

DEVON & SOMERSET FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY

29 September 2021

Present:

Councillors Randall Johnson (Chair), Best, Biederman, Bown, Brazil, Dr. Buchan, Chesterton, Clayton, Coles, Corvid, Drean, Healey MBE, Long, Napper, Parker-Khan, Peart, Radford, Roome, Scott, Shayer and Thomas (Vice-Chair).

Apologies:

Councillors Hannaford, Prowse, Redman and Vijeh.

DSFRA/21/15 Minutes

a Authority Annual Meeting 29 June 2021

The Minutes of the Authority Annual Meeting held on 29 June 2021 were signed as a correct record.

b Authority Ordinary Meeting 29 June 2021

The Minutes of the Authority Ordinary Meeting held on 29 June 2021 were signed as a correct record.

DSFRA/21/16 Minutes of Committees

a People Committee

The Chair of the Committee, Councillor Bown, **MOVED** the Minutes of the meeting held on 23 July 2021 which had considered, amongst other things:

- appointments to the Internal Disputes Resolution Panel;
- future scrutiny arrangements for the Committee;
- a progress report on the Service People Strategy;
- an update on firefighter annual fitness testing; and
- the annual Diversity and Recruitment report 2020.

RESOLVED that the Minutes be adopted in accordance with Standing Orders.

b Community Safety Committee

The Chair of the Committee, Councillor Chesterton, **MOVED** the Minutes of the meeting held on 26 July 2021 which had considered, amongst other things:

- future scrutiny arrangements for the Committee;
- a report on match-funding for domestic fire suppression systems; and
- development of the Community Risk Management Plan.

The Authority Chair advised that the recommendation at Minute CR/21/3 (Match funding of Domestic Sprinklers), together with the item later on the agenda for this meeting on a proposed amendment to Financial Regulations, had been deferred pending development of a policy to address match-funding of domestic fire suppression systems. This would be submitted to a future meeting.

RESOLVED that the Minutes be adopted in accordance with Standing Orders.

(See also Minutes DSFRA/21/18 and DSFRA/21/21 below)

c Audit & Governance Committee

The Chair of the Committee, Councillor Healey MBE, **MOVED** the Minutes of the meeting held on 30 July 2021 which had considered, amongst other things:

- a report on the Authority Financial Statements for the 2020-21 financial year;
- interim audit findings on the Authority's 2020-21 Financial Statements;
- an internal audit report for the 2020-21 financial year;
- an internal audit progress report for the first quarter of the 2021-22 financial year;
- the Local Pension Board Annual Report 2020-21; and
- a report on application of the Authority's policy in relation to the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA) 2000.

RESOLVED that the Minutes be adopted in accordance with Standing Orders.

(See also Minute DSFRA/21/19 below).

d Resources Committee Public Minutes

The Chair of the Committee, Councillor Peart, **MOVED** the public Minutes of the meeting held on 9 September 2021 which had considered, amongst other things:

- a report on Treasury Management performance during the first quarter of the current (2021-22) financial year;
- a report on Service financial performance during the first quarter of the current (2021-22) financial year;
- proposed revisions to the Capital Programme 2021-22 to 2023-24 (note: the proposed revisions were summarised in an appendix to the Minutes);
- the Reserves Strategy 2021-22 (note: a copy of the Strategy, as initially considered by the Committee, was included with the agenda for this meeting);
- future scrutiny arrangements for the Committee; and
- a report on the financial performance of Red One Ltd. during the first quarter of the current (2021-22) financial year.

RESOLVED

- (i). that the recommendations at Minutes RC/21/3 (Revision to Capital Programme 2021-22 to 2023-24) and RC/21/4 (Reserves Strategy 2021-22) be approved; and
- (ii). that, subject to (i) above, the Minutes be adopted in accordance with Standing Orders.

(See also Minute DSFRA/21/24 below)

DSFRA/21/17 Authority Governance Processes

In accordance with Standing Order 21, Councillor Brazil had requested an item included on the agenda for this meeting as follows:

“Following the Authority’s AGM in June and the appointment of Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Committees and, subsequently, the appointment of Authority Member non-executive directors to the Board of Red One Ltd., the Authority should debate the operation of its governance arrangements and also the direction in which the Authority is moving”.

Councillors Brazil, Biederman, Long, Dr. Buchan and Roome spoke to this item and expressed views that, with appointments to senior positions (e.g. Committee Chairs etc.) going to the majority political party, the Authority no longer seemed as collegiate as in previous years and that this could have a detrimental effect.

DSFRA/21/18 Development of Community Risk Management Plan - Proposals for Authority Engagement

The Authority considered a report of the Chief Fire Officer (DSFRA/21/20) on the requirement for the Authority to have a Community Risk Management Plan (formerly Integrated Risk Management Plan) and on proposals to secure full Member engagement in development of a draft Plan prior to public consultation.

RESOLVED

- (a). that the Authority meeting initially scheduled for 15 December 2021 be held at 10.00hours on 10 November 2021 to enable a draft Community Risk Management Plan to be approved for public consultation purposes;
- (b). that the remaining proposals as detailed in report DSFRA/21/2 for Authority engagement in development of the draft Plan be endorsed.

DSFRA/21/19 Statement of Accounts 2020-21

The Authority considered a report of the Treasurer (DSFRA/21/21) to which was appended the Authority’s Statement of Accounts for the financial year ended 31 March 2021.

The Accounts & Audit Regulations 2015 required the Accounts to be approved (following a public inspection period) by 30 September 2021.

The Regulations also required the Accounts to be published, together with the external auditor's final findings, by the same date. The external auditor had not been able to issue its final findings, however, as information was still awaited in relation to the audit of the Local Government Pension Scheme. Consequently, as provided for by the Regulations, it would be necessary to publish a notice to this effect and stating that the Statement of Accounts and final audit findings would be published as soon as the latter was available.

RESOLVED

- (a). that the Authority's Statement of Accounts 2020-21 as appended to report DSFRA/21/21 be approved;
- (b). that the Treasurer be authorised to publish a notice, in accordance with Regulation 10(2) of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 (as amended) advising that it is not possible to publish the final Statement of Accounts by 30 September 2021 and that these will be published as soon as practicable following receipt of the external auditor's final findings.

(See also Minute DSFRA/16(c) above and Minute DSFRA/20 below).

DSFRA/21/20 2020-21 Annual Statement of Assurance (FINAL)

The Authority considered a report of the Director of Governance & Digital Services (DSFRA/21/22) to which was appended the final Statement of Assurance for 2020-21.

The Accounts & Audit Regulations 2015 (as amended), together with the Fire & Rescue National Framework for England, required each fire and rescue authority to produce an annual statement of assurance on financial, governance and operational matters. Although primarily backward looking, the Statement also features an action plan to address, in the forthcoming financial year, any issues identified as part of the review process.

The draft Statement had been approved in principle by the then Audit & Performance Review Committee on 5 March 2021 after which it had been submitted to the external auditors alongside the Authority's Statement of Accounts for 2020-21. Comments received from the external auditors had been addressed as part of the final Statement now presented.

RESOLVED that the final Annual Statement of Assurance 2020-21 as appended to report DSFRA/21/22 and required to accompany the Statement of Accounts 2020-21 be approved and published on the Authority's website.

(See also Minute DSFRA/21/19 above).

DSFRA/21/21 Amendment to Financial Regulations

Note: this item was deferred by the Chair to a future meeting pending production of a policy framework for the match-funding of domestic fire suppression systems.

(See also Minute DSFRA/21/16(b) above).

DSFRA/21/22 Resources Committee Terms of Reference and Committee Appointments

The Authority considered a report of the Director of Governance & Digital Services (DSFRA/21/24) on:

- a proposed revision to the Terms of Reference for the Resources Committee on responsibility for assisting in development and subsequent monitoring of the Service Environmental Strategy; and
- vacancies on the Resources Committee resulting from the appointment of Authority Member non-executive directors to the Board of Red One Ltd.

RESOLVED

- (a). that the Terms of Reference of the Resources Committee be amended as indicated in paragraph 1.4 of report DSFRA/21/24;
- (b). that the following appointments be made, the term of office to be until the Authority Annual Meeting in 2022:
 - (i). Councillors Chesterton and Thomas to the vacancies on the Resources Committee;
 - (ii). Councillor Shayer to replace Councillor Thomas on the Audit & Governance Committee.

DSFRA/21/23 Exclusion of the Press and Public

RESOLVED that, in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A (as amended) to the Act, namely information relating to the financial and business affairs of any particular person, including the authority holding that information.

DSFRA/21/24 Resources Committee 9 September 2021 Restricted Minutes

(An item taken in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 during which the press and public were excluded from the meeting).

(Councillors Radford and Shayer each declared a personal, non-pecuniary interest in this item by virtue of being Authority-appointed non-executive directors to the Board of Red One Ltd. Councillors Radford and Shayer both left the meeting and took no part in the decision on the item).

The Chair of the Committee, Councillor Peart, **MOVED** the restricted Minutes of the meeting held on 9 September 2021 which had considered a report on the financial performance of Red One Ltd. for the first quarter of the current (2021-22) financial year.

RESOLVED that the restricted Minutes be adopted in accordance with Standing Orders.

(See also Minute DSFRA/21/16(d) above).

The Meeting started at 10.00 am and finished at 10.50 am