

**Minutes of the Meeting of
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority
Strategy and Resources Committee
held in the Oak Room, Headquarters
on Wednesday, 23 March 2022 at 2.00 pm**

Present

Members

Councillors Hartin (Vice-Chair), Lavery, Offland (Chair) and Pardy

Officers

Rod Hammerton	Chief Fire Officer	CFO
Dan Quinn	Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Service Delivery)	ACFO (SD)
Jan Morris	Head of Transformation and Collaboration	HoTC
Lisa Vickers	Human Resources Manager (Contracts)	HRM
Natalie Parkinson	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Officer	EDIO
Lynn Ince	Executive Support Officer	ESO

1 Apologies for Absence

Councillors Aldcroft, Carter and Wynn
James Walton, Treasurer
Germaine Worker, Head of Human Resources and Administration

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 meeting, held on 26 January 2022, be agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

5 Committee Work Plan 2022/23

This report reviewed progress against the Strategy and Resources Committee 2021/22 Work Plan and put forward a 2022/23 Work Plan for consideration and approval by Members.

Resolved that the Committee

- a) Note progress made against the Strategy and Resources Committee 2021/22 Work Plan; and
- b) Approve the Work Plan for 2022/23, attached as an appendix to the report, without amendment.

6 Committee Terms of Reference

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

Resolved that the Committee agree the Terms of Reference, as attached at the Appendix to the report, without amendment and that these be forwarded to the Fire Authority for agreement.

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.

Resolved that the Committee agree the Role Descriptions for Chair and Vice-Chair of the Strategy and Resources Committee, as set out in the Appendix to the report.

8 Review of Corporate Performance Indicators and Proposed Tolerances for 2022/23

This report provided information and recommendations for consideration by the Strategy and Resources Committee in relation to work currently being undertaken by the Service to introduce a new set of corporate performance measures.

The HoTC presented this report to the Committee.

Members commented that it was good to see the total number of fires reducing and asked how this was being achieved. The HoTC explained that this reduction can be attributed to the Service's ongoing Prevention and Protection work but it should also be noted that the effect of Covid pandemic may have skewed the number of fires occurring.

Members also asked if education through schools is impacting on the reduction of accidental fires. are they listening? The ACFO (SD) responded that the Schools Strategy has been successful post Covid, largely due to the employment of a new Schools Officer, the increased use of technology and collaborative work with the Police. There is an ongoing strategy to engage with individuals and the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) is currently undertaking an evaluation of intervention nationally.

The CFO added that the CPIs are not targets but the aim is to continue the trajectories shown in the report and part of this involves continuing with the strategy of in-depth investigation into incidents. The Service has the ability to drill down into data due to the small numbers involved.

Members asked if the spike in deliberate fires could be attributed to vehicles. The CFO advised that deliberate fires are affected by the cost of scrap. Members then asked if electric vehicle fires could potentially increase in the future. The CFO explained that National Operational Guidance (NOG) is developing procedures for dealing with electric vehicle fires and commented that it is likely that incidents may increase due to economic downturn. The ACFO (SD) also added that the Service provides battery related fires training to operational staff via LEO, which is the online learning environment.

Resolved that the Committee

- a) Note the report and acknowledge the work undertaken to determine the proposed Corporate Performance Indicators for 2022/23;
- b) Approve the proposed Corporate Performance Indicators for 2022/23; and
- c) Approve the introduction of a tolerance for Fire in Regulated Buildings (CPI 8)

9 People Strategy End of Year Report

This report provided an update on the achievements that have been made against the People Strategy 2021-2025.

The HRM presented this report and highlighted the following:

- **Developing Leadership Capacity**
External coaching has been provided by West Midlands Employers
- **Organisational Development and engagement**
The Service will be re-opening the Cycle to Work Scheme in June 2022 and is exploring the validity of introducing a car salary sacrifice scheme
- **Resourcing the Service**
A new end to end recruitment process has been implemented and the Service is currently undertaking a new ways of working pilot to allow more agile working for support staff
- **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)**
A Watch Manager from West Midlands Fire Service has been seconded into the EDI Team
- **Health, Wellbeing and Fitness**
The Service has engaged with the Serve and Protect Credit Union which allows staff to save and to borrow with repayment straight from their pay
- **New Ways of Working**
The Service will move its pension administration from Shropshire Council to West Yorkshire Pension Fund on 1 April 2022 and the preparations for this are progressing well

Members asked if the Mental Health Awareness Session could be made available to Fire Authority Members. The HRM confirmed that it will be offered to the Fire Authority as part of their development.

In relation to the transition to West Yorkshire Pension Fund, Members sought reassurance that the Fund did not have any Russian investments. The HRM advised that it is a non-funded scheme so there is no issue with this

Members praised the Voices Group with one Member explaining that his son is involved in this as a Voices Rep and the benefits of it can be seen both in and out of the workplace.

The Committee asked who sits on the Job Evaluation Steering Group? The CFO explained that the Group consists of the ACFO (SS), the Head of HR and Administration and a HR Officer. At present there is no Union representative on the Group, but this may be because there is currently no Unison representative in the Service. The CFO undertook to investigate this.

Resolved that the Committee note the report

10 Gender Pay Gap Report

This report outlined Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service's (SFRS) obligations under the Equality Act 2010 (Gender Pay Information Regulations 2017) and detailed its annual Gender Pay Gap figures for 2021 and the differences in average earnings between its male and female employees.

The EDIO presented this report and advised that whilst no average pay gap was published nationally for 2021, the Service's mean gender pay gap has reduced from 8% in 2020 to 4% in 2021. The median gender pay gap has also reduced from 2% in 2020 to 0% in 2021. This reflects Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service's commitment to an inclusive workforce and the initiatives that are in place to support the reduction of the gender pay gap are set out in the report.

Members asked if there are any jobs that are still to go through Job Evaluation which may fall into the gender pay gap. The EDIO explained that non-operational staff (Green Book) roles have all gone through Job Evaluation, but operational staff roles are part of a national process. The HRM added that Job Evaluation System is done through an electronic system which ensure that the process is impartial.

The Committee asked if the Service was able to provide a family friendly work/life balance for firefighters. The CFO explained that there is an ongoing debate about this with a recent survey being undertaken on the issue but at present, there is no single identifiable option to resolve the situation.

An Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) was carried out when the shift system changes were implemented, and this considered the start / finish times. The Service's Support staff work flexi time and some individuals on the shift system do work part-time.

The CFO also advised that there is ongoing dialogue regarding a productivity review.

Resolved that the Committee note the contents of the 2022 report (for 2021 data) for publishing on the Service's website and the Government website www.gov.uk.

11 Progress on Implementation of the Equality Scheme Action Plan

This report updated Members on progress on the main actions identified in the Equality Scheme Action Plan from March 2021 to February 2022.

The EDIO presented this report and talked through the examples of EDI focused work detailed in the report.

Members queried the reasons for the cancellation of Taster Days for specific groups during the past year. The EDIO explained that there has not been the same take up for 'in person' sessions so these have been cancelled. The EDI Team are aware of this and are reviewing the move to virtual sessions.

Members also asked about the Women's / all sessions. The EDIO explained that attendees are given the option to attend as part of 'women' or 'all'. The LGBT On Call was a trial, with sessions such as this providing an opportunity to explore, and connect with, communities to drive further change. The HRM added that whilst Positive Action is a primary driver for the taster sessions, these have now broadened to all potential On Call recruits. The Committee also noted that there had been very positive feedback from the Wholetime and BAME Taster sessions.

Resolved that the Committee note the report.

12 Equality Monitoring Statistics 2021

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

The EDIO presented this report and advised that there is a legal requirement for the Service to report equality statistics. The EDIO also advised that the Service's EDI Steering Group receive more detailed equality monitoring statistics on a regular basis. The EDIO also reported that a gender identity question is now included on the Service's Equality Monitoring form.

In relation to ethnicity statistics, Members questioned if the significant increase in 'unknown' responses related to the movement of data from the 'prefer not to say' response. The HRM advised that a check of individuals' HR data has been introduced as part of Individual Performance and Development Review (IPDR) process. The CFO commented that it may be better to change the wording for reporting to 'not stated' or 'did not complete'. It is interesting that people do chose 'prefer not to say' and it may be beneficial to educate employees as to why this information is collected and how it is used.

The EDIO explained that as individuals monitoring forms are updated for disabilities as they go through the reasonable adjustments process.

Resolved that the Committee note the report.

13 Reasonable Adjustments Update

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

The EDIO presented this report and highlighted the following points to the Committee

- The Service has introduced a new 'workplace adjustments passport' which travels with employees throughout their employment, and this will be promoted with staff.
- There has been an increase in reasonable adjustments spend in 2021/22 due to the backlog caused by the Covid pandemic – the Service does reclaim costs from Access to Work where possible.
- The Service has been nominated for the 'most inclusive employer' award at the Celebrating Neurodiversity Awards 2022 – the winners of the awards will be announced on 24 March 2022.

Resolved that the Committee note the report.

14 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 paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

15 Exempt Minutes

Resolved that the exempt minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting, held on 26 January 2022, be agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

The meeting closed at 3.10 pm.

Chair.....

Date.....