assured Members that matters were progressing, the Heads of Terms had now been agreed and external solicitors had been appointed for the land acquisition for completion the end of June 2021.

A Member queried the disposal of the Windsor Street site and was informed that the local authority were considering whether to make an offer for the site failing which the property would be put back on the open market in August.

There was a question with regard to the Environmental sustainability in properties and the Chief Fire Officer was pleased to confirm that consideration had been included in the budget for improvement to all buildings following a full review of all sites.

[Cllr Amos left the meeting at 11.46am].

The Police and Crime Commissioner assured Members that he would meet the Authority's expectation and deliver their requirements.

[Cllr Amos returned to the meeting at 11.49am].

RESOLVED that Members note:

i. Place Partnership Limited ceased trading on 31st March 2021 following a decision by the shareholders that the company was no longer viable and should be wound up in view of the County Council's decision to withdraw from the venture;

ii. along with the other shareholders, the Fire Authority has entered into a Deed of Assurance in order to facilitate a solvent liquidation of the company and will enter into a supplemental shareholder agreement to give further effect to this;

iii. the Fire Authority has entered into a new arrangement with effect from 1st April 2021 for the provision of property management services on our behalf by the Police and Crime Commissioner for West Mercia as part of a joint property function; and

iv. the appendix to the report contained an update on current property schemes.

332 2020-21 Performance Report: Q1-Q4

The Assistant Chief Fire Officer presented Members with a summary of the Service's performance for Quarter 1 to Quarter 4 2020-21 against a comprehensive set of Performance Indicators agreed by the Senior Management Board (SMB).

The Vice-Chairman informed Members that the Community Risk Management Plan was going to look at new attendance targets for rural areas which was following what Shropshire Fire and Rescue Authority were also persuing.

RESOLVED that Members note the following headlines drawn from Appendix 1 relating to performance in Q1-Q4, 2020-21:

i. A total of 7,018 incidents were attended in Q1-Q4 2020-21, a decrease of 11.18% (883 incidents) when compared with Q1-Q4 2019-20.

a. Fires: there were 1,664 Fire incidents in Q1-Q4 2020-21, a decrease of 42 incidents when compared to Q1-Q4 2019-20 which had 1,706. There was a decrease in Primary Fires of 157 incidents and an increase in Secondary Fires of 104 incidents. Overall there has been a 4.76% decrease in the number of casualties. However there has been an increase of one for both fatality and victim went to hospital, injuries appear to be serious when compared to Q1-Q4 2019-20.

b. Special Services: there were 2,009 Special Services incidents Q1-Q4 2020-21, a decrease of 735 incidents (-26.79%) when compared to Q1-Q4 2019-20. The largest decrease was due to a reduction in flooding incidents (-183 incidents) followed by RTC's (-170) and Rescue or Evacuation from Water (-131 incidents).

c. False Alarms: there were 3,345 Fire False Alarm incidents during Q1-Q4 2020-21, 106 fewer (-3.07%) than Q1-Q4 2019-20. Malicious False alarms had the largest percentage decrease (40.35%). Both Good Intent False Alarms and Fire Alarm Due to Apparatus also had small decreases (-1.39% and 2.84% respectively).

ii. Overall Staff Sickness level for Q1-Q4 2020-21 was 3.75 days lost per head (which is the ratio of the number of days/shifts lost per

person against the average number of personnel) this shows a decrease when compared to Q1-Q4 2019-20, where the number of days lost per head was 5.71. Long term sickness continues to form the greatest proportion of all staff sickness with 72.90% in Q1-Q4 2020-21. Wholetime firefighter sickness, Non-uniformed and Fire Control staff sickness all improved when compared to Q1-Q4 2019-20. Wholetime firefighters lost 5.66 days, Non-uniformed lost 6.28 days and Fire control staff lost 3.75 days per head.

iii. The Service attended 48.49% (241 incidents) of Primary Building Fires within 10 minutes in Q1-Q4 2020-21, compared with 51.79% (318 incidents) in Q1-Q4 2019-20. The average time for the first fire appliance to attend a Primary Building Fire was 11 minutes 1 seconds for Q1-Q4 2020-21 compared with 10 minutes 27 seconds in Q1-Q4 2019-20.

iv. The average for the overall availability of the first On-Call (Retained) fire appliance was 91.66% in Q1-Q4 2020-21 compared to 84.97% in Q1-Q4 2019-20; an increase in overall average availability of 6.69%. The new Wyre Forest hub is included in this calculation and is compared to the sum of Kidderminster, Bewdley and Stourport stations in 2019-20.

333 Minutes of the Audit and Standards Committee

The Chairman of the Committee presented the minutes of the Audit and Standards Committee meeting held on 21 April 2021.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Audit and Standards Committee meeting held on 21 April 2021 be received and noted.

The Meeting ended at: 12:00

Signed:.....

Date:.....

Chairman

Appendix 1

Political Groups						
	Conservative Group	Herefordshire Alliance	Green & Ind. Alliance	Unity Group	Total	
	Cllr. C. Taylor	Cllr. L. Stark	Cllr.T. Wells	Cllr. R. Udall		
	Cllr. R. Phillips	Cllr Toynbee	Cllr.N. McVey	Cllr.J. Robinson		
	Cllr K. Guthrie	Cllr. S. Bowen				
	Cllr. A. Amos	Cllr. K. Hey				
	Cllr. B. Clayton					
	Cllr. E. Eyre					
	Cllr. A. Hardman					
	Cllr. I. Hardiman					
	Cllr. M. Hart					
	Cllr. R. Morris					
	Cllr.L. Robinson					
	Cllr.D. Chambers					
	Cllr.A. Ditta					
	Cllr.R. Brookes					
	Cllr.D. Morehead					
	Cllr. J. Monk					
	Cllr.E. Marshall					
	17	4	2	2	25	
	68%	16%	8%	8%		
Allocation of Committee Seats						
Number In Group		Conservative Group	Herefordshire Alliance	Green & Independent Alliance	Unity Group	Total
		17	4	2	2	25
		68%	16%	8%	8%	
Committee	Seats					
Appointments	7	4	1	1	1	7
Audit and Standards	12	8	2	1	1	12
Policy and Resources	13	9	2	1	1	13
TOTAL SEATS	32	21	5	3	3	32
	%	66%	16%	9%	9%	

Policy & Resources Committee

Conservative Group (8)	Herefordshire Alliance (2)	Ind. & Green Alliance (1)	Unity Group (1)
Cllr. R. Phillips (Chairman)	Cllr. L. Stark	Cllr.T. Wells	Cllr. R. Udall
Cllr. C. Taylor (Vice)	Cllr. K. Hey		
Cllr. D. Chambers			
Cllr. A. Ditta			
Cllr. K. Guthrie			
Cllr. J. Monk			
Cllr. D. Morehead			
Cllr. L. Robinson			

Audit & Standards Committee (cannot include Chair/Vice-Chair of Authority, Chair of Policy & Resources or Group Leaders)

Conservative Group (8)	Herefordshire Alliance (2)	Ind. & Green Alliance (1)	Unity Group (1)
Cllr. M. Hart (Chairman)	Cllr. D. Toynbee	Cllr. N. McVey	Cllr. J. Robinson
Cllr. A. Amos (Vice)	Cllr. S. Bowen		
Cllr. R. Brookes			
Cllr. B. Clayton			
Cllr. A. Hardman			
Cllr. I. Hardiman			
Cllr. E. Marshall			
Cllr. R. Morris			

Appointments Committee

Conservative Group (4)	Herefordshire Alliance (1)	Ind. & Green Alliance (1)	Unity Group (1)
Cllr. C. Taylor	Cllr. L. Stark	Cllr. T. Wells	Cllr. R. Udall
Cllr. R. Phillips			
Cllr. M. Hart (Chairman)			
Cllr. E. Eyre			

Others

Health & Safety Representative Cllr. B. Clayton
ED+I Champion Cllr. S. Bowen

Report of the Treasurer

Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) Update

Purpose of report

1. To inform Members of the current position on the MTFP and limited information available on future budgets.
-

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Authority:

- i. Approves the known changes to the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP);*
- ii. Notes that the outcome of the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) and its impact on the emerging MTFP is still awaited; and*
- iii. Notes that the Policy and Resources Committee will receive further reports as more information is received.*

Introduction and Background

2. In February 2021 the Authority approved a budget for 2021/22 and an MTFP for the period up to 2024/25; this was based on very uncertain information for years beyond 2021/22.
3. The most recent Policy and Resources Committee approved some changes to the budget (and consequently to the MTFP) in relation to Retained Business Rates estimates, and some other changes to minor grants and expenditure are now known.
4. Ordinarily this Report would cover the implications of the new year's financial settlement as details started to filter through, however the results of the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) are not expected until late October and indications are that useable information at individual authority level will not emerge until very late December.
5. The report therefore focuses on what is known and gives indications of the various areas of potential change in the future unknowns. There is no reliable information on the likelihood or scale of any of the variations and therefore at this stage no "most likely" scenario can be planned with any credibility.

Changes to the MTFP

6. In February 2021 the Fire Authority approved an MTFP based on core assumptions which had small surpluses/deficits over the period. These were considered manageable pending the expected 3-4 year settlement flowing from the CSR. Part of the Reserves has been set aside to cover the net deficit of around £0.9m.
7. The table at paragraph 8 below summarises the known variables and is explained below:
 - a. Pay Awards – in line with most Fire Authorities, and in line with the government's clear direction, no provision was made for pay awards in 2021/22, but the Employer side of the national negotiating bodies have made an offer, which has been settled at 1.5% for grey book staff and a revised offer of 1.75% made to green book staff.
Grey book staff are firefighters and fire control staff, sometimes referred to as uniformed staff and green book staff are support staff (although some do wear uniform).
 - b. Firefighters pension scheme (FFPS) employer's contribution rate. The new (increased) rates which will take account of the McCloud/Sargeant remedy, which were expected from April 2022 have now been advised as put back to April 2024.
 - c. Since the date of the Authority meeting more clarity has emerged over the Retained Business Rate estimates and as a result the budget and forecast are amended.
 - d. In a similar way the Taxation Income Guarantee grant has been amended downward as government revised the rules as actual information became available.
 - e. Finally government have identified that due to a Home Office error, fire-link grant has nationally been paid at too high a level in 2020/21 and 2021/22 is being adjusted to the correct (lower) level and to recover the overpayment
8. The net impact on the MTFP is shown below:

	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
	Budget	Forecast	Forecast	Forecast
	£m	£m	£m	£m
MTFP - Expenditure: Feb 2021	35.056	36.467	37.217	38.180
21/22 Pay Awards 1.5%	0.268	0.339	0.339	0.339
Green book at 1.75%	0.010	0.010	0.010	0.010
FFPS-McCloud/Sargeant Contrib. Rates		(0.400)	(0.400)	
MTFP - Expenditure: Current	35.334	36.416	37.166	38.529
MTFP - Funding: Feb 2021	(35.187)	(35.994)	(36.977)	(37.825)
Retained Business Rate Corrections	0.130	(0.208)	(0.212)	(0.227)
Revised Taxation Income Guarantee	0.059	0.059	0.060	
Reduced FireLink Grant	0.048	0.023	0.023	
MTFP - Funding: Current	(34.950)	(36.120)	(37.106)	(38.052)

Structural Gap/(Surplus): Feb 2021	(0.131)	0.473	0.240	0.355
Structural Gap/(Surplus): Current	0.384	0.296	0.060	0.477

9. Overall the net draw on reserves has increased from £0.9m to £1.2m.

Future Variables

10. As has been stated previously there is still uncertainty over direction of funding that may arise from the CSR and the table below just gives an indicating of some of the potential impacts. *(Note: a figure in brackets indicates an impact that reduces the deficit).*

	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
	£m	£m	£m
1) 5% cut per year in SFA	0.544	1.071	1.583
2) 25% cut per year in RSG	0.562	1.124	1.688
3) 10% cut per year in SFA	0.932	1.790	2.208
4) 15% cut per year in SFA	1.321	2.164	2.208
5) continuation of Rural Service Grant	(0.115)	(0.115)	(0.115)
6) 0.1% additional increase in tax-base	(0.025)	(0.050)	(0.075)

SFA = Settlement Funding Assessment – the figure which government determines will be funded from Retained Business Rates, Business Rate Tip-up Grant and Revenue Support Grant.

RSG = Revenue Support Grant, one of the elements that make up RSG.

11. In addition the following areas have uncertainty around them:
- Pension Grant - £1.6m. Introduced as a temporary funding measure in 2019/20 to cover the significantly increased cost of employers contributions, this was intended to be dealt with through the next CSR. In the interim it has been passed from Home Office back to Ministry of Housing & Local Government (MHCLG) for inclusion in core funding and it is uncertain if the existing distribution can be maintained.
 - Pension Costs – FFPS rates are due for revision from April 2022 (now probably 2024) and at the moment the formula for the discount rate to be used indicates another potential increase significantly greater than the £1.6m experienced in 2019/20. It is not yet clear how government intends to handle this.
 - Pension increases – As injury pensions (and On-call pensions prior to 2006/2000) are paid from the revenue account the “triple-lock” arrangement if implemented would increase costs by an additional £0.050m.
 - Early indications are that the cost of the Emergency Service Network (ESN) may be less than the current Firelink arrangements, by up to £0.2m from 2024/25, but there is still a lot of detail to be provided before this can be relied upon.

ESN is the new national emergency services communications network being developed by government. Firelink is the Fire element of the

existing government developed communications system, sometimes know as Airwave.

Conclusion

12. Other than the revisions identified at paragraph 8 above, there is insufficient reliable information to amend the MTFP further at this stage. However, excepting the external “unknowns” the Plan remains within the manageable parameters accepted in Feb 2021.
13. Further reports will be brought to the Authority and Policy and Resources Committee as information on the CSR and then the grant settlement emerges.

Corporate Considerations

Resource Implications (identify any financial, legal, property or human resources issues)	Whole Report
Strategic Policy Links (identify how proposals link in with current priorities and policy framework and if they do not, identify any potential implications).	None
Risk Management / Health & Safety (identify any risks, the proposed control measures and risk evaluation scores).	None
Consultation (identify any public or other consultation that has been carried out on this matter)	None
Equalities (has an Equalities Impact Assessment been completed? If not, why not?)	N/A

Report of Report of Assistant Director: Prevention

Attendance Performance Measure

Purpose of report

1. To seek permission from the Fire Authority to undertake public consultation on a new Service Attendance Performance Measure to align with Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service as outlined in the 2021-25 Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP).

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Fire Authority authorises officers to commence public consultation on a revised Attendance Performance Measure.





Introduction and Background

Current Attendance Performance Measure

2. Attendance performance measures are established by each Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) individually and are used to measure the FRS's performance in regards of how quickly fire engines attend incidents, which are then reported to the Fire Authority. Results are also reported in a FRS's Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) / Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) and link to the Strategic Risk Register.
3. The current attendance performance measures for Building Fires and Road Traffic Collisions (Table1) were first introduced in 2009 as part of the 2009-12 Integrated Risk Management Plan. Out of the four published measures, attendance of the first appliance at building fires is the only one that is consistently reported to the Fire Authority on a quarterly basis.
4. The Community Risk Management Plan 2021-2025 (CRMP) states that a new performance measure will be consulted upon:

"A new standard based on our Alliance work with Shropshire FRS will be consulted upon and, if appropriate, introduced during the term of the CRMP. This will be complemented by a travel-time analysis of all incidents that do not align with expected travel times, in order to identify any areas for improvement."
5. Please note that since 2009-10, the Service's attendance performance measure has been calculated for Primary Buildings Fires, which is a slightly narrower category, when compared to 'all building fires'. It is noted that since the introduction of the attendance performance measure (2009) all fire engines are equipped with dedicated cutters and spreaders (described in the IRMP as an 'enhanced rescue capability'). This is calculated for four stages of response, *i.e.*, call handling time, crew turnout time, travel time and from call to arrival time.

Table 1: Summary of Current Attendance Performance Measure

Model	HWFRS's Standards of Fire Cover from 2009-12 IRMP Attendance Times and Weight of Attack			
Fires in buildings		First fire engine		Second fire engine
	<i>Within 10 mins on 75% of occasions</i>		<i>Within 5 mins of first fire engine on 75% of occasions</i>	
Road Traffic Collisions		First fire engine		Second fire engine
	<i>Within 10 mins on 75% of occasions</i>		<i>Enhanced rescue capability within 20 mins on 85% of occasions</i>	

Performance Against the Current Attendance Performance Measure

6. A summary of the Service's performance calculated against the current measure is presented in Table 2. These calculations refer to the first appliance in attendance and are measured from the time of call to the time of arrival at the scene.

Table 2: Service's performance reported each year in the Performance Report

Year	No. of incidents that met the attendance standard	Total no. of incidents	Proportion of incidents where performance measure was met	Reported as
2012/13	431	675	63.85%	Building fires
2013/14	366	677	54.06%	Building fires
2014/15	351	574	61.15%	Building fires
2015/16	404	671	60.21%	Building fires
2016/17	384	660	58.18%	Building fires
2017/18	380	636	59.75%	Building fires
2018/19	369	655	56.34%	Primary building fires
2019/20	318	614	51.79%	Primary building fires
2020/21	241	497	48.49%	Primary building fires

7. Analysis of reports logged in the Incident Recording System (IRS) shows that the current performance measure is no longer a meaningful tool, and applies a singular measure across the whole Service area when it is clear that attendance times in a city centre will be much quicker than in a more rural area, for example.
8. The Service attends a much wider range of incidents than just fires in buildings, so a different way of measuring a wider range of incidents taking into account the different areas covered would be more appropriate.
9. Since the measure was first introduced in 2009, there have been a number of key factors outside of the Service's control that have changed significantly, including increasing traffic congestion, traffic calming, and roadwork network changes and upgrades.
10. Another factor is the Service's prevention work which, alongside other partners' agencies and societal changes over the years, now means the Service is




responding to many fewer calls to this type. This has an adverse statistical effect on the current measurement with fewer incidents of the type recorded over a wider geographic area and often in less urban areas. This is evidenced by the largest recorded reason for not meeting the current measurement as ‘travel distance’.

11. Of utmost importance it must be emphasised that revising the performance measure is only a change in how the Service measures and reports performance, and will not have a detrimental impact on the service provided to the local communities. Revising the performance measure will allow the Service to collate more useful data, report on performance on a wider range of incidents, and analyse where this falls short of expectations, enabling review and improvement.

Proposed New Performance Measure

12. A revised attendance performance measure will provide local communities with a much clearer picture of the emergency incident response time for the area in which they live for each type of incident attended. The Government has divided England and Wales into categorised Lower Super Output Areas (LSOA).
13. The proposal is to use the LSOA categories, linking these to emergency response times as in Table 3. Importantly, the response time is measured from the time of mobilisation to the arrival at the scene by the first appliance.
14. In adopting this model it supports the strategic alliance with Shropshire FRS and ensures a more transparent and consistent approach across the both Services.

Table 3: Summary of Proposed Attendance Performance Measure

Model	Attendance Performance Measure			
	<i>First fire engine at the scene</i>	<i>Risk area</i>	<i>LSOA codes</i>	<i>First fire engine within</i>
Emergency response time (exc. call handling)		Urban	A1, B1, C1, C2	10 minutes
		Town and fringe	D1, D2	15 minutes
		Rural	E1, E2, F1, F2	20 minutes

Potential Impact Based on Modelling

15. A company was commissioned to provide evidence of expected performance for Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service based on the proposal outlined in Table 3. Incident and response data from April 2015 to March 2020 was analysed, and findings presented by financial year, modelling how adopting the proposed attendance performance measure would impact on historical figures.
16. The modelling showed that the proposed attendance performance measure provides a more transparent and realistic terminology with which to assess delivery of services to the local communities.

17. Lower Super Output Areas (LSOA) response targets by HWFRS measured from time mobilised for all incidents types:
- First appliance in urban areas met the condition of 10 minutes with an average time of 8 minutes and 13 seconds;
 - First appliance in town and fringe areas met the condition of 15 minutes with an average time of 11 minutes and 30 seconds;
 - First appliance in rural areas met the condition of 20 minutes with an average time of 12 minutes and 57 seconds.

Public Consultation

18. Should the recommendation to consider adopting the revised attendance performance measure be approved, it is recommended that the Fire Authority supports a proportionate public consultation process.
19. It would be advisable to run the Public Consultation throughout the autumn to winter period, analyse obtained results and report the results to the Fire Authority in April 2022.
20. The service will announce a procurement process to deliver this Public Consultation upon Fire Authority's approval. The successful company will deliver the final report of consultation findings for review. All collected data will be carefully analysed and summarised in a final report presented to the Fire Authority in 2022.
21. The cost of the consultation exercise is accounted for in budget planning and is expected to be in the region of £15,000.

Conclusion/Summary

22. To conclude, the Community Risk Management Plan 2021-2025 endorsed by the Fire Authority, states that a new attendance performance measure will be consulted upon during its term. An analysis of the current data has shown that the current attendance performance measure is no longer a meaningful tool. It is proposed that public consultation is commenced on a revised attendance performance measure.

Corporate Considerations

Resource Implications (identify any financial, legal, property or human resources issues)	A procurement process will be undertaken to secure a provider to conduct the public consultation. This is budgeted for. Upon completion of the consultation the feedback will be analysed by the Performance and Information Department.
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Strategic Policy Links (identify how proposals link in with current priorities and policy framework and if they do not, identify any potential implications).	This closely links to the CRMP and also delivery of the Response Strategy.
Risk Management / Health & Safety (identify any risks, the proposed control measures and risk evaluation scores).	This work closely aligns to the CRMP and by default the Strategic Risk Register.
Consultation (identify any public or other consultation that has been carried out on this matter)	The report proposes a public consultation exercise is carried out. Consultation will also occur internally with members of staff encouraged to contribute.
Equalities (has an Equalities Impact Assessment been completed? If not, why not?)	An equality impact assessment of the consultation proposal will be carried out by the preferred provider.
Data Protection Impact Assessment (where personal data is processed a DPIA must be completed to ensure compliant handling)	A DPIA will be conducted as part of the procurement process.

Report of the Treasurer

Arrangements for Appointment of External Auditors

Purpose of report

1. To approve arrangements for the appointment of external auditors following the conclusion of the 2022/23 audit year.
-

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Authority continues to “opt in” to Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd (PSAA) for the procurement of future external audit provision (Option 3).

Background

2. Under the provisions of The Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and the Local Audit (Appointing Person) Regulations 2015 the fire Authority is able to independently appoint its own External Auditor. However, like almost every other local authority, the fire Authority opted to join the sector led arrangements administered through PSAA.
3. The present contracts come to an end after the 2022/23 Audit year and it is now necessary to consider future arrangements.
4. The relevant regulations require that a decision to opt in must be made by the members of the Authority meeting as a whole.
5. The arguments for and against the various options are unchanged from those last considered by the Fire Authority in December 2016.

Options for local appointment of External Auditors

6. There are three broad options open to the Authority under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 (the Act):

Option 1 - To make a stand-alone appointment

7. In order to make a stand-alone appointment the Authority will need to set up an Auditor Panel. The members of the panel must be wholly or a majority of independent members as defined by the Act. Independent members for this purpose are independent appointees, this excludes current and former Authority Members (or officers) and their close families and friends. This means that Authority Members will not have a majority input to assessing bids and choosing which firm of accountants to award a contract for the Authority's external audit. A

new independent auditor panel established by the Authority will be responsible for selecting the auditor.

Advantages/benefits

- Setting up an auditor panel allows the Authority to take maximum advantage of the new local appointment regime and have local input to the decision.

Disadvantages/risks

- There will be costs associated with the recruitment and servicing of the Auditor Panel, running the bidding exercise and negotiating the contract; in addition, on-going expenses and allowances will be incurred.
- The Authority will not be able to take advantage of reduced fees that may be available through joint or national procurement contracts.
- The assessment of bids and decision on awarding contracts will be taken by independent appointees and not solely by Authority Members.
- The Authority does not have the capacity to undertake such a procurement exercise and manage the consequential arrangements without incurring additional cost.

Option 2 - Set up a Joint Auditor Panel / local joint procurement arrangements

8. The Act enables the Authority to join with others to establish a joint auditor panel. Again this will need to be constituted of wholly or a majority of independent appointees (members). Further legal advice will be required on the exact constitution of such a panel, having regard to the obligations of each authority under the Act, and the Authority's requirement to liaise with other local authorities to assess the appetite for such an arrangement.

Advantages/benefits

- The costs of setting up the panel, running the bidding exercise and negotiating the contract will be shared across a number of authorities.
- There is greater opportunity for negotiating some economies of scale by being able to offer a larger combined contract value to the firms.

Disadvantages/risks

- The decision making body will be further removed from local input. There will be potentially no input from Authority Members where a wholly independent auditor panel is used or limited input where only one Authority Member is appointed to the joint panel to represent the Authority.

- The choice of auditor could be complicated where individual authorities have independence issues. An independence issue occurs where the auditor has recently or is currently carrying out work such as consultancy or advisory work for the Authority. Where this occurs, some auditors may be prevented from being appointed by the terms of their professional standards. There is a risk that if the joint auditor panel choose a firm that is conflicted for this Authority, then a separate appointment, with all the attendant costs and loss of economies possible through joint procurement, may still be required.
- It also requires a willing partner or partners of sufficient size to give the exercise a chance of being financially favourable. Indications are that most of our potential partners are opting for 3 below.

Option 3 – Continue to Opt-in to a Sector Led Body (PSAA)

9. On 22 July 2016, the LGA confirmed that Public Service Appointments Ltd (PSAA) had been approved by the Government to become the body which is authorised to make future audit appointments on behalf of principal local authorities.

Advantages/benefits

- The costs of setting up the appointment arrangements and negotiating fees would be shared across all opt-in authorities.
- By offering large contract values the firms would be able to offer better rates and lower fees than are likely to result from local negotiation.
- Any conflicts at individual authorities would be managed by the Sector Led Body who would have a number of contracted firms to call upon.
- The Authority would not need to set up an Auditor Panel and therefore locally appointed independent members would not be required. Instead, a separate body would be set up to act in the collective interests of the 'opt-in' authorities.

Disadvantages/risks

- Individual Authority Members will have less opportunity for direct involvement in the appointment process other than through the LGA and/or stakeholder representative groups.
- In order for the Sector Led Body to be viable and to be placed in the strongest possible negotiating position, authorities would be required to indicate their intention to opt-in before final contract prices are known.

Financial Implications

10. The cost of establishing a local or joint Auditor Panel outlined in options 1 and 2 above would need to be estimated and included in the Authority's budget from 2017/18. This would include the cost of recruiting independent appointees (members), servicing the Panel, running a bidding and tender evaluation process, letting a contract and any agreed payments to Panel members.
11. Opting-in to a national Sector Led Body provides maximum opportunity to limit the extent of any increases by entering into a large scale collective procurement arrangement and would remove the costs of establishing an auditor panel. There will be no fee to join the sector led arrangements.
12. The audit fees that opted-in bodies will be charged by the sector led body will cover the costs of appointing auditors. The LGA believes that audit fees achieved through block contracts will be lower than the costs that individual authorities will be able to negotiate.

Conclusion/Summary

13. In practice it would appear that Option 2 is not feasible as there are unlikely to be any partners, therefore it is a choice between Option 1 and Option 3, and on balance the benefits of Option 3 outweigh Option 1
14. The Authority should therefore "opt-in" to the PSAA arrangements.

Next Steps

15. Authorities that wish to "opt in" to the PSAA arrangements have been asked to confirm this to PSAA by 11th March 2022.

Corporate Considerations

Resource Implications (identify any financial, legal, property or human resources issues)	As set out in report
Strategic Policy Links (identify how proposals link in with current priorities and policy framework and if they do not, identify any potential implications).	n/a
Risk Management / Health & Safety (identify any risks, the proposed control measures and risk evaluation scores).	n/a

Consultation (identify any public or other consultation that has been carried out on this matter)	n/a
Equalities (has an Equalities Impact Assessment been completed? If not, why not?)	n/a

Appendix 1: Letter from PSAA

Appendix 2 “opt In” pro-forma

22 September 2021

To: Mr Travis, Chief Executive
Hereford and Worcester Fire Authority

Copied to: Mr Rehorn, S151 Officer
Councillor Hart, Chair of Audit Committee or equivalent

Dear Mr Travis,

Invitation to opt into the national scheme for auditor appointments from April 2023

I want to ensure that you are aware the external auditor for the audit of your accounts for 2023/24 has to be appointed before the end of December 2022. That may seem a long way away but, as your organisation has a choice about how to make that appointment, your decision-making process needs to begin soon.

We are pleased that the Secretary of State has confirmed PSAA in the role of the appointing person for eligible principal bodies for the period commencing April 2023. Joining PSAA's national scheme for auditor appointments is one of the choices available to your organisation.

In June 2021 we issued a draft prospectus and invited your views and comments on our early thinking on the development of the national scheme for the next period. Feedback from the sector has been extremely helpful and has enabled us to refine our proposals which are now set out in the [scheme prospectus](#) and our [procurement strategy](#). Both documents can be downloaded from our website which also contains a range of useful information that you may find helpful.

The national scheme timetable for appointing auditors from 2023/24 means we now need to issue a formal invitation to you to opt into these arrangements. In order to meet the requirements of the relevant regulations, we also attach a form of acceptance of our invitation which you must use if your organisation decides to join the national scheme. We have specified the five consecutive financial years beginning 1 April 2023 as the compulsory appointing period for the purposes of the regulations which govern the national scheme.

Given the very challenging local audit market, we believe that eligible bodies will be best served by opting to join the scheme and have attached a short summary of why we believe that is the best solution both for individual bodies and the sector as a whole.

I would like to highlight three matters to you:

1. if you opt to join the national scheme, we need to receive your formal acceptance of this invitation by Friday 11 March 2022;

2. the relevant regulations require that, except for a body that is a corporation sole (e.g. a police and crime commissioner), the decision to accept our invitation and to opt in must be made by the members of the authority meeting as a whole e.g. Full Council or equivalent. We appreciate this will need to be built into your decision-making timetable. We have deliberately set a generous timescale for bodies to make opt in decisions (24 weeks compared to the statutory minimum of 8 weeks) to ensure that all eligible bodies have sufficient time to comply with this requirement; and
3. if you decide not to accept the invitation to opt in by the closing date, you may subsequently make a request to opt in, but only after 1 April 2023. We are required to consider such requests and agree to them unless there are reasonable grounds for their refusal. PSAA must consider a request as the appointing person in accordance with the Regulations. The Regulations allow us to recover our reasonable costs for making arrangements to appoint a local auditor in these circumstances, for example if we need to embark on a further procurement or enter into further discussions with our contracted firms.

If you have any other questions not covered by our information, do not hesitate to contact us by email at ap2@psaa.co.uk. We also publish answers to [frequently asked questions](#) on our website.

If you would like to discuss a particular issue with us, please send an email also to ap2@psaa.co.uk, and we will respond to you.

Yours sincerely

Tony Crawley
Chief Executive

Encl: Summary of the national scheme

Why accepting the national scheme opt-in invitation is the best solution

Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited (PSAA)

We are a not-for-profit, independent company limited by guarantee incorporated by the Local Government Association in August 2014.

We have the support of the LGA, which in 2014 worked to secure the option for principal local government and police bodies to appoint auditors through a dedicated sector-led national body.

We have the support of Government; MHCLG's Spring statement confirmed our appointment because of our "strong technical expertise and the proactive work they have done to help to identify improvements that can be made to the process".

We are an active member of the new Local Audit Liaison Committee, chaired by MHCLG and attended by key local audit stakeholders, enabling us to feed in body and audit perspectives to decisions about changes to the local audit framework, and the need to address timeliness through actions across the system.

We conduct research to raise awareness of local audit issues, and work with MHCLG and other stakeholders to enable changes arising from Sir Tony Redmond's review, such as more flexible fee setting and a timelier basis to set scale fees.

We have established an advisory panel, which meets three times per year. Its membership is drawn from relevant representative groups of local government and police bodies, to act as a sounding board for our scheme and to enable us to hear your views on the design and operation of the scheme.

The national scheme for appointing local auditors

In July 2016, the Secretary of State specified PSAA as an appointing person for principal local government and police bodies for audits from 2018/19, under the provisions of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and the Local Audit (Appointing Person) Regulations 2015. Acting in accordance with this role PSAA is responsible for appointing an auditor and setting scales of fees for relevant principal authorities that have chosen to opt into its national scheme. 98% of eligible bodies made the choice to opt-in for the five-year period commencing in April 2018.

We will appoint an auditor for all opted-in bodies for each of the five financial years beginning from 1 April 2023.

We aim for all opted-in bodies to receive an audit service of the required quality at a realistic market price and to support the drive towards a long term competitive and more sustainable market for local audit. The focus of our quality assessment will include resourcing capacity and capability including sector knowledge, and client relationship management and communication.

What the appointing person scheme from 2023 will offer

We believe that a sector-led, collaborative, national scheme stands out as the best option for all eligible bodies, offering the best value for money and assuring the independence of the auditor appointment.

The national scheme from 2023 will build on the range of benefits already available for members:

- transparent and independent auditor appointment via a third party;
- the best opportunity to secure the appointment of a qualified, registered auditor;
- appointment, if possible, of the same auditors to bodies involved in significant collaboration/joint working initiatives, if the parties believe that it will enhance efficiency;
- on-going management of any independence issues which may arise;
- access to a specialist PSAA team with significant experience of working within the context of the relevant regulations to appoint auditors, managing contracts with audit firms, and setting and determining audit fees;
- a value for money offer based on minimising PSAA costs and distribution of any surpluses to scheme members - in 2019 we returned a total £3.5million to relevant bodies and more recently we announced a further distribution of £5.6m in August 2021;
- collective efficiency savings for the sector through undertaking one major procurement as opposed to a multiplicity of smaller procurements;
- avoids the necessity for local bodies to establish an auditor panel and undertake an auditor procurement, enabling time and resources to be deployed on other pressing priorities;
- updates from PSAA to Section 151 officers and Audit Committee Chairs on a range of local audit related matters to inform and support effective auditor-audited body relationships; and
- concerted efforts to work with other stakeholders to develop a more sustainable local audit market.

We are committed to keep developing our scheme, taking into account feedback from scheme members, suppliers and other stakeholders, and learning from the collective post-2018 experience. This work is ongoing, and we have taken a number of initiatives to improve the operation of the scheme for the benefit of all parties.

Importantly we have listened to your feedback to our recent consultation, and our response is reflected in [the scheme prospectus](#).

Opting in

The closing date for opting in is 11 March 2022. We have allowed more than the minimum eight-week notice period required, because the formal approval process for most eligible bodies is a decision made by the members of the authority meeting as a whole [Full Council or equivalent], except police and crime commissioners who are able to make their own decision.

We will confirm receipt of all opt-in notices. A full list of eligible bodies that opt in will be published on our website. Once we have received an opt-in notice, we will write to you to request information on any joint working arrangements relevant to your auditor appointment, and any potential independence matters which may need to be taken into consideration when appointing your auditor.

Local Government Reorganisation

We are aware that reorganisations in the local government areas of Cumbria, Somerset, and North Yorkshire were announced in July 2021. Subject to parliamentary approval shadow elections will take place in May 2022 for the new Councils to become established from 1 April 2023. Newly established local government bodies have the right to opt into PSAA's scheme under Regulation 10 of the Appointing Person Regulations 2015. These Regulations also set out that a local government body that ceases to exist is automatically removed from the scheme.

If for any reason there is any uncertainty that reorganisations will take place or meet the current timetable, we would suggest that the current eligible bodies confirm their acceptance to opt in to avoid the requirement to have to make local arrangements should the reorganisation be delayed.

Next Steps

We expect to formally commence the procurement of audit services in early February 2022. At that time our procurement documentation will be available for opted-in bodies to view through our e-tendering platform.

Our recent webinars to support our consultation proved to be popular, and we will be running a series of webinars covering specific areas of our work and our progress to prepare for the second appointing period. Details can be found on [our website](#) and in [the scheme prospectus](#).

Appointing Period 2023/24 to 2027/28

Form of notice of acceptance of the invitation to opt in

(Please use the details and text below to submit to PSAA your body's formal notice of acceptance of the invitation to opt into the appointing person arrangements from 2023)

Email to: ap2@psaa.co.uk

Subject: **Hereford and Worcester Fire Authority**

Notice of acceptance of the invitation to become an opted-in authority

This email is notice of the acceptance of your invitation dated 22 September 2021 to become an opted-in authority for the audit years 2023/2024 to 2027/2028 for the purposes of the appointment of our auditor under the provisions of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and the requirements of the Local Audit (Appointing Person) Regulations 2015.

I confirm that **Hereford and Worcester Fire Authority** has made the decision to accept your invitation to become an opted-in authority in accordance with the decision making requirements of the Regulations, and that I am authorised to sign this notice of acceptance on behalf of the authority.

Name: **[insert name of signatory]**

Title: **[insert role of signatory]** (authorised officer)

For and on behalf of: **Hereford and Worcester Fire Authority**

Date: **[insert date completed]**

Report of Assistant Director: Prevention

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabularies and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) Improvement Plan – Update September 2021

Purpose of report

1. To provide Members with a final update on the implementation of the HMICFRS Improvement Plan following the inspection report dated 20 December 2018.
-

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Authority:

- i) notes progress on actions to deliver the 2018 HMICFRS Improvement Plan; and*
- ii) agrees to close down reporting on the 2018 HMICFRS Improvement Plan.*

Introduction and Background

2. At the Fire Authority meeting on 17 June 2021, Members received a copy of the Quarter 4 update of the Service's Improvement Plan drawn up to address the findings of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) inspection report dated 20 December 2018. At that stage there were four of the fifteen areas for improvement open.
3. The Improvement Plan has now been updated to outline progress made up to September 2021. The report shows the outstanding four 'areas for improvement' have been closed.
4. All fifteen areas for improvement noted in the 2018 inspection report have now been closed.

HMICFRS Improvement Plan – Progress Update

5. Delivery of the Improvement Plan is overseen by members of the HMICFRS support team, who meet regularly with senior managers responsible for each area for improvement to prepare updates on actions proposed and completed. The team also ensure that actions carried out are fully evidenced and available for evaluation and audit. The ninth update, covering up to September 2021, is attached to this report (see Appendix 1).

6. The update shows that progress has been made in addressing areas identified within the three themes covered in the HMICFRS report; effectiveness, efficiency and people. However it should be noted that due to Covid-19 restrictions, certain actions were delayed or postponed. Members should note that actions completed or previously embedded in the Service's ongoing processes have been greyed out in the Improvement Plan.
7. Key points to note are highlighted below, with further details available in Appendix 1.
8. Following work undertaken this quarter, all areas for improvement have now been addressed, with actions embedded into business as usual.

Effectiveness	
<i>Area for improvement</i>	<i>September 21 - Update</i>
1. Access to relevant and up-to-date risk information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closed in Q3 2020-21.
2. Understanding and identifying vulnerability and safeguarding vulnerable people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Domestic abuse training advertised. New Exploitation and Vulnerability training is in the process of being rolled out Service wide. This training is undertaken by West Mercia Police and available as part of the compulsory learning package for staff. This item is now closed
3. Evaluating prevention work to understand the benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closed in Q3 2020-21.
4. Resourcing the risk-based inspection programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closed in Q2 2020-21.
5. Effective system for learning and debriefs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incident Recording System (IRS) configuration tool has been purchased and will go live after training in November. This item is now closed

Efficiency	
<i>Area for improvement</i>	<i>September 2021 - Update</i>
6. Workforce productivity - clarify the role of Watch Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closed in Q1 2020-21
7. Workforce productivity - prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Protection, Prevention and Response strategies have all been published. This item is now closed

8. Managing the replacement of faulty smoke alarms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closed in Q2 2020-21.
9. Workforce productivity – protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closed in Q3 2020-21.
10. Benefits and outcomes of collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closed in Q2 2020-21.

People	
Area for improvement	September 2021 - Update
11. Staff engagement – communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closed in Q2 2020-21.
12. Staff engagement – culture and values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closed in Q1 2020-21
13. Feedback mechanisms and change processes – ensuring fairness and promoting diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closed in Q2 2020-21.
14. Supporting high-potential staff and aspiring leaders – appraisal process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reminders continue to be published in the Bulletin on completing appraisals. Overall completion rates are being monitored quarterly. A refreshed appraisal process linked to the new core strategies to be launched April 2022 as part of the People Strategy. This item is now closed.
15. Supporting high-potential staff and aspiring leaders – promotion process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closed in Q3 2020-21.

Conclusion/Summary

9. The ninth update of the HMICFRS Improvement Plan shows that additional progress has been made up to September 2021, with all items now closed and embedded into core work streams, although some delays have occurred due to the Covid-19 restrictions and national lockdowns.
10. Members are recommended to note the progress made in delivering the HMICFRS Improvement Plan and endorse the recommendation to cease reporting on the 2018 Improvement Plan.
11. The Service now awaits the full report from the 2021 inspection which is due to be published in December 2021. Upon receipt of the full report, a new

action plan will need to be formed and subsequently reported to the Authority in early 2022.

12. Subject to any matters arising following your consideration, the update will be published on the Service website.

Corporate Considerations

Resource Implications (identify any financial, legal, property or human resources issues)	The Improvement Plan highlights areas for improvement relating to effectiveness, efficiency and people. Actions to address these areas are likely to have resource implications, which will be identified in the Improvement Plan.
Strategic Policy Links (identify how proposals link in with current priorities and policy framework and if they do not, identify any potential implications).	Actions proposed in the Improvement Plan are likely to have an impact on both the CRMP and the MTFP. All proposals will be assessed to ensure they meet the Service's overall Core Purpose and Vision.
Risk Management / Health & Safety (identify any risks, the proposed control measures and risk evaluation scores).	Any risks associated with proposals will be assessed through the Improvement Plan.
Consultation (identify any public or other consultation that has been carried out on this matter)	Proposals to deliver the Improvement Plan have the full participation of Senior Managers in relevant Service departments. The Improvement Plan is publicly available on the Service website.

Equalities (has an Equalities Impact Assessment been completed? If not, why not?)	An EIA is not required for this report. EIAs will be completed as appropriate when preparing proposals through the Improvement Plan.
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Supporting Information

Appendix 1: HMICFRS Improvement Plan 2018-19; Update: September 2021



Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service

HMICFRS Improvement Plan 2018/19

Updated: September 2021



In March 2018, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Service (HMICFRS) announced their intention to inspect all 45 fire and rescue services in England over the next 18 months. The Service was selected as one of the first 14 services to be inspected.

Over summer 2018, inspectors from HMICFRS carried out their in-depth review of our Service, focusing on how effective and efficient we are and how well we look after our people. Their report was published in December 2018, and this is [the link to the report](#).

Report findings

The inspection considered three main questions:

- How **effective** is the fire and rescue service at keeping people safe and secure from fire and other risks?
- How **efficient** is the fire and rescue service at keeping people safe and secure from fire and other risks?
- How well does the fire and rescue service look after its **people**?

The Service was found to be 'good' within the effectiveness area but 'requiring improvement' when considering efficiency and people. The inspection report highlighted a number of areas for improvement and recommended that action be taken to address them. Therefore, the Service has prepared an Improvement Plan which not only focuses on the areas for improvement highlighted in the inspection report. The Improvement Plan is owned by senior managers and is regularly updated and published as progress is made.

The last update was presented to the Fire Authority on 17 June 2021 and the [Improvement Plan](#) was published on the Service website.

This report provides an update of progress in implementing the Improvement Plan up to September 2021 against the identified Areas for Improvement noted in the HMICFRS report. Greyed out sections in the Improvement Plan note actions completed or embedded in the Service's ongoing processes.

Effectiveness – ES1.4

Area for Improvement	The Service should ensure staff understands how to identify vulnerability and safeguard vulnerable people.		
Summary Finding	The Service has extended its home fire safety checks to include questions about vulnerable people. Further training is needed to give staff more confidence in this process.		
HWFRS Action Proposed	Progress To Date	Work since last update	Target Date
a. All staff to complete the Safeguarding e-learning package.	All staff have access to the online E-learning package, due be completed by end September 2019. At the end of Q4, 524 staff (77%) have now completed this training whilst 160 (23%) staff are still required to complete the package and update their CTR record. Outstanding training for staff is now reviewed as part of the Operational Assurance Report and emails have been sent to Managers identifying the relevant personnel, districts to chase those outstanding.	Prevention has updated the safeguarding e-learning package and the revised version will be published in September. The department will continue to monitor completion rates and report accordingly.	On going
b. Human Resources staff should be trained in safer recruiting.	Four recruitment officers have completed principles of safer recruitment training.		Complete
c. Safeguarding training included in L1 Command training.	In the Level 1 incident command assessments, additional questions have been added to confirm understanding of safeguarding.		Complete
d. Continue to work with Operational Crews and how they can report concerns to Prevention.	Community Risk staff have now visited all Wholtime watches and district teams prior to the roll out of the new safe and well check. 24 visits have been completed and covered Vulnerability, safeguarding and signposting.		Complete
e. Station Skills audits checking all staff are trained to the appropriate level.	As part of the 2020-21 Station Assurance Audit, questions regarding safeguarding are now included and will be reviewed on completion of this process.		Complete
f. Additional training for Managers.	Domestic Abuse training was delivered in September 2019 via Training & Development Centre. 55 staff from across the Service completed this training. An additional 3 sessions were booked for March 2020 for Level 1 Commanders. New Exploitation and Vulnerability training is in the process of being rolled out Service wide. This training is undertaken by West Mercia Police and available as part of the compulsory learning package for staff.	Further domestic abuse training advertised. New Exploitation and Vulnerability training is in the process of being rolled out Service wide. This training is undertaken by West Mercia Police and available as part of the compulsory learning package for staff.	Complete
	Statutory safeguarding training for middle managers and the service lead has commenced. Basic Adults safeguarding training took place on 10th Dec 20. Mop up session booked for 25th Jan 21. Children's Safeguarding training booked for 11th Jan 21. Recognising, Responding and Report Adult Safeguarding training booked for 1st Feb		Complete
Strategic lead	<i>Assistant Director: Prevention</i>		

Effectiveness – ES1.10

Area for Improvement	The service should ensure it has an effective system for staff to use learning and debriefs to improve operational response and incident command.		
Summary Finding	The service is good at responding to fires and other emergencies. It has good equipment and training. It is flexible in how it responds to incidents and follows national guidance. However, it should use hot debriefs more often.		
HWFRS Action Proposed	Progress To Date	Work since last update	Target Date
Review policy and make necessary amendments.	The Incident and Exercise Debrief SPI is up to date and current with the last review date 1 September 2019. Following this review only minor amendments were required, notably a revision to reflect the new electronic system and to highlight 'hot debriefing' protocols as recommended by HMICFRS. Ops policy have created a handbook file that includes hot, electronic and formal debrief overviews.		Complete
Incident Command department to cover debriefs on initial course, during the bi-annual health checks and on the technical knowledge packages.	A supplementary debrief question has been added to the list of questions asked following conclusion of an Incident Commander Health check. Incident Command Training Lead has confirmed that he covers all debriefs on the initial incident courses. This will be noted in the course master file. Incident Command Training Lead has confirmed that hot debriefs have been added to Incident Command packages and questions.		Complete
Appropriate debrief carried out' question included in AIM form.	This question is included within the AIM form. Monitoring has identified further information is required in the notes section of the debrief. This is currently being addressed with all monitoring Officers		Complete
Questions on hot debriefs is included in the Practical Skills Audit 20/21 to report on the understanding of Junior Officer's responsibilities for hot debriefs.	This has been requested as part of the Practical Skills Audit for the 2020/21. This process starts in April.		Complete
IRS update. Additional question to be added into Incident Reporting System.	When the new IRS is introduced an additional question asking whether a hot debrief has taken place will be added. This will allow the Service to monitor the number of hot debriefs being carried out. Bulletin item now drafted to raise the awareness of debriefs, including individual responsibilities. This will be circulated following completion of the above work on the IRS.	IRS configuration tool has been purchased and will allow questions to be added to incident reports. This will go live after the training in November, with bulletin item and comms prepared.	Complete
Debriefs to be included in all future promotion workbooks for CC's and WC's.	Actioned		Complete
Strategic lead	<i>Head of Operations</i>		

Efficiency- EY1.4

Area for Improvement	The Service should assure itself that its workforce is productive.		
Summary Finding	Progress made in the Service's prevention work is likely to increase workloads in other areas. We found that specialist prevention officers already have a lot of work to do. This is a risk. The Service should review the situation and consider how to deal with this problem.		
HWFRS Action Proposed	Progress To Date	Work since last update	Target Date
Implementation of Community Risk Plans 2020/2021: Accidental Dwelling Fires Deliberate Fires Health and Well Being Road Traffic Collisions.	These plans are currently in draft. A Strategic CRMP Workshop took place in January 2019 where a common definition of risk was agreed with Shropshire FRS. The updated plans are drafted and awaiting SMB sign off. Progress against the plans will be reviewed on a quarterly basis once they have gone live. CRMP is now live as of 1 st April 2021.	SMB have approved and published the 3 core strategies; Protection, Prevention and Response. They are also available on the HWFRS external website. http://www.hwfire.org.uk/your-right-to-know/our-publications/	Complete July 21
We want to clear the backlog we have for the specialist prevention officers and allocate sufficient resources to prevention.	As a result of the SMB paper (December 2018) additional budget has been allocated in 2019/2020 to fund additional posts in Community Risk.		Complete
	Two Community Risk Technicians have been appointed and are now in position taking the total number of technicians within the Service to 4.		Complete
	To support the MORSE initiative, an additional Watch Commander and Technician have joined the department. These positions are funded through the PCC budget allocation.		Complete
	Prevention strategy is in draft providing clarity on how we will deliver prevention services across the counties and prioritise resources.	The Protection, Prevention and Response strategies have all been published	Complete
Periodic review of progress against back log for Technicians	A quarterly report is being developed to review the number of outstanding jobs for the Community Risk Technicians.	This report is now being produced on a quarterly basis and will assist in monitoring workloads now that all technicians have been appointed. It also includes a review of the number of faulty alarms being attended by crews and those attended by crews.	Complete
Strategic lead	Head of Prevention and HRD		

People – P1.8			
Area for Improvement	The Service should put in place an open and fair process to identify, develop and support high-potential staff and aspiring leaders.		
Summary Finding	The Service should improve how it manages performance and develops leaders.		
HWFRS Action Proposed	Progress To Date	Work since last update	Target Date
Ensure specific development actions are being captured as part of the review of the appraisal process/policy.	A bulletin item was published reminding staff that appraisals need to be carried out and the process through which courses can be requested.		Complete
	Appraisals completion has been affected by COVID-19. A bulletin item was published to update staff and an email sent to managers communicating flexibility around completion dates and update them regarding CPD payments. Appraisals recommenced at the end of lockdown 1.	Reminders continue to be published in the Bulletin on completing appraisals. Overall completion rates are being monitored quarterly. A refreshed appraisal process linked to the new core strategies to be launched April 2022 as part of the People Strategy.	Programmed for launch April 2022.
Building on the success of the Crew Commanders promotion process create toolkit for promotion/recruitment events.	Toolkit templates for each stage of the promotion process available in HR to support Service Delivery e.g. advert template, candidate guidance, shortlisting matrix, etc. Updates on progress through each promotion process have been provided through regular bulletin items.		Completed
Review promotion policy and recruitment policy to support implementation.	The promotion policy has been approved and is now live.		Completed
	The recruitment policy has been approved by SMB and is now live.		Completed
Implement the NFCC Leadership Framework and the leadership behaviours as assessment criteria for promotion processes.	The NFCC Leadership Framework was used in all the promotional processes during 2020 and 2021 and is now embedded in the Service.		Completed
Look into providing coaching and mentoring courses to managers.	Three places on an initial coaching course were offered to ODCG members in collaboration with Shropshire FRS. Feedback has been provided to inform future options within HWFRS.		Completed
	Virtual training sessions, Coaching Skills for Managers, were held for staff who will coach and mentor the newly appointed Watch Commander 'A's. So far 90 members of staff from throughout the organisation have attended over 10 sessions. The Service is tied into the NFCC coaching and mentoring work stream and when they publish their guides later in the year this will form our coaching plan going forward. Further Coaching skills for managers training taking place in Autumn 2021.		On going
Continue to have a regular workforce planning meeting.	Workforce Planning Meetings scheduled every 6 weeks and include succession planning. Terms of reference have been approved and communicated to staff via the Service Bulletin (28/08/20).		Completed
Strategic lead	Assistant Director: Prevention		

Report of Deputy Chief Fire Officer – Director of Prevention and Assets

Strategic Fire Alliance Board Update

Purpose of report

1. To update the Fire Authority on progress against the programme of priority projects developed by the Strategic Fire Alliance between Hereford & Worcester and Shropshire Fire and Rescue Services.
-

Recommendation

It is recommended that progress on the programme to date be noted.

Background

2. At the meetings held on 24 September and 17 December 2018, agreement was made to prioritise four projects:
 - i) to review the future requirements for the fire control mobilising command and control function;
 - ii) to develop organisational arrangements for ICT functions;
 - iii) to prepare options for aligning the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) process for Hereford & Worcester FRS and Shropshire FRS;
 - iv) to review procurement strategies within both Services to examine the potential for alignment.
3. This report provides an update on progress on the four key projects, as well as the Communications Strategy.

Programme Update

4. Since the last meeting held in May 2021, both Services have continued to deal with the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Whilst resources continue to be directed to support partners and maintain service delivery the new Senior Responsible Owners (SROs) have managed to progress the Alliance projects.
5. Officers previously discussed governance of the four priority projects, and it was agreed that each project once initiated would convene a Project Working Group, as outlined on page 16 of the Fire Alliance Strategic Plan 2018 – 2022, the most recent meetings being Procurement and ICT.

Communications Strategy

6. At the February 2020 meeting of the Fire Alliance Programme Board, members requested an updated version of the Communications Strategy and the supporting Deliverables Plan. This work has been significantly impacted by the pandemic, however communications teams from across the Alliance have now successfully completed this work.

CRMP

7. The CRMPs for both FRSs were published on 1 April 2021.
8. Next Steps:
 - HWFRS to request permission from the FRA to carry out public consultation on aligning attendance standards to those of Shropshire FRS, as outlined in the CRMP.
 - Standards will feature in both service Corporate Performance Indicators and a future action will be for both FRSs to report back to the Delivery Board to enable comparisons to be made.
 - Formalisation of Protection enforcement future workstream.

Procurement

9. SFRS has taken over as project lead for procurement and the regular liaison meetings continue, most recently on 26 April. Highlights include both FRSs committing resources to supporting the regional Respiratory Protective Equipment (RPE) Breathing Apparatus contract development, joint consideration and evaluation of the national workwear clothing contract, and joint contracts to be developed for the testing and repair of life jackets, pneumatic equipment and hose, and for the purchase of stationery and consumables.
10. Additionally, a number of reviews (including those for vehicles, ladders, smoke hoods and lifejackets) were assessed to ensure that further benefits are achieved. A further 'compatibility' stream will consider ways in which the reserves, parts, servicing, training and operational use of common equipment can be optimised to support the resilience of both Services.
11. Further discussions have been held between the Services to agree a way forward for the procurement workstream, which enables better reporting of the resilience benefits achieved through collaboration. A further update will be provided to the next Strategic Alliance Programme Delivery Board.

ICT

12. Following the last update, an agreed structure has been implemented to enable both Services to progress with the key workstreams within the ICT pillar of the Alliance. The revised structure now includes managers from SFRS and HWFRS.
13. With the role of ICT and Digital Transformation Manager being removed from the structure, SFRS will provide project management and coordination. This structure will remain flexible as we progress and may include any external consultants engaged as part of the delivery within one of the key areas. Since the last update, progress has been made in the following areas:

Wide Area Network (WAN)

14. HWFRS published the tender specification in May 2021, via Crown Commercial, and the tender process closed in July 2021. Tender evaluation has been completed, and contractual negotiations have now commenced with the preferred provider.
15. SFRS has negotiated an offer from their existing supplier, with availability through the YPO framework, to ensure compliance with procurement regulations. Assurance has been provided in relation to the overall objective of creating resilience across both services, through having the ability to link SFRS and HWFRS WANs.

Helpdesk System Project

16. Work continues with on-boarding of the agreed product within both organisations.
17. Both Services are having weekly meetings with the supplier and this has resulted in different approaches to that determined within the original agreement being implemented. It is important to note that no significant concerns have been raised by either ICT team and the projected go live date is October 2021.

Software Analysis

18. The Alliance ICT Project Board will identify hardware and software collaboration opportunities with future reports identifying those areas of priority for consideration and approval. This work will also support the procurement pillar of the Alliance.
19. Discussions at the Project Board have remained around current capacity to deliver on a wide range of largescale software implementations and it is felt at this time that efforts should be prioritised around the time critical aspects of the WAN projects and implementation of the Helpdesk software.

Joint ICT Purchasing

20. Discussions are ongoing with the two heads of ICT to create a list of potential procurement items. This will allow joint specifications to be documented in readiness for joint procurement opportunity. The joint ICT procurement topic is a key agenda item at the Alliance ICT Project Board meetings.

Fire Control

23. Emphasis has moved from strategic options appraisal, to creating specification for a new Command and Control system. HWFRS is producing a joint specification that can be bought online at different times for both Services.
24. Once the user specification is completed, the Programme Board will be asked to agree the business case (including specification, resource plan and project plan) and give permission for the project to be initiated.

Environmental Management

26. Environmental management and the minimisation of environmental impact is a corporate priority within both Services.
27. HWFRS has introduced a new Environmental Sustainability Plan for 2021-25 with a focus on demonstrating best practice and leading their communities by example. Environmentally efficient 'demonstration' buildings form a major part of planned investment with the aim of achieving a number of low carbon sites. There is also a focus on staff engagement and support.
28. SFRS has a long established formal environmental management system to ISO14001, and environmental management is fully integrated within the resources team responsible for property, procurement and asset management. A number of the areas being considered by HWFRS have already been addressed, and this learning can be shared. The SFRS system also addresses a wider range of environmental impacts than the HWFRS strategy focuses on. Within Shropshire, much of the environmental improvement has been achieved through technical actions.
29. There are opportunities to share learning and to develop policies and communications materials together to support both Services in delivering real improvement and increasing staff engagement.

Conclusion

30. Officers continue to make progress on each priority project and initiative, although some delays have been inevitable, given the ongoing impact of COVID-19. The tempo of delivery is increasing in some areas as teams across both Services become more accustomed to the evolving new ways of working.

Corporate Considerations

Resource Implications (identify any financial, legal, property or human	N/A
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resources issues)	
Strategic Policy Links (identify how proposals link in with current priorities and policy framework and if they do not, identify any potential implications).	Government's Fire Reform agenda as embedded in the Fire and Rescue National Framework , other links are to the Fire Alliance Strategic Plan and the Fire Alliance ICT Strategy.
Risk Management / Health & Safety (identify any risks, the proposed control measures and risk evaluation scores)	N/A
Consultation (identify any public or other consultation that has been carried out on this matter)	N/A
Equalities (has an Equalities Impact Assessment been completed? If not, why not?)	N/A
Data Protection Impact Assessment (where personal data is processed a DPIA must be completed to ensure compliant handling)	N/A



Hereford & Worcester Fire Authority

Audit and Standards Committee

Wednesday, 28 July 2021, 10:30

Chairman: Mr M Hart

Vice-Chairman: Mr A Amos

Minutes

Members Present: Mr S Bowen, Mr I D Hardiman, Mr Al Hardman, Mr M Hart, Mrs E Marshall, Ms N McVey, Mr J Robinson, Mrs D Toynbee

197 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllr A Amos, Cllr B Brookes, Cllr B Clayton and Cllr R Morris.

198 Named Substitutes

There were no named substitutes.

199 Declarations of Interest (if any)

There were no interests declared.

200 Confirmation of Minutes

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 21 April 2021 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

201 Draft Statement of Accounts 2020/21

The Treasurer presented Members with the draft 2020/21 Statement of Accounts for information prior to approval at the next Committee meeting.

[Cllr Robinson entered the meeting at 10.34am]

The Treasurer informed Members that the dates for approval and publishing of the Accounts had been relaxed for a second year due to Covid which meant that this year the Accounts had to be approved and

published by 30 September, which was on track.

RESOLVED that the Draft Statement of Accounts 2020/21 be noted.

202 External Audit Plan (2020/21 Accounts)

The External Audit Plan, which sets out the work to be undertaken in 2021/22 in respect of the 2020/21 Audit, was presented to Members by the Authority's External Auditor, Grant Thornton UK LLP.

Members were informed that for the last 5/6 years the main focus of the Value for Money aspect of the audit had been on finances, however this year it was much wider with more work on governance arrangements that were in place, how the organisation understood its cost base and the benchmark that was set against other organisations.

Members were pleased to note that the audit had started last week and it was hoped it would be completed by the end of September.

RESOLVED that the External Audit Plan 2021/22 (2020/21 Accounts) be noted.

203 Informing the Audit Risk Assessment 2020/21

Members were presented with the Audit Risk Assessment carried out by Grant Thornton UK LLP, the Authority's External Auditor, in deriving the External Audit Plan 2021/22 in respect of the 2020/21 Accounts.

Members were pleased to note that there were no specific risks highlighted that were abnormal, or which caused the Treasurer or External Auditor particular concern.

RESOLVED that the External Auditor's "Informing the Audit Risk Assessment" report be noted.

204 Internal Audit Annual Report 2020/21

The Head of Internal Audit Shared Service presented Members with the Internal Audit Annual Report 2020/21.

Members were informed that the original plan for 2020/21 had been revised in view of the pandemic and some changes had been made, however the coverage achieved was sufficient to provide an opinion with just a few reviews rolled forward to 2021/22. Members were pleased to note that all reviews that took place last year had assurance and there were no high priority recommendations reported.

RESOLVED that the Committee note the Internal Audit Charter and

that the audit plan delivered in 2020/21 had provided an assurance level of “full” for four core financial areas and that no limited or below assurance areas had been reported or any high priority recommendations.

205 Internal Audit Draft Audit Plan 2021/22

The Head of Internal Audit Shared Service presented Members with the Draft Internal Audit Plan for 2021/22.

Members were informed that the Plan, which includes the brought forward audits from last year which were already taking place, was based on risk factors. This Plan was flexible and therefore if Officers decided resources needed to be moved then discussions would take place and the Plan would be altered accordingly. Members were pleased to note that regular updates would be provided to the Committee.

RESOLVED that the 2021/22 Draft Internal Audit Plan be approved.

206 Risk Management and Strategic Risk Register – Annual Update

The Chief Fire Officer presented Members with an annual update on the Risk Management Framework and Strategic Risk Register.

Members were informed that the Strategic Risk Register and Department Risk Registers were a method for continual monitoring and reviewing of the Service's risks by the Senior Management Board and middle managers informing the Service's objectives and business goals over time. The Authority's Strategic Risk Register is formally reported to Members annually with significant changes being reported to the Audit and Standards Committee in a risk update.

There was a query with regard to the ill health now being a medium risk, the Chief Fire Officer assured Members that although the likelihood was a high risk, the actual impact to the Service was low as the Service had not been hit heavily by Covid during the pandemic. Members were pleased to note that good remote working from home allowed staff to continue to work.

RESOLVED that the summary of strategic risks and existing controls measures be noted and agreed.

207 People Strategy 2020-22: Progress Report Year 1 2020-2021

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer presented Members with a summary of progress for 2020-2021 in the delivery of the People Strategy 2020-2022.

Members were informed that this Strategy was in its final year of implementation. The 2023-25 Strategy would be presented at the Audit and Standards Committee in January 2022 for ratification.

RESOLVED that Members note progress made against the People Strategy for 2020-2021.

208 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Plan 2020-2025 Update for Q4 2020-21 and proposed Equality Objectives 2021-2025

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer presented Members with a summary of progress against the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Plan 2020-2025 for Quarter 4 2020-2021 and the Service's proposed Equality Objectives 2021-2025 for approval for publication.

Members were pleased to note the increase of women applicants which was helped by positive action undertaken prior to recruitment offering specific training days and fitness tests to allow for improvement.

RESOLVED that Members:

i) note progress made against the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Plan 2020-2025 in Q4 2020-21.

ii) ratify the Service's proposed Equality Objectives 2021-2025 and approve them for publication on the Service website.

209 National Fraud Initiative 2020/21

The Treasurer updated Members on the National Fraud Initiative.

Members were pleased to note that following investigation of the two matches, it was found that this was local use of a known supplier who was also a retained firefighter. Whilst the employee was not directly involved in the procurement and it was of relatively low value and no fraud was involved, it was identified as a minor area where management oversight could be improved in future.

RESOLVED that the Committee noted that the process of examining all National Fraud Initiative matches was now complete and no fraud had been detected.

210 Health & Safety Committee Update

The Assistant Chief Officer provided Members with a Health & Safety update on activities and items of significance for the reporting period. In particular, work being carried out locally and regionally with particular

focus around guidance released by the National Fire Chiefs Council and worked carried out linked to Breathing Apparatus set failures. Members were pleased to note Covid remains a key area of focus as we emerge from the pandemic and that abuse to staff had decreased and that levels were still relatively low when compared nationally.

RESOLVED that the following issues, in particular, be noted:

i) The involvement of the Service in Health and Safety initiatives; and

ii) Health and Safety performance information recorded during January to March 2021 (Quarter 4).

The Meeting ended at: 12:26

Signed:.....

Date:.....

Chairman