

**Non-Exempt Minutes of the Meeting of
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority
Strategy and Resources Committee
held in the Oak Room, Headquarters
on Wednesday, 20 March 2024 at 2.00 pm**

Present

Members

Councillors Aldcroft, Cook, Hartin (Vice-chair), Minnery, 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)
Germaine Worker	Head of Human Resources and Administration	HHRA
Natalie Parkinson	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Officer	EDIO
Lynn Ince	Executive Support Supervisor	ESS
Aleksandra Zydek	Executive Support Officer	ESO

1 Apologies for Absence

Councillor Offland and Price, James Walton (Treasurer)

2 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

None

3 Public Questions

None

4 Non-Exempt Minutes

Resolved that the non-exempt minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee, held on 31 January 2024, be agreed, and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

5 Committee Work Plan 2024/25

This report, presented by ESO, reviewed progress against the Strategy and Resources Committee 2023/24 Work Plan and put forward a 2024/25 Work Plan for consideration and approval by Members.

The ESO stated that the plan sets out in a structured manner what the Committee's activities will be throughout the year, thus ensuring that the

responsibilities imposed by its terms of reference will be carried out in a timely manner and that no deadlines will be missed.

The ESO advised that having carried out a review of 2023/24 Work Plan, officers can confirm that all activities, listed in the Plan, have been carried out or are on the agenda for this meeting.

During the review Officers also considered what activities should be included in the next Work Plan, taking into account any recent developments. Attached as an appendix to this report is a draft 2024/25 Work Plan, outlining all the actions which, it is expected, the Committee will need to carry out during the coming year.

The ESO asked the Committee to provide any comments or suggestions about the attached draft Work Plan and approve its contents.

Resolved that the Committee:

- a) note progress made against the Strategy and Resources Committee 2023/24 Work Plan; and
- b) approved the Work Plan for 2024/25, attached as an appendix, without amendment

6 Committee Terms of Reference

This report asked Members to consider the Terms of Reference (ToR) of the Strategy and Resources Committee, following the annual review conducted by officers.

The ESO presented this report which asked the Strategy and Resources Committee to review its Terms of Reference, as set out in the Appendix to the report. The ESO stated that the Strategy and Resources Committee reviews its Terms of Reference annually and this action is included in the Committee's Work Plan. Having carried out a review of the Committee's ToR, Officers do not propose any changes to them. The ESO advised, however, that the Committee is able to review its ToRs, which were attached at the Appendix to the report, and recommend any amendments that it considers to the Fire Authority for agreement.

The Members proposed one change to replace Integrated Risk Management Planning Process with Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP).

Resolved that the Committee agreed the Terms of Reference, as attached at the Appendix to the report, with one amendment that the reference to the Integrated Risk Management Planning Process be replaced with Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP).

7 Review of Member Role Descriptions

This report asked Members to review the Role Descriptions for the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Strategy and Resources Committee.

The ESO presented this report and stated that under its ToRs, the Committee is required to review the Role Descriptions of its Chair and Vice-Chair. The Committee was, therefore, asked to consider whether any amendments are required to these Role Descriptions.

The ESO advised that having carried out a review of the two Role Descriptions, there is one minor amendment that officers propose which is updating the allowance figures payable to the Chair of the Committee. The ESO pointed out an error in the Appendix A to the report and corrected the record by giving the correct amounts which are as follow:

Special responsibility allowance of £2,204 per annum in addition to basic allowance of £3,627 per annum.

The ESO asked the Committee to review the Role Descriptions, which were attached as appendices to the report, and make any amendments that it considers necessary.

Resolved that the Committee agreed the Role Descriptions for Chair and Vice-Chair of the Strategy and Resources Committee, with one minor amendment to Appendix A Special responsibility allowance of £2,204 per annum in addition to basic allowance of £3,627 per annum.

8 Review of Corporate Performance Indicators and Proposed tolerances for 2024/25

This report presented the agreed Corporate Performance Indicators (CPIs) for 2024/25, to be approved by the Strategy and Resources Committee. The report also includes the data provided to the Committee to inform its decision making.

The ACFO SD presented this report. and brought members attention to the CPIs listed on page 2 of the report. He explained that CPIs enabled the Service to move away from a set of numeric annual targets as this previous approach left no room for tolerance in performance. Applying a tolerance has enabled the Service to monitor performance and establish direction of travel thus providing a more flexible and agile way to monitor performance throughout the year.

The ACFO SD advised that in response to a request from Fire Authority to demonstrate measurement of sustainability and financial corporate performance indicators, the Service proposes to regularly report performance and internal and external audit findings and opinions, and to continue to report to ISO14001 outcomes alongside 6 monthly external audits from British Standard Institution (BSI) to Fire Authority and its committees.

The ACFO SD explained that it would be difficult to find a single metric to satisfy request from Fire Authority as no single CPI will adequately demonstrate the Service's commitment to, and effectiveness at, environmental

improvement. Selection of the wrong CPI and misplaced efforts to achieve improvement at the expense of other activities must be avoided.

Members questioned if there is a particular problem around finding this measure like time for example. The CFO explained that a potential sustainability CPI was discussed at length during the Environmental Management Meeting on 19 March 2024 and that it is an issue with a lot of complexities around it. No organization measures sustainability in the same way. The Service looked at Greenhouse Gas Emissions which has 3 scopes:

Scope 1: These gases come from sources controlled or owned by the Service, such as vehicles.

Scope 2: These gases come from indirect use, such as electricity.

Scope 3: these gases are also indirect coming from things like purchased goods and services.

If using this measurement, the Service's carbon emissions would give a false reading because of building of Telford Fire Station this year. At the Environmental Management meeting it was agreed that formal measurement of scope 3 emissions did not represent value for money and will not currently be pursued. It was decided that ISO14001 environmental standard, which the Service works to, should be focused on in order to avoid 'greenwashing'.

The ACFO SD explained that to ensure Service performance receives the appropriate level of scrutiny, Performance & Risk Group was introduced. This Group looks at the CPIs with its focus primarily on Prevention, Protection, Response, Availability and People. The ACFO added that the performance dashboard was also introduced which includes performance metrics. The ACFO SD asked the Committee to approve the proposed CPIs for 2024/25 and quarterly reporting into Standards, Audit and Performance Committee, throughout 2024/25.

The ACFO SD then moved onto the following CPIs:

CPI.1 All Fires – The ACFO SD highlighted the recommendation to maintain a 5% tolerance and brought Members attention to the graphs on page 4 of the report. He explained that performance is predicted to be 1038 fires for 2023/24 which is an expected 11% decrease compared to previous year. He added that the Service predicts a plateauing of performance within tolerance levels.

CPI.2 Accidental Dwelling Fires – The ACFO SD recommended to maintain a 10% tolerance for this CPI. At the end of the quarter 3, performance for 2023/34 has seen an increase of 6% compared to previous year. This sits within the tolerance of 10%. He explained that the Service predicts a 2% reduction of performance but within tolerance levels.

CPI.3 Deliberate Fires – The ACFO SD recommended to maintain a 7% tolerance and explained that based on the graphs on page 7 of the report and the assumption that Q4 will remain in the set tolerances, the final tolerance figures for 2023/24 would be 305 upper and 178 lower. This is based on the predicted annual cumulative performance of 278. He added that the total as of

January sits at 238 and that the Service predicts a slight reduction of deliberate fires of up to 2.5%, which is within tolerance levels.

Members questioned if the reduction can be attributed to a particular factor. The ACFO SD explained that it is likely to be a combination of factors like changes in society post Covid. He added that arson is opportunistic and most young people now spend less time outside and more time in front of video games. He added that with county lines operations, criminals do not want to draw the attention of emergency services. The ACFO SS added that this is also a credit to the Service's investment in dedicated staff who build partnerships with local services to support identification of criminality. The CFO added this CPI will be monitored closely especially with financial constraints on Local Authorities.

Members commented on potential issues in terms of Local Authorities managing their contracts, such as waste collection and lack of recycling centres. The ACFO SD added those financial constraints may result in a reduced ability to pick up fly tipping waste and if Local Authorities decide to charge for green bin collections some people may burn the waste instead increasing the risk of fire. The CFO added the Service did some staff education regarding the recording of incidents, for example bonfires are deliberate fires but are not set to cause damage.

CP.4 Fire Related Deaths and Serious Injuries – The ACFO SD advised that the Service has seen no fatal fires in 2023/24 and the number of serious injuries sadly sits at 5. Due to nature of this CPI tolerance levels are not appropriate as the Service's aspiration is for zero fire deaths and serious injuries. He recommended that the Service continue to report on each occurrence in the form of a narrative report.

Members questioned if Road Traffic Collisions (RTCs) were included in this CPI. The ACFO SD explained that they are not unless the vehicle caught on fire. He added that as most RTCs are not fire related they are not included in this metric. Members questioned if this is something that the Performance and Risk Group needs to look at. The ACFO SD explained that as part of the next Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) there will be a metric included around RTCs. He also added about the Service's rolling out First Responder Emergency Care (FREC) training to firefighters and the bonus of having a specialist response unit at Wellington.

Members questioned if the Service is preparing for more electric car fires due to these vehicles becoming more and more popular and if the number of those types of fires are included in the CPIs provided. The ACFO SD explained that the Service do not routinely provide those numbers and that this issue will be a part of next IRMP.

CPI.5 Fires Confined to Room of Origin – The ACFO SD recommended to maintain a 7% tolerance on this CPI. He added this CPI is susceptible to arrange of variations but remains critical for enabling the Service to assess the effectiveness of Prevention, Protection and Response activity. He added that although the graphs on page 9 and 10 of the report demonstrate fluctuation over the reporting period, the cumulative figure remains in line with

expectations set in March 2023. He added that the decline in Fires Confined to Room of Origin mirrors the increase in agricultural fires. The CFO added that this is due to the new CPI methodology brought to the Committee in 2020.

CPI.6 Injuries sustained to Staff through Operational Activity – The ACFO SD recommended that the Service’s ambition is to achieve zero injuries and therefore it would not be appropriate to apply a tolerance as this would suggest the Service is accepting of injuries to staff. Therefore, he recommended that the Service continue to report on each occurrence in the form of a narrative report.

Members asked if there were any injuries to staff in 2023/24. The CFO advised that in 2021/22 there were 26 injuries, in 2022/23 there were 21 injuries and to date in 2023/24 there were 17 injuries and that there was a reduction in injuries. 11 injuries this year required more than 7 days off work and were reportable under RIDDOR. The ACFO SS added that verbal abuse to Reception staff is not captured within this metric, but it is reported. If there are instances of physical violence and injury is sustained this would be included in this CPI. He commented that this CPI does not only capture operational staff but all staff including those who have direct contact with the public.

CPI.7 Response Standard – The ACFO SD proposed that the Service continue to monitor against the 3 categories: of Urban 10 minutes, Town and Fringe 15 minutes and Rural 20 minutes. He added that the aim is to meet these standards on 85% of occasions. The ACFO SD added that the Service Response standard 2023/24 predicted performance is 94%. The ACFO added that to develop this CPI and to identify ways to improve performance the Service will trial the following 3 measurements of the current response standard:

- Measuring from the time the emergency call is first taken to the time the Service arrives at the incident. The ACFO SD added this is the most likely standard to become national requirement.
- Measuring from the time emergency assets are deployed by fire control to the time the Service arrives at the incident.
- Measuring from the time the Service vehicle is mobile to the incident to time the Service arrives at the incident.

The ACFO SD added that by monitoring all three, the Service gives itself a head start once the decision on the national standard is made.

CPI.8 Fires in Regulated Buildings – The ACFO SD highlighted that this is the only CPI where the recommendation is to implement a 7% tolerance. He added that this CPI is challenging due to definition of a regulated building, but more quality assurance and support was given to staff who are making those assessments. The ACFO SD added that an increase of 13.8% is predicted for 2023/24 and that the Service will be in a position to report back on what has caused the increase in the summer. He noted that 2022/23 saw a drop from 119 to 101 and that this CPI is susceptible to variations.

Members questioned the definition of regulated building. The CFO explained that it is any building that Protection can enforce the law against and the easiest way to explain it that it is any building the Service used to issue a Fire Certificate for.

CPI.9 Diversity, Establishment and Firefighter Competence – The ACFO recommended that a tolerance is not attached to this CPI but that the Service continue to apply an attainment rate of 90% against each skill set. He noted that some skill sets do not require 100% of the operational workforce to be trained, such as FREC, whereby the Service require 70% of operational staff to achieve the required qualification. In this case the minimum Service aim is that 90% of the 70% of FREC staff are competent.

The ACFO SD asked the Committee to approve the proposals for each CPI, so that these can form the basis of the Service's quarterly reporting to the Standards, Audit and Performance Committee.

Resolved that the Committee:

- a) noted the report and acknowledge the work undertaken to determine the Corporate Performance Indicators for 2024/25; and
- b) agreed Corporate Performance Indicators for 2024/25, as set out in the report,
- c) noted the reporting of Financial and Sustainability performance measures.

9 People Strategy End of Year Report

This report, presented by the HHRA, provided an update on the achievements that have been made against the People Strategy 2016-2020 and presented the new People Strategy 2021-2025.

The HHRA explained that she will cover highlights from the achievements list and that she will not be cover the EDI section as this will be covered later in the meeting by EDIO.

The HHRA listed the following achievements of Leadership Development and Coaching and Mentoring:

- The Service has successfully used facilities of the NFCC Coaching and Mentoring Portal for two individuals to access external coaching.
- There are 11 internal mentoring relationships within the service.
- The Service trained a further 37 managers in Talent management bringing the total to 81.
Members questioned if this training was done by an external provider. The HHRA advised this training was done internally.
- Further ILM levels and CMI level courses took place.
- 25 individuals have attended the new inhouse Political Awareness sessions, with positive feedback received.
- Promotion process for CM, WM, SM, GM, AM and ACFO were all delivered during 2023/24.

- First stage of 360 feedback process for SMT members has been implemented. This ties in with recommendations from HMI Values and Cultures report.

For Organisational Development and engagement, the HHRA highlighted the following:

- The Cycle to Work scheme has now been running for 5 years. Since the launch, the Service has supported 140 orders and has saved £15,047 in NI contributions which will be invested back into Health & Wellbeing initiatives.
- ICT and Performance Planning structural review was completed with 10 job roles/ descriptions reviewed using the Skills for the Information Age Framework. All jobs have now been benchmarked and pay uplifted for support staff in line with market values for the roles.
- Celebration of Success was held in September.
- Medals Ceremony was held in October. This was the first year that 30- and 40-year clasps have been presented since their introduction in 2022.
- 62 compliments have been received by the Service during 2023 compared to 48 the previous year.

For Resourcing the Service, the HHRA highlighted the following:

- HR launched a new robust end to end recruitment process called Tribepad which includes a fully managed online application system to streamline and systematise the entire function, thus, reducing time and eliminating paper from the process.
- A further 8 support staff roles have been reviewed through the job evaluation scheme.
- Successful recruitment of Administration apprentice, two ICT apprentices and Fire Safety Inspecting Officer apprentice.
- Successful new initiative has seen recruitment of 3 Volunteers working with Prevention.

For Health, Wellbeing and Fitness HHRA highlighted the following:

- 64 members of staff have been trained by the Fire Fighters Charity in areas listed on page 5 of this report.
- 34 members of staff are now saving with Serve and Protect Credit union. Members questioned how the Credit Union is being promoted. The HHRA advised that it is promoted during Induction; on the Health & Wellbeing site; and in the Pink newsletter which goes to current and retired staff members.

Members asked if Pink newsletter can be shared with Fire Authority Members. The HHRA advised that it is possible if Members wish to receive it. It was agreed that Members be added to Pink newsletter distribution list.

- Suicide Prevention, Mental Health First Aid and TRiM training provided to staff.

- 426 fitness tests were completed during 2023 with 396 individuals receiving a green rating. The remaining 22 were amber and 8 in the red, all of which have received a supportive trainer journey. Members questioned what happens to those employees who do not achieve the required standard and if this varies between wholetime and On Call firefighters. The HHRA explained that staff in the amber and red categories are supported through a training program with an Associate Trainer but if there is no improvement following this the Service may take a disciplinary route.

The ACFO SS added there is a risk from taking off duty staff that do not achieve the national fitness standard. This is why the Service took a pragmatic approach which was supported with investment in fitness equipment on stations from the Fire Authority. This solves the problem of appliances not being available due to staff attending gym sessions. He added that the decision to invest in fitness equipment for each station is a success story. The ACFO SS added that there is also a flexible approach to Watch Managers. He assured Members that the Executive Officers get tested to the same standards as fire fighters.

Members questioned if the fitness test causes the Service to lose experienced drivers due to them not being able to meet the required fitness standards. The ACFO SS advised that the Service and the wider fire sector are taking this issue under consideration moving forward. The CFO added that discussions were held around specialising roles in the last 12 months, and it has been noted that this would cause issues around contracts and pay.

The HHRA explained that Skills, Training and Education covers two specific areas which are Statutory and Mandatory Training and Learning and Education. The HHRA highlighted the following achievements:

- Continued review to align the Service to National Operational Guidance (NOG).
- XVR developer on 12-month secondment to assist with developing simulations.
- NOG Middle managers have been moved to LEO/TRaCs for all future role map and competency recording.

For the New Ways of Working, the HHRA highlighted the following achievements:

- Positive engagement with staff and representative bodies continued throughout 2023. Further opportunities to improve the Wholetime shift systems were identified.
- Pay negotiations for Wholetime staff, support staff and Brigade Managers were agreed and pay awards granted.
- Work is ongoing with both the Sargeant and the Matthews pensions exercises. The HHRA assured Members that the Service is in line with the Home Office timelines in relation to these exercises.
- All support staff are working in line with the Home and Hybrid Working Policy

- A new streamlined and paperless process with Security Watchdog for DBS Vetting and Right to Work processes was introduced. The HHRA added this is a big exercise for the Service.

Regarding the Cycle to Work scheme, Members asked how many Service staff are actually cycling to work as a result of the scheme. The HHRA explained that this topic was part of the conversation with provider of the scheme as there were concerns if this would be checked. The HHRA advised that no checks are carried out and that whilst some staff do cycle to work, the majority do not. The CFO added that this scheme attracts different types of people from commuters to professional cyclists and because of this, even if staff choose not to cycle to work, the scheme still has health and wellbeing benefits. The HHRA added that the Service, when compared to other organisations in the scheme, receives a steady influx of uptake rather than just the initial interest on launch.

Resolved that the Committee noted the report.

10 Gender Pay Gap Report

This report presented by the EDIO outlined the Service's obligations under the Equality Act 2010 (Gender Pay Information Regulations 2017) and detailed annual Gender Pay Gap figures for 2023 and the differences in average earnings between the Services male and female employees.

The EDIO explained that the gender pay gap is an equality measure that identifies the difference in average between women and men and that the overall UK average gender pay gap for all employees is determined by data received by the Office of National Statistics and is published annually on the Government website. The national figure for 2023 for all employees is 14.3% and is the Services benchmark.

The EDIO added that the Service is required to publish figures using 31 March as a reference date. The Service publishes the mean and median gender pay gap as only those categories are relevant to the Service.

For 2023, the mean was 3% which is significantly below the national mean of 14.3%. It is also a reduction compared to previous years. The Service's median gender pay gap for 2023 is 0%.

The data, on page 5 of the report, shows 34% of the Service employees in the lower quartile band are female, which is a slight increase of 1%; 16% female remain the same for the higher salary band. There is an increase of 2% in the Service's mid upper quartile to 19%, and a reduction to 1% in the mid lower.

The EDIO highlighted new initiatives that support reducing the Gender Pay Gap including:

- The Service has undertaken an Independent Cultural Review in 2023 with results due in early 2024, which will be shared with all employees.

- Implementation of the National Fire Chief's Council Culture and Values report actions during 2023 into the Service departmental plans.
- The Service has developed a cultural statement of intent, focusing on a zero tolerance approach to unacceptable behaviours.
- The Service is exploring a range of specific women development programmes in addition to the Women in the Fire Service development weekend.
- From the results of the OnCall sustainability survey a range of new contracts has been recommended and are under review.
- The Service has reviewed how it allows green book employees to take their flexi leave and have put forward recommendations to change this to hours to make it more flexible and family friendly.
- The Service is reviewing paid family, medical and fostering leave.

The EDIO added that progress has been made, and the gender pay gap remains at 3%. The Service will continue to address this moving forward.

Resolved that the Committee note the report (for 2023 data) for publishing on the Service's website and the Government website.

11 Progression on Implementation of the Equality Plan

This report, presented by the EDIO, updated Members on progress on the main actions identified in the Equality Scheme Action Plan from March 2023 to February 2024.

The EDIO updated the Members on details of key actions within the latest version of quarterly Equality Action Plan, attached as an Appendix to the report. This action plan is reviewed by the EDI Steering group. The EDIO highlighted the following activities:

- The Positive Action programme which aims to encourage underrepresented sections of the community to apply for employment with the Service.
- Taster Days for Wholetime and On-Call have been held to encourage specific groups to apply for employment.
- Focus on Mental Health and implementation of Mental Health at Work Commitment action plan is ongoing.
- CFO sent a direct email to all employees about the 'time to talk day' in February 2024 and a pack was sent to each station/watch or department in the Service.
- Occupational Health referral form amended to include questions around mental health.
- Three EDI Induction Training sessions have been delivered for new employees during the year.
- Equality Impact Assessment and Dyslexia Awareness training has been delivered.
- Two Women have attended the Womens Development Programme which was created with association with Women in the Fire Service and

delivered by Women to Work. In addition to this, the Women in the Fire Service development weekend was attended by 2 employees.

- The Voices employee support group is now embedded and undertaken many initiatives:
 - BAME working group meeting was held. BAME rep attends the newly created National Black Firefighters Network and West Mercia Network.
 - Mental Health rep held their first coffee morning for World Mental health Day at HQ.
 - Attendance at local LGBT events and display at HQ for Pride Month.
 - Peri-Menopause walks, 'Microsoft teams' chat and sharing of information. 2 Menopause 'chomp and chat' sessions held over the past 12 months with attendance from both women and men who were able to share information with women in their lives.
 - Menopause rep attends the National NFCC Menopause meetings, and the Service has trained 2 Menopause Champions.
 - 6 weeks Menopause nutrition course was offered to all employees.
 - Women's networking roadshow is in creation for 2024, to take the concept of the networking days to on call stations.
 - International Women's Day, March 2023 had 2 guest speakers. The Mayor of Shrewsbury and a former Female Chief Officer, well attended by range of employees.
- The Voices information area on the intranet has been reviewed and redesigned to incorporate more information/support, links and events that link to each of the Reps specific areas.
- White Ribbon Accreditation - first steering group meeting took place and draft action plan has been created and is awaiting approval from White Ribbon.
- Confidential reporting line 'Say so' was launched in May 2023
- Yoga courses have taken place in 2023.
- The Service responded to all NFCC EDI consultation documents and attended NFCC EDI meetings.
- Frequent articles and notices on social media and in 'The Pink' about equality related issues and events.
- Attendance at, and ongoing support, for local equality, diversity and inclusion groups and events listed on page 4 of the report. The EDIO highlighted attendance at recruitment fairs and connection to colleges.

The Members commented on big number of EDI activities carried out by the Service.

Resolved that the Committee noted the report.

12 Equality Monitoring Statistics

This report, presented by the EDIO, provided Members with an overview of the Service's Equality Monitoring Statistics and how it uses this data.

The EDIO explained that the Equality Act 2010 Public Sector Equality Duty requires Combine Fire Authority to publish equality statistics. These statistics are broken down by:

- Age
- Disability
- Ethnicity
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual Orientation

In some areas (in particular ethnicity and sexual orientation) the numbers of employees are so low that analysing them by employment areas might enable the identification of individuals, in contravention of good employment practice and the requirements of General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Because of this the Service may choose not to report on all data fields.

The EDIO explained that the Service uses these statistics to identify protected characteristics that are underrepresented by comparison with the makeup of communities the Service serves. This enables the Service to plan for positive action and other appropriate initiatives to address imbalances.

The EDIO made Members aware that in comparison with the wider community profile of Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin, as outlined in Appendix B, there are low numbers of employees from Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities (1.56%), of lesbian, gay and bisexual + (LGB+) people (0.87%), and that women are disproportionately under-represented in the operational workforce.

The EDO added that the Service has continued to encourage staff to accurately report their personal details and informs them of the use of their data and the importance of this during their EDI introduction, training, internal newsletter and annual performance review. Disclosure rates have increased across many categories and there was a notable reduction in the 'not stated' category.

The Members questioned if staff are satisfied with the confidentiality of the data and if those questions around special characteristics were compulsory. The EDIO advised that questions can be left blank or with 'prefer not to say'. The EDIO assured Members that the Service has seen positive changes to employee disclosures. She added that more employees are sharing their data with the Service and noted the reduction from the previous year of people who did not state their disability, ethnicity, religion or belief, and sex.

Members questioned if the categories the Service use to report ethnicity are mandated or standard. The EDIO advised that they are based on census data but may not be exactly the same in order to avoid identifying individuals. She added that the EDI Steering Group receives a more detailed breakdown of data but as this is a public meeting it would not be a good practice to share those here.

Members questioned the ethnicity categories, particularly the split between White British and White Irish and the order of the list. The CFO commented that the Service is fortunate to have Councillor Pardy as EDI Champion for the Service and who advised that the categories are shown in alphabetical order rather than by numbers. The EDIO confirmed that rather than having the majority at the top of the list, a better and more inclusive practise is using alphabetical order.

Resolved that the Committee note the report.

13 Reasonable Adjustments Update

This report, presented by EDIO, provided Members with an overview of the reasonable adjustments made to support employees in their work roles.

The EDIO explained the Equality Act 2010 requires the Service to make reasonable adjustments to enable employees who have a disability to carry out their work. Those adjustments may vary depending on employee needs. The Service has supported 172 employees to date and currently has 36 live reasonable adjustment cases, most of which are for employees who are neurodivergent or have medical conditions. The duration of these cases varies according to each employee needs, with support lasting from a few months to the whole of employment.

Cases will be closed when all support has been provided but then can be reopened if the individual's circumstances change, for example if they get a promotion or move to a different type of role.

The EDIO explained that depending on their needs, employees are referred to an appropriate expert for advice on adjustments to their work processes. Referrals may include Occupational Health and Access to Work (ATW) for specialist advice and/or funding for workplace support and equipment. Dyslexia accounts for the majority of cases but other reasonable adjustments cases have included back, neck and wrist problems, hearing and visual impairments, foot support.

When an assessment is received the employee meets with the EDIO and a manager to discuss and agree an action plan from list of measures from external providers.

The Service are continuing to promote the 'Workplace Adjustments Passport' which can travel with an employee during their employment. This can be shared as much as employee feels comfortable with.

The EDIO added that to support Neurodiverse employees, but also available to all employees, the Service has purchased a Service wide license for Read and Write software. This means the Service will no longer have to purchase individual licenses.

The EDIO advised that adjustments depend on individual circumstances and include things like software (for example Grammarly or Dragon), high/low desks, specialist keyboard and/or mouse, specialised chairs, noise cancelling headsets, specialist insoles for shoes and desk fans.

To date, the Service has spent £10,654.69 on reasonable adjustments for employees with a proportion of this cost reclaimed from ATW.

The EDIO shared that the Service has been recognised for supporting Neurodiverse employees and was shortlisted and in the final for the 'most inclusive employer' at the Dyslexia Awards in 2023.

Members thanked the EDIO and commented that this report was very comprehensive.

Resolved that the Committee note the report.

14 Exclusion of Press and Public

Resolved that having been satisfied in all the circumstances of the case that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing this information, that Members formally resolve that the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

15 Exempt Minutes (Paragraphs 1, 2 and 3)

Resolved that the-exempt minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee, held on 31 January 2024, be agreed, and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

Before meeting closed Councillor Minnery shared with the Members his appointment to Local Government Association (LGA) Fire Commission. Members commented that this appointment serves as a credit to good reputation of the Service.

The meeting closed at 3.20 pm.

Chair _____

Date _____