

**Minutes of the Meeting of  
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority  
held in the Stiperstones Room, Telford Central Fire Station  
on Wednesday, 15 October 2025, at 2.00 pm**

**Present**

**Members**

Councillors Bentley, Blundell, Clayton, Coleman, Evans, Fejfer, Handley, Hannington, Kerr, Mehta, Minnery, Mosley, Overton, Radford, Waite and Walmsley

**Officers**

Simon Hardiman	Chief Fire Officer	CFO
Karen Gowreesunker	Assistant Chief Fire Officer	ACFO
Richard Phillips	Deputy Clerk and Monitoring Officer	Deputy Clerk
Joanne Coadey	Head of Finance	HoF
Chris Haigh	Head of Digital and Data	HoDD
Lynn Ince	Executive Support Supervisor	ESS
Aleksandra Zydek	Executive Support Officer	ESO

**1 Apologies for Absence**

Councillor Husemann  
Sam Burton, Deputy Chief Fire Officer  
James Walton, Treasurer)

**2 Welcome to Fire Authority**

The Fire Authority welcomed Councillor Alan Mosley from Shropshire Council and Councillor Stephen Bentley from Telford & Wrekin Council, who joined the Fire Authority on 1 October 2025 to their first meeting.

**3 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**

None

**4 Public Questions**

None

**5 Fire Authority Minutes**  
**5a 25 June 2025**

**Resolved, with abstentions from Councillors Bentley and Mosley**, that the minutes of the Annual Fire Authority meeting, held on 25 June 2025, be agreed, and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

**5b 23 July 2025**

**Resolved, with abstentions from Councillors Bentley and Mosley**, that the minutes of the Extraordinary Fire Authority meeting, held on 23 July 2025, be agreed, and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

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

**6a 10 July 2025**

**Resolved** that the Fire Authority note the minutes of the Standards, Audit and Performance Committee meeting, held on 10 July 2025.

**6b 30 September 2025**

Referring to the Member / Officer Relations Protocol that was discussed at this meeting, Councillor Coleman commented that only four Fire Authority Members attended the recent Celebration of Success. Councillor Coleman feels that it is important that Authority Members try to attend such events and meet fire and rescue service employees.

In response to the Chair's request for an update on the Service's Christmas Celebration, the CFO clarified that Christmas Celebration will not take place this year, as it will now happen every two years rather than yearly.

Councillor Kerr requested that Members receive early notification of Service events. The ESS undertook to distribute a schedule of Service events at the start of the calendar year.

**Resolved** that the Fire Authority note the minutes of the Standards, Audit and Performance Committee meeting, held on 30 September 2025

**7 Constitutional Reports**

**7a Committee Composition, Allocation of Seats to Political Groups, and Committee Membership**

This report asked the Fire Authority to agree both the composition of its Committees and the allocations of seats on its Committees to political groups. It also requested the Fire Authority to confirm the appointment of Members to serve on Committees.

**Resolved** that the Fire Authority

- a) Agree the Committee composition and allocation of seats to political groups, as set out in Appendix A to the report; and
- b) Agree that the Appendix B to the report will be shared with Group Leaders after this meeting, for them to provide their Group nominations. The nominations will then be approved by the Clerk under their delegated power to approve changes to committee membership.

## **7b Update of Fire Authority Standing Orders**

This report reviewed the Fire Authority's Standing Orders for the Regulation of Proceedings and Business, Standing Orders relating to Contracts, and Financial Regulations and set out proposed amendments for consideration and agreement by Members.

***The following recommendations were deferred to be reconsidered after the Member Workshop that will be held later in the year:***

The Fire Authority is requested to consider and agree the proposed amendments to:

- Standing Orders for the Regulation of Proceedings and Business; and
- Financial Regulations

## **8 Statement of Accounts 2024/25**

This report set out the key revenue issues which have arisen from work on the Statement of Accounts 2024/25 and sought approval for use of the General Fund balance in 2025/26.

The HoF presented this report and explained that the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2024 state that the Statement of Accounts 2024/25 must be approved by the Treasurer and published on the Authority's website by 30 June 2025, with final audited accounts being published by 28 February 2026. Whilst Officers worked as closely as possible to these dates, the accounts were approved and published on 11 July 2025, i.e. slightly past the deadline. Grant Thornton (External Auditors) will audit the Statement of Accounts during October and November 2025, with their findings being presented to the Audit and Standards Committee for approval in December 2025.

The Fire Authority approved a revenue budget of £29.178m for 2024/25 which quantified the Service's strategic and operational plans and enabled individual business area plans to be quantified, and achievements monitored. The table on page two of the report sets out the changes to the revenue budget that were approved by the Fire Authority during 2024/25. These changes total £1.131m, which includes amounts that have been transferred to, or from, the reserves during the financial year.

The actual out-turn on the revenue budget was £28.362m with further variances of £513,000 identified, as set out on page 3 of the report. The General Fund balance at the end of 2024/25 is £700,000. There is a total of £40,000 of Slipped Income and Expenditure, relating to Culture and Values project costs, which leaves a balance of £660,000 to be distributed to reserves.

A number of senior Officers left the Service during 2023/24, and it was anticipated that more would leave during 2024/25 so a total of £1.382m was transferred to the Pensions and Other Staff Issues Reserve, to mitigate the impact of any future employment liabilities. At the same time, £1m was transferred to the Major Projects Reserves and £121,000 to the General Fund.

£1.2m has been transferred to the Major Projects Reserve as underspends were reported during 2024/25. Contributions of £200,000 have been required from the Service Transformation Staff Reserve during 2024/25 to cover funding for fixed term posts and support for projects whose purpose is to increase capacity and resources across the Service.

It is essential that the Service can uplift capacity and resources as and when it requires as it continues its improvement and transformation journey. The HoF, therefore, recommended that the balance of the General Fund be transferred to the Service Transformation Staff Reserve, noting that the final balance on the General Fund may change subject to audit findings.

**Resolved** that the Fire Authority

- a) Note the financial position of the revenue budget and the General Fund balance in 2024/25; and
- b) Approve the use of the General Fund balance in 2025/26.

## **9 Financial Performance to June 2025, including Capital Programme Update**

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

The HoF presented this report and explained that the revenue budget for 2025/26 is £30.084m which is split across the three service areas of Executive and Resources; Service Delivery and Corporate Governance. Each of these areas has a pay and non-pay budget which is monitored with appropriate officers. The budget is currently where it is expected to be at this point in the financial year with approximately a quarter of the budget spent so far. The table on page 2 of the report which summarises the budget position for Quarter 1 of 2025/26.

There are significant variances in anticipated spend, which are shown in the table on page 3 of the report.

These include identified underspends on Debt Charges due to slipped capital schemes and delayed borrowing; various vacancies within the ICT Department which are now being addressed; and the development of the Strategic Operational Assessment of Risk (SOAR) being undertaken in house rather than by a consultant.

The 2025/26 budget included a pay contingency of 2% as it was anticipated that this was likely to be the agreed pay award for operational and fire control staff. The actual agreed pay award was 3.2% which the Authority can cover from its existing pay contingency balances. The additional 1.2% will, however, need to be factored into the budget setting process going forward.

The HoF drew Members' attention to Appendix B to the report which contains the Authority's Capital Programme 2025/26.

Of note is the rescoping of the Emergency Mobile Comms Replacement Network scheme. This scheme was approved by the Fire Authority in 2016/17 to ensure that any potential gap between Airwave and the new solution for emergency mobile communications could be bridged. As it is now confirmed that this provision is unlikely to be called upon in the next two years, £92,000 of this scheme has been reallocated to cover the replacement of network switches. The Replacement Network scheme will be reviewed as part of the capital programme planning for the 2026/27 budget.

There has also been an inflationary increase to the Appliance Replacement capital scheme which was approved for nine appliances at a cost of £300,000 per appliance. Due to one of these appliances being reconfigured as a replacement for the rescue tender, the scheme now covers eight appliances at a cost of £355,000 each which equates to an increase of £140,000.

Councillor Overton raised the issue of recent press coverage of fire funding. The CFO explained the budget settlement will be announced in December 2025 and that the local MPs are lobbying central government on the funding mechanism that will be used. The HoF added that fire funding will be covered in the first budget setting paper which the Strategy and Resources Committee will consider in November.

Councillor Kerr queried if the Fire Authority has a Medium-Term Financial Plan in place. The HoF confirmed that it does, and it will be brought to the February meeting of the Fire Authority for consideration and approval.

Councillor Evans commented that it would be useful for Authority Members to see press releases before they go out to the media. The CFO advised that the Service does not issue many press releases as it tends to use social media instead.

It was agreed that a briefing session on fire funding will be arranged for Authority Members.

**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 position of the Capital Programme 2024/25;
- d) Note the position of the Capital Programme 2025/26 to June 2025 and approve amendments to schemes; and
- e) Note performance against prudential indicators to date in 2022/26.

## **10 His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services Inspection 2024: Cause of Concern and Areas for Improvement Update**

This report provided an update on Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service's (SFRS) response to the 2024 His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) inspection, addressing a Cause of Concern (CoC) and 30 Areas for Improvement (AFIs). It outlined progress in governance, risk management, performance, digital strategy, and financial oversight.

The ACFO presented this report and drew Members' attention to Sections 4 and 5 of the report which set out progress to date on the AFIs. The table in Section 4 gives a progress indicator for each of the 30 AFIs. The AFIs that are marked as 'Future Review' in the table were not initially prioritised in the action plan that was drawn up to ensure the AFIs are addressed. There are 8 AFIs shown as 'Behind Schedule' in the table. This is due to interdependencies between AFIs that require investment and support; as detailed in Section 5 of the report.

Members commented that the table in Section 4 needs to include much clearer narrative as discussed at the Standards, Audit and Performance Committee meeting in September.

Referring to Section 6 of the report which sets out progress on the five elements of the CoC, Members queried the estimated completion date which is 30 November 2028 and asked what 'Behind Schedule' means for progress on this strand of the CoC. The ACFO explained that the CoC elements have been identified by the HMICFRS as needing action and improvement and an Action Plan detailing how this would be achieved was submitted to the HMICFRS in December 2024. The Chair added that there has been a delay on this element, which relates to access to accurate data and analysis, due to the Head of ICT retiring, and queried the completion date. Members expressed concern that they were not being given full information regarding progress on the CoC; however, it was clarified that a narrative of progress is set out in Section 7 of the report.

The ACFO explained that the HMICFRS has asked the Service to reconsider the 2028 completion date for element four of the CoC. Work will be undertaken to revise the estimated date, and Members will be informed of the adjusted date.

The ACFO acknowledged that the unexpected retirement of the Head of ICT had impacted on progress on this element. The new Head of Digital and Data, Chris Haigh, is now in post and some progress has been made, for example approval of the Digital Strategy and vacancies within the ICT Team being filled.

The next HMICFRS Inspection is due in 12 to 18 months' time when they will re-inspect areas from the previous Inspection alongside inspection of new areas. The Chair commented that data is a major concern and asked how robust the Service's position for any re-inspection is. The CFO responded that there are two options for the re-inspection of the CoC elements, the HMICFRS can either re-inspect separately or incorporate it into their next inspection.

Councillor Kerr commented that a lot of work has been undertaken and that culture is a major concern. Councillor Kerr believes that the Fire Authority needs to ensure that it has an in-depth understanding of the Service's culture and values so that it can lead on this issue. The Chair commented that the new intake of Members to the Fire Authority will allow historical practices to be addressed. The CFO said that it was fantastic that the Fire Authority wanted to be involved in the cultural transformation programme (CTP) and undertook to work with Future Works, the consultants that are leading on the CTP, to shape Member involvement.

Councillor Mosley commented that he was not impressed with HMI report which he felt highlighted a lot of HR issues. Councillor Mosley asked how neighbouring authorities had performed in their Inspections. The CFO explained that there is a table in the State of Fire Report 2025 which sets out this information. The CFO undertook to share this with Members with a note of the different inspection times for Services. The CFO also advised that the 2025-27 round of inspections will include an assessment of how governance impacts on service delivery.

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

## **11 Annual Review of Partnership Working 2025**

This report outlined Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service's collaborative partnerships, evidencing their contribution to community safety and operational resilience. It also responded to inspection findings by enhancing governance and evaluation to better demonstrate the value and impact of partnerships.

The ACFO presented this report and highlighted Section 4 of the report which gives an overview of the range of partnership types, each varying in formality and scope that the Service engages in.

These include legally mandated collaborations under the Fire and Rescue Services Act and the Civil Contingencies Act, and formal agreements such as Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) and Service Level Agreements (SLAs).

In addition, the Service also participates in informal partnerships and data-sharing arrangements which support operational delivery and community safety.

The ACFO explained that the Partnership Register currently shows 47 active partnerships which span multiple departments and reflect a broad scope of collaboration that supports delivery of the Service's strategic objectives. Two new partnerships have been added to the Partnership Register over the past 12 months. The first is a data-sharing agreement with Baywater Healthcare, which provides data identifying patients across the county who are using home oxygen therapy. This allows the Service to proactively offer Safe and Well visits to vulnerable residents and enhances the Service's effectiveness. The second is a MoU with Jon Beech Recovery, which covers the provision of electric vehicle recovery services to support incident response. This helps to ensure operational resilience, cost efficiency and public safety benefits.

Members asked what a Safe and Well visit covers. The CFO explained that the Service visits vulnerable households to check equipment / assess risks within the home etc. Referrals for Safe and Well visits come through Exeter data which provides data on vulnerable groups within the Fire Authority's area. Personcentric Safe and Well visits are in the process of being introduced and these will include signposting residents to other agencies if needed.

Referring to Section 7 of the report, the ACFO explained that one of the AFIs identified by HMICFRS relates to collaboration. AFI 11 states that the Service should make sure it effectively monitors, reviews and evaluates the benefits and outcomes of any collaboration activity and particularly highlights the joint Command & Control (C&C) system that the Service is working on with Hereford & Worcestershire, Durham & Darlington and Cleveland Fire and Rescue Services. This project aims to increase resilience by allowing the Services involved to take emergency calls for each other and mobilise resources where necessary. The HMI looks forward to seeing progress on this project and to reviewing the evaluation of the benefits achieved and the lessons learned from it.

Members queried if there is a common criterion for the Services that are involved in the C&C project. The CFO explained that the four Services are all looking at procuring and/or introducing the same C&C system at the same time which has led to this being a joint project.

In response to this AFI, the Service has acknowledged the need to strengthen the monitoring, review, and evaluation mechanisms that underpin its partnership activity. There is a commitment to establishing more robust and routine evaluation processes which will ensure all collaborations are assessed for operational impact, strategic value and return on investment. As part of this internal governance for partnership oversight is being reviewed, together with an update of the evaluation criteria for the Partnership Register. The aim of this is to achieve greater transparency and accountability and enable organisational learning and continuous improvement to be evidenced.



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

## **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 4 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

## **13 Exempt Fire Authority Minutes (Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, and 4)**

**Resolved, with abstentions from Councillors Bentley and Mosley**, that the exempt minutes of the Annual Fire Authority meeting, held on 25 June 2025, be agreed, and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

## **14 Exempt Brigade Managers' Employment Panel Minutes (Paragraphs 1, 2, and 3)**

**Resolved** that the Fire Authority note the exempt minutes of the Brigade Managers' Employment Panel meeting, held on 4 September 2025.

The meeting closed at 3.15 pm.

**Chair**.....

**Date**.....