

**Minutes of the Meeting of  
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority  
held at Shrewsbury Town Football Club, Shrewsbury  
on Wednesday, 13 December 2023, at 2.00 pm**

**Present****Members**

Councillors Aldcroft, Blundell, Evans, Hartin, Hignett, Lea, Minnery (Chair), Offland, Overton (Vice-Chair), Parady, Price and Wynn

**Officers**

Simon Hardiman	Chief Fire Officer	CFO
Adam Matthews	Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Service Delivery)	ACFO (SD)
Guy Williams	Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Service Support)	ACFO (SS)
Anthea Lowe	Clerk and Monitoring Officer	Clerk
James Walton	Treasurer	Treasurer
Marc Millward	Area Manager Service Delivery	AMSD
Germaine Worker	Head of Human Resources and Administration	HHRA
Mark Bayliss	Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner	DPCC
Lynn Ince	Executive Support Officer	ESO

**1 Apologies for Absence**

Councillors Burchett, Carter and Cook

**2 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**

None

**3 Public Questions**

None

**4 Fire Authority Non-Exempt Minutes****4a 11 October 2023**

**Resolved** that the non-exempt minutes of the Fire Authority meeting, held on 11 October 2023, be agreed, and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

#### **4b 22 November 2023**

**Resolved** that the non-exempt minutes of the Extraordinary Fire Authority meeting, held on 22 November 2023, be agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

#### **5 Strategy and Resources Committee Non-Exempt Minutes**

**Resolved** that the non-exempt minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting, held on 22 November 2023, be noted and the recommendations at item 5 of those minutes, as given below, be agreed.

##### **Item 5 – Financial Performance to September 2023, including Annual Treasury Review 2022/23 and Mid-Year Treasury Review 2023/24**

**Resolved** that the Fire Authority

- a) Note the position of the revenue budget
- b) Approve virements to the revenue budget, where requested;
- c) Note activity on capital schemes;
- d) Note the annual review of treasury activities for 2022/23
- e) Approve the request for an ongoing staff resource in Workshops; and
- f) Note performance against prudential indicators to date in 2023/24.

#### **6 Standards, Audit and Performance Committee Minutes**

**Resolved** that the minutes of the Standards, Audit and Performance Committee meeting, held on 30 November 2023, be noted.

#### **7 Meeting Schedule 2024**

A revised Meeting Schedule for 2024 was distributed to the Fire Authority.

**Resolved** that the Fire Authority approve the amended Authority and Committee meeting schedule for 2024.

#### **8 2024/25 and Later Years Budget Summary**

This report summarised the budgets that are proposed by the Strategy and Resources Committee. The results are put forward to the Fire Authority for approval as the basis for consultation, leading to a final decision at the Fire Authority meeting in February 2024.

The HoF presented the report and highlighted the following points:

- The precept cap has been confirmed as 3% not £5.
- There is likely to be grant from the Treasury to cover around 90% of the increase in employer contributions from the Fire Pension Scheme revaluation. It is also likely that this will be included in the settlement from 2025/26

- The change in the SCAPE rate, which is used by the Government Actuary Department, will also be covered by government funding in 2024/25 and will be rolled into the settlement from 2025/26. It is expected that Authorities will be liable for around 5% of the increase but a definite figure has not yet been confirmed for this.
- The assumptions and surpluses used in the budget planning are set out on page 3 of the report.
- The Capital Programme will be reviewed by the Strategy and Resources Committee at its meeting in January 2024

The Chair emphasised that are in very early days of budget setting and therefore the figures in the report are very provisional.

**Resolved** that the Fire Authority

- a) Note the report;
- b) Agree the recommendations on expenditure for 2024/25 and later years, as set out in report 6 of the Appendix;
- c) Agree the recommendations on Reserves and Provision, as set out in report 7 of the Appendix; and
- d) Request the Strategy and Resources Committee to prepare a final budget package in January 2024, for final decision by the Fire Authority in February 2024.

## **9 Replacement Command and Control System Implementation**

This report updated Members on the current position of the Command and Control (C&C) System implementation project and requested an additional increase to the revenue budget prior to award of contract.

The CFO presented this report and highlighted the following to the meeting:

- There is an agreed budget of £1.5m for the project.
- The Service has entered a consortium for the project with Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service (FRS), Cleveland FRS and Hereford & Worcester FRS (HWFRS)
- This consortium arrangement allows the Service to undertake this project as the cost of it for the Service would otherwise be £8m.
- There are three elements to C&C system: – Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD), Integrated Communications Control System (ICCS) and Mobile Data Terminals (MDTs)
- The Service's CAD and MDT systems are currently supplied by SEED and the ICCS by Motorola.
- The scope of the C&C Project is to replace the CAD and ICCS systems, which will give enhanced resilience and fallback arrangements across the four Services whilst also retaining independent Control Rooms in each Service.
- The initial outlay for the project has now been assessed to be much lower than the £1.5m capital programme that was originally approved.

- The original scheme did not include any ongoing revenue costs and the main project expenditure will be on subscriptions and hosting.
- The Fire Authority is therefore asked to approve the additional funding required for the project. The Financial Implications of this are set out in Section 9 of the report where the table sets out the seven-year financing programme for the project.

Members referred to the issue of the MDT hardware being around three years old with the associated software being significantly older; as the SEED system is part of a whole contract would it not make sense to upgrade the MDTs at the same time. The CFO explained that there is uncertainty over the costs for the MDT replacement, as well as risk management implications. The Service would prefer to avoid changing the entire C&C system at the same time so that it can manage implementation effectively. The MDT portion of the C&C Project will therefore be brought to the Fire Authority for decision in the future.

The DPCC asked for more information about Hereford & Worcester FRS's involvement in the C&C Project. The CFO confirmed that H&WFRS are the lead on the project, i.e. they are the main contract holder, and this Service's contract is an addendum to the main contract.

**Resolved** that the Fire Authority

- a) note the report; and
- b) agree the additional uplift of the revenue budget as outlined in Section 9 of the report.

## 10 The Scheme for the Payment of Members' Allowances 2023/24

This report asked the Fire Authority to consider and agree its 2023/24 Scheme for the Payment of Members Allowances.

The HHRA presented this report and advised Members that a 3.88% uplift to member allowances is proposed which is in line with National Joint Council recommendations. Any uplift agreed to Member allowances will be backdated to 1 April 2023. The HHRA also informed the Fire Authority that an Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) review of the Allowance Scheme will be undertaken in 2024 as it is four years since the last review was carried out.

The Chair commented that there is some contradictory wording, related to scale points, in the Scheme. The Clerk advised that like Telford & Wrekin Council, the recommendations are adopted from the IRP. The Clerk does not think anything needs to be done in relation at present, but this may change with the IRP's next review.

**Resolved** on a vote with 11 members voting for and 1 against, that the Fire Authority

- a) Note the report; and

- b) Agree that the Scheme for the Payment of Members Allowances 2023/24, be updated by 3.88% in line with National Joint Council recommendations, and to backdate this to take effect from 1 April 2023.

## 11 Operational Update

The AMSD gave an Operational Update presentation to the Authority, which covered the previous three months of Service activity.

The following issues were highlighted and/or addressed during the presentation:

- Figures for incidents in mischief week are shown in the presentation. The Service particularly targeted known fly-tipping areas in the run up to the period which resulted in a good outcome for the Service and partner agencies.
- West Mercia Search and Rescue (WMSAR) were involved with the Significant Incident Room during the recent storms and flooding due to their assets being deployed.
- Officers have spoken to local commercial laundries about the recent incidents involving combustion of laundered tea towels. The issue is attributed to oils / iodine on the towels which oxidises and causes them to self-combust. Protection and Prevention are working with hotels and educational establishments about the issue. The Service has fed details of the incidents into national forums but are still waiting to hear if similar incidents have occurred in other services.
- Two teams from the Service entered the national Breathing Apparatus (BA) Challenge. Both teams were rated as gold standard with Firefighter Harriet Davies (Red Watch, Wellington) placing third overall in the BA Control Board Operator
- Work is continuing to address the issues identified in the Thematic Death Review. There are currently three Prevention volunteers working with Service and there have also been positive data sharing conversations to 'join up the dots' between organisations.

Members queried the use of the phrase 'mischief week' as T&W Council have moved away from this and now say "Celebrate Safely." The AMSD responded that it is a phrase that is used amongst partners but accepts that it probably should not to be used outside the Service

Members also raised the issue of emollient creams which was identified in the Thematic Review. The AMSD explained that the Service do a lot of work with care homes and are working with hospitals and care homes on this issue, whilst also ensuring not to cause alarm with the public about this issue. Members also suggested that it may be useful to engage with fall prevention teams and childhood eczema teams regarding this issue. The Service is also working with the National Fire Chiefs Council to see what can be done with emollient cream manufacturers to address the issue.

The DPCC advised that there is investment available for road traffic collision prevention work. The ACFO (SS) will investigate how the Service can bid for this.

**Resolved** that the Fire Authority note the Operational Update presentation.

**12 Exclusion of Press and Public**

**Resolved** that the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1, 2, 3 and 5 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

**13 Fire Authority Exempt Minutes (Paragraphs 1, 2, 3 and 5)**

**Resolved** that the exempt minutes of the Fire Authority meeting, held on 11 October 2023, be agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

**14 Strategy and Resources Committee Exempt Minutes (Paragraph 3)**

**Resolved** that the exempt minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting held on 22 November 2023 be noted.

The meeting closed at 3.15 pm.

**Chair**.....

**Date**.....