

Review of Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority (SWFRA) Governance

This review of governance has been requested through Cllr David Minnery, Chair to the Fire Authority. The Fire Authority (FRA) will be asked to approve this scope for a review to take place between November 2024 and April 2025. It is expected that this review will take in the considerations and proposals of FRA members and the outcomes of this review will be presented to FRA at its June 2025 Annual General Meeting.

Background:

Following feedback and areas for improvement identified through the HMICFRS Inspection for the Service. The FRA has considered its position and potential areas for improvement.

Most immediately, Committee Chairs will be asked to review the agenda for their meetings prior to publication and the meeting taking place the purpose of papers will be discussed at these meeting.

The above change will be in place before the November and December Authority and Committee meetings commence.

Feedback from the Chair of the FRA, Members and officers has identified potential areas for improvement in the structure, decision making and operation of the Fire Authority. This has included:

- The need for robust challenge and consultation in fire authority business
- A more inclusive approach to setting agendas for meetings, agreeing work plans, and reviewing papers ahead of meetings to ensure preparedness.
- Increased interaction from Fire Authority members when reviewing and scrutinising Fire Authority business, supported by appropriate induction and training provided to support the roles and responsibilities of committee members.
- Clarity of roles, responsibilities of Fire Authority Members and specifically delegations of statutory officers
- A clearer delineation of committee roles through a review of committees and associated terms of reference, subsequently leading to;
 - A review of the committee structure
 - Providing more effective scrutiny of Service performance to include financial
 - Enabling effective decision making at all meetings
- Officer (including statutory) approval process prior to report publication
- Reporting of strategic performance and analysis of trends in relation to misconduct and disputes resolution.
- Enhancing the statutory officer provision in support of building additional capacity, continued effective relationships and reporting. This will commence with a review of the Service Level Agreements that exist for these arrangements.

The review process will engage with members and officers to identify further areas for improvement where needed in its initial stages.

Purpose and scope:

Any review of Fire Authority governance should seek to support and enhance the Nolan Principles of good governance, which are critical elements to the delivery of public services and should be upheld across all Authority business. These principles are:

Selflessness, Integrity, Objectivity, Accountability, Openness, Honesty, and Leadership

[Nolan Principles](#)

This review of Fire Authority governance arrangements will enable current ways of working to be considered against the expectations set out in Fire and Rescue and Local Government legislation and Local Government guidance for both Fire Authorities and Statutory Officers. The LGA's 'Leading the Fire Sector' is also a useful reference source document and provides Fire Authority members with information on governance arrangements in the fire and rescue sector, as well as practical advice on how they can apply the principles of good governance – with a particular focus on effective performance oversight and scrutiny

[Leading the Fire Sector](#)

Aligned to the potential areas for improvement cited in the background section above, the committee structure, committee roles, roles and responsibilities of members, chairs, and vice chairs (to include appointment) and training and development for FRA members will form part of this review.

There will be a particular focus on the FRA's role in scrutinising performance of the Service, how it applies its processes (such as those regarding misconduct) and providing assurance that values are upheld, driving positive culture change.

All areas of this review should seek to support and enhance the FRA's approach to decision making in the delivery of its approved Strategy and budget, enabling decisions to be well informed and as efficient as possible.

In addition, the officer resource required to support any changes in future FRA governance arrangements will be considered as part of this review.

This review will not seek to change the numbers or make-up of elected Councillors on the Fire Authority however, it will consider how the introduction of independent and or co-opted members can enhance the scrutiny role.

Review dependencies:

The successful completion of this review to recommend changes to FRA arrangements at the June 2025 AGM will be dependent on the following factors:

- Availability and effective contribution of Fire Authority members, statutory officers, and officers

- The successful progression of the implementation plan (aligned to the timeline below) which will be formed on approval of this review.
- Effective stakeholder management aligned to a stakeholder plan which will be formed on approval.
- An assumption that legislation aligned to fire service governance does not undergo any notable change.
- Sufficient resource at officer and statutory officer level to undertake the review and support the implementation of any changes.

Review owners:

Clerk and Monitoring Officer who has responsibility for reviewing and updating the Authority Constitution.

Fire Authority Members who have the responsibility for contributing to and agreeing any changes to the constitution as advised by the Clerk and Monitoring Officer.
Officers and statutory officers who will support the Monitoring Officer in the review process and contribute to proposals from organisational perspective.

Stakeholders:

Fire Authority Members
Officers
Statutory Officers
Partners across Shropshire, Telford, and Wrekin Council
HMICFRS SLL
Representative bodies

Review method:

On approval of this proposal an implementation plan will be prepared setting out the review in three stages. The review will be supported by SFRS officers and Statutory officers to ensure that the FRA are informed throughout.

Prescheduled workshops will enable direct engagement of both members and officers at each stage of the review.

Review progress will be updated into FRA through Chair's briefing's and latterly through a STAG and FRA in June 2025.

Stage 1:

Identify where current ways of working need to continue, change and or improve.
Highlight themes for improvement and/or change.

Stage 2:

Considering outcomes of stage 1, the arrangements of other fire and public sector governance models, sector comparisons and learning, this stage will consider alternative ways of working for the Fire Authority against several themes identified from stage 1.

Stage 3:

Formulation of options for change to present to and discuss with members and stakeholders as appropriate.

Prepare options for approval at June 2025 AGM

Timeline:

This following is a broad timeline for the proposed review. The implementation of recommendations from the June 2025 AGM will be implemented over a 3-12 month timeline dependent on these outcomes.

November Chairs briefing/STAG 13 th November 2024	Engage with Members to discuss scope of review and views/proposals of Members
5 th December FRA 2024	Revised and final review scope to be approved by FRA.
December – March 2025	Review to be undertaken with FRA members
April 2025 STAG/Chairs briefing	Review findings to be engaged and discussed
June 2025 FRA AGM	Review findings and recommendations for change to be approved.