**Minutes of the Meeting of**
**Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority**
# Standards, Audit and Performance Committee
**Held in the Oak Room, Headquarters**
**On Thursday, 10 April 2025 at 2.00 pm**

**Present**

**Members**
Councillors Davis, Evans, Hignett and Lea.

**Officers**

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| Simon Hardiman | Chief Fire Officer | CFO |
| Sam Burton | Deputy Chief Fire Officer (Service Delivery) | DCFO |
| Karen Gowreesunker | Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Service Support) | ACFO |
| Germaine Worker | Head of HR and Administration | HHRA |
| Scott Hurford | Head of Transformation and Collaboration | HoTC |
| Andy Groom | HMI Service Liaison Lead | AG |
| Lynn Ince | Executive Support Supervisor | ESS |
| Aleksandra Zydek | Executive Support Officer | ESO |

The CFO introduced Andy Groom from HMI and Councillor David Minnery who joined via MS Teams to observe the meeting.

## 1    Apologies for Absence

Councillor Blundell, Burchett, Overton and Pardy, James Walton (Treasurer), Joanne Coadey (Head of Finance).

## 2    Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

None

## 3    Public Questions

None

## 4    Non-Exempt Minutes

**Resolved**, that the minutes of the Standards, Audit and Performance Committee, held on 11 December 2024, be agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

## 5    Extraordinary Meeting Minutes

**Resolved**, that the minutes of the Extraordinary Standards, Audit and Performance Committee, held on 25 February 2025, be agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

## 6    Code of Corporate Governance 2024/25

This report, presented by the ACFO, gave the Committee an opportunity to make comment on the draft Code of Corporate Governance 2024/25 prior to it going forward to the full Fire Authority for consideration and formal adoption.

The ACFO touched on the background as listed on page one of the report. She noted that the Code has been reviewed in line with the latest CIPFA guidance. The authority will refer to this Code of Corporate Governance when publishing its Annual Governance Statement for 2024/25.

The ACFO noted that the appendix to the report provides high level detail regarding the Service compliance with the code of corporate governance and its principles. She highlighted the areas of update:

1.11 and 1.1.2. were updated to reflect ongoing review of the Fire Authority Governance arrangements. Members questioned if the results of the review are going to be presented at the Authority meeting in June and if Members will have an opportunity to see proposed changes before then. The ACFO noted that at the extraordinary meeting of the Authority later in April a report with broad proposed changes will be presented and if approved more details will follow which will then be brought to June Authority meeting for approval.

1.1.4 was amended to reflect in more detail the process that sits around the review of brigade and authority owned policies. This includes expanding the internal processes.

1.2.1 detail were included around expected behaviours and how this is managed through performance management processes and how themes are monitored and learning applied. The ACFO noted that any learnings are regularly reported and actioned through the People Management Meetings. Members were pleased to see that the Service is working to strengthen those controls. The ACFO reported that more work is underway in current reporting period that was not included on the report due to its retrospective nature.

1.2.2. details were added around the development of the workplace charter and the cultural work undertaken in 2024 which will form the basis of improvement planning this year through the EDI steering group.

1.2.4 detail added around how the Service set expectations for supplier conduct.

1.3.1 detail added in regard to the role of the Data Protection Officer and Senior Information Risk Owner.

1.3.3 detail added to account for how Members report service performance back into councils.

1.3.5 detail added around the whistleblowing policy and code of conduct for members as key authority policies which ensure most appropriate handling of complaints for this section.

The ACFO noted that the Service intends to review the format in which the code and other statutory reports and are prepared and presented for future publications. This will be an area of focus for statutory officers following the review of statutory officer roles.

Members had questions on section 6.1. Managing Risks. The ACFO assured Members that the Corporate Risk Management Summary will be covered as part of item 13 on the agenda. She noted that the Service Risk Register should include strategic risks which is anything that would stop the Authority from delivering the services to communities. An example of such risk would be failure to engage with staff which could conclude in industrial action. The ACFO added that Project Risks should be managed by departments though framework that allows to identify, discuss, monitor and manage those project risks. She noted that project specific risk could develop into strategic risks which would be brought to Authority's attention.

Members questioned which board are the risks looked at. The CFO noted that corporate risk is reported at Performance and Risk Group meetings and programme risks are reported to Service Programme Board

**Resolved** that the Committee

a) comment on the draft Code of Corporate Governance 2024/25, attached as an appendix to this report; and
b) forward the draft Code, without amendments, to the Fire Authority for consideration and formal adoption.

## 7   Statement of Accounts 2024/25: Review of Accounting Policies

This report presented the accounting policies to be used in the production of the Fire Authority's Statement of Accounts 2024/25, for consideration and approval. The report also states the areas of estimation uncertainty to the Committee, and what is done to mitigate the risks around this uncertainty.

The CFO presented this report on behalf of HoF and noted that the accounting policies currently adopted by the Fire Authority have been reviewed in readiness for the completion of the 2024/25 Statement of Accounts; these are attached as an appendix to this report. Proposed additions and changes to the policies are shown in bold italics, and deletions are struck though.

The CFO noted that apart from the changes to the existing policies that reflect the updating of financial years and codes of practice there are no further amendments to be made. He noted that there are two major areas of uncertainty for the Authority are valuation of property plant and equipment, and actuarial valuations of pensions liability.

Members asked if the areas of uncertainty have been agreed with the audit. The CFO noted that audit is still considering those areas. Members noted that given uncertainty of global market the Authority needs to be mindful of how investments may be affected.

**Resolved** that the Committee

a)    approve the accounting policies, prior to the presentation of the Statement of Accounts 2024/25; and
b)    note the risks associated with estimation uncertainty within the financial statements, and how they are mitigated.

## 8      Internal Audit Plan for 2025/26

This report, presented by the CFO, informed the Committee of the proposed internal audit plan for 2025/26.

Following three successful single year agreements with WIASS, the Authority were approached about entering the Shared Services arrangement as a partner working collaboratively and efficiently with others in the region including Alliance partners, Hereford and Worcester FRS. This agreement does not require contract renegotiations and offers the opportunity to shape the nature of internal audit reviews by identifying best practises.

Following Authority's acceptance, the HoF now represents the Authority on this group. The Service will pay the same daily cost for the provision of internal audit as in previous year, with no increase for pay costs at this time.

The DCFO noted that the internal audit is being utilised as additional defence and check for significant areas of work including HMI CoC and AFIs.

**Resolved** that the Committee approve the internal audit plan proposed for 2023/24.

## 9      Review of Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Strategy

This report, presented by the CFO, requested the Committee to recommend that the Fire Authority re-affirm the Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Strategy, following the annual review conducted by officers.

The CFO noted that the Strategy is reviewed annually by officers and the Standards, audit and Performance Committee.

The CFO reported that only minor adjustments were needed as shown in the appendix. The CFO proposed that a reference to The Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Act 2023 is added to the Strategy going forward.

**Resolved** that the Committee agree to recommend that the Fire Authority re-affirm the Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Strategy with amendment that reference to The Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Act 2023 is added.

## 10   Committee Terms of Reference

The ESS gave a verbal update on Standards, Audit and Performance Committee Terms of Reference.

The ESS reported that due to the ongoing governance arrangement review the decision was made to postpone this paper as further changes may be needed.

Members noted that this is a right approach given the significant work on governance arrangements.

**Resolved** that the Committee note the update.

## 11   Review of Member Role Descriptions

The ESS gave a verbal update on the Role Descriptions for the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Standards, Audit and Performance Committee, the Member Champion for Risk Management and Audit and the Fire Authority's Independent Person.

As above, the ESS noted that due to the ongoing governance arrangement review the decision was made to postpone this paper as further changes may be needed.

Members noted that this is a right approach given the significant work on governance arrangements.

**Resolved** that the Committee note the update.

## 12   Annual Governance Statement Improvement Plan 2024/25

This report, presented by the ACFO, summarised the progress made to date against the improvements contained in the Annual Governance Statement Improvement Plan 2024/25.

The ACFO reported that the Statement of Accounts contains, as an appendix, a statement as to how effective the Authority's various systems of internal control have been in governing risks to which the Authority is exposed to. This is known as the Annual Governance Statement. The ACFO added that annual governance statement contains an action plan which identifies how the

Service is seeking to progress and improve a number of systems of internal control. Many of these will form control measures for the Service corporate risks as presented in earlier paper and will support the progression of areas identified in the HMI CoC and AFIs.

The ACFO highlighted to Members the following items in the appendix to the report:

People/ On-call Sustainability- the ACFO noted significant progress took place in past year. Project has now been closed, and any outstanding actions were moved to business as usual and incorporated for planning for current financial year. New banded contracts On-Call were implemented from January 2025 and were largely welcomed by staff.

People/ Fitness support facilities - new fitness equipment has been purchased for all stations. Evaluation of 'fitness pod' is and discussions regarding the remaining 5 'fitness pods are taking place with the interim Tech Services management team.

Members questioned if staff are using the new equipment. The CFO assured Members that the staff are using the facilities and Associate trainer regularly attend stations to provide inductions to staff on new equipment.

Members wanted to know if there set minimum standard in place for fitness equipment. The CFO noted that around 3 years ago the Service committed to a Watt Bike, Treadmill and set of kettle bells with matts. This equipment takes significant amount of space so the 'fitness pod' is being evaluated as a solution to saving space. The CFO noted that the Service keeps exploring ways to add selection of equipment for its staff.

Processes – Automation of the processes is one of the Service Goals for 2025/28 planning period, aligned to the expectations of CRMP. The development of the Digital and Data Strategy in April 2025 will support this as a priority for all areas of the Service. As part of the structure review, it is proposed that there is investment in skills across the Service and in ICT team, as well as investment in the systems to support it. The ACFO noted that the Service needs to also understand how ready staff are to take on new technology and applications. This will be a significant piece of work, and the Service is at the very beginning of this journey.

Systems/ Infrastructure- The Service has now implemented a Managed Detection and Response (MDR) approach to cyber incidents that gives the Service access to a 24/7 Security Operations Centre.

Building Facilities- ongoing delivery of property capital schemes and introducing improvements to station access and security at all SFRS sites. Members asked if a paper is planned to go to June authority meeting. The ACFO noted that a presentation has been delivered to Programme Board, and this was followed with a report presented to SMT. A report will next be delivered to Fire Authority to seek funding approval.

Appliances- proposed reduction in pumping units from three to two and increased investment in water carries are recommended. Final recommendations are pending SMT review to ensure alignment with strategic aims.

Collaboration – Command & Control (C&C) system now estimated to go live for March 2026 which has moved from September 2025, this is likely to be delayed further. The ACFO noted that C&C system is critical system to mobilise staff in most effective way. This project is quite complex but moving as intended. She added that back up fire control is being relocated from Wellington Station to Telford where in the future main Fire Control will be.

Members asked about default back up for Fire Control. The CFO noted that it is H&W FRS. The CFO noted that nationally issues have been experienced with Motorola infrastructure system which will likely be main focus for Motorola causing further delay to new C&C system introduction.

Operations – the CRMP was launched on 1 April 2025.

**Resolved** that the Committee note the progress made on the 2024/25 Annual Governance Statement Improvement Plan.

## 13    Corporate Risk Management Summary

This report, presented by the ACFO, updated Members on the status of risks on the Corporate Risk Register. She noted that these risks have mitigation plans in place and appendix B provides progress where these are being managed.

The ACFO stated that it should be noted as the background details that the format for reporting the Corporate Risk Register was restructured to show both current static risks and dynamic risks. Appendix A is a summary of the Corporate Risk Register and Appendix B covers all details that are captured about each risk on the register with the latest update by the risk owner on their respective risks.

The ACFO asked Members to note that the date that the risk was entered onto the corporate risk register is not relevant if the risk is still deemed to be one that could impact delivery of our strategy and as long as we are still mitigating or managing it effectively.  The ACFO added that the ongoing improvement work in progressing regarding corporate risks and in addressing these areas of our CoC from HMI inspection will be presented later in this meeting.

The ACFO reported that current risk register is still in operation until the end of May. This has been rationalised to ensure only those that are still relevant to the delivery of the Services strategy and CRMP remain. She added that some of these will have been raised some years ago as a risk but will still be relevant today and where needed will be actively mitigated.

The ACFO reported that three risks have been closed on the corporate risk register. Power cuts and outages risks are no longer considered relevant as they have not materialised and no longer present a risk, the risk regarding pensions knowledge has been mitigated. She noted that two risks have been increased (Provision of Information for Management Decision Making and Failure of Primary Contractor, or Failure or Disruption of Supply Chain or Uncontrolled Cost Increases for Critical Goods). The AFI regarding the Service digital and data capacity and capabilities forms part of the Service AFIs and some of the Service key first steps here are ensuring we have a strategy in place to set the direction of travel for developing both investment from a resource and people awareness and skills perspective.

The ACFO noted increase in risk relating to supply chain, which reflects recent changes externally and particularly world events, recent decisions impacting on trade. Once the Service is clearer on the impacts to the Fire Authority suppliers and contracts, this risk may remain where it is or reduce.

The ACFO reported that one risk has been reduced since the last Committee update (reduced availability of On Call due to recruitment and On Call Sustainability project. The new banded contracts have been implemented and are working well.

It has been recognised by the Service and more recently through the inspection process that the risks contained in the corporate risk register were old, progress in managing/mitigating was not clear and the process that sat around the governance of these risks lacked robustness. The corporate risk register review began towards the end of 2024 and section 6 of the report provides an overview of this process which will complete at the end of May.

Members questioned the Learning Management System (LMS) not providing functionality to meet demands of the Service requirements. The DCFO noted that this is being considered as part of Structural Review. The paper is due to be shared with SMT to set appropriate budget for review of LMS in 2025-26. The DCFO noted this will not take a form of usual Business Case but rather a holistic review.

Members were pleased to see the On Call Sustainability risk decreasing. The DCFO commended Service Deliver AM on the work he has done on this and assured Members that a review will be done at appropriate time. The DCFO noted very good On Call Availability over past months and no immediate impact of introduction of banded contracts.

**Resolved** that the Committee note the contents of the report.

At this point the ACFO presented Members with slides updating them on the progress of the Corporate Risk Register review. She noted the CoC:

*The service doesn't have adequate processes, controls or internal governance arrangements in place to manage strategic risks, performance and improvement plans.*

The ACFO reported that the Service needs to use the corporate risk register is actively to mitigate and manage known risks.

The ACFO identified the following issues:
- Review and refresh the corporate risks and register
- Staff and member training to understand:
    - What is a corporate risk,
    - What can trigger them,
    - What control measures we have in place
- Align the Corporate Risk Policy (Brigade Order) to the new approach
- Refresh method to present corporate risks to Member

The ACFO noted progress so far which includes:
- The Service approach to the recording and management of corporate risk is currently under review – to be completed by the end of May 2025
- Embedding understanding and awareness of corporate risk across the Strategic Management Team and Members through focused information awareness, and training sessions. Completed.
- Review of current corporate risk register to ensure currency of the information being reported. Completed.
- Mapping new corporate risks – 2 SMT workshops (March and May 2025), with: Draft risks identified aligned to the delivery of the Service Plan 2025/28. In progress
- The policy, risks register and reporting process to the Authority in review to align to new corporate risks

The ACFO then moved to show Members the draft risks identified with support from Zurich as presented on slides 6 to 11. She noted that recently Zurich has delivered risk workshops to Members of the Authority.

Members noted they were grateful for the training, and it gave them good overview of what risks they needed to be looking out for. The ACFO noted that suggestion to look at risks thematically that was made by Members in the training session was taken under consideration when draft register was created.

The ACFO noted that next steps include:
- Finalise Corporate Risks, triggers and control measures
- Align to new corporate risk register
- Approval of Corporate Risks and approach will be presented at the June 2025 committee meeting.

Members were pleased with the direction of travel taken when revieing the register. They noted they would like to see a dashboard to offer them a snapshot of how risks have changes over time. This would be particularly valuable to new members joining the Authority.  Members would also like to see the 3/3 table expanded to give better indication on risks status.

The DCFO added that it is important the Service looks at interdependencies between departments when looking at risks and track those going forward. The DCFO noted

that work on CPI review will be critical in identifying some of those interdependencies and keeping the Service on track

Members will be interested in seeing updates on how this work develops.

## 14 Performance Monitoring

## 14a Corporate Performance Indicators including On Call Duty System Performance – April to December 2024 (Quarter 3)

This report presented a summary of the Service's performance from April to December 2024.

The HoTC presented this report and gave the following narratives for each CPI:

### CPI 1 – All Fires - 746
The HoTc noted that analysis has shown that when the reporting period is broken down, performance is within tolerance in October, November and December. This is due to a significant decrease in the number of primary and chimney fires attended by the Service. The success of this has been due to extra patrolling, schools and social media Prevention activity.

### CPI 2 – Accidental Dwelling Fires (ADFs) - 129
The cumulative total for ADFs for the reporting period is 129, which is a 14.6% decrease on the same period last year (151).

The top two causes of these fires were faulty appliances / leads and misuse of equipment / appliances. Of positive note is that 89.7% of these fires were confined to room of origin and 94.8% had smoke alarms fitted in the property.

### CPI 3 Deliberate Fires - 192
In quarter 3 there is an increase in the number of deliberate fires with significant increases seen in months November and December. During October and December, although there are only small increases, the figures were impacted by 2 separate patterns of arson in Market Drayton.

The Prevention Team continues to work with crews and partners to identify hot spots, and the Service's Arson Crime Officers enable close links with Police colleagues to be created with shared intelligence driving activity. There is no specific area profile where fires have occurred, and there is a continued decline in the number of gang related arson incidents involving vehicles.

### CPI 4 - Fire Related Deaths and Serious Injuries
There have been no deaths in this quarter but unfortunately there has been 4 serious injuries, 3 in October and 1 in December. There has been a total of 8 injuries year to date which compared to the same period last year is an increase of 3 injuries.

When analysing the incident types, all four are recorded as accidental.

**CPI 5 – Fires Confined to Room of Origin – 88.9%**
Year to date 11.1% of fires have not been confined to room of origin. Of the 4 domestic fires not confined to room of origin this quarter, one was caused by combustibles within a wheelie bin, three were related to overheating of electrical appliances.

**CPI 6 – Injuries sustained to Staff through Operational Activity**
The figures provided in the table above show a total of 15 injuries to staff from operational activity during the reporting period, which is in line with the same period last year.

Out of the 3 injuries recorded during Q3, none were RIDDOR reportable due to being below 7-day absence events.

**CPI 7 – Response Standard monitored against Urban, Town & Fringe and Rural Categories – 93%**
At the end of December 2024, the average Response Standard was 93%, which compares to the average Response Standard of 94% achieved at the same period last year.

During Q3 there were 20 occasions where the response standard target was not achieved, 5 in October, 7 in November and 8 in December. There is no overall pattern, half were due to access issues or travel distance.

**CPI 8 – Fires in Regulated Buildings –84%**
In Q3 3 out of 22 incidents were reported as agricultural and 2 are attributed to being chimney fires which do not come under The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 therefore the total this quarter should be seen as 17. Which is down by 10 compared to the same Quarter in the previous year.

**CPI 9 – Diversity, Establishment and Firefighter Competence**
There has been little movement in categories since the last report. There has been two on-call recruits course that has started during this period and an overall increase in headcount due to retirements and leavers from the Service – whilst some of the headcount has stayed the same, the percentages have increased due to the overall numbers of employees decreasing.

For competencies the Service remains close to targets, reasons for individuals falling out of certification and competency included the fact that individuals may currently be away from the workplace due to long term absence or working modified duties, whilst completing a workup plan to return to full operational capability. Others have courses booked.

**On Call System Performance**
The HoTC noted that the Service On Call System Performance remines one of the strongest in the country. Special mention to Church Stretton remaining 100% availability. The HoTC added that stations with reduced availability have action plans in place to address the causes of the issues.

Members thanked HoTC for the update and questioned for CPI 6 what learning has been taken from the injuries. The CFO noted that every accident is followed by an investigation which looks for a cause of accident and preventing them moving forward. This sits with H&S Officer and includes not only accidents but also near misses.

Members questioned missing commentary on 4 missed response targets for CPI 7. The HoTC noted that missed response time triggers additional questions that have not been answered by crews. The Area Command is chasing up the stations to provide the narrative. The HoTC noted he will be happy to share it with Members if they would like once this has been received.

**Resolved** that the Committee note the report.

## 14b  Review of Corporate Performance Indicators and Proposed Tolerances for 2025/26

This report presented the agreed Corporate Performance Indicators (CPIs) for 2025/26, as approved by the Strategy and Resources Committee at its meeting on 20 March 2025.  The report also included the data provided to the Committee to inform its decision making.

The HoTC presented this report and gave the following proposals for each CPI:

**CPI 1 – All Fires**
The recommendation is to maintain 5% tolerance.

**CPI 2 – Accidental Dwelling Fires (ADFs)**
The recommendation is to maintain 10% tolerance.

**CPI 3 Deliberate Fires**
The recommendation is to maintain 7% tolerance

**CPI 4 - Fire Related Deaths and Serious Injuries**
It is recommended that the Service continue to report on each occurrence in the form of a narrative report.

**CPI 5 – Fires Confined to Room of Origin**
The recommendation is to maintain a 2% tolerance.

**CPI 6 – Injuries sustained to Staff through Operational Activity**
It is recommended that the Service continue to report on each occurrence in the form of a narrative report.

**CPI 7 – Response Standard monitored against Urban, Town & Fringe and Rural Categories**
Through consultation as part of the production, adoption, and implementation of the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) 2021-25, a revised response standard was agreed and split across three distinct areas: urban,

Town and Fringe, and Rural. The proposal is for the Service to continue to monitor against these 3 areas as separate measures and report to Standards, Audit and Performance Committee, comparing each one independently against the figure of 85%.

**CPI 8 – Fires in Regulated Buildings**
The recommendation is to maintain a 7% tolerance.

**CPI 9 – Diversity, Establishment and Firefighter Competence**
There is no tolerance level attached to this CPI, however there is an attainment rate of 90% against each skill set.

Members questioned which CPI covers the garden fires. The CFO explained that they are covered by CPI 1 All Fires. Members questioned if the Service has seen any increase in fires since the Garden Waste Collection in Shopshire became a paid service. The CFO reported that if Members remember back to Covid lockdowns where the recycling centres were closed the Service has seen slight increase in fires during that period. He noted that it would not be surprising to see a similar trend with paid Garden Waste Collections. He noted that this will be monitored through Performance and Risk Group meetings. The HoTC added that another potential for increase in deliberate fires (arson) goes in hand with increase in fly tipping. The CFO noted that crews often patrol rural areas and report fly tipping sites to local authorities.

Members asked if about spontaneous combustion numbers in the area. The HoTC noted that this is a rural risk around periods of low humidity. The CFO reported that following baled hay catching fire last year the Service run a big communication campaign on this issue, and this remains on the Services radar.

Members were pleased to note that a low tolerance is set for CPI 5 Fires contained to the room of origin and noted positive feedback from public around Safe and Well visits and Prevention & Protection activity.

The DCFO updated Members on progress of CPI review and stated that it is a critical step in ensuring alignment with evolving risks and community needs. The HMICFRS report on SFRS in 2024 highlighted the necessity of reassessing CPIs, as a comprehensive review has not occurred for a considerable period. With changing risk profiles in communities, there is a need for more aspirational targets that drive a positive trajectory in reducing risk and vulnerability across Shropshire. The review will also include an assessment of a range of CPIs across the service and corporate health indicators to track progress and support the development of delivery models.

The DCFO reported that the objective of the review is to:
- Align CPIs with the strategic priorities outlined in the Service Plan 2025-2028.
- Ensure CPIs reflect efficiency, effectiveness, and service delivery improvements.

- Develop appropriate corporate health indicators to support organisational effectiveness.
- Enhance data-driven decision-making for operational and strategic performance management.

The DCFO noted that key considerations for the review are:
- Performance trends from Performance Reports.
- Strategic Goals (2025-2028).
- Recommendations from the HMICFRS Inspection Report 2023-2025.
- Alignment with the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP).
- Feedback from the Service Management Team, Performance and Risk Group, and Strategy and Resources Committee.
- Identification of data.
- Integration of digital tools for data collection and reporting.

The DCFO noted that key areas of focus:
- Operational Response: Response times, incident resolution efficiency, firefighter safety, call handling.
- Prevention & Protection: Community engagement, fire safety visits, prevention and protection effectiveness, reduction in vulnerability (community and business)
- People: Training and development, diversity and inclusion, leadership development.
- Resource Management: Financial efficiency, asset utilisation, sustainability initiatives, non-pay costs.
- Digital & Data Management: Implementation of technology-driven performance monitoring and reporting.

The DCFO informed Members that the next steps include:
- Establish a working group to oversee CPI review and implementation.
- Engage with key stakeholders to ensure alignment and relevance.
- Regularly report progress to the Strategy and Resources Committee, Fire Authority, and SMT.

The DCFO reported that the Service is currently working to deep dive into data held for various areas and work to develop framework and mapping dependencies between areas of work. The DCFO added that the proposed approach will then be presented to the Authority and if approved the Service will implement a trial of new CPIs.

This structured review and implementation plan will ensure that SFRS maintains a strong performance management framework that supports strategic goals, drives continuous improvement, and enhances service delivery for the communities it serves.

Members commented that the Service moving in that direction is right. It gives a level of transparency and opportunity to really scrutinise the data. Members are cautious that the Service can measure various things but what is important that the data they presented with has value and is relevant.

The DCFO reported that updating CPIs needs to take into consideration measuring the Service performance against the Service Strategy and CRMP.

Members questioned if a timeline is available for this work and if any deadlines have been set. The DCFO noted that Members can expect broad proposal to be presented at the next Committee meeting.  The DCFO reported that this worked is planned for next 12-months and links with CoC and AFIs work that will be presented as part of next report on the agenda for this meeting. Members thanked DCFO for the update.

**Resolved** that the Committee:

a)  Note the report and acknowledge the work undertaken to determine the Corporate Performance Indicators for 2025/26.

## 14c  HMICFRS Inspection 2024: Cause of Concern and Areas for Improvement Update

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

The HoTC reported that the Service was inspected by HMICFRS in the summer of 2024 and the subsequent Inspection Report, published in November 2024 identified
* One Cause of Concern (CoC), comprising five key elements.
* 30 Areas for Improvement (AFIs) requiring service-wide enhancements.

In response, SFRS has developed a comprehensive action plan to address these issues and drive sustained improvements. The HoTC noted that the Service has adopted a structured, collaborative approach to addressing the findings of the inspection.  Lessons learned from previous AFIs following the 2021 inspection were reviewed, ensuring a more informed response.  Key elements of the approach include:

* Stakeholder engagement – Consulting with staff, Fire Authority Members, HMICFRS, the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC), and neighboring fire services to refine governance and oversight mechanisms.
* Enhanced governance structure – Strengthening scrutiny at all levels through increased engagement between the Senior Management Team (SMT) and operational leads.
* Strategic risk management – Embedding a proactive, service-wide risk assessment framework to ensure early identification of challenges.
* Capacity and resource planning – Assessing and addressing resourcing needs to ensure successful implementation of improvements.

The HoTC reported that following the 2024 HMICFRS inspection, the Cause of Concern identified weaknesses in strategic risk management, performance oversight, and governance. In response, an action plan was established, addressing five key areas. Each of those areas has a strategic owner responsible. This action plan was shared with the Fire Authority in December 2024.

The HoTC reported that for Governance and Risk Management 3 out of 23 objectives are now complete and noted the following progress to date:
- Recruitment for a Portfolio Manager is underway to strengthen strategic governance.
- Review of the Service structure is nearing completion and went to SMT for approval today.
- The introduction of member champions to lead Fire Authority scrutiny of Service improvements and ongoing activity.

Councillor Davis was put forward to be a Members Champion and he reiterated that it is incumbent on all staff and Members alike to ensure the areas are progressed. He also noted his satisfaction with the Service direction of travel. The Chair of the Committee thanked Councillor Davis for his involvement in this piece of work.

The HoTC reported that for Corporate Risk Management 2 out of 5 objectives are now complete and noted the update was provided as part of papers earlier on the agenda.

The HoTC reported that for Service Planning, Performance and Leadership Development 5 out of 15 objectives are now complete and noted the approval of the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP), strategy, and budget has strengthened alignment between planning and strategic objectives.

The HoTC reported that for Digital and Data Strategy 4 out of 13 objectives are now complete and noted:

- A draft Digital and Data Strategy is in development with resource and capacity requirements assessed.
- A skills gap analysis has informed workforce planning and ICT resourcing

The HoTC reported that for Financial Governance and Statutory Oversight, all 5 objectives are progressing concurrently to meet the deadline and noted the following progress to date:

- A Project Management Office (PMO) has been included as part of the Service Structure review and a portfolio manager position advertised to enhance financial governance and reporting.
- The role of the Deputy Chief Fire Officer has been approved, strengthening leadership capacity.
- A review is underway to enhance statutory officer engagement in strategic management and FRA arrangements to support scrutiny and oversight.

The HoTC then moved to Areas for Improvement and noted iimplementation of a new strategic approach which includes:

- Establishing ownership and oversight – Responsible leads have been assigned to each AFI to identify common themes, provide day to day progress, and prioritise actions effectively.

- Identifying key themes – A review of the 30 AFIs has highlighted that the majority are linked to culture, workforce planning, evaluation, organisational assurance, risk management, and data quality.

- Prioritising key improvements – Strategic leads are now progressing 20 areas for improvement, in conjunction with addressing the cause of concern raised in the inspection.

- Breaking down AFIs into manageable objectives – Each of the 30 AFIs has been further broken down into 168 specific objectives within the action plan. This structured approach enhances resource allocation and helps to identify where additional support may be required from other teams or external partners to achieve the necessary improvements.

- Enhancing tracking and risk management – To monitor progress, collate evidence, and identify risks at an early stage, the Service is utilising Microsoft Teams and MS Planner as part of a digital solution. Staff are receiving training on these platforms, with support provided by experienced personnel.

- Identifying and managing risks – The process includes a proactive approach to identifying any emerging risks or urgent issues that require immediate action.

- Ensuring alignment with broader strategic objectives – AFI actions are being integrated with the structural review, Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP), and current vacancies, ensuring a joined-up approach to service improvement.

- Developing AFI product packs – Each AFI has a product pack containing key information, best practice examples, and guidance obtained through collaboration with the NFCC, other fire and rescue services, and national fire standards. These packs will provide a framework for success metrics, offer external stakeholder support, and highlight innovative approaches to improvement.

The HoTC added that governance and scrutiny processes have been revised, ensuring oversight and accountability for AFIs) and the CoC. Progress meetings align with the SMT cycle, with four-weekly updates providing structured evidence gathering, monitoring, and scrutiny.

Microsoft Office suite, such as MS Teams and MS Planner streamline tracking and communication, with a dedicated Teams channel in place. Awareness sessions have been delivered to support effective use.

The HoTC highlighted three main risks as listed in section 8 of the report. Members acknowledged that the workload balance will be significant in avoiding risk of delays in progress.

Councillor Davis thanked HoTC and DCFO who took time to take him through the process in place which was great to see. Members commented on capacity needed to deliver the plan and noted the significant amount of work undertaken in small amount of time. Members were pleased with the progress. Members remarked that the Fire Authority can offer support with capacity.

The HoTC has presented to Members MS Planner that was set up to gather evidence on the progress. He also noted the service has developed a Power-Bi tool to monitor progress. Each objective owner gives progress summary on 4-weekly basis. The HoTC noted that there is a plan to make the dashboard available to Members and public in the future.

Members asked HMI Liaison Lead if he was able to provide a comment on progress the Service has made so far. AG noted that he is in regular contact with the Service and is aware of progress the Service is doing on CoC and AFIs. He noted a revisit from HMICFRS has been booked for end of July 2025 to check on the progress. AG noted that what has been shared in today's meeting looks promising and its positive the Service has involved the stakeholders in the process. He noted that there is a variety of other activity taking place within the Service. Those improvements will holistically make positive change to organisation.

Members thanked AG for full and frank response and noted that the Authority would like to build positive relationship with inspection team. Members will await the feedback post July 2025 visit. AG commented that he is unable to give a detailed judgment, but the amount of work presented at today's meeting is impressive.

**Resolved** that the Committee note the report.

At this point the meeting was temporarily adjourned for a comfort break.

## 14d  HMICFRS Standards of Behaviour: The Handling of Misconduct in Fire and Rescue Services: Progress Report

This report presented the Service progress against the recommendations made to the sector in the His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) Standards of behaviour: The handling of misconduct in the fire and rescue services report.

The ACFO presented this report and noted upon the receipt of the report the Service immediately carried out a gap analysis which formed the basis of the Service Action Plan. The Service is committed to implementing the recommendations prioritising those that are currently within its gift and continues to work proactively to meet the HMICFRS recommendations.

The ACFO gave the following narrative against 15 recommendations:

**Recommendation 12** is completed. Existing support in place to meet this recommendation includes Line managers, Welfare officers, TRIM, Occupational Health, Counselling, Psychiatric support, Health and Wellbeing tile. The Welfare officer role is detailed and in place in the Disciplinary Process.

Recent communication to the workforce has raised awareness of the offer of welfare support/channels of support.

A published review of disciplinary process includes a review of support in place and Welfare Officers role.

A review of Welfare Officer training has resulted in an updated welfare officer training module for line managers.

A review of the occupational health provision has resulted in a procurement process to tender for an occupational health provider. This will be provided by Health Partners from 1st April 2025.

**Recommendation 5** is completed. To meet the recommendation the Whistleblowing policy has been updated. A review of the SaySo confidential reporting line has also taken place, resulting in enhanced contract meetings and increased raising of awareness of this provision for staff.

Existing evidence includes the Grievance policy and current provision for raising concerns through line management.

As well as wider communications to the workforce, specific communications within support sessions are programmed.

The HR team are currently reviewing additional alternatives for staff to raise concerns.

**Recommendation 8** is completed. Existing evidence to meet this recommendation includes the Disciplinary process. Following a comprehensive review this policy has been updated and published to further align to ACAS guidance.

**Recommendation 13** is completed. To meet this recommendation a review of disciplinary policy (which includes the appeals process) against ACAS guidance has confirmed that the appeals process is appropriate. All appeals against dismissal will be reviewed by the Chief Fire Officer and the Fire Authority's Independent Person.

A training review for staff required to support and hear appeals has been conducted, this has resulted in enhanced provision of training for authority members and the appropriate Officers.

**Recommendation 1** is in progress to meet this recommendation many of our policies now make reference to and incorporate the Core Code of Ethics and Workplace Charter.

To further progress work towards completion of this recommendation includes ongoing work within EDI steering group to further develop employee engagement/ communication. The Human Resources team are also reviewing best practice of Greater Manchester FRS, Inclusive Culture training highlighted by the NFCC.

A mapping exercise has also been completed to cross map the cultural action plan, staff survey and HMICFRS thematic report. As a result of discussions Lynchpin and FutureWorks delivered presentations to EDI Steering Group.

Members questioned if the update on this work expected at the next Committee meeting in June. The ACFO confirmed that the update will be provided at the next meeting.

**Recommendation 2** is in progress. To meet this recommendation the Performance Management Brigade Order has been completely reviewed with regards to the overall process and best practice to ensure a clear, robust and transparent procedure. This has been distributed for discussion within the HR team to ensure wider HR professional input before following the usual internal process. The HR team has also sent comms to line managers to ensure training is provided.

To further progress work towards completion of this recommendation includes the administration and union review of policy updates.

**Recommendation 4** is in progress. The previous contract with an external consultant has ended, further exploration around professional standards approach is being reviewed. To further progress this work the ACFO has developed a broad outline statement for the oversight cases.

**Recommendation 6** is completed. To meet this recommendation there are performance management and disciplinary policies in place. This has been reviewed to clarify the role of HR Services in helping managers to deal with staff concerns and misconduct issues.

These policies have also been reviewed, resulting in the production of a gap analysis of training for all supervisors and managers.

Critical Management Conversations training course have been programmed for completion in 2025 to facilitate performance management and handling difficult conversations.

Welfare and Conducting Investigations (including absence management) Officers training programmed in 2025.

To further progress work towards completion of this recommendation includes the administration and union review of policy updates.

**Recommendation 15** is in progress. To meet this recommendation the HR team has confirmed that learning from misconduct is already captured and discussed as part of the exempt session for People Management Meeting.

Information is shared with HMICFRS team periodically so that they have the most up to date information on our case management.

The HR team are awaiting the development of a national system for sharing learning.

To further progress towards the completion of this recommendation, work includes, programmed further discussion by SMT members regarding how to capture learning from misconduct cases to improve the process.

Members wanted to know who sits on a Hearing Panel mentioned in the Recommendation 13 "B*y 1 November 2024, fire and rescue authorities and chief fire officers should consider varying the approach to hearing appeals so that appeals for complex or serious cases are heard by a panel rather than one person.*"  The CFO assured Members that dismissal appeals are heard by panel of the CFO, Fire Authority's Independent Person and HHRA who gives policy direction. There also may be HR officer present to take notes.

**Resolved** that the Committee note the report.

## Standards
## 15a  Ethical Standards Framework

The Officers gave a verbal update on the review of ethical framework matters.

As above, the ESS noted that due to the ongoing governance arrangement review the decision was made to postpone this paper as further changes may be needed.

**Resolved that** the Committee noted the update

## 15b  Code of Conduct Complaints 2024/25

**Resolved** that the Committee note that, whilst not a legal requirement, it is good practice for Members to receive regular updates on Code of Conduct complaints, even if there have been none.  The ESO reported that, during the period 2024/25, the Fire Authority had received no complaints that any of its Members had breached its Code of Conduct

**Member Development**
## 16      Member Development 2024/25 and 2025/26

The ESS verbally updated the Committee on Member development activity over the past year and proposed training and development activity for the year April 2025 to March 2026.

As above, the ESS noted that due to the ongoing governance arrangement review the decision was made to postpone this paper as further changes may be needed.

**Resolved** that the Committee noted the update.

**Pension Board**
## 17      11 December 2024

**Resolved** that the Committee noted the minutes of the Pension Board meeting, held on 11 December 2024.

## 18      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 paragraph 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 12a to the Local Government Act 1972

## 19      Corporate Risk Management Summary (Paragraph 4)

**Resolved** that the Committee noted exempt Appendix C to report 13 – Corporate Risk Management Summary

The meeting closed at 4.39 pm.

Chair  _____

Date  _____