

**Non-Exempt Minutes of the Meeting of  
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority  
held at Telford Central Fire Station,  
Stafford Park, Telford, TF3 3BW  
on Tuesday, 11 February 2025 at 2.00 pm**

## **Present**

### **Members**

Councillors Aldcroft, Blundell, Burchett, Cook, Davis, Evans (from 2.30 pm), Handley, Hartin, Hignett, Lea, Minnery (Chair), Overton (Vice-Chair), Price and Wynn.

### **Officers**

Simon Hardiman	Chief Fire Officer	CFO
Sam Burton	T/Deputy Chief Fire Officer	DCFO
Jason Kirby	Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Service Delivery)	ACFO (SD)
Karen Gowreesunker	Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Corporate Services)	ACFO (CS)
Joanne Coadey	Head of Finance	HoF
Richard Phillips	Clerk and Monitoring Officer	Clerk
Germaine Worker	Head of Human Resources and Administration	HHRA
Lynn Ince	Executive Support Supervisor	ESS

## **1 Apologies for Absence**

Councillor Pardy

## **2 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**

None

## **3 Public Questions**

None

## **4 Fire Authority Non-Exempt Minutes**

**Resolved** that the non-exempt minutes of the Fire Authority meeting, held on 5 December 2024, be agreed, and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

## **5 Standards, Audit and Performance Committee Minutes**

**Resolved** that the minutes of the Standards, Audit and Performance Committee, held on 5 December 2024, be noted.

## **6 Strategy and Resources Committee Non-Exempt Minutes**

**Resolved** that the non-exempt minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee, held on 29 January 2025, be noted and the Committee's recommendations, as set out below, be approved.

### **Item 6 - Financial Performance to December 2024**

**Resolved** that the Fire Authority agree the Committee's recommendation to:

- a) note the position of the revenue budget,
- b) approve virements to the revenue budget, where requested;
- c) Approve amendment to the capital scheme; and
- d) note performance against prudential indicators to date in 2023/24.

### **Item 8- Capital Programmes 2025/26 to 2029/30, Treasury Management Statement and Capital Strategy**

**Resolved** that the Fire Authority agree the Committee's recommendations to:

- a) approve the Capital Strategy for 2025/26 – 2029/30, set out in Appendix A to the report;
- b) recommendation considered in the exempt session,
- c) approve the Treasury Strategy Statement for 2025/26.

### **Item 9 - Adequacy of Reserves and Robustness of Budget**

**Resolved** that the Fire Authority agree the Committee's recommendations of:

- i. the reserves as set out in the appendix to the report; and
- ii. the Treasurer's assurances covering the robustness of the 2025/26 budget and adequacy of its reserves.

## **7 Exclusion of Press and Public**

**Resolved:** Members agreed that, under Section 100(A)(4) the Local Government Act 1972, having been satisfied in all the circumstances of the case that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing this information, that it is formally 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 and 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

## **8 Strategy and Resource Committee Exempt Minutes (Paragraph 3)**

**Resolved** that the exempt minutes of the Strategy and Resources Committee, held on 29 January 2025, be agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

## **9 Capital Programme from 2025/26 (Paragraph 3)**

The Fire Authority received the exempt paper Capital Programmes from 2025/26 (the appendix B to paper 6b) on this agenda.

**Resolved** that the Fire Authority agree to:

- b) confirm the 2025/26 onward programmes, as part of its final precept deliberations.

## **10 Capital Programme from 2025/26 (Paragraph 3)**

This report informed the Authority of an additional scheme to be considered and included in the capital programme for 2025/26.

**Resolved** that the Fire Authority

- a) Approve the inclusion of the scheme in the capital programme; and
- b) Approve the amendments to capital charges to the revenue budget and prudential indicators.

At this point (2.10 pm), all officers, except the Chief Fire Officer, Head of Human Resources and Administration and the Executive Support Supervisor, were excluded from the meeting for the two following items of business.

## **11 Fire Authority Exempt Minutes (Paragraph 3)**

**Resolved** that the exempt minutes of the Fire Authority meeting, held on 5 December 2024, be agreed, and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

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

**Resolved** that the exempt minutes of the Brigade Managers Employment Panel meeting, held on 15 January 2025 be noted.

**At this point (2.15 pm), the meeting reverted to open session and all officers returned to the meeting.**

## **13 Community Risk Management Plan 2025-2028**

This item was deferred to the next meeting of the Fire Authority on 5 March 2025

## **14 Fire Authority 3-Year Strategy 2025-28: Vision and Strategic Goals**

This report, which was presented by the ACFO (CS), set out the Vision and Strategic Goals for the Authority over the next three years and provided Members with an overview and awareness of strategic planning arrangements.

The Authority's Service Plan 2021-25 was published in 2021. The Service Plan is the strategic bridging document between the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP), the Medium-Term Financial Plan and the Annual and Departmental Plans. The Service Plan includes the Service's Vision, Purpose, Core Values and Goals; Corporate Performance Indicators; Three-Year Service Priorities; strategic direction; and its governance, financial planning, strategic planning process and legal requirements.

The Authority's vision statement is 'Making Shropshire Safer' and it is proposed that this remains unchanged for the next three years. The previous six Service Aims have been reviewed as part of the strategic planning process, and these will now be replaced by Strategic Goals that are more future focused, and which enable the Service to deliver against its priorities as detailed in the CRMP 2025-2028. The new proposed Strategic Goals are set out in the table on page 4 of the report.

The Service's Annual Plan will include the internal planning required to ensure the Strategic Goals are met. Officers are currently working on the detail of the Annual Plan aligned to the development of more detailed priorities, along with the supporting departmental plans.

It is proposed that the format of the Annual Plan will continue to contain the following areas of introduction; purpose; goals; core values; corporate performance indicators; and Service priorities. The format and contents of the Annual Plan will be discussed with the CFO and Chair of the Fire Authority prior to it being finalised and published.

The report also asks the Authority to delegate the setting of its Corporate Performance Indicators (CPIs) and associated tolerances to the Strategy and Resources Committee as in previous years. A review of the CPIs is currently being undertaken and any proposals for future change will be brought to the Fire Authority later in this financial year. The intention is that any future changes to the CPIs will provide a sound basis for understanding overall performance against the Authority's 3-Year Strategic Goals.

Members asked if the current Government's devolution agenda was being taken into account as part of its strategic planning. The CFO responded that local government reform and devolution will be a key area for discussion at the Governance Workshops that are being held during February and March.

In response to Members seeking assurance about the monitoring of performance against Service goals, the ACFO (CS) explained that as the strategic goals are quite broad, they have been broken down into priorities and an internal governance framework is being established to monitor progress against these more detailed priorities. This will include quarterly reporting to Standards, Audit and Performance Committee.

Members are pleased that the CPIs are being reviewed and think that careful work will enable the Service to see where it is progressing etc.

**Resolved** that the Fire Authority

- a) Approve the Authority Strategic Vision and Goals, as set out in the report, for the planning period 2025-2028; and
- b) Delegate the setting of corporate performance indicators and tolerances to its Strategy and Resources Committee at its meeting in March 2025.

## **15 Revenue Budget 2025/26**

This report incorporated the recommendations made by Strategy and Resources Committee on 29 January 2025, in relation to the revenue budget for 2025/26. The report also confirmed the use of assumptions for medium-term financial planning.

The HoF presented this report and advised that Members should consider Papers 15 and 16 together.

The Strategy and Resources (S&R) Committee, at its meeting on 23 January 2025, were informed of a number of developments that had occurred since the revenue budget for 2025/26 was last considered

- The Local Government Finance Settlement policy statement was published in October and confirmed that
  - Standalone fire authorities can increase precept by £5 without requiring a referendum
  - Rural Services Delivery Grant, Services Grant and Minimum Funding Guarantee are removed in full
  - A one-off Recovery Grant, based on deprivation, is being introduced although it is unlikely to be distributed to the Authority
  - Local authorities will be compensated in the usual way for the freeze in the small business rates multiplier
  - Support will be provided for increased National Insurance employer contributions costs
- The provisional grant settlement was announced on 18 December 2024 and confirmed the above policy statement announcements
- A total of £515m will be made available to support additional National Insurance Contributions costs, it is likely that the Authority's share will only cover around 50% of the additional costs, therefore an increase of £150k is needed in the revenue budget to cover these costs
- Confirmation of grant to compensate for increases in employer contributions following the 2020 pension schemes valuation has not been received
- Council Tax base was confirmed at £179,538.74, which is an increase of 2.15% on 2024/25

As outlined in the previous report on this agenda, the Service has identified several priority areas to focus on including addressing the Areas for Improvement (AFIs) and Cause of Concern (CoC) identified in His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) inspection report; developing strategic priorities for 2025/26; and undertaking

a review of the Service's structure to enable delivery of the CRMP and strategic priorities.

It is proposed that £250k be allocated within the 2025/26 budget to make the investments required to meet the delivery of identified objectives, with details of this expenditure being reported to the Fire Authority in future financial monitoring reports. There will be a medium-term approach to this investment with some areas being addressed in years 2 and 3 of the planning period. However, the anticipated move to a multi-year settlement from Government from 2026/27 means that this cannot currently be planned with certainty, therefore an indicative amount of £250k for both years 2 and 3 has been included in the report for illustrative purposes.

The table on page 3 of the report is based on a 2.9% precept increase for 2025/26 and future years. S&R Committee, at its meeting on 23 January 2025, were presented with a range of precept increases for consideration, ranging from no increase to a 4.33% increase which is equivalent to £5.

An increase of 2.99% would enable the Authority to cover inflationary pressures but would not service the capital programme or provide any opportunity for growth and investment in the Service or its staff. Aggressive efficiencies would need to be found with any further funds required to balance the budget being found from the Authority's reserves in the short term.

A precept increase of £5, or 4.33%, would be in line with the Government's assumptions used in the Comprehensive Spending Review and would restore some loss of grant income whilst also allowing for some growth and investment to be realised during the first year of the planning period. The actual increase would be set at £4.96 to avoid triggering a referendum process and this is equivalent to a 10p per week increase for a Band D property.

Both Shropshire Council and Telford & Wrekin Council have confirmed their business rates income figures although these are subject to revision in the last two months of the financial year. The combined income from the two authorities is £174k less than the estimated rates income included in the settlement in December. Collection fund balances for council tax and business rates have also been confirmed with surpluses of £333k receivable on Council Tax and £21k receivable on Business Rates.

Section 31 rates related grants have also been confirmed at £38k more than the provisional settlement. However, the element of business grants compensation grant based on top up grant is £110k less than the figures used in the Authority's scenario planning. This is due to a change in the adjustment factor used in calculating the grant and the Authority's planning model has been adjusted to reflect these changes.

The table in section 5 of the report exemplifies two different precept increases; firstly a 2.99% increase which would give deficits and no growth in all three years of the planning period. The second, as recommended by the S&R

Committee, is a precept increase of 4.33%. This would give a surplus in 2025/26, with deficiencies in the following two years but these can be addressed by the Authority.

The Government Finance Settlement is still to be debated by Parliament, and it may be that changes could occur prior to the revenue budget being approved, Members were, therefore, asked to delegate approval of any necessary amendments to the Treasurer, in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Authority.

The table in Section 7 of the report summarises the final budget package for 2025/26 and into the medium term. It is anticipated that the precept increase will reduce to 3% in 2026/27 and 2027/28. Once the revenue budget has been approved, the Medium-Term Financial Plan will be updated to reflect the Authority's position.

Councillor Evans arrived at this point (2.30 pm) and the Clerk advised that he abstain from voting on Agenda Items 15 and 16 as he had not been present whilst those items were debated.

**Resolved unanimously**, with Councillor Evans abstaining, that the Fire Authority

- a) approve a revenue budget for 2025/26 and a forward financial projection to 2027/28, as set out in section 7;
- b) approve the Medium-Term Financial Plan and Reserves Strategy 2025/26 to 2027/28; and
- c) delegate any necessary amendments to the revenue budget and the Medium-Term Financial Plan to the Treasurer, in consultation with the Chair and the Vice Chair.

## **16 Revenue Budget: 2025/26 Precept**

This report sought Fire Authority approval to a budget for 2025/26; Council Tax levels for 205/26; and precepts on billing authorities and related matters.

**Resolved unanimously**, with Councillor Evans abstaining, that the Fire Authority:

- a) approve that a net budget requirement is set at £30,084,060 (calculated in accordance with the provisions of Section 42a of the Local Government Finance Act 1992);
- b) approve a total precept of £21,445,901 to be levied on the billing authorities;
- c) approve a Council Tax, resulting in a basic amount of Council Tax at Band D calculated in accordance with the provisions of the 1992 Act (Section 42b) of £119.45;

- d) approved, under Section 47 of the 1992 Act:
- a. the amount of Council Tax calculated for each category of dwelling in each billing authority's area, as follows:

<b>Band</b>	<b>2025/2026 Council Tax</b>
	£ p
A	79.63
B	92.91
C	106.18
D	119.45
E	145.99
F	172.54
G	199308
H	238.90

- b. the amount calculated (in accordance with Section 48 of the 1992 Act) as payable by billing authorities for 2025/26, as follows:

<b>Council</b>	<b>Precept £</b>
Shropshire Council	14,498,128
Borough of Telford & Wrekin Council	6,947,773
	<hr/> 21,445,901 <hr/>

- e) approve that the Treasurer:
- Issue the necessary precepts and information to the billing authorities in accordance with the provisions of Chapter IV of Part 1 of the 1992 Act and be authorised to make any amendment to the above to reflect the final approved budget, after consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Fire Authority; and
  - Is authorised to make payments required from, and to, reserves and provisions within the approved budget strategy and within the Authority's Financial Regulations, in conjunction with the Chair and Vice-Chair;
- f) approve the revenue budget and pensions account, illustrated in Appendix A, for budgetary control in accordance with approved standing orders, and
- g) approve the schedule of reserves and provisions at Appendix B

The Fire Authority recorded their thanks to the HoF, the Finance Team and Officers for their work on the budget.



## **17 Fire Authority Work Plan 2025/26**

This report reviewed progress against the Fire Authority's 2024/25 Work Plan and put forward a 2025/26 Work Plan for consideration and approval by Members.

Members asked which meetings will receive reports on progress against the HMICFRS CoC and AFIs. The ACFO (CS) explained that the Service Management Team (SMT) are meeting to identify and understand the themes within the Inspection report and there is due to be a SMT workshop this week. Progress will be reported to either Committee or full Fire Authority on a quarterly basis.

**Resolved** that the Fire Authority:

- a) note progress made against the Fire Authority 2024/25 Work Plan, as detailed at paragraph 4 of the report: and
- b) approve the 2025/26 Work Plan (attached at the appendix to the report) subject to the amendment that an HMI progress update will be brought to the Fire Authority on a quarterly basis.

## **18 Amendments to the Pay Policy Statement 2025/26**

This report was presented by HHRA and set out proposed amendments to the Pay Policy Statement for the consideration by the full Authority, as required under the Localism Act 2011 and in accordance with the process agreed by the Fire Authority in February 2012.

Members asked if the publication of the Pay Policy Statement was mandatory for the Fire Authority. The HHRA confirmed that it is under the Localism Act 2011.

Paragraph 2 of the report refers to the review of Brigade Manager pay, and Members questioned what the timeframe for the next review is. The last review of Brigade Manager pay by the Brigade Managers' Employment Panel was done in February 2022. The HHRA explained that it is in the gift of the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) to advise as to when they wish a pay review to be done. The CFO will discuss this with the ELT and bring it back to the Fire Authority. This will also be looked at within the ongoing structural review.

**Resolved** that the Fire Authority:

- a) noted the report; and
- b) agreed the further amendments to the Pay Policy Statement.

## **19 The Scheme for the Payment of Members' Allowances 2024/25**

This report asked the Fire Authority to consider and agree its 2024/25 Scheme for the Payment of Member Allowances.

The HHRA presented this report and advised that the Independent Remuneration Panel's four yearly review of the Fire Authority's Members Allowances Scheme will be carried out later this year.

**Resolved** that the Fire Authority

- a) Note the report; and
- b) Agree that the Scheme for the Payment of Members' Allowances 2024/25, be uprated by 2.5% in line with National Joint Council recommendations, and that this be backdated to take effect from 1 April 2024.

## **20 HMICFRS Progress Report**

This item was deferred to the next meeting of the Fire Authority on 5 March 2025

## **Chair's Notices**

- The Chair reminded Members that a Fire Authority meeting will be held on Wednesday, 5 March 2025, 12 noon, at Headquarters. This will be followed by the second Governance Workshop at 2.00 pm and lunch will be provided for Members.

The meeting closed at 2.50 pm.

**Chair**.....

**Date**.....