

Minutes of
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority
Strategy and Resources Committee
held in the Oak Room, Headquarters
on Thursday, 20 November 2025 at 2.00 pm

Present

Members

Councillors Evans (Chair), Minnery, Clayton, Feifer

Officers

Simon Hardiman	Chief Fire Officer	CFO
Karen Gowreesunker	Assistant Chief Fire Officer	ACFO
Marc Millward	Acting Assistant Chief Fire Officer	AACFO
Joanne Coadey	Head of Finance	HoF
Germaine Worker	Head of Human Resources and Administration	HHRA
Natalie Parkinson	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Officer	EDO
Lynn Ince	Executive Support Officer	ESO
Joanna Pritchard	Executive Support Officer	ESO

1 Apologies for Absence

Councillors Mosley, Burton, Mehta and Bentley
Lauren Jeal

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 20 March 2025, be agreed, and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

5 Financial Performance to September 2025, including Annual Treasury Review 2024/25 and Mid-Year Treasury Review 2025/26

This report provides information on the financial performance of the Service, and seeks approval for action, where necessary.

Overview of revenue budget discussed.

Table provided in HoF report. Executive & Resources figures: a number of vacancies are still available with posts still being advertised. It was agreed the 'Other' row should be 'Non-Pay'. The HoF undertook to change this in future reports.

Non-domestic rates. Overspend is due to refurbishment and extension of Telford fire station. Rates of Telford fire station has increased by around £400k. We have a consultant working on an appeal to see if these rates can be dropped slightly and we're waiting for outcome of the appeal. This overspend was not anticipated at the time for rates, but it was on utilities. A slight drop is likely but not a huge amount.

Contract cleaning. Reviewing the repairs and maintenance costs and hoping to release some of these costs to pay for the increase in cleaning costs.

Some vacancies for the quarter were already there prior to the new structure and still there since. Things are progressing. Councillor Clayton was querying salaries within HoF data. He asked for an explanation on how to decide pay bands. HHRA explained that all roles have a job description with HR, benchmarked, given pay bands and confirmed from there. Funds for posts already advertised have come out of the current budget so already accounted for.

A number of staff have been seconded with funds from current budget covering these individuals. Staffing for the 'Project Team' are covered in the 'Service Reserve'. HoF has listed the total overspend for this quarter, but this is counteracted by the underspends earlier on in the year.

Revenue budget is covered. £533k held in the general fund; then we'll look towards the end of the year and see what reserves we have.

Pay award: Councillor Evans mentioned '3.2%'. HoF showed the contingency report of £870k. We have allocated 2% of our pay in 25/26. We've been able to cover the pay increase.

Reserves: £10.4m in reserves currently. Once we've completed our capital program, this will decrease. Because we can spread Telford costs over a longer time frame, we can borrow from the Telford budget, and this has been documented.

Pensions reserves were put in place prior. Any 24/25 staffing issues were covered. Councillor Evans has said his PCC (was this right?) has an issue with being overdrawn and is having to make some staff redundant; Councillor Evans queried how we would manage this potential issue. Hoff has said that there is a reserve for such an event.

Capital programme: Hoff has had a review with officers, and it includes their updates. We will look at the capital budget for 2026 in our next S&R meeting and then we can provide the information.

Treasury review: 2024/2025. We are working within our indicators to show this is sustainable and affordable. We're achieving good rates in our investments. We will work with the Treasury when we need to borrow anymore funds if and when the time arises. Anything we don't use is invested into local authorities and we receive a 4.2% return. Hoff reassured members that the policy is to fund until we borrow.

Hoff confirmed we review capital debt every year.

Resolved that the Committee recommend that the Fire Authority:

- a) Note the position of the revenue budget;
- b) Approve virements to the revenue budget, where requested;
- c) Note the position of the capital programme;
- d) Note the annual review of treasury activities for 2024/25;
- e) Note performance against prudential indicators to date in 2025/26, and
- f) Note the mid-year review of treasury activities for 2025/26.

6 2026/27 and Later Years Revenue and Capital Budgets

This report brings together the elements of an initial revenue budget, based on current planning assumptions, and seeks the Committee's approval for this outline to be recommended to the Fire Authority in December 2025.

The Capital Programme will be brought to this Committee in January 2026 for consideration and the budget for 2026/27 will be approved by the Fire Authority at its meeting in February 2026.

Fair funding review: this is currently being carried out and we're expecting the budget to show some movement for the Fire authority taking into account rural authorities. Councillor Evans mentioned some council tax costs are doubling which could have affect.

Budget end of November; Hoff to look at numbers before Christmas to see if there's any room for growth.

CFO says he's been lobbying councillors for more SFRS support for fair funding.

£30m in the current budget: Hoff listed a few items within this.

IT: Councillor Evans said there's pressure from Government to take extra precautions about being hacked. ACFO confirmed we do have systems in place to detect such attacks. It was confirmed we have software to identify these in the early stages.

Councillor Clayton said he's concerned about the lack of staff to support this issue and acknowledged there is an increase in risk to all organisations.

Productivity: Finance staff are working on our wholetime watch stations to change working patterns to increase productivity. Will be reporting back in 2026 with the findings.

Pay and price contingency: we've decided to go with a 3% pay for grey and green book staff. Councillor Evans asked if 3% is realistic or should it be higher. HofF responded by saying if we can afford it, then it could be revised. Councillor Evans would prefer to choose the safer option.

CFO has a meeting with Councillor Minnery on Friday 20th November re the above. Reserve a decision on the above until this meeting has occurred.

Councillor Evans picked up last paragraph in HofF report and referred to 'capital reserves'. HofF confirmed description.

HofF summarised her paper with a working figure which will go into the next report.

Resolved that the Committee recommend that the Fire Authority:

- a) Notes the revisions and the committed changes to the base budget, as shown in section 4;
- b) Notes the ongoing work on efficiencies and productivity improvements in section 5;
- c) Bases its pay and price contingency in the revenue budget on the calculations set out in section 6;
- d) Notes the process for the approval of the capital programme, and
- e) Approves the expenditure figures associated with those approved assumptions as a basis for developing the budget at the meeting of the Fire Authority in December 2025

7 Reserves and Funds

This report sets out the issues which the Fire Authority will need to consider as part of its annual review of reserves and funds.

The reserves position has been observed, and the report lays out its reasoning which are subject to review. A provision has been created this year which is quantifiable.

Councillor Evans asked re "C third paragraph". HofF confirmed that the chair will be aware of this.

Resolved that the Committee recommend proposing that the Fire Authority confirms the current position of its reserves and funds.

8 Equality and Diversity Steering Group Annual Report

This report provides an update on the work of the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Steering Group from October 2024 to October 2025.

EDO briefly explained to the committee what the EDI steering group was and the main areas of work.

CFO also confirmed the engagement of these workshops with members.

Councillor Clayton would like to see data sent to members on how this has an impact on the fire service. EDO said they are still in their infancy but will be able to report back in about 12 months' time. ACFO suggested they could report on how members of staff have engaged in the workshops directly to committee members.

Feedback has been positive with many staff quoting they want it to continue.

CFO confirms a staff survey could help with feedback.

Overview of external events were mentioned; including the STFC event and EDI training which forms part of our induction program. Mental/health and prevention training is also available, so managers have the right guidance for staff.

The next meeting of this Committee will be held in mid-January 2026 – date to be confirmed.

The meeting closed at 3.05 pm.

Chair _____

Date _____