

**Non-Exempt Minutes of the Meeting of  
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority  
held in the Oak Room, Headquarters,  
on Wednesday, 14 December 2022, at 2.30 pm**

**Present**

**Members**

Councillors Aldcroft, Burchett, Carter (Chair), Evans, Hartin, Jhawar, Lea, Minnery (Vice-Chair), Offland, Overton, Pardy, Price, Thompson and Wynn

**Officers**

Rod Hammerton	Chief Fire Officer	CFO
Simon Hardiman	Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Corporate Services)	ACFO (CS)
Guy Williams	Head of Area Command	HoAC
Richard Phillips	Deputy Clerk and Monitoring Officer	Clerk
Emma Harvey	Solicitor, Telford and Wrekin Council	
Joanne Coadey	Head of Finance	HoF
Germaine Worker	Head of Human Resources and Administration	HHRA
Lynn Ince	Executive Support Officer	ESO

**External Bodies**

Rebecca Clough      Shropshire County Pension Fund

**1 Apologies for Absence**

Councillor Hignett  
Dan Quinn, Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Service Delivery)  
James Walton, Treasurer  
Marc Bayliss, Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner

**2 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**

Councillors Evans, Hartin, Lea and Overton declared an interest in relation to item 9 as they are, or were, members of the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS). It was agreed that the Members concerned would remain in the meeting for the discussion and voting on the item, as the recommendations related to contributing members which the Members concerned no longer are.

Councillor Pardy also declared an interest in item 9 as it related to pensions. It was agreed that Councillor Pardy would remain in the meeting for the discussion and voting on the item as it related to the LGPS rather than the Firefighters' Pension Scheme which Councillor Pardy is a member of.

### 3 Public Questions

None

### 4 Non-Exempt Minutes

Councillors Aldcroft, Hartin, Minnery, Pardy and Wynn abstained from voting on this item as they were not present at the meeting on 12 October 2022.

**Resolved** that the non-exempt minutes of the Fire Authority meeting, held on 12 October 2022, be agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

Members asked if there were plans to donate more fire appliances to the Ukraine, as the Service had done in October 2022. The CFO explained that the resale demand for used fire appliances has increased recently with significant returns being achieved on them on the open market. The Service has therefore, made the decision that it will test the market with its current end-of-life appliances. If they do not meet the reserve set by the Service at auction, they will then be donated to an appropriate cause.

### 5 Strategy and Resources Committee Minutes

**Resolved** that the minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee meeting, held on 16 November 2022, be noted and that the recommendation at item 5, as given below, be agreed.

#### **Item 5 – Financial Performance to September 2022, including Annual Treasury Review 2021/22 and Mid-Year Treasury Review 2022/23**

**Resolved** that the Fire Authority

- a) Note the position of the revenue budget;
- b) Approve virements to the revenue budget, where requested;
- c) Note the update on pay awards and inflation;
- d) Note activity on capital schemes;
- e) Approve virements to capital schemes where requested;
- f) Note the annual review of treasury activities for 2021/22;
- g) Note performance against prudential indicators to date in 2022/23; and
- h) Note the mid-year review of treasury activities for 2022/23.

### 6 Standards, Audit and Performance Committee Minutes

**Resolved** that the minutes of the Standards, Audit and Performance Committee meeting, held on 1 December 2022, be noted and that the recommendations at item 11a, as given below, be agreed.

#### **Item 11a – Appointment of Independent Persons**

**Resolved** that the Fire Authority

- a) Note the recruitment exercise that has taken place; and
- b) Agree the appointments of Thomas Senior and Julia Lynch as Independent Persons for the Fire Authority be approved for an initial period of four years.

## **7 Meeting Schedule 2023**

The Meeting Schedule for the 2023 meetings of the Fire Authority and its Committees was brought to the Fire Authority for approval.

**Resolved** that the Fire Authority agree the meeting schedule for 2023

## **8 2022/23 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 2023.

The HoF presented this report and highlighted the following points

- The report is based on the Autumn Statement
- Fire Pensions employer contributions have been covered by grant from the Treasury and it is anticipated that this will continue from 2023/24
- Officers have continued to produce scenarios to test the sensitivity to changes in planning assumptions
- The table on page 3 shows that current planning indicates that the Service will have large deficits in 2023/24 and 2025/26
- Grant assumptions as set out in section 5 of the report
- Page 4 of the report shows that the pay contingency has been reduced to 4% in 2024/25 and 2025/26
- Projects will be factored in as and when needed to avoid Service degradation

A document was tabled to the meeting which set out confirmation that a £5 referendum principle on Band D Council Tax bills has been given to all fire and rescue authorities in the local government finance policy statement that was published on 12 December 2022. The Statement also confirmed that Revenue Support Grant will be increased in line with the Consumer Price Index; Rural Services Delivery Grant will remain unchanged; and Service Grant will be reduced, in part because there will no longer be an increase in National Insurance contributions. The Service's scenario planning will now be updated to incorporate these changes.

Budget planning will be based on both this Statement and the settlement announcement, which is due next week, with revised scenarios being taken to the Strategy and Resources Committee in January 2023 for consideration and recommendation to the Fire Authority in February 2023.

Members queried if the announcement next week would be a provisional settlement. The HoF advised that very firm figures are expected to be announced next week.

In response to Members' questions regarding the £5 precept increase, the HoF advised that the £5 precept figure equates to an approximate 4.7% increase. Regarding the Collection Rate, Members advised that Shropshire Council will consider a 2.77% increase in Band D Council Tax at its meeting tomorrow.

Members asked what contingency arrangements are in place in relation to any potential pay offer. The CFO advised that this is a very challenging issue and planning scenarios are being worked up to look at this. The Chair added that the £5 precept increase has been requested on numerous occasions but has been rejected until now.

Members thanked the HoF for the clear information that has been presented to Authority.

**Resolved unanimously** that the Fire Authority

- a) Approve the change in planning assumptions as set out in section 5 of the report, and allow officers to continue to work on a range of planning scenarios for later years of the planning period;
- b) Agree the recommendations on Reserves and Provisions, set out in report 7 of the Appendix; and
- c) Request the Strategy and Resources Committee to prepare a final budget package in January 2023, for final decision by the Fire Authority in February 2023.

## **9 2022 Review of Local Government Pension Scheme – Employer Discretions Statement of Policy**

This report informed the Fire Authority of the review of the employer discretions Statement of Policy for the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS).

The HHRA presented the report and advised that label on final appendix is incorrect – it should read Appendix C not Appendix A.

The HHRA explained that Appendix A to the report sets out the discretions to be exercised in relation to scheme members who ceased active membership between 1 April 2008 and 31 March 2014. These contained a lot of older information and did not mention some mandatory discretions.

These discretions were reviewed in 2014 and amended to those set out in Appendix B to the report. This document did cover most of the mandatory policies but the detail within the Statement was hard to follow and there were also some instances where there appeared to be a fettering of discretion which is not good practice.

Because of this, and to meet the requirements of the LGPS 2013 Regulations, the HHRA and the Pensions Officer from Shropshire Council have reviewed the Discretions Statement and updated its format to make it easier to use.

**Resolved** that the Fire Authority

- a) Note the 2022 review of the Statement of Policy for the Local Government Pension Scheme; and
- b) Agree the new Statement of Policy.

## **10 Fire Alliance Update – December 2022**

This report summarised the progress made against the key areas of the Fire Alliance Strategic Plan 2018-2022 and gave an outline of the next steps for the Alliance.

The ACFO (SS) presented this report and highlighted the following points:

- The report summarises the key achievements of the Alliance to date
- Capacity and resilience are the key elements of Alliance
- The next iteration of Alliance Plan is being developed
- ICT – The Wide Area Network (WAN) project has achieved a cost saving in this Service of £550k over the 5-year contract
- Procurement has become business as usual (BAU) with efficiencies being achieved as a by-product of resilience and capacity
- The Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) Response standard has been redefined for this Service; Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Authority has now agreed to use the same standards which will allow for comparisons and benchmarking across both Services
- Fire Control is a joint procurement and implementation project, and the Command & Control system replacement gives further opportunity for joint working
- The Fire Investigation ISO has been delayed to 2025 which will allow for re-evaluation and a possible new approach to this issue
- The Fire Alliance has become BAU across both Services
- The next steps for the Alliance are set out on page 6 of the report and include Aerial Ladder Platforms (ALPs), Resource Review and Training
- This Service will be undertaking the On Call Sustainability Project which is focused on retention; Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service will undertake a similar exercise which will focus on On Call recruitment

Members asked for further detail on the involvement of Cleveland Fire and Rescue Service in the fire control resilience project. The ACFO (SS) explained that the Service currently has tri-service fallback arrangements in place involving Cleveland and Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Services. The CFO advised that Cleveland were involved in the previous iteration of this project and want to stay involved as this new project evolves. The aim of the project is to achieve one central cloud-based system across the Services involved. The ACFO (SS) added that part of Grenfell Review recommendations included enabling Control Rooms to scale up and scale down as required, which this project will help the Service to achieve.

Members also asked for further information on the initiative to train West Mercia Police Community Support Officers (CSOs) as On Call Firefighters. The CFO explained that this had been done on a trial basis, but the initiative had not had as much benefit as was anticipated due to CSOs working across various locations.

Members asked if the Fire Control Project would be purely officer led or if there would be Fire Authority input. The CFO advised that Officers would lead on this due to the highly technical and specialist nature of the project, but the Fire Authority will receive regular reports on the progress of the project.

The Chair commented that the main focus of the Alliance will now be the Fire Control Project and that the Fire Alliance is worthwhile and has been worth doing.

**Resolved** that the Fire Authority note the report.

## **11 The Scheme for the Payment of Members' Allowances 2022/23**

This report asked the Fire Authority to consider and agree its 2022/23 Scheme for the Payment of Members' Allowances.

The HHRA presented this report and advised that the basic and special responsibility allowances set out in the Scheme may be reviewed annually based on National Joint Council (NJC) annual pay reviews with any percentage increase applied automatically from that date. On 1 November 2022, the Local Government Services Pay Agreement 2022-2023 was published with rates for allowances brought uprated by 4.04% with effect from 1 April 2022. This increase has been applied to Member Allowances and the updated rates are set out in Schedule 2 of the Appendix to the report. The Appendix has also been updated to include electric vehicle use.

Councillor Pardy stated that he found it difficult to accept increases to Member Allowances and has not taken the increases in previous years. Councillor Pardy also said that he feels strongly that the Authority should set an example and that a 3% increase to allowances would be more acceptable.

The Chair commented that the Fire Authority did not increase its allowances for many years until the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) recommendations that were agreed in June 2021. Councillor Burchett added that if the Authority keeps ignoring the recommendations of its IRP, they will stop undertaking reviews of Allowance Schemes. Councillor Aldcroft commented that the IRP is an independent body who are tasked with putting an appropriate increase in place.

Councillor Hartin asked if the increase being applied was recommended by the IRP or if it was the annual increase that is based on the NJC annual pay review. The HHRA explained that it is the increase based on the NJC annual pay review. IRP reviews are undertaken every four years with the next review being due after November 2023.

It was proposed by Councillor Minnery, seconded by Councillor Aldcroft, and with nine Members voting for, and five Members voting against, it was

**Resolved** that the Fire Authority

- a) Note the report; and
- b) Agreed that the Scheme for the Payment of Members' Allowances 2022/23, be updated by 4.04% in line with National Joint Council recommendations, and to backdate this to take effect from 1 April 2022.

## **12 Exclusion of Press and Public**

**Resolved** that, under section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting room for the following items on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information, as defined by the provisions of Part I of Schedule 12(A) to the Act, by virtue of Paragraphs 3 and 4.

## **13 Fire Authority Exempt Minutes**

### **13a 12 October 2022 (Paragraphs 1, 2,3 and 4)**

Councillors Aldcroft, Hartin, Minnery, Pardy and Wynn abstained from voting on this item as they were not present at the meeting on 12 October 2022.

**Resolved** that the exempt minutes of the Fire Authority meeting, held on 12 October 2022, be agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

### **13b 18 November 2022 (Paragraphs 1, 2 and 3)**

**Resolved** that the exempt minutes of the Extraordinary Fire Authority meeting, held on 18 November 2022, be agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

## **14 Industrial Action Update (Paragraph 4)**

This report provided assurance to Members regarding the Service's approach to mitigating the impacts of industrial action. It sought to provide an overview of current planning assumptions and activity, relating to periods of Industrial Action, which could take place as early as 14 February 2023.

**Resolved** that the Fire Authority note the report.

## **Chair's Announcements**

Festival of Carols is taking place on Thursday, 15 December 2022, 7.00 pm, in the Appliance Bay, Shrewsbury Fire Station – all Members are encouraged to attend

The Chair closed the meeting by wishing Members a Merry Christmas and a happy, safe New Year.

The meeting closed at 4.05 pm.

**Chair**.....

**Date**.....