



DEVON & SOMERSET FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY

**S.J. Sharman
CLERK TO THE AUTHORITY**

**To: The Chair and Members of the Devon &
Somerset Fire & Rescue Authority**

(see below)

**SERVICE HEADQUARTERS
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Our ref : DSFRA/SJS/
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Date : 1 December 2023
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DEVON & SOMERSET FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY

Monday, 11th December, 2023

A meeting of the Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Authority will be held on the above date, **commencing at 10.00 am in The Committee Rooms, Somerset House, Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service Headquarters, Exeter** to consider the following matters.

S.J. Sharman
Clerk to the Authority

A G E N D A

PLEASE REFER TO THE NOTES AT THE END OF THE AGENDA LISTING SHEETS

1 Apologies

2 Minutes

a Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting held on 25 September 2023 (Pages 1 - 6)

b Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting held on 31 October 2023 (Pages 7 - 8)

3 Items Requiring Urgent Attention

Items which, in the opinion of the Chair, should be considered at the meeting as matters of urgency.

PART 1 - OPEN COMMITTEE

4 Questions and Petitions from the Public

In accordance with [Standing Orders](#), to consider any questions and petitions submitted by the public. Questions must relate to matters to be considered at this meeting of the Authority. Petitions must relate to matters for which the Authority is responsible, or which affect the Authority. Neither questions nor petitions may require the disclosure of confidential or exempt information. Questions and petitions must be submitted in writing or by e-mail to the Clerk to the Authority (e-mail address: clerk@dsfire.gov.uk) **by midday on 6 December 2023.**

5 Addresses by Representative Bodies

To receive addresses from representative bodies requested and approved in accordance with Standing Orders.

6 Questions from Members of the Authority

To receive and answer any questions submitted in accordance with Standing Orders.

7 Minutes of Committees

a People Committee (Pages 9 - 14)

The Chair of the Committee, Councillor Clayton, to **MOVE** the Minutes of the meeting held on 30 October 2023 (attached).

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

b Appointments & Disciplinary Committee (Pages 15 - 16)

The Chair of the Committee, Councillor Cook-Woodman, to **MOVE** the Minutes of the meeting held on 31 October 2023 (attached).

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

c Community Safety Committee (Pages 17 - 18)

The Chair of the Committee, Councillor Hendy, to **MOVE** the Minutes of the meeting held on 10 November 2023 (attached).

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

d Resources Committee (Pages 19 - 24)

The Chair of the Committee, Councillor Peart, to **MOVE** the Minutes of the meeting held on 22 November 2023 (attached).

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

e Audit & Governance Committee (Pages 25 - 28)

The Chair of the Committee, Councillor Coles, to **MOVE** the Minutes of the meeting held on 30 November 2023 (attached).

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

8 Independent Review of Members' Allowance Scheme 2024-25 to 2027-28
(Pages 29 - 48)

Report of the Clerk to the Authority (DSFRA/23/26) attached.

9 Strategic Business Change Plan Tranche One (Pages 49 - 68)

Report of the Chief Fire Officer (DSFRA/23/27) attached.

MEMBERS ARE REQUESTED TO SIGN THE ATTENDANCE REGISTER

Membership:-

Councillors Atkinson, Best, Biederman (Vice-Chair), Brazil, Chesterton, Clayton, Coles, Cook-Woodman (Chair), Fellows, Gilmour, Hendy, Kendall, Kerley, Patel, Randall-Johnson, Peart, Power, Radford, Roome, Sellis, Slade, Sproston, Sully, Tolchard and Trail BEM

NOTES

1. **Access to Information**

Any person wishing to inspect any minutes, reports or lists of background papers relating to any item on this agenda should contact the person listed in the “Please ask for” section at the top of this agenda.

2. **Reporting of Meetings**

Any person attending a meeting may report (film, photograph or make an audio recording) on any part of the meeting which is open to the public – unless there is good reason not to do so, as directed by the Chair - and use any communication method, including the internet and social media (Facebook, Twitter etc.), to publish, post or otherwise share the report. The Authority accepts no liability for the content or accuracy of any such report, which should not be construed as representing the official, Authority record of the meeting. Similarly, any views expressed in such reports should not be interpreted as representing the views of the Authority.

Flash photography is not permitted and any filming must be done as unobtrusively as possible from a single fixed position without the use of any additional lighting; focusing only on those actively participating in the meeting and having regard also to the wishes of any member of the public present who may not wish to be filmed. As a matter of courtesy, anyone wishing to film proceedings is asked to advise the Chair or the Democratic Services Officer in attendance so that all those present may be made aware that is happening.

3. **Declarations of Interests at meetings (Authority Members only)**

If you are present at a meeting and you are aware that you have either a disclosable pecuniary interest, personal interest or non-registerable interest in any matter being considered or to be considered at the meeting then, unless you have a current and relevant dispensation in relation to the matter, you must:

- (i) disclose at that meeting, by no later than commencement of consideration of the item in which you have the interest or, if later, the time at which the interest becomes apparent to you, the existence of and – for anything other than a “sensitive” interest – the nature of that interest; and then
- (ii) withdraw from the room or chamber during consideration of the item in which you have the relevant interest.

If the interest is sensitive (as agreed with the Monitoring Officer), you need not disclose the nature of the interest but merely that you have an interest of a sensitive nature. You must still follow (i) and (ii) above.

Where a dispensation has been granted to you either by the Authority or its Monitoring Officer in relation to any relevant interest, then you must act in accordance with any terms and conditions associated with that dispensation.

Where you declare at a meeting a disclosable pecuniary or personal interest that you have not previously included in your Register of Interests then you must, within 28 days of the date of the meeting at which the declaration was made, ensure that your Register is updated to include details of the interest so declared.

	NOTES (Continued)
4.	<u>Part 2 Reports</u> Members are reminded that any Part 2 reports as circulated with the agenda for this meeting contain exempt information and should therefore be treated accordingly. They should not be disclosed or passed on to any other person(s). Members are also reminded of the need to dispose of such reports carefully and are therefore invited to return them to the Committee Secretary at the conclusion of the meeting for disposal.
5.	<u>Substitute Members (Committee Meetings only)</u> Members are reminded that, in accordance with Standing Orders, the Clerk (or his representative) must be advised of any substitution prior to the start of the meeting. Members are also reminded that substitutions are not permitted for full Authority meetings.
6.	<u>Other Attendance at Committees)</u> Any Authority Member wishing to attend, in accordance with Standing Orders, a meeting of a Committee of which they are not a Member should contact the Democratic Services Officer (see "please ask for" on the front page of this agenda) in advance of the meeting.

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DEVON & SOMERSET FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY

25 September 2023

Present:

Councillors Cook-Woodman (Chair), Biederman (Chair), Atkinson, Best, Brazil, Chesterton, Coles, Fellows, Gilmour, Hendy, Kerley, Patel, Power, Radford, Randall-Johnson, Sellis, Slade, Sproston, Sully, Tolchard and Trail BEM.

Apologies:

Councillors Clayton, Kendall, Peart and Roome

DSFRA/23/14 Minutes

a Annual General Meeting - 12 June 2023

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 12 June 2023 be signed as a correct record.

b Ordinary Meeting - 12 June 2023

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting held on 12 June 2023 be signed as a correct record.

DSFRA/23/15 Minutes of Committees

a Audit & Governance Committee

The Chair of the Committee, Councillor Coles, **MOVED** the Minutes of the meeting held on 21 July 2023 which had considered, amongst other things:

- An external audit progress and sector update;
- The annual internal audit report 2022-23;
- An internal audit interim progress report 2023-24;
- The draft Annual Statement of Assurance 2022-23;
- A report on the Corporate Risk Register;
- A formal response from management to the external auditor (Grant Thornton) in relation to the going concern review;
- A report on the annual review of the Authority's Standards arrangements;
- A report on progress with action to address the areas for improvement identified by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary & Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) following its last inspection of the Service and falling within the remit of this Committee to monitor; and

- A report identifying the management response to the improvement recommendations identified in the External Auditor's Annual Report 2021-22.

RESOLVED that the Minutes be adopted in accordance with Standing Orders.
(See also *Minute DSFRA/23/19(a) below*).

b People Committee

In the absence of the Chair, the Committee Vice-Chair, Councillor Trail BEM, **MOVED** the Minutes of the meeting held on 28 July 2023 which had considered, amongst other things:

- A report on performance at Quarter 1 of 2023-24 against the key performance indicators for the Authority approved strategic priorities associated with this Committee;
- A report on the high-level findings of the most recent Service People Survey;
- A report on progress against the actions to address the Cause for Concern and Areas for Improvement identified by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary & Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) following its recent inspection of the Service and falling within the remit of this Committee to monitor; and
- A report on progress made by the Service to address those recommendations contained in the recently-published HMICFRS national report on values and culture in the fire and rescue service.

RESOLVED that the Minutes be adopted in accordance with Standing Orders.
(See also *Minutes DSFRA/23/19(a) and (b) below*).

c Resources Committee

In the absence of the Chair, the Committee Vice-Chair, Councillor Best, **MOVED** the Minutes of the meeting held on 5 September 2023 which had considered, amongst other things:

- A report on Treasury Management Performance of the Authority during the first quarter of the current (2023-24) financial year;
- A report on performance during the first quarter of the current (2023-24) financial year against those financial targets associated with the Authority's approved budget for that year;
- A report on progress with the Service Environmental Strategy and Action Plan;
- A report on progress against the actions to address the Areas for Improvement identified by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary & Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) following its recent inspection of the Service and falling within the remit of this Committee to monitor; and

- A report on the financial performance of Red One Ltd. (the Authority's arms-length trading company) during the first quarter of the current (2023-24) financial year.

RESOLVED that the Minutes be adopted in accordance with Standing Orders. *(See also Minute DSFRA/23/19(a) below).*

d Community Safety Committee

The Chair of the Committee, Councillor Hendy, **MOVED** the Minutes of the meeting held on 8 September 2023 which had considered, amongst other things:

- A report on performance at Quarter 1 of 2023-24 against the key performance indicators for the Authority approved strategic priorities associated with this Committee;
- A report on work being undertaken in the Service in relation to Planning applications and the role of the fire and rescue;
- A report on protection and prevention partnership activities with other agencies to target high-risk groups and individuals; and
- A report on progress against the actions to address the Areas for Improvement identified by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary & Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) following its recent inspection of the Service and falling within the remit of this Committee to monitor.

RESOLVED that the Minutes be adopted in accordance with Standing Orders. *(See also Minute DSFRA/23/19(a) below).*

DSFRA/23/16 Appointment of Monitoring Officer

The Authority considered a report of the Chief Fire Officer (DSFRA/23/19) on the requirement, in light of the imminent departure of the current Monitoring Officer, to appoint a Monitoring Officer and Clerk for the Authority. The Local Government & Housing Act 1989 (the Act) required the Authority to have a Monitoring Officer to discharge, amongst other things, those duties imparted by the Act.

The report outlined three options to provide a Monitoring Officer (both internal and external appointment), together with an appraisal for each of the options.

RESOLVED

- (a). That Ms. Samantha Sharman be appointed as the Authority's relevant officer to serve as its Monitoring Officer and Clerk with effect from 25 September 2023;
- (b). That the Clerk be authorised to make any consequential changes to the Authority's Constitutional Governance Framework (Standing Orders, Scheme of Delegations etc.) as may be necessitated by this appointment.

DSFRA/23/17 Appointments to Committees and Outside Bodies

The Authority considered a report of the Monitoring Officer & Clerk to the Authority (DSFRA/23/20) on proposals to fill vacancies on Committees etc. arising from changes in membership.

RESOLVED

- (a). That Councillors Clayton and Sproston be appointed to the vacancies on the Audit & Governance Committee, the Term of Office to be until the Authority annual meeting in 2024;
- (b). That, in relation to the two Scheme Manager Vacancies on the Local Pensions Board:
 - (i). Councillor Coles be appointed to one of the vacancies, the Term of Office to be for four years (pending continuation of Authority Membership); and
 - (ii). The Assistant Director of Corporate Services be appointed to the second vacancy, the Term of Office to be for four years (pending continuation of employment);
- (c). That Councillor Cook-Woodman be appointed to the vacancy on the DELT Working Group, the Term of Office to be until the Authority annual meeting in 2024 or until dissolution of the Working Group (whichever is the sooner).

DSFRA/23/18 Extraordinary Authority Meeting to Consider the DELT Shared Services Business Case

The Authority considered a report of the Monitoring Officer & Clerk to the Authority (DSFRA/23/21) on a requirement for an extraordinary Authority meeting to consider the DELT Shared Services business case.

RESOLVED that an Extraordinary Authority meeting be held at 10.00hours on Tuesday 31 October 2023 to consider DELT Shared Services business case.

DSFRA/23/19 His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary & Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) Inspection

a Action Plan Update

The Authority received for information a report of the Chief Fire Officer (DSFRA/23/22) on progress against the action plans developed to address the Cause of Concern and all of the fourteen Areas for Improvement identified by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary & Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) following its most recent inspection of the Service.

Detailed monitoring of relevant actions had been assigned to respective Committees.

The report identified that one action in the Cause of Concern action plan and three actions in the Areas for Improvement action plan were currently recorded as being "in progress – off track", with the reasons for being off track indicated in each case.

(See also Minutes DSFRA/23/15(a) to (d) inclusive, above).

b Culture Recommendations - Update

The Authority received for information a report of the Chief Fire Officer (DSFRA/23/23) on progress against the action plan developed to address the 34 recommendations (14 requiring action at a national level; 20 specific for fire and rescue services) contained in the national report published recently by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary & Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) on values and culture in fire and rescue services.

(See also Minute DSFRA/23/15(b) above).

DSFRA/23/20 Appointment of Independent Person - Standards Issues

(A report published in accordance with the provisions of Section 100B(3)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972).

The Authority considered a report of the Monitoring Officer (DSFRA/23/24) on the requirement for appointment of an Independent Person. The Localism Act 2011 required the Authority to appoint, as part of its Standards arrangements, at least one Independent Person whose views must be sought and taken account of prior to deciding any allegation which had been subject to investigation.

At its ordinary meeting on 7 June 2019, the Authority had approved a recommendation from its (then) Standards Committee to adopt recommendations from the Committee on Standards in Public Life that each relevant authority should have at least two Independent Persons, each to serve for a maximum term of office of two years (renewable once).

The term of office for one of the Independent Persons subsequently appointed by the Authority would expire in November 2023.

RESOLVED

- (a). That the Monitoring Officer be authorised to undertake a process for the appointment of an Independent Person (as required by the Localism Act 2011), the appointment to be confirmed by the Authority;
- (b). That, pending this appointment and subject to them still being willing to serve, the current appointee's term of office be extended accordingly.

DSFRA/23/21 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/23/22 Restricted Minutes of the Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Authority Ordinary Meeting held on 12 June 2023

RESOLVED that the Restricted Minutes of the Authority Ordinary Meeting held on 12 June 2023 be signed as a correct record.

The Meeting started at 10.00 am and finished at 11.35 am

DEVON & SOMERSET FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY

31 October 2023

Present:

Councillors Cook-Woodman (Chair), Biederman (Vice-Chair), Atkinson, Best, Brazil, Chesterton, Clayton, Coles, Fellows, Hendy, Kerley, Patel, Peart, Power, Radford, Sellis, Slade, Sproston, Sully, Tolchard and Trail BEM

Apologies:

Councillors Gilmour, Kendall, Randall-Johnson and Roome

DSFRA/23/23 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/23/24 DELT Shared Services Agreement (Digital Services Provision) - Full Business Case

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).

The Authority considered a report of the Director of Finance & Corporate Services (Treasurer) (DSFRA/23/25) setting out, in line with the decision taken at its meeting on 19 April 2023 (Minute DSFRA/22/38 refers) the Full Business Case for the proposal to enter into the DELT Shared Service agreement for the provision of digital services.

It was noted that the Full Business Case had been prepared on the basis of the five case model as widely used in central government, each of which was covered in depth in the report circulated and at the meeting. The five cases were:

- Strategic – was there a case for change;
- Economic – did the proposal represent value for money;
- Financial – was the proposal affordable;
- Commercial – was there a viable route to market and effective contractual arrangements; and
- Management – how would the relationship be managed and was there sufficient capacity to deliver the change?

The Authority expressed its thanks to the Officers involved in the preparation of the Full Business Case which was very thorough, informative and easily understandable. During a lengthy debate, the view was expressed, amongst others, that the potential benefits outlined in some areas of the Full Business Case did not seem to outweigh the considerable disruption to the organisation that would follow should the Authority decide to enter into the Shared Services agreement with DELT. Further to this, Councillor Trail BEM (seconded by Councillor Peart) **MOVED** the recommendation as set out within report DSFRA/23/25.

Confirmation was sought of the plans to monitor the progress of the digital services provision should the recommendation (as moved) be not approved. The Treasurer advised that this was a valid point and that he would be instigating a review of the progress made with the provision of in-house digital services within 6 to 12 months in this event.

Councillor Sully put forward an amendment (duly accepted by Councillors Trail BEM and Peart) to the motion to approve the recommendation in the report which was to add:

- “(b). That a review of the progress made with the provision of the Data, Digital and Technology services within Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service be undertaken and reported back through the Resources Committee in six months’ time”.

Councillor Trail BEM (seconded by Councillor Peart) **MOVED**:

- (a). That the Authority would not proceed with the implementation of the DELT Shared Services Agreement for its digital services provision based on the findings of the Full Business Case as attached to report DSFRA/23/25 at Appendix A; and
- (b). That a review of the progress made with the provision of the Data, Digital and Technology services within Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service be undertaken and reported back through the Resources Committee in six months’ time”.

Upon a vote, the motion was **CARRIED** unanimously.

RESOLVED

- (a). That the Authority would not proceed with the implementation of the DELT Shared Services Agreement for its digital services provision based on the findings of the Full Business Case as attached to report DSFRA/23/25 at Appendix A; and
- (b). That a review of the progress made with the provision of the Data, Digital and Technology services within Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service be undertaken and reported back through the Resources Committee in six months’ time”.

***DENOTES DELEGATED MATTER WITH POWER TO ACT**

The Meeting started at 10.00 am and finished at 11.04 am

PEOPLE COMMITTEE

(Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Authority)

30 October 2023

Present:

Councillors Clayton (Chair), Trail BEM (Vice-Chair), Coles (vice Biederman), Kendall, Peart and Tolchard

In attendance (via Teams):

Councillors Biederman and Cook-Woodman

Apologies:

Councillor Atkinson

* **PC/23/6** **Minutes**

RESOLVED that, subject to an amendment to include the apology for non-attendance received from Councillor Atkinson, the Minutes of the meeting held on 28 July 2023 be signed as a correct record.

* **PC/23/7** **Performance Monitoring Report 2023-24: Quarter 2**

The Committee received for information a report of the Director of Finance & Corporate Services (Treasurer) (PC/23/12) detailing performance as at Quarter 2 of 2023-24 against those Key Performance Indicators agreed by the Committee for measuring progress against the following three strategic priorities as approved by the Authority:

- 3(a). Ensure that the workforce is highly trained and has the capability and capacity to deliver services professionally, safely and effectively;
- 3(b). Increase the diversity of the workforce to better reflect the communities we serve, promoting inclusion and developing strong and effective leaders who ensure that we have a fair place to work where our organisational values are a lived experience; and
- 3(c). Recognise and maximise the value of all employees, particularly the commitment of on-call firefighters, improving recruitment and retention.

In particular, the report provided information on performance against each of the following key measures:

- operational core competence skills (beathing apparatus; incident command; water rescue; safety when working at heights or in confined spaces; maritime; driving; and casualty care);

- health and safety (a general overview of the work undertaken on station audits and the risk from contaminants, accidents [including near misses]; personal injuries; vehicle incidents (together with the correlation to appliance mobilisation) and reporting against the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR));
- sickness and absence (including mental health) for wholetime, on-call, support, Control and casual staff, types of sickness absence, details of the health and wellbeing support offered by the Service. The report also provided comparisons with national fire service data and featured benchmarking for sickness absence against comparable, neighbouring fire and rescue services;
- fitness testing (including support offered for red and amber groups);
- diversity, with a particular emphasis on the work being undertaken on promoting inclusion and developing strong leaders within the organisation;
- strategic workforce planning including details of staff turnover in all categories of the workforce;
- employee engagement (also reported elsewhere on the agenda for this meeting at item PC/23/13); and
- an overview of the People Services Systems project.

Attention was drawn at the meeting to the following points:

- Working at Height and in Confined spaces (SHACS) was showing as amber in the report but this was the only one area at amber which was at 92.6%. There had been a slight increase on quarter 1 of 2022-23 but attendance at courses continued to be monitored. The Director of Service Delivery Service - Support stated that she had asked for further information as to why this was still at 92% but initial indications were that this was due largely to competencies going out of date and being unable to catch up although she was happy with the tolerance on this matter;
- On fitness, 1520 staff were required to test with 98.2 % (1493 staff) passing and 27 in the red zone (1.8%);
- Work had commenced on the Control of Substances hazardous to Health (COSHH) audits which would be undertaken over the next 12 months at a proportion of service locations and work continued on reducing the risk for contaminants
- Accidents – there had been a slight increase in in the overall trend over the past 12 months but in quarter 2 of 2023-24, these were down by 28 on quarter 1 at 51. The Organisational Road Risk Group was meeting monthly now to monitor the position more closely;

- Near misses – there were 14 near misses in quarter 2 of 2023-24, a 50% reduction on reporting in the previous quarter of 2023-24 (14 events). The Service’s wider culture on “safe to” would help to make improvements in this area;
- Personal injuries – the rolling 12 month statistics showed a decrease with a reduction of 7 injuries in quarter 2 of 2023-24 - a 37% decrease;
- Vehicle accidents – there had been a 33% reduction (17 incidents) in quarter 2 of 2023-24, most of which were due to non-blue light activity. This represented just 0.4% of all mobilisations;
- RIDDOR – there had been 3 reports in quarter 2 of 2023-24.
- total sickness had increased marginally to 10.2 days/shifts lost in quarter 2 of 2023-24 due largely to the time of year but the Service continued to work on getting staff back to work quickly. Total sickness was 4.80 days/shifts lost to quarter 2 of 2023-24 as compared to 5.06 days at the same quarter in 2022-23 so positive news. Mental health issues (41% of days/shifts lost) continued to be the prevalent cause of sickness absence above musculoskeletal injuries (24% of days/shifts lost). Mental health absences were not always caused by work related issues but more personal matters such as the current financial crisis although the Service continued to offer support wherever possible and to signpost staff where appropriate.
- The Committee was apprised of the work being undertaken to address diversity and inclusion issues including (but not limited to) the training that had been implemented in October and November 2023 for middle managers on managing difficult conversations and conflict.
- Strategic workforce planning - reference was made to the monthly meetings held to monitor workforce planning and the point that this was improving the levels of engagement. A new On call recruitment process had been introduced which had achieved 100% attendance at practical assessment centres and 90% of candidates progressing to the next stage; and
- the People Services project was going live on 31 October 2023 which had been a huge undertaking for the Service and staff involved.

NB. Minute PC/23/8 below also refers.

* **PC/23/8**

People Survey Actions

The Committee received for information a report of the Assistant Director – Service Delivery (PC/23/13) which provided an overview of the action being taken by the Service in response to the Staff Survey undertaken earlier in 2023.

It was noted that the Service had received 813 responses to the survey representing 44% of the workforce. From the survey findings, five key focus areas had emerged which were:

- Inclusion of thought;

- Bullying and harassment and the reporting of this;
- Trust in leadership;
- Support staff – differences in responses between operational opportunities and those available for support staff; and
- Working together well (high negative).

The report set out the action being taken by the Service to address the points raised in each of the above areas. Reference was made in particular to areas such as a uniform and non-uniform divide which was being addressed through equalisation of promotion processes. Work was also being undertaken on:

- Introducing channels for staff to report concerns such as the confidential reporting line;
- continuing work on the cultural journey;
- improving communication channels;
- standardising recruitment processes; and
- providing consistent guidance across departments.

The Committee expressed concern at the marked drop in trust in leadership from 56% in the previous survey to 43% in 2023. The Director of Finance & Corporate Services (Treasurer) concurred that this was disappointing but there had been a lot of senior management changes together with budget cuts and associated freezes to Professional and Technical staff recruitment, all of which would impact inevitably on such indicators. The solution was in recognising the need for improvements and it was hoped that the changes made since the survey had been undertaken would be borne out in future survey results.

* PC/23/9

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary & Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) Cause of Concern and Areas for Improvement Action Plan

The Committee received for information a report of the Chief Fire Officer (PC/23/14) outlining progress to date against the Action Plans developed to address both the Cause of Concern and Areas for Improvement identified following the most recent Service inspection by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS).

In terms of the Cause of Concern and 14 Areas for Improvement identified by HMICFRS, 8 had been linked to the People Committee for tracking.

Three of the actions within the Cause of Concern Action Plan were recorded currently as "Off Track" which were:

- 01a.07 - Expectations documents (charters).;
- 01b.03 – performance/conflict training for managers; and
- 01b.15 – 01 evidence and assurance.

The reasons behind this were:

- Information to support departments creating team charters had been published on the intranet and the customer charter had also been published (both internally and externally). These elements of the action will be marked as completed.
- The training charter has been submitted to the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Commission for final review, after which it will be published to the wider organisation. This is expected to be completed by 31/10/2023 (01a.07).
- Performance management training will be delivered to managers over three sessions on 13/10/2023, 24/10/2023, 03/11/2023. Action 01b.03 will remain as 'off-track' until these have taken place.
- The evidence and assurance for the Cause of Concern will be started once all actions have been completed (01b.15).

Two actions were recorded as "In Progress – Off Track" which were:

- HMI-3.2-202210 – temporary promotions; and
- HMI-3.4-202213 – selection and promotion processes.

One Area for Improvement, HMI-3.4-202215 (High Potential Staff), remained 'paused' due to dependencies on the Area for Improvement around the selection and promotions process (HMI-3.4-202213).

It was noted that the selection and recruitment process had been rewritten and aligned to the national Fire Chief's Council (NFCC) framework but this was off track still as it was linked to the overall recruitment process. The Director of Finance & Corporate Services (Treasurer) advised the Committee that this was a good piece of work which required staff to self-endorse to move forward with the promotions process now.

NB. Minute PC/23/10 below also refers.

* **PC/23/10**

People and Culture Update

The Committee received for information a report of the Chief Fire Officer (PC/23/15 setting out the progress made against the 35 recommendations in His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary & Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) published report into values and culture in the fire and rescue service. 19 of these recommendations were specific to the fire and rescue service and 15 required action at national level.

A further three recommendations had been closed following review by the HMICFRS Governance Board and the Service's Executive Board with a total of 12 of the 19 recommendations closed to date. 5 were "in progress" (as below), two "not started" and one "in progress - on track".

The five recommendations which remained 'In Progress' were:

- REC04 – handling of raised concerns;
- REC32 – diversity in succession planning;

- REC33 – progress of non-operational staff;
- REC024 – monitor and evaluate feedback; and
- REC26 – management and leadership training.

This was due to the following factors:

- The Head of Organisational Assurance had produced a paper for the Executive Board (EB) to outline a proposed structure for a professional standards function. The action will remain marked as 'In Progress' until EB have considered the options presented (REC04);
- Recommendations 24 (Monitoring and Evaluating Feedback), 32 (Diversity in succession planning) and 33 (Progression of non-operational staff) had not been fully addressed by the Service and therefore will remain 'In Progress' until further action has been taken; and
- The decision was made at HMICFRS Governance Board (04/10/2023) to re-open the evidence and assurance against this recommendation 26 (Management and Leadership Training) to ensure the expected outcome has been fully achieved.

NB. Minutes PC/23/8 and PC/23/9 above also refer.

***DENOTES DELEGATED MATTER WITH POWER TO ACT**

The Meeting started at 10.12 am and finished at 12.04 pm

APPOINTMENTS & DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE

(Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Authority)

31 October 2023

Present:

Councillors Cook-Woodman, Best and Hendy

Apologies:

Councillor Randall-Johnson

* **ADC/23/1**

Minutes

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 26 May 2023 be signed as a correct record.

* **ADC/23/2**

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 items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the following Paragraph(s) of Part 1 of Schedule 12A (as amended) to the Act:

- Paragraph 1 (information relating to an individual); and
- Paragraph 2 (information likely to reveal the identity of an individual).

* **ADC/23/3**

Appointment of Authority Non-Executive Director to the Board of Red One Ltd.

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).

The Committee considered a report of the Clerk to the Authority (ADC/23/2) that set out details of the process to be followed for appointment to the position of Authority Appointed Non-Executive Director on the Board of Red One Ltd. together with the two applications received.

RESOLVED that Councillor Julian Brazil be appointed to the vacancy of Authority Appointed Non-Executive Director on the Board of Red One Ltd. to serve for a term of three years.

***DENOTES DELEGATED MATTER WITH POWER TO ACT**

The Meeting started at 1.10 pm and finished at 2.15 pm

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COMMUNITY SAFETY COMMITTEE

(Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Authority)

10 November 2023

Present:

Councillors Hendy (Chair), Chesterton (Vice-Chair), Coles, Cook-Woodman, Kerley, Patel and Radford

Apologies:

Councillors Brazil and Power

* **CSC/23/6 Minutes**

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 8 September 2023 be signed as a correct record.

* **CSC/23/7 Review of Key Performance Indicators**

The Committee considered a report of the Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Service Delivery) (CSC/23/12) to which was appended a review of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) within the remit of this Committee for scrutiny purposes and aligned to the following two Authority-approved Strategic Priorities:

Priority 1 – targeted prevention and protection activities to reduce risks in the community, improve health, safety and well-being and supporting the local economy; and

Priority 2 – use of operational resources to provide an effective emergency response to meet local and national risks identified in the Community Risk Management Plan.

The KPIs had been subject to extensive review with the resultant suite approved by the Service Executive Board. The report identified a number of amendments to existing KPIs, the removal of six KPIs and the inclusion of four new KPIs one of which (the proportion of dwelling fires resulting in “hot strike” activity) addressed an issue raised His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary & Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) following the last Service inspection. For each KPI, the rationale for the proposed change was indicated.

RESOLVED that the proposed KPIs as identified in the appendix to report CSC/23/12 be endorsed.

*(See also Minute *CSC/23/8) below).*

* **CSC/23/8 Strategic Priority 1 and 2 Performance Measures: Quarter 2 2023-24**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Service Delivery (CSC/23/13) to which was appended a performance monitoring report for the second quarter of the current (2023-24) financial year against those Key Performance Indicators falling within the remit of this Committee for scrutiny purposes and aligned to Authority-approved Strategic Priorities 1 and 2.

In summary, the KPI performance was:

	Succeeding (i.e. achieving target)	Near target (i.e. less than 10% away from achieving target)	Needs Improvement (i.e. at least 10% away from achieving target)
Priority 1	11	5	3
Priority 2	6	8	0

The report provided a detailed exception report for the three KPIs requiring improvement, explaining the reasons for the exceptions and measures to remediate the performance.

RESOLVED

- (a). That a report be submitted to the next meeting detailing data collection for KPI 1.2.4.1 (the number of non-domestic false alarms due to apparatus per 10,000 rateable premises) together with any measures proposed to improve performance against this KPI;
- (b). That, subject to (a) above, the report be noted.

(See also Minute CSC/23/7) above).

* **CSC/23/9 His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary & Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) Areas for Improvement Action Plan Update**

The Committee received for information a report of the Chief Fire Officer (CSC/23/14) on progress against those Areas for Improvement falling within the remit of this Committee and as identified by HMICFRS following its last inspection of the Service.

The report indicated one Area of Improvement was currently identified as “In progress – off track”. The reasons for this were identified and it was anticipated that, by the next report to the Committee, this Area for Improvement would be back on track.

***DENOTES DELEGATED MATTER WITH POWER TO ACT**

The Meeting started at 10.00 am and finished at 11.02 am

RESOURCES COMMITTEE

(Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Authority)

22 November 2023

Present:

Councillors Peart (Chair), Best (Vice-Chair), Coles (vice Fellows), Gilmour, Power, Slade and Sully

Apologies:

Councillor Fellows

In attendance (via Teams):-

Councillors Cook-Woodman and Randall Johnson

* **RC/23/8** **Minutes**

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 5 September 2023 be signed as a correct record.

* **RC/23/9** **Treasury Management Performance 2023-24: Quarter 2**

NB. Adam Burleton, representing Link Asset Services, the Authority's Treasury Management advisers, was in attendance for this item of business.

The Committee received for information a report of the Director of Finance & Corporate Services (Treasurer) (RC/23/17) that set out the Authority's performance relating to the second quarter of 2023-24 (to September 2023) in accordance with the Treasury Management in Public Service Code of Practice (published by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy {CIPFA}) and the CIPFA Prudential Code. The report set out how this Authority was demonstrating best practice in accordance with these Codes.

During consideration of this item, the following key points were noted:

- The United Kingdom (UK) had been seeing marginal growth but was at risk of potential, technical recession based on information received from supplier markets on current performance in key areas;
- Consumer Price Inflation (CPI) had fallen from 6.8% to 6.7% in August 2023 which when coupled with the drop in core CPI inflation to 6.2%, meant that the UK was drawing closer to the position for other G7 countries;
- interest rates had increased by 25bp in August 2023 taking the bank base rate to 5.25% although this had remained static since then;
- the Authority had benefitted from the recent rises in interest rates with an increased return on investments at a yield of over 5%. The benchmark return for quarter 2 of 2023-24 was 5.09% with performance at 5.15% (£0.429m). The forecast return on investment at year end was now £1.055m;

- the annual treasury management strategy had continued on a prudent approach, underpinned by investment priorities based on security of capital, liquidity and yield;
- none of the Prudential Indicators (affordability limits) had been breached in quarter 2 with external borrowing at 30 September 2023 being £24.217m, forecast to reduce to £23.771 by the end of the financial year with no new borrowing undertaken; and
- There were no plans to borrow any further funds in the immediate future.

The question was raised as to the likelihood of a technical recession given that the UK had experienced over 2 quarters of no growth. It was noted that this was in the balance currently. Around 48% of responses from the market currently indicated no growth but the UK was not in technical recession as yet albeit it was expected. Employment was expected to rise, however, which should contribute to lower inflation in due course. Action was being targeted in accordance with monetarist policy to move inflation down to 2% again.

The Committee had anticipated that interest rates would go down more quickly than set out in the report circulated. Adam Burleton responded that the 3-year gilt deposit rate was around 4.80% so this anticipated a drop in interest rates. Things could change quickly and with inflation at 4.7% currently, it was moving in the right direction but wage growth was hiking inflating still and needed to come down. The issues in the Middle East and Ukraine had all impacted on inflation.

The Treasurer advised that, when drilling down into the data behind the drop in the level of inflation, whilst the decrease seemed positive on the face of it, the key factors were due to reductions in energy costs which ignored the point that while these costs were higher at this time in 2022-23, households were receiving direct cash support from Government. As such, the actual spending by households was more comparative despite the reported drop in inflation. Other factors such as mortgage and food costs had seen an increase, all of which continue to impact negatively on householders' income.

Attention was drawn to the potential for future political changes and how this might impact along with the Middle East crisis. Adam Burleton responded that the price of oil was a major factor in the economy and if supply was cut off, this could impact such as with higher borrowing costs etc. Public finances were at high levels of national debt (nearly 100% of GDP) so any new government would need to consider its position very carefully.

The Treasurer agreed and indicated that, at this stage, the Service would be insulated from such factors as the budget to be set in February 2024 would be one of fiscal consolidation as the risk of having to borrow to support capital expenditure was high. The Authority needed to return to making contributions from revenue to capital in future to avoid the high costs of borrowing. If the Authority did need to borrow in future, it was hoped interest rates would be at a lower rate to make this more viable.

* **RC/23/10** **Financial Performance Report 2023-24: Quarter 2**

The Committee received for information a report of the Director of Finance & Corporate Services (Treasurer) (RC/23/18) that provided the Committee with details of the second quarter performance (to September 2023) against the agreed financial targets for 2023-24.

The Director of Finance & Corporate Services (Treasurer) advised that, at this stage in the financial year, it was projected that spending would be £0.817m less than the budget of £85.413 at £84.596 representing an underspend of 0.96% of total budget. He drew attention to the point that the reserve of £2.8m to cover the cost of pay awards arising post budget in 2023-24 would not be required due to better than anticipated in year investment returns. This money would be returned to Reserves at the year end. It was noted that the Executive Board continued to bear down on costs across the Service to try to close the budgetary gap in 2024-25, 2025-26 and 2026-27 as outlined within the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP).

The main drivers for this forecast underspend in 2024-25 were:

- Wholetime pay – underspend of £0.745m due largely to a number of vacancies being held within the Service pending a review of shift patterns;
- Professional and Technical staff – underspend of £0.708m due largely to a number of vacancies being held albeit that it was acknowledged that there were key posts that needed to be filled in some areas in due course;
- Transport running costs and insurance – underspend of £0.244m due largely to the reduction in wholesale fuel prices; and
- Investment income – over recovery of £1.055m - the budget was set when interest rates were still low but the recent rises had resulted in a much healthier return than had been anticipated.

The Committee asked if posts not being filled was just a short-term measure. Confirmation was also sought on provision for the anticipated pay awards in 2023-34. The Treasurer responded that no decision had been made on wholetime posts yet but there would be an update given at the Authority's meeting on 11 December 2023. It was anticipated that the vacancies held may not be needed but this decision had not been taken as yet. He added that he was keeping a close eye on the position on pay awards with an assumption of a 5% increase for Grey Book staff. He indicated that approval may be sought at the Authority's budget meeting in February 2024 to consider the use of Reserves should the pay increase be agreed above the 5% provision made.

It was noted that total Reserves held were £27m at the start of 2023-24 anticipated to be £12.303m at the year end. The Capital Programme had slippage reported due largely to delays in the arrival of new vehicles and the station rebuild at Camels Head which was anticipated to commence in quarter 1 of 2024-25.

Outstanding debt was due largely to the historic position for Red One Ltd. but a repayment plan was in place and this was due to be fully repaid in April 2024.

In terms of the MTFP, a shortfall of £8.556m was anticipated in 2026-27 but this was cumulative. Key assumptions did not include a £5 council tax increase. Such an increase would bring in revenue of £1.3million towards the budget gap of £3m in 2024-25 although this did not factor in a contribution to capital from the revenue budget.

Reference was made to the council tax collection rate which was showing no surplus in 2023-24 and the impact of the pension detriment. The Treasurer stated that he was not expecting a direct cost to the Service as a result of the pension detriment as Government was making available grant funding to cover any increases together with providing assistance to support the administration of the backlog of cases. An actuarial evaluation would be undertaken and it was more likely that the costs of the employer pension contribution rate would increase in future rather than a one off hit.

It was noted that a 98% return rate on Council Tax was expected for 2023-24 but not all of the returns had been received from District Councils as yet. The Committee asked if the Treasurer was confident on achieving the £1.3m income anticipated from tax on second homes. The Treasurer advised that the Finance Team had contacted each of the precepting authorities to discuss the level of tax to be received and this was a conservative assumption bearing in mind that these were new rules subject to interpretation. Each district council had invoked this decision and an 80% assumption on second homes had been built into the calculation. There was there was secondary legislation in terms of what was classified as a second home which could also be invoked if necessary but it was unclear who would be policing this matter. The Treasurer reassured the Committee that the assumptions would be reviewed to ensure that a prudent approach was maintained.

* **RC/23/11** **His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary & Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) Areas for Improvement Action Plan Update**

The Committee received for information a report of the Chief Fire Officer (RC/23/19) upon the progress made by the Service in addressing the 14 Areas for Improvement (AFIs) identified by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary & Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) and associated actions, of which two were linked to the Resources Committee, including:

- HMI-2.2-202206a - The Service needs to make sure that its fleet strategy is regularly reviewed and evaluated to maximise potential efficiency; and
- HMI-2.2-202206b – The Service needs to ensure that its estate strategy is regularly reviewed and evaluated to maximise potential efficiency.

The Committee noted that action AFI-2.2-202206a had been closed. AFI-2.2-202206b was “in progress on track” currently with the Estates Strategy being aligned to work on the Service's Target Operating Model.

* **RC/23/12** **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

RESOLVED that, in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public (with the exception of Officers of Red One Ltd.) be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involved 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.

* **RC/23/13** **Red One Ltd. Financial Performance 2023-24: Quarter 2**

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

The Committee received for information a report of the Director of Finance & Corporate Services (Treasurer) (RC/23/20) setting out the financial performance of Red One Ltd. in quarter 2 of the 2023-24 financial year.

***DENOTES DELEGATED MATTER WITH POWER TO ACT**

The Meeting started at 10.00 am and finished at 12.15 pm

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AUDIT & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE (Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Authority)

30 November 2023

Present:

Councillors Coles (Chair), Clayton, Cook-Woodman, Fellows, Roome, Slade (Vice-Chair), Sproston and Sully

In attendance:

Mr S. Perks and Ms A. Turkington – Independent, Co-opted Members
Councillor Randall Johnson (online via Teams)
Andrew Davies – Grant Thornton
Tony Rose – Head of Devon Audit Partnership

Apologies:

Councillor Sellis

* **AGC/23/17 Minutes**

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 28 September 2023 be signed as a correct record.

* **AGC/23/18 External Audit Update**

Andrew Davies, representing the Authority's external auditor, Grant Thornton, gave an update on the progress made with the audit of the financial statements for the 2022-23 financial year for information.

He advised that the Committee had received the External Audit Plan for 2022-23 at its previous meeting on 28 September 2023 (Minute AGC/23/12 refers). The 2022-23 audit had commenced with work on the Value for Money (VFM) assessment undertaken including on the valuation of property, plant and equipment and on pension fund liabilities. Work on the testing of other balances within the financial statements was also underway and there were no issues to draw to the attention of the Committee at this stage.

It was noted that Group Accounts had been a significant risk in previous years but was not considered so for 2022-23 by the external auditor. This work was almost concluded with no issues to report in terms of the consolidation process.

In terms of VFM, good progress had been made. A draft Annual Report covering the VFM findings would be issued to the Service shortly for agreement. This would be submitted at the next meeting of Committee in January 2024. The recommendations were all around improvement with no significant risks identified.

The Treasurer advised that, following discussion with the auditor on 29 November 2023, there was nothing reported that was of concern to him at this stage. The need to bear down on costs was acknowledged and would be reflected in the proposed budget for 2024-25 to be submitted to the Authority on 16 February 2024. It was recognised that visibility for the Authority and governance was a matter to be discussed further.

* **AGC/23/19 Internal Audit Interim Progress Report 2023-24**

The Committee received for information a report of the Head of the Devon Audit Partnership (DAP) (AGC/23/21) on the progress made to date in securing independent assurance for the Authority that it had sufficient governance, risk management and controls in place to secure an efficient and effective service.

The report was positive in that good progress was being made and the Authority was heading in the right direction with the Plan on track. The following audits had been completed with the assurance in the final reports as indicated:

- Medium Term Financial Plan – reasonable assurance;
- Summary of Service Actions on External Bodies Reports – HMICFRS – reasonable assurance;
- Cyber Governance – Cyber Assessment Framework (CAF) Self Assessment – Value added;
- Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy (CIPFA) Counter Fraud Research Project – Value added; and
- Productivity of the workforce and Wholetime Crews – limited assurance.

Work was ongoing on the following audits:

- Investigations; and
- New People Systems – live advice and quality assurance.

Four further audits had work in progress.

The Committee referred to the productivity of the workforce and asked how this was measured. The Head of DAP stated this was not an easy area to measure but Officers had a system in place. The Treasurer responded that productivity was a key area of focus for the Home Office and a percentage increase was expected for the forthcoming year. The Chief Fire Officer had also imparted information received at a recent meeting through the National Fire Chiefs' Council (NFCC) that there may not be a cut in funding but the increase in productivity was expected. A trial had been run on a number of stations in Devon & Somerset for a few months and this had produced some interesting information. The information would feed into the budget preparations for 2024-25.

The question was raised as to whether a target could be set in this area so that performance could be measured in the future. The Treasurer indicated that data was available now but this was based on self-reporting so it gave a limited picture as to how the Service could boost the productivity of the workforce but he was content to find an appropriate target for the future. The Service needed to ensure that emergency response could be maintained so there was a balance to be found. In response to a further question, the Treasurer added that he would be happy to share information on data gathering at a future Members' Forum.

Reference was also made to the Cyber Governance review and what this had achieved. The Head of DAP responded that the approach to this had been changed in light of the point that the Authority had to undertake a self-assessment. He added that this self-assessment would form part of the Annual Governance Review. The Treasurer stated that he was content for the Committee to see the self-assessment although the Clerk suggested that this should not be undertaken in a public meeting. The Treasurer and Clerk undertook to consider the best way to provide this information.

The Treasurer gave an explanation of the assurance "value added" in response to a question. It was noted that the Internal Audit Plan was commissioned by the Authority but senior officers wished to see support to improve its services so had commissioned additional pieces of work hence the "value added" assessment. The DAP had additional skills and experience to give the Service more reassurance on areas of work undertaken.

Ms Turkington asked why, given the emergency response nature of the Service, the Health and Safety audit had been postponed. The Head of Assurance advised that this had been deferred as the coverage required from information governance was restricted. External health and safety consultants had been appointed recently who had generated a lot of actions to be undertaken and this had given comfort that there was a framework in place to take this forward. Contaminants and PPE had also been audited recently.

Mr Perks drew attention to the point that the HMICFRS audits included examples of significant time extensions. He asked if future reports could identify how many times a deadline had been extended. The Treasurer advised that there was a need to be fully transparent on all slippages which would be included in future.

Mr Perks also referred to the Investigations that were underway but not at a stage where they could be reported to the Committee. The Treasurer stated that it was useful for the Committee to be sighted on all areas of work but there was a confidentiality aspect to internal investigations. He suggested that the report could, in future, include information in terms of what type of investigation was underway, i.e., an internal investigation or one involving a breach of the Members' Code of Conduct.

* **AGC/23/20 Local Pension Board Annual Report 2022-23**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Finance & Corporate Services (AGC/23/22) to which was appended the Local Pension Board annual report for 2021-22. The report provided information on (amongst other things):

- work undertaken by the Board in 2022-23;
- details of any identified risks and Board actions (based on a RAG rating);
- details of statutory breaches (if any); and
- the management of conflicts of interest.

It was noted that there had been two statutory breaches reported to the Regulator in 2022-23, due largely to timing issues.

RESOLVED that the Local Pensions Board Annual Report for 2022-23, as appended to report AGC/23/22 be endorsed.

* **AGC/23/21 His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary & Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) Areas for Improvement Action Plan Update**

The Committee received, for information, a report of the Chief Fire Officer (AGC/23/23) on progress against the Action Plan to address the Areas for Improvement falling within the remit of this Committee and as identified by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary & Fire & Rescue Services following its last inspection of the Service.

The report identified that there was currently one Area for Improvement recorded as "in progress – off track" (HMI-1.3-202205 – Quality Assurance of Audits and Fire safety Checks) due to changes in management within the protection team. An update was due by 30 November 2023 but it was likely this deadline would be extended.

Mr Perks sought a response on how the Committee could be assured that work on the 8 actions completed was being maintained. It was noted that the 8 actions were not fully closed yet so a final review had not been undertaken. The Service would need to look carefully at how it monitored these actions as business as usual but an assurance was given that there were many levels of review in place within the Service to ensure that actions were maintained.

***DENOTES DELEGATED MATTER WITH POWER TO ACT**

The Meeting started at 10.00 am and finished at 11.25 am

Agenda Item 8

REPORT REFERENCE NO.	DSFRA/23/26
MEETING	DEVON & SOMERSET FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY
DATE OF MEETING	11 DECEMBER 2023
SUBJECT OF REPORT	DEVON & SOMERSET FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY APPROVED SCHEME OF MEMBERS ALLOWANCES 2020-21
LEAD OFFICER	Clerk to the Authority
RECOMMENDATIONS	<p>(a). <i>That the contents of this report be considered alongside the report and recommendations of the Independent Advisor (as attached at Appendix A) and with a view to determining the Allowances Scheme to operate from 1 April 2024 for the 2024-25 and subsequent financial years;</i></p> <p>(b). <i>that, following from (a) above and in accordance with the requirements of the relevant Regulations, the Clerk to the Authority be authorised:</i></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>(i). to arrange for publication as soon as possible of those rates agreed in relation to Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances;</i></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>(ii). to amend the Authority Approved Scheme of Members Allowances to reflect, where required, decisions taken at (a) above.</i></p>
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	<p>Regulations require the Authority to determine, prior to the start of each financial year, basic and special responsibility allowances, together with levels for reimbursement of travel and subsistence expenses to Members. The Regulations also provide that, where an automatic uprating methodology is used, this should only apply for a maximum period of four years pending a more substantive review.</p> <p>The Authority's Allowances Scheme was last subject to a substantive, independent review to inform allowances to operate from the 2020-21 financial year. Consequently, when setting the Scheme to operate for the current (2024-25) financial year, the Authority authorised the Clerk to commission an independent review to inform setting the scheme for the forthcoming (2020-21) and subsequent financial years (Minute DSFRA/22/25b refers).</p> <p>A copy of the Independent Advisor's report is now duly appended to this paper for consideration.</p>

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS	As indicated in the appended report of the Independent Advisor. The Authority's approved revenue budget for 2024-25 will contain provision for the payment of Members' allowances.
EQUALITY RISKS AND BENEFITS ANALYSIS	The contents of this report are considered compatible with existing equalities and human rights legislation.
APPENDICES	A. Report and recommendations of Independent Advisor.
BACKGROUND PAPERS	The Local Authorities (Members Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003.

1. BACKGROUND - LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK AND REVIEW PROCESS

- 1.1. Regulations require the Authority to determine, prior to the start each financial year, Basic (payable at the same rate to all Members) and Special Responsibility Allowances, together with levels for reimbursement of travel and subsistence expenses to Members. The Regulations also provide that, where an automatic uprating methodology is used, this should only apply for a maximum period of four years pending a more substantive review.
- 1.2. Whilst this Authority is not required to have its own Independent Remunerations Panel, it is required to “have regard to” recommendations made by the Independent Remuneration Panels of constituent authorities in relation to the level of allowances payable by those authorities.
- 1.3. This Authority’s Approved Scheme of Members Allowances was last reviewed substantially by an Independent Advisor in 2019 (to inform allowances for a four year period from 2020-21 to 2023-24). At that time, it was considered appropriate to continue to use the services of an Independent Advisor given the sensitivity of this issue and in-keeping with a desire to reflect the impartiality, objectivity and transparency of the arrangements applying to other public authorities.
- 1.4. Applying this rationale again and in line with the decision of the Authority at its meeting on 12 December 2022 (Minute DSFRA/22/25(b) refers), Ms. Bryony Houlden was appointed, following a quotation exercise, to review the allowances scheme in sufficient time to inform its budget setting for the 2024-25 and subsequent financial years. Ms. Houlden is Chief Executive of South West Councils and has considerable experience of Independent Remuneration Panels, serving on the Devon, Exeter, Plymouth and Somerset Panels and chairing the Torbay, Torridge and North Devon Panels. Ms. Houlden also undertook the last three substantive reviews for the Authority in 2012, 2015 and 2019.
- 1.5. A copy of Ms. Houlden’s review, including proposals as to allowances to be paid, is attached to the report at Appendix A.
- 1.6. Financial provision to meet any proposals on Members’ Allowances agreed by the Authority for the forthcoming financial year will be included in the draft 2024-25 revenue budget.

SAMANTHA SHARMAN
Clerk to the Authority

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INDEPENDENT REVIEW

**DEVON AND SOMERSET FIRE AND
RESCUE AUTHORITY MEMBERS'
ALLOWANCES SCHEME**

December 2023

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Authority (“the authority”) commissioned an independent review of their allowances scheme following the last review in 2019.

The financial pressures on fire authorities have continued through the period since the last review and look set to continue further. Members will wish to take this into account in considering the recommendations in this report. It is not the role of the independent advisor to make judgements related to these budgetary pressures.

It is important to emphasise that allowances are not intended as salaries but are intended to recognise the time commitment of members whilst continuing with the principle of ‘public service’ whereby the work of members continues to be voluntary - that some hours are not remunerated. This must be balanced against the need to ensure that financial loss is not suffered by members and ensure that people are encouraged and able to come forward to serve the community.

The recommendations are outlined below, these have been arrived at following the review of evidence including from members themselves and benchmarking information.

Recommendations:

- (i) The basic allowance be set at:**
 - **£3,346 from 1st April 2024, and**
 - **Provisionally set at £3,505 from 1st April 2025, subject to officers increase not being more than 4.75% (should that increase be higher then that should be used as the uprating for the basic allowance and the SRAs appropriately. If there is a pay freeze this provisional increase should also be revisited).**
- (ii) Members should only be able to claim one Special Responsibility Allowance (at the highest rate applicable).**
- (iii) The multiplier for the Chair’s Allowance be set at 4.9x basic allowance giving an allowance of £16,395 from 1st April 2024 and £17,175 from 1st April 2025.**
- (iv) The Vice Chair’s allowance be set at 2.48x basic allowance giving an allowance of £8,298 from 1st April 2024 and £8,692 from 1st April 2025.**
- (v) The Committee Chair’s Allowance be set at 1.45x basic allowance giving an allowance of £4,52 from 1st April 2024 and £5,082 from 1st April 2025.**
- (vi) The allowance for the Non-Executive Directors placed on the board of Red One Ltd should be set at 2.2x basic allowance at £7,361 from 1st April 2024 and £7,771 from 1st April 2025.**

- (vii) The allowance for the Local Pensions Board should be set at 0.15x basic allowance giving an allowance of £501 from 1st April 2024 and £525 from 1st April 2025.**
- (viii) The allowance for Independent Members of the Audit & Governance Committee should be set at 0.5x basic allowance giving an allowance of £1,673 from 1st April 2024 and £1,753 from 1st April 2025.**
- (ix) From 1st April 2026 uprating of allowances should continue to be linked to any annual increase agreed by the NJC for Local Government Services (Green Book). In the event of a flat-rate increase arising from the Green Book pay award in any future year, the automatic uprating applied should be the percentage increase on the overall Green Book staffing budget resulting from the pay award.**
- (x) Travel rates should be linked to the rates published by HMRC and uprated as appropriate.**
- (xi) Subsistence should be linked to the employee scheme and uprated as appropriate.**
- (xii) Overnight accommodation should be approved via Democratic Services based on the introduction of the following guidelines:**

Members would be eligible for overnight accommodation when:

- o A Member is attending a residential event as the Devon and Somerset FRS's appointed representative.*
- o Attendance at a non-residential meeting by a member as the Devon and Somerset FRS's appointed representative would require them to leave home before 7.00am or arrive back home after 11pm.*

When booking accommodation, either via Democratic Services or directly, there is an expectation that reasonable effort be made to book as far in advance as possible to secure the best rate available.

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority) is a body corporate and as such is required to have a scheme of allowances. These allowances are set under *The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003*.
- 1.2. In setting the level of allowances the Authority must have regard to the recommendations made by any Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) in relation to any local authority that nominates members to the Authority. Fire and rescue authorities are not required to set up their own Independent Remuneration Panel but may conclude that some external, independent advice is appropriate. This Authority decided to appoint an advisor to undertake a review. The advisor and author of this report, Bryony Houlden, is Chief Executive of South West Councils. The author is also currently Chair of the Torbay Council Panel and a Member of the Devon County Council, Plymouth City Council and Somerset Council Panels. She also undertook the previous reviews for this Authority in 2012, 2015 and 2019. SW Councils supports the work of IRPs and produces comparator information on allowances across the South West for the use of panels and advisors.
- 1.3. The authority merged in April 2007 and the first review of allowances following the merger took place in 2008. Members did not take an increase in allowances between that period and the 2012 review. The 2012, 2015 and 2019 reviews recommended new levels in the allowances scheme and that increases between reviews be linked to the NJC for Local Government Services, a recommendation which was accepted. As a result, the basic allowance has risen to its current level of £3,194 for 2023-24.
- 1.4. The Authority has now requested a further review of the allowances scheme recognising that the regulations specify that adjustments of allowances must not rely on an index for longer than four years.
- 1.5. In developing the recommendations, I was helped by input from members through a questionnaire and series of interviews. The recommendations are based on the evidence I have gathered, I am not required to take account of the budget impact, but it is clear that financial pressures are continuing. It will be for members to consider these in deciding whether to agree the recommendations in full or in part.
- 1.6. In preparing this report I was very grateful for the helpful support and advice from Sam Sharman and her colleagues from the officer team who provided factual advice and information.

2. Background

- 2.1. Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service is the largest non-metropolitan fire and rescue service in England, covering almost 4,000 square miles. The service protects 820,000 households, 74,000 businesses and a further 1.1m visitors a year. The service has 332 emergency response vehicles and 1,915 staff.
- 2.2. The Fire Authority leads Devon and Somerset FRS, setting the strategic direction, setting and overseeing the budget and ensuring the delivery of the overall objectives. The Authority is comprised of 25 elected members drawn from the four constituent local authorities – Devon County Council, Somerset Council, Plymouth City Council and Torbay Council.
- 2.3. The structure supporting the authority's work is:
- Full authority meetings take place 4 times a year although in 2023/24 there were two extraordinary meetings.
 - A supporting committee structure comprising:
 - the Appraisals & Disciplinary Committee (meeting as and when required)
 - the Audit & Governance Committee (meeting 5 times a year)
 - the People Committee (meeting 4 times a year)
 - the Resources Committee (meeting 4 times per year)
 - the Community Safety Committee (meeting 4 times a year)
 - Hearing Panel (Audit and Governance) (meeting as a minimum once a year and then as and when required)
- 2.4. In addition, there is a monthly Members' Forum to update the Authority on important issues outside of the formal process. This is held virtually.
- 2.5. Finally, there is member representation on the Local Pensions Board which meets quarterly.

3. Purpose

- 3.1. The purpose of this review is to provide recommendations (together with the rationale for those recommendations) covering the following issues:
- The level of the Basic Allowance for 2024/25;
 - The level and number of Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs) for 2024/25;
 - An appropriate mechanism for annual uprating of the Basic and Special Responsibility Allowances from 2024 onwards; and

- The level of travel and subsistence reimbursement from April 2024 together with an appropriate mechanism for uprating.

4. Methodology

- 4.1. In producing the report, I have considered:
- i. The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) Regulations 2003 and the Guidance issued by the Department for Communities and Local Government
 - ii. The LGA Scheme of Members' Allowances
 - iii. The current Allowances scheme and the previous independent report
 - iv. Evidence obtained directly from questionnaire which 6 members completed (this was disappointingly low although it is the same level as the response in 2019 and higher than in 2015, there was also an initial technical glitch). A number of members were interviewed, and all members were given the opportunity to contact me as the independent advisor.
 - v. The allowances schemes for the constituent authorities: Devon County Council, Somerset Council, Plymouth City Council and Torbay Council.
 - vi. Benchmark data on combined fire and rescue authority allowances schemes across England.

5. Basic Allowance

- 5.1. The current basic allowance from 1 April 2023 is £3,194. This was increased from the 2022 rate based on the percentage increase on the overall Green Book staffing budget resulting from the pay award of 5.8%.
- 5.2. As set out in the guidance, (referred to at 4.1 (i) above) the basic allowance is intended to: *“recognise the time commitment of all councillors, including such inevitable call on their time as meetings with officers and constituents and attendance at political group meetings. It is also intended to cover incidental costs such as the use of their homes”*. The basic allowance paid *“must be the same for each councillor”* and it cannot be based on measures such as attendance at meetings.
- 5.3. The allowances provide some recognition of the commitment of elected members but are not intended as a salary. The expectation is that members will still be ‘volunteering’, giving ‘public service’ and therefore not all hours will be recompensed. There is no set amount recommended for the “public service” element – in the previous report setting the current level of allowances a 30% figure was used. However, it is important that a value is placed on members commitment of time

and taking on the serious responsibilities of being part of the Authority. It is also important that the allowances scheme does not act as a barrier to ensuring a diverse range of members reflecting the community it serves.

- 5.4. In previous reviews, members were invited to record detailed information about contact time. This information produced was very variable with only 6 returns and was also a time-consuming exercise for members, so a separate monitor of time was not requested in this review. This review asked members to complete a more general questionnaire which did ask about average hours worked as well as a range of other questions. The response in terms of hours worked was again very variable. In response to the question on average hours worked in a week, the responses ranged from 1 to 20 hours and comments included the fact they were difficult to estimate as the workload was very variable.
- 5.5. The responses in the questionnaire and the interviews provided evidence that there was a fairly even split between members who thought the allowance was too low with others of the view it was at the right level.
- 5.6. It might be deduced that the low response rate to the questionnaire and the lack of requests to meet me as the independent reviewer means that members are generally happy with the level of the allowance. I am of the view that whilst there might be some merit to this view there are other factors likely to be in play including that members are very busy and might think responding to the questionnaire makes no real difference. I hope in future reviews it might be possible to increase the return rate.
- 5.7. In the previous reviews, several options were considered in reaching a conclusion about the methodology for setting the basic allowance. These included using the current daily rate as advised by the Local Government Association, which is now £348, or a calculation as used by Devon County Council using median salaries. The variability of hours recorded as work make these measures less useful, in my view, than benchmarking which I have concluded that the most helpful information for the purposes of this review.
- 5.8. Benchmarking can be done in two ways. First, benchmark the information from constituent authorities. The basic allowance in the four constituent authorities range from £9,428 to £15,500. The guidance does not specifically suggest that this is an appropriate benchmark group given the different nature of the activities and business but it is a useful background figure and as all the members of the authority will be in receipt of one of these allowances it sets further context.
- 5.9. I believe the other more relevant benchmark data is from other combined fire and rescue authorities. The data obtained is the most up to date available on websites but two date back to 2021/22 and the majority date back to 2022/23. This reveals a range of basic allowances from £1,158 - £6,569 with the average basic allowance being £3,079.

5.10. If different benchmark groups are taken from within the whole fire and rescue authority data set, there are other permutations. First, a geographic benchmarking group from the “South West”: Dorset & Wiltshire and Avon. Second, a benchmark group of authorities with broadly similar sized budgets and population: Dorset & Wiltshire, Hampshire, Kent and Lancashire. These groups have been used in previous years as the appropriate comparators.

Table 1:

Combined Fire Authorities Average and Range	SW Authorities (Avon, Dorset/Wiltshire excludes Devon & Somerset) Average and Range)	“similar sized” FRSA (Dorset/Wiltshire, Hants, Kent, Lancashire) Average and Range
£3,082	£3,585	£3,857
£1,158-6,569	£2,970-£4,200	£1,569-£6,569

5.11. These comparisons shows that the current basic allowance for the authority is reasonably aligned with the totality of combined fire and rescue authorities. It is lower than the average for the South West group but it should be noted there are only two in the group with a wide range.

5.12. The average of the “similar size group” is higher but again there is a wide variation of levels of basic allowance: from £1,569 in Kent to £6,569 in Hampshire. It is worth noting that the highest level paid in Hampshire may reflect the fact the authority is made up of only 11 Members. The other three authorities in this benchmark group have 25 Members (Kent and Lancashire) and 18 in Dorset and Wiltshire.

5.13. Following the last review allowances have been rising in line with officer pay settlements, I am recommending below that this continues but for the coming year the pay settlement has not been decided. So, to give certainty for the members allowances budget the recommendation is that the allowance for 2024/25 be set without the pay settlement data but taking account of information gathered as set out above. I have also taken account of the CPI rates for September 2023 (6.3%) and October 2023 (3.2%) – the mid point being 4.75%.

5.14. It is important, in my view, that allowances are not allowed to substantially slip behind in comparison with other fire authorities and as noted above it is also important that they attract a diverse range of members reflecting the diversity of the community served. Whilst Devon and Somerset Fire Authority is above the overall average the allowances are below the average of the South West and ‘similar sized’ benchmarking group averages.

5.15. However, given the lack of evidence of member dissatisfaction with the current level of allowance I have not proposed a very substantial increase to bring the allowances in line with the averages of other benchmark groups instead I am suggesting increases of 4.75% both in

2024-25 and 2025-26 with the caveat that should officer salaries increase more than this the level in 2025-26 then that should be used as the uplift or if there is a pay freeze this should be revisited. The increases over two years allow the Basic Allowance to move closer in line with the averages of the SW and Similar sized authorities benchmark groups (whilst recognising these are likely to have changed over the 2 year period).

5.16. **I am therefore recommending the basic allowance be set at:**

- **£3,346 from 1st April 2024 and**
- **£3,505 from 1 April 2025 provisionally set, (subject to officers increase not being more that 4.75%or there being a pay freeze).**

In monetary terms the 4.75% equates to increases of £152 and £159 respectively.

5.17. Whatever the level of the basic allowance, its payment clearly brings with it the expectation that Members will continue to put in the commitment, attending meetings, contribute to the debate and take a lead role in constructive challenge to the service.

6. Special Responsibility Allowances

6.1. Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs) are payable to those members who have significant additional responsibilities. The regulations stipulate the grounds upon which an SRA can be paid but do not prohibit payment of more than one SRA to any one member. However, it is widely adopted practice to limit the number of SRAs payable to any individual member to one. One of the reasons may be the view that members only have so many hours in a day so if they are taking on one demanding role in addition to that of the basic councillor responsibilities then there is limited scope to effectively undertake other roles.

6.2. **I am recommending a continuation of the policy of allowing only one SRA per Member (at the highest rate applicable).**

6.3. The current scheme pays the following SRAs:

Table 2:

Chair of the Authority	£15,971
Vice Chair	£7,928
Chair of Committee	£4,700
Non-Executive Directors Red One Ltd	£7,228
Local Pensions Board	£479

- 6.4. In reaching conclusions on the way forward consideration has been given to benchmarking information. Using the information about the totality of combined fire and rescue authorities and the same benchmark groups of similar sized fire and rescue authorities and the SW fire and rescue authorities provides the following data:

Table 3:

	Combined Fire Authorities Average and Range	SW Authorities (Avon, Dorset/Wiltshire) Average and Range	“similar sized” FRSA (Dorset/Wilts, Hants, Kent, Lancs) Average and Range
Chair:	£13,528 [£23,231-8,952]	£ 11,048 [£12,496-9,600]	£15,314 [£20,574-9,600]
Vice Chair:	£6,839 [£16,593-2,923]	£3,862 [£4,800-2,923]	£6,322 [£8,973-3,285]
Committee Chair:	£2,817 [£7,500-561/£0]	£5,204 [£7,500-£2,907]	£3,795 [£7,500-£1,624]

- 6.5. The benchmarking data shows there is considerable variation across the fire authorities. This is not just variation in amounts paid but what allowances are paid – for example Kent does not pay an allowance for committee chairs but pays political group allowances as do some other. Some pay different allowances for different committees, for example Dorset Pays £7,500 for finance and audit but other committee chairs get £1,600. Comparators are therefore just a guide.
- 6.6. SRAs are often set by reference to the basic allowance with a multiplier assessed for each post which attracts a SRA. This approach has been previously adopted for a number of Allowances. **I am recommending the continued use of multipliers as a clear and transparent way of setting allowances.**
- (i) **Authority Chair**
- 6.7. The authority chair’s allowance was confirmed at a multiplier of 5x in previous reviews, on that basis it is now set at £15,971.
- 6.8. In previous reviews the chairs allowance was identified as being below the average of the similar sized fire authorities. On the current benchmarking assessment, the chair’s allowance is above all the benchmarking averages (but as noted not all the data is for the same time period). This has probably been helped by the multiplier approach which not all other authorities use.

- 6.9. All the survey responses and interviews suggested that the allowance was currently 'about right' evidence also suggests the role of the authority chair will continue to have a high level of commitment and responsibility given the current challenges, and opportunities, facing the authority. It is also important that the chair's allowance (along with others) does not start to slip behind.
- 6.10. Taking these considerations into account **I recommend that the multiplier for the authority chair be set at 4.9x basic allowance** but that this multiplier be kept under review to ensure it does not drop too far against benchmarking. **This gives an authority chair's allowance of £16,395 from 1 April 2024 and £17,175 from 1 April 2025** (assuming the basic allowance is increased as per the recommendation above). This would be the fourth highest of the combined authorities benchmarked.

In monetary terms this delivers increases of £424 and £780 respectively.

(ii) Authority Vice Chair

- 6.11. The multiplier applied to the role of Authority Vice Chair's has varied over different reviews following evidence presented at the time of those reviews. The last review proposed a reduction to 2.48x basic allowance. All but one respondent to the survey saw the level of this allowance as about right, the one disagreeing felt it was too high.
- 6.12. In looking at benchmarking evidence, this authority's Vice Chair allowance at £7,928 remains, higher than the average of all the benchmark groups with only three combined fire authorities paying more than Devon and Somerset Fire Authority.
- 6.13. **I previously recommend that the multiplier for the Authority Vice Chair be set at 2.48x basic allowance. My recommendation is that this is the appropriate multiplier which gives an SRA for the Authority Vice-Chair of £8,298 from 1 April 2024 and £8,692 from 1 April 2025** (assuming the increase in basic allowance is accepted). This would still be the fourth highest of the combined authorities benchmarked.

In monetary terms this delivers increases of £370 and £394 respectively.

(iii) Committee Chairs

- 6.14. The allowance for committee chairs has also varied over reviews and the last review suggested there should be a reduction and the review should particularly consider this allowance. The survey results showed all but one member thought the level of the current allowance was about right, one thought it was too low.

- 6.15. There are currently four committees with allowances payable to the Chair of the committee:
- Audit and Governance Committee
 - People Committee
 - Resources Committee
 - Community Safety Committee
- 6.16. There is an additional committee: the Appraisals and Disciplinary Committee which meets as and when required and is chaired by the authority chair. There is also a Hearings Panel linked to audit and governance. For avoidance of doubt, **I am not recommending any SRA should be attached to the work of either of these.**
- 6.17. The benchmarking exercise shows that the authority's allowance level for committee chairs is higher at £4,700 than two of the benchmarking groups. The three benchmark groups have the following averages: £2,817; £5,204 and £3,795. The SW Benchmark group and the 'similar size' group have their average skewed by Dorset and Wiltshire FRS's figure of £7,500 for the Chair of Finance and Audit, they pay other chairs £1,600 which if used would bring the average down to £2,254 (South West Group) and £1,828 (similar size) substantially.
- 6.18. Dorset and Wiltshire are not the only authority to pay differential rates for committee, but no evidence was presented to suggest that there should be a differential rate for different committees at Dorset and Somerset. I am therefore proposing the same rate for all chairs.
- 6.19. The committee chairs allowance is the third highest in the benchmarking behind Cambridgeshire and Dorset and Wiltshire and second highest if Dorset and Wiltshire's 'other chairs' figure is used.
- 6.20. There is no question that committee chairs work hard and take on considerable responsibility. However, the committee chairs allowance is still relatively high in comparison with other SRAs.
- 6.21. **I recommend that the committee chair SRA should be set at a multiplier of 1.45x basic allowance i.e., £4,852 from 1 April 2024 and £5,082 from 1 April 2025** (assuming the basic allowance is increased in line with the recommendation above).

In monetary terms this delivers increases of £152 and £230 respectively with the allowance still being third (or second) highest in the benchmarking group.

(iv) Non-Executive Director (NED) roles on Red One Ltd

- 6.22. The role of NED on Red One Ltd is currently £7,228.
- 6.23. Guidance recognises that non-executive directors may be remunerated although it is sometimes the case that these positions are not remunerated. Under the Local Authorities (Companies) Order 1995 Part 2, Regulation 5 the authority members appointed as non-

executive director of Red One Ltd are “regulated directors” for the purposes of the regulations (with Red One similarly being a “regulated company”). 5(1)(a) limits the amount of remuneration payable to a regulated director, with 5(3)(a) defining that limit as: “*greatest amount which would for the time being be payable...in respect of a comparable duty performed on behalf of the authority, less any amount payable by that authority in respect of the relevant duty*” (paragraph 5).

- 6.24. Red One has recently been subject to a governance review but the outcome of this is not yet known, if this makes any changes there may need to be a further review of the allowance. For the purpose of this review **I am recommending the use of a multiplier for this allowance too and that it should be set at 2.2x basic which would mean an allowance of £7,361 from 1 April 2024 and £7,711 from 1 April 2025.**

In monetary terms this delivers increases of £133 and £350 respectively.

(v) Local Pensions Board

- 6.25. In the last review an allowance was recommended for the Local Pensions Board representative. The LPB was established by the Authority in 2015 in accordance with the requirements of the Firefighters’ Pension Scheme (Amendment)(Governance) Regulations. The role of the Board is to assist the Authority (as Scheme Manager) in ensuring the effective and efficient governance and administration of the Scheme. The allowance was set at 0.15x basic allowance: £479.

- 6.26. **I am recommending that there should continue to be an allowance for the member of the Local Pensions Board and this should be set at 0.15x basic allowance: £501 from 1 April 2024 and £525 from 1 April 2025** (assuming the increase in basic allowance is accepted).

In monetary terms this delivers increases of £22 and 24 respectively.

(vi) Independent Members of the Audit & Governance Committee

- 6.27. The review has considered this role for the first time. There is no legislative direction on the Authority to appoint independent members to its Audit & Governance Committee. The CIPFA Position Statement: Audit Committees in Local Authorities and Police 2022 - for the audit committees of all relevant authorities (including combined fire and rescue authorities) to have, as part of their membership, at least two co-opted independent members to provide appropriate technical expertise. The Authority does, however, has the power, under Section 102(3) of the Local Government Act 1972 (the Act), to appoint co-opted members to any of its committees. Co-opted members may not exercise a vote. This means that attendance at meetings need not be physical. This in turn means that any associated recruitment process

may be national, rather than restricted to the immediate locality. The remuneration was set by the Authority at its meeting on 26 September 2022 as 0.5 of the basic allowance.

- 6.28. **I am recommending that Independent Members of the Audit and Governance Committee should continue to have an allowance set at 0.5x basic allowance: £1,673 from 1 April 2024 and £1,753 from 1 April 2025** (assuming the increase in basic allowance is accepted).

In monetary terms this delivers increases of £75 and £80 respectively.

7. Uprating mechanism

- 7.1. As part of my recommendations, I am recommending specific increases to the basic allowance for two years and the SRAs increasing in line with their multiplication factor. However, I have caveated that the second year (2025-26) should be revisited if the increase in officer pay (NJC Green Book) would increase the basic allowance above the recommendation.
- 7.2. **I am recommending that following the two-year period, from 1 April 2026 the annual uplift should be based on any agreed annual increase for officer pay agreed by the NJC for Local Government Services (Green Book).**
- 7.3. In the last two years (2021-22 and 2022-23) the Green Book agreement has been a flat rate. **I am recommending that, in the event of a flat-rate increase arising from the Green Book pay award, in any future year, the automatic uprating applied should be the percentage increase on the overall Green Book staffing budget resulting from the pay award.**

8. Travel and Subsistence

- 8.1. **I am recommending that there should be a continuation of the link to HMRC rates and reimbursement for employees:**

(i) Reimbursement of approved mileage be linked to the rates published by HMRC. Currently:

- 45p per mile for the first 10,000 miles pa.
- 25p per mile for mileage over 10,001 miles pa.
- Passenger rate is 5p per passenger per mile (max 4 passengers).
- Bicycle allowance: 20p per mile.

Any increases or decreases to these rates by HMRC should automatically be reflected in the payment to Members in the future.

(ii) Subsistence allowances should be the same as for employees, with any changes in rates reflecting changes to the employee scheme. Currently set at:

- Breakfast: £7
- Lunch: £10
- Tea: £4
- Evening meal (if returning home after 8pm) £12
- Evening meal if staying overnight £22

8.2. In relation to the cost of overnight accommodation this may exceptionally be reimbursed subject to agreement through Democratic Services, but **I am recommending the introduction of the following guideline to ensure transparency and consistency:**

OVERNIGHT ACCOMMODATION

Members would be eligible for overnight accommodation when:

- A member attends a residential event as the Devon and Somerset FRS's appointed representative.
- Attendance at a non-residential meeting by a member as the Devon and Somerset FRS's appointed representative would require them to leave home before 7.00am or arrive back home after 11pm.

When booking accommodation, either via Democratic Services or directly, there is an expectation that reasonable effort be made to book as far in advance as possible to secure the best rate available.

**Bryony Houlden
December 2023**

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Agenda Item 9

REPORT REFERENCE NO.	DSFRA/23/27
MEETING	DEVON & SOMERSET FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY
DATE OF MEETING	11 DECEMBER 2023
SUBJECT OF REPORT	STRATEGIC BUSINESS CHANGE PLAN – TRANCHE ONE
LEAD OFFICER	CHIEF FIRE OFFICER
RECOMMENDATIONS	<p><i>(a). That the Authority considers the contents of this report and endorses the planned areas for change;</i></p> <p><i>(b). That, subject to (a) above, the planned areas for change be included within the proposals for the Revenue Budget and Council Tax 2024-25 to be considered at the Budget Meeting in February 2024.</i></p>
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	<p>The purpose of this report is to give visibility and assurance to the Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Authority (“the Authority”) of the steps that the Executive Board is taking to ensure future sustainability of Devon and Somerset Fire & Rescue Service (“the Service”).</p> <p>The Chief Fire Officer (CFO) is proposing to make changes to the current service delivery operating model to address the predicted budgetary deficit as reported within Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) in accordance with powers as set out within the Authority’s approved Scheme of Delegations. The aim is to boost productivity and facilitate diversity and inclusion within the workforce. This will begin the step change towards achieving the Service’s desired future Target Operating Model (TOM).</p> <p>This paper outlines some of the key areas of focus that are within the first tranche of the ‘Sustainable Transformation Programme’. They include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A change to Whole Time Duty Systems; • Changes to the operating model for specialist rescue capability (SRT); • Amendments to the Pay for Availability remuneration agreement; • Amendments to the policy and practice for dealing with unwanted fire signals; and <p>This report set out the case for change and plans to address current and future challenges.</p>
RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS	As indicated in the paper.

EQUALITY RISKS AND BENEFITS ANALYSIS	An initial assessment has not identified any equality issues emanating from this report.
APPENDICES	None.
BACKGROUND PAPERS	CRMP artwork long table 2022.pdf (dsfire.gov.uk)

1. **BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 In January 2020, the Authority approved a series of proposals which were innovative, progressive and driven from staff and public feedback. They were designed to improve the reliability of emergency cover, in particular for On-call stations. The proposals also removed resources such as appliances and stations that were not needed and provided investment where it was needed to improved services. This work has been implemented gradually under the Service Delivery Operating Model (SDOM).
- 1.2 The work undertaken over the past three years through the SDOM has addressed the most significant risks as identified within what was the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP), now the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP). The current CRMP 2022-27 sets out and explained what the key risks facing our community are. This also explained in broad terms what the Service would do to mitigate against these risks. A commitment was made to increase preventative activities in order to make our communities safer. We also gave a commitment to relocate resources to match the changing risk profiles.
- 1.3 The high-level actions to reduce the risks faced by our communities are covered within four high level strategic priorities set by the Fire & Rescue Authority. These are:
- Priority 1: Our targeted prevention and protection activities reduce the risks in our communities, improving health, safety and wellbeing, and supporting the local economy;
 - Priority 2: Our operational resources provide an effective emergency response to meet the local and national risks identified in this plan;
 - Priority 3: Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service is recognised as a great place to work: our staff feel valued, supported, safe, and well-trained to deliver a high performing fire and rescue service; and
 - Priority 4: We are open and accountable, using our resources efficiently to deliver an effective, sustainable service that demonstrates improving public value.
- 1.4 The Authority continues to scrutinise performance against these strategic priorities at its Committees. Priority 4 is key in the current economic climate and the Service is striving to provide an efficient and effective service in the face of diminishing resources. The amount of money available is also reducing so there is a need to ensure the efficient and effective use of resources in order to provide the best service to the communities of Devon and Somerset.
- 1.5 The Service has not been immune to the impact on finances seen across the globe over the last year or so. There is a responsibility to deliver a balanced budget for 2024-25 and beyond in line with the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP). The financial gap as highlighted within the MTFP has been the subject of recent report to the Authority.

- 1.6 The savings required to meet the budget deficit are due to a number of factors including unfunded and unbudgeted pay awards, a cost-of-living crisis and an increase in utilities and resources. To do nothing now is not an option. There is a need to drive organisational transformation further to deliver two key priorities:
- Financial sustainability
 - Creating a more inclusive organisation
- 1.7 The Service will continue to develop and set out a longer-term strategy in line with the Community Risk Management Plan from 2025/26 up to 2027. To support the strategy paper, we will be commissioning a fire cover review for our service area. The review will model the risk areas against the demand placed on us under our capacity and capability project. This will allow the service to generate further options in line with the sustainable transformation programme.

2. PROPOSALS TO ADDRESS BUDGETARY DEFICIT

- 2.1. The specific purpose of this report is to:
- Identify the plans that are in scope;
 - Provide assurance to the Fire Authority, that plans are being developed to reduce the deficit outlined within the 2024/25 MTFP;
 - Provide an overview of the areas that officers are considering and will progress to outline business cases;
 - Ensure the support of the Authority to enable the proposals to be implemented in accordance with the approved Scheme of delegations, where appropriate; and
 - Highlight the proposals that may require consultation and subsequent approval of the Authority.
- 2.2. The focus for the first tranche of the change and improvement plan is for the following reasons:
- The financial benefits that are expected are required to meet the forecasted budget deficit over the next few years;
 - They provide opportunities for the Service to ensure we are resourcing to risk;
 - They provide the Service with an opportunity to position itself as an employer of choice welcoming diversity to the role of Firefighter and throughout the Service as a whole; and
 - To clearly outline the Service's case for change and plans to address current and future challenges.

- 2.3. Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service ("the Service") has a legal responsibility to present a balanced budget, which must be approved by the Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Authority ("the Authority"). The budget for the financial year 2024-25 will be considered and approved by the Authority at its meeting on 16 February 2024.
- 2.4. The Service regularly updates its Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP), using calculations such as expected funding of revenue support grants, precept receipts through taxation, income generation and forecast budget spend. This allows the Service to estimate if the current funding can meet the demands of our operating model or if there is likely to be a deficit in that funding. This is then forecast over a 4-year period.

2.5. In 2023-24, the Service was funded as below:

Formula funding grant	£7,293,000
Share of non-domestic business rates	£16,259,000
District councils collection funds	£61,860,000
Total	£85,412,000

- 2.6. The MTFP has demonstrated that the existing operating model is not sustainable against the backdrop of increased costs, primarily as a result of unfunded pay awards and across the board inflationary price increases. If the Service does not adapt, within the forthcoming 2024-25 financial year, it would face a revenue deficit of £3m, rising to circa £7.8m and £8.6m in 2025-26 and 2026-27 respectively. The Service's Extended Leadership Team (ELT) has been set a savings target of £4m for the forthcoming year and, if successful, this would allow a balanced budget to be presented in 2024-25 whilst also providing for the resumption of the revenue to capital contributions. This would, of course, also improve the Authority's longer-term financial position by reducing the forecast deficit in 2025-26 and 2026-27 to circa £3.8m and £4.6m respectively.
- 2.7. To this end, the ELT has been investigating options to reduce overall operating costs to bridge the impending budgetary gap. This is not an easy task due to the fact the Service's largest revenue spend is its people which equated to 79% of spend within the 2022/23 financial year.
- 2.8. The Service has reserves, however, these are earmarked to progress the extensive capital programme required to ensure that its appliances and estates are effective for the future. Based on the current capital programme, it is expected these Reserves will have been fully exhausted by financial year-end 2025/26 (assuming no call on this reserve is made to support the Service's core revenue budget). It is within this context that the Service must re-think the way in which it delivers to the public, ensuring that it is not only able to live within its annual funding envelope, but goes further to generate underspends to support a programme of capital investment.

- 2.9. Whilst the need to meet the MTFP and provide a balanced budget is a key driver for change, there is also the need for reform of the Service's operating model to ensure that it continues to strive to evolve in delivering even better services and outcomes for our communities.
- 2.10. The Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) identifies that the risks of climate change is increasing and will, in future, shape the national infrastructure and resilience. This, in turn, will shape the services to be delivered to keep our communities safe. This is combined with changes in the way people live their lives and changing demographics and behaviours, affecting local risk profiles. The Service must ensure it is agile enough to respond to these changes, planning and building for them now rather than dealing with them retrospectively. Therefore, all the decisions the Service takes will be cognisant of and using risk-based analysis.
- 2.11. In addition to this, the Service has committed in its target operating model to ensuring that it welcomes everyone and proudly exhibits its values and ethics. By promoting equality, recognising diversity, and championing inclusion, the workforce will be unified, more innovative, bring diversity of thinking and representative of the communities served. This is also a prominent consideration in all plans.
- 2.12. This paper outlines some of the key areas of change and corresponding 2024/25 savings amounting to **£1.752m** within the first tranche of the proposals. Alongside these reductions, a £5 council tax increase would conservatively deliver an additional **£1.3m** of funding. Together they total **£3.052m**.
- 2.13. These initiatives include:
- **(£1.3m)**: A change to Whole Time Duty Systems;
 - **(£0.133m)**: Changes to the operating model for specialist rescue capability;
 - **(£0.250m)**: Amendments to the Pay for Availability remuneration agreement;
 - **(£0.069m)**: Amendments to the policy and practice for dealing with unwanted fire signals.
- 2.14. The proposed plans are also formed on the basis of the desire to avoid the need for:
- Removal of front-line pumping appliances (also known as P1);
 - Station Closures; and
 - Compulsory redundancies
- 2.15. Each of the planned areas for change are addressed in more depths in the following paragraphs of this report.

3. WHOLETIME ESTABLISHMENT AND SHIFT PATTERNS

- 3.1. The Service runs a 2-2-4 shift system for its station based wholetime (WT) staff. This means there are 4 watches, made up of 7 members of staff (8 if they are a specialist rescue station) per station that work on a pattern of 2-day shifts, 2-night shifts and then 4 days off.
- 3.2. This is a popular shift pattern with some staff (not all, but for staff that have only ever worked in the Service it will be the only shift pattern that they know). It is not efficient and doesn't add the greatest value for money from a Service perspective to the communities served. It has been in place for over 40 years and is the only WT operational shift pattern available. The hours of work are 9-hour days between the hours of 09:00- 18:00, the night shifts operate over a 15-hour shift from 18:00 – 09:00 with staff standing down and resting from 00:00 – 07:00 unless they are involved in operational incidents.
- 3.3. As part of the Service Delivery Operating Model (SDOM) consultation in 2019, a change in wholetime duty system was considered but never concluded. Over the years, other Fire Rescue Services (FRS) have introduced different and more efficient shift systems which have supported a reduction in the number of operational personnel required to ensure a standard crew of 5 is available, ensuring optimum crewing levels are achieved 24/7. Introducing a new wholetime duty system will seek to achieve flexible working patterns, that would also remove current barriers of adding to the diversity of our workforce, demonstrating the Services commitment to equality and diversity and inclusion. The change would also ensure greater productivity would be achieved as there would be an increase in hours that could be used for community safety work and operational preparedness directly supporting the Authority's strategic priorities.
- 3.4. Due to the predicted financial deficit, the Service also considers this an attractive option as a change to shift system would enable significant financial savings which could be achieved via natural attrition, given the number of expected retirees planned over the course of the next 12 to 24 months and would not have any impact on the response to the community.
- 3.5. The Service currently budgets in the region of £23.2m on wholetime salaries for station based staff. If it is opted to do nothing, with inflation this is expected to rise to £24.8m by the 2026-27 financial year. The proposed changes in shift system will accommodate a potential saving in the region of £2.3m reducing the wholetime salary spend to £22.4m by the financial year 2026-27. This is based on the Service pursuing a form of an annualised hours system that is compliant with the nationally recognised Firefighter Grey Book terms and conditions.
- 3.6. ***Key Outcomes This Change Would Achieve For Wholetime Fire Stations.***
 - Ability to continue to ensure standard crewing of 5 wholetime firefighters per pumping appliance to maintain availability, ensuring that the required number of staff are always available, as per the current policy.

- Staff will have more choice in the shifts they work, giving more flexibility to meet personal commitments and a better work life balance. Improving opportunities for people from diverse backgrounds to consider the role of Firefighter as a career.
- A change would also need less adjustments for internal station alterations for sleeping provision requirements, as an annualised hours shift system could see shorter shifts introduced which would reduce the current need to provide sleeping accommodation. which would also open the doors for more cultural diversity to the role of firefighter.
- Supports increased efficiency in the Service's provision of response activity, and resultant savings, enabling the service to set a balanced budget.
- The working pattern is Grey Book compliant. Which are the agreed terms and conditions of service.
- It is expected that this approach would be beneficial to mobilising times at night as crews would be actively working and alert rather than resting.
- Build upon current utilisation of day duty staff (operational) to ensure maintenance of skills and command hours are achieved as applicable to the role and ensuring optimum crewing levels are maintained.
- Reduces the use of bank staff, pre-arranged overtime, or TOIL, which adds additional costs to the current system.
- Facilitates a positive working environment through movement of staff via a hub model, creating a more inclusive workforce and broadening local risk knowledge.
- Allow staff available for duty, but not required for response activity on a station, to undertake other service priority activities, such as Community Safety.

3.7. ***What does it mean in practice?***

- Staff are contracted to provide a set number of hours per year, after leave, and are asked to say when they are available to work (subject to business rules governing the system).
- Given an individual's stated availability, managers will ensure the correct amount of people are on duty, with the required competencies, to ensure there are always enough members of staff available per pumping appliance.
- Wholtime duty system staff would be expected to work at any station within their hub and sometimes any station within the Service as required. which is no change to the current policy, contracts and terms & conditions.
- This supports a change in shift start and finish times to mitigate peak time for incidents, for example, start and finish at 0700 and 1900 hours. This would support our strategic priority of providing the most effective response possible.

3.8. **Anticipated potential financial benefits (based on achievement via attrition).**

Option	Current Cost	Future Cost			Saving against 'As Is' cost			
		Year 1 FY24/25	Year 2 (+5%)	Year 3 (+2%)	Year 1 FY24/25	Year 2 (+5%)	Year 3 (+2%)	Total
1. As Is'	£23.2m	No change	£24.3m	£24.8m	-	-	-	-
2. Typical Annualised Shift System	£23.2m	£21.9m m	£22.0m	£22.4m	£1.3m based on a reduction of x26 posts	£1.01m based on a reduction of x18 posts	-	£2.31m

3.9. **Expected non-financial benefits.**

- Inbuilt flexibility ensures that staffing levels are consistent across the year;
- Cover can be provided at short notice by those who are available, providing increased resilience, without additional cost;
- Overtime does not become a consideration until the annualised hours of local resources are spent, therefore demonstrating cost avoidance;
- Where this system has been implemented in other FRSs short-term sickness rates have been reduced, because of the flexibility inherent in the system;
- Support a reduction in estates footprint and therefore operating costs as there will be no need to provide sleeping accommodation (which can also be a cultural barrier for some);
- Ability to dial resources up and down in line with Service risk;
- Increased hours available for community safety work and training to ensure the Service continues to employ professional staff who demonstrate operational competence; and
- Enables greater diversity into the role of firefighter, therefore providing improved outcomes to our communities.

3.10. ***Any associated risks with changes to WT shifts***

Risk	Mitigation
There is a potential for a dip in performance (as is usual for any significant change) during implementation as staff move along the change curve.	Planned staff engagement and good implementation planning involving middle managers to minimise service disruption.
The rep bodies may choose not to support the proposed changes which could lead to discord and disruption on a short-term basis.	Good engagement with Rep Bodies via the Employee Relations Committee, and ensuring the system chosen is compliant with grey book terms and conditions.
Achievement of full savings cited are dependent on moving forward with the proposed changes to Specialist Rescue.	Both proposals are cited within this paper, so the Service and FA are aware of the dependencies between each piece of work.
Having adequate systems in place to manage the change	There is a risk that the supplier may not be able to meet our demands for system change in the desired timeframes to make the savings as per the benefits realisation plan.
Attrition may affect benefits if they are not in line with current predictions	Regular workforce planning sessions will be undertaken to manage this.
Implementation may not keep pace with retirements, meaning current resilience is compromised for a period.	Regular workforce planning sessions will be undertaken to manage this.

4. **SPECIALIST RESCUE CAPABILITY CHANGES**

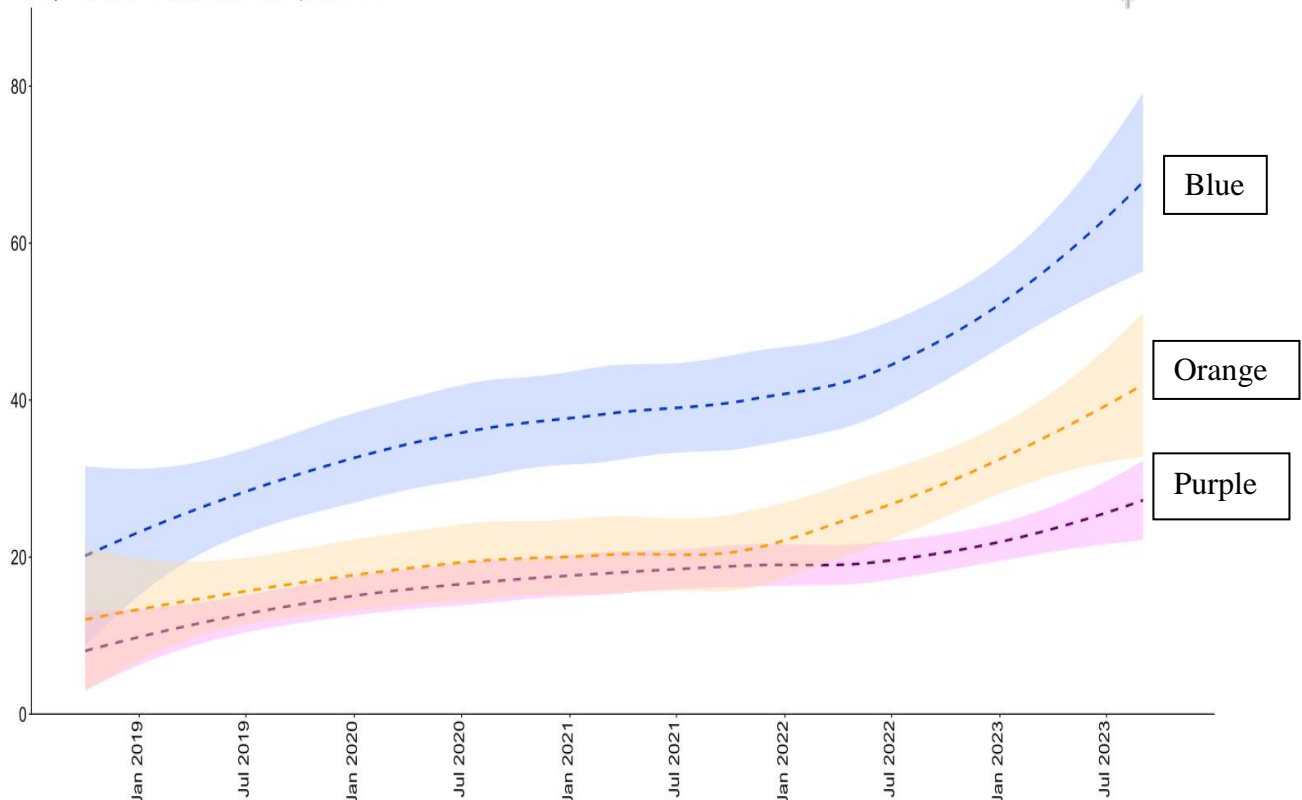
Case For Change

- 4.1. Currently the Service has 3 Specialist Rescue Teams trained in rope, water, boat, and animal rescue, these are based at Camels Head Station in Plymouth, Barnstaple Station, and Bridgwater station. A further water, boat and animal rescue station based at Exmouth Station and a water and boat trained team at Station 60 (known as USAR, based at Service Headquarters). Certain On-Call stations are trained with Level 2 working at height and confined space. High level options of change to how the Service delivers this capability have been investigated to ensure that the full context of risk, resourcing and cost have been considered.

- 4.2. The strategic case for change is driven by the commitment within the Community Risk Management Plan to review our specialist rescue capability to ensure that it is correctly located and have the appropriate crewing levels, training and equipment required to deal with incidents effectively and in the most efficient way. This also includes considering our flood response capability to ensure that all specialist rescue capabilities are matched to the risk and needs of our communities. It is key to also note that Specialist Rescue is not a statutory duty under the Fire & Rescue Services Act 2004, and, whilst the Service is not recommending or considering non-attendance at these incidents, it is also cognisant of the fact that the HMICFRS annual assessment of Fire and Rescue Services in England 2022, identified responding to fires and emergencies as an area that still requires improvements with the need for continuous review by FRS to ensure that;
- Fire and rescue services should continually review whether its resources are located where the risks lie.
 - Fire and rescue services should manage their resources properly and appropriately, aligning them with the services' risks and statutory responsibilities.
- 4.3. The Service currently operates with three levels of safe working at height & confined space (SHACS), with all stations being level 1 trained. 16 stations have been trained to a level 2 standard, which enables rescues trapped at height and securing casualties at height. Level 3 capability (animal, water, boat & line) ensures the Service has sufficient provision in place to be able to rescue their own staff should the need occur, level 3 also covers the requirements of level 2.
- 4.4. At present, all SRT personnel are trained to maintain the same levels of competence across each of the disciplines, however, as the data demonstrates, the risk profile across each station ground varies and therefore so do the types of incidents frequently attended.
- 4.5. The initial look into potential high-level options demonstrates that there is the ability for the Service to deliver the capability in a more cost effective and efficient way. Whilst the final options for consideration are yet to be fully defined, initial analysis has shown that there is potential to gain cost savings without significantly impacting the services that we provide. The Service currently spends in the region of £1m on specialist rescue capability. If it opts to do nothing, with inflation this cost is expected to continue to rise.
- 4.6. Through the Network Fire Service Partnership (NFSP a developed partnership with Dorset & Wiltshire and Hampshire Fire Services a response plan (identifies the pre-determined level of response sent to an incident) agreement was introduced with the Service. Often, our Service is exceeding this with the resource that it mobilises (in comparison to the other services in the partnership) which all has a knock-on effect to the day to day running commitment and cost to the service.

- 4.7. In development of any new operating model, there are several potential options that could be considered, supported through statistical data from 01/10/2018 to 30/09/2023. This data has shown that there have been 2399 alerts of resources to 1674 different incidents. Of which 1389 we attended (57.9%) 1045 (43.5%) of these were attended for a duration greater than 20 minutes. This is an indicator that is used to identify that meaningful activity has been carried out on the incident ground.
- 4.8. Whilst these numbers may appear significant, in comparison the Service attended nearly 4500 dwelling fires and 4000 road traffic collisions over the same period. This small number of specialist rescue incidents makes it more difficult to predict as the overall level of demand (away from specific locations) is low, however more detail will be provided within the full business case. It is also important to note that dwelling fires and Road Traffic Collisions (RTCs) have an agreed Emergency Response Standard (ERS) whereas specialist rescues does not.
- 4.9. The data demonstrates a potential over provision of specialist rescue resources in some areas and that the provision may not be matched to risk and may not provide value for money in comparison to other operational resources. Whilst the Service has seen an upward trend in the number of specialist rescue resources alerted to incidents since the start of 2022 this is not matched by the increase in attendances of over 20 minutes, meaning although resource mobilisations may have increased this does not necessarily equate to an increase in need.

Trend of SRT resources alerted by month (blue)
not attended or attended for under 20 mins (orange)
and attended for over 20 mins (purple)
May include more than one resource per incident



Potential Financial and Non-Financial Benefits

- 4.10. It is difficult to pinpoint the potential financial savings as options are still in the development stage. However, the initial data and risk analysis has posed a number of potential alternative operating models which could include removing some or all of the skills from specific stations and reducing the burden of this provision on the On-Call. This could generate savings up to £416,000.00 over three years or **£0.133m** in 2024/25.
- 4.11. Further savings may be realised through a reduction in FTE from 8 to 6 which is currently required for rope rescue. This will be dependent on the Services risk appetite and the supporting data.
- Other benefits associated with making a change are to assure that resources are matched to the risk and focused where most needed;
 - Reduce the current burden on some staff who struggle to maintain competency. (Under the introduction of NFCC competence framework, there is a likely requirement for each service to allocate an additional 12 on call drill nights per annum to ensure competence SHACS level 2 is maintained); and
 - Release capacity within the Training Academy for more training in other statutory operational areas.

Any Potential Associated Risks

- 4.12. A Fire and Rescue Service response is inherently about managing risk due to its very nature. This can never be fully eliminated in all that the Service does, however, below are some risks associated with making a change to the way the Service responds to specialist rescue incidents.

Risk	Mitigation
There is a potential for a dip in performance (as is usual for any significant change) during implementation as staff move along the change curve.	Planned staff engagement and good implementation by middle managers planning to minimise service disruption.
The rep bodies may choose not to support the proposed changes which could lead to discord and disruption on a short-term basis.	Good engagement with Rep Bodies via the Employee Relations Committee.
Having adequate systems in place to manage the change.	There is a risk that the Service current systems may not be able to meet our requirements without some additional development, this work would need to be prioritised internally.
Whilst the decision is being taken on a new operating model, on call staff may stop prioritising specialist Rescue training in anticipation of the change.	Clear communication to staff about the expectations of training to be given whilst any transition is in discussions competence led by middle managers for all station-based staff,

Risk	Mitigation
Service reputation may be impacted during transition to a new operating model if the community does not fully understand the impact of any changes.	Accurate messaging about what any changes mean to be communicated.
The data we captured may not be granular enough level for the Service need.	The Service will instigate a fire cover review in 2024 to support the current use of data, any changes will be carefully monitored and evaluated at regular intervals.

5. **PAY FOR AVAILABILITY ON CALL SYSTEM**

- 5.1. One of the key risks identified is the availability of the On Call fire appliances. The Service has 99 On Call appliances, the largest number in England, providing approximately 88% of the response capability maintained by the Service to deal with emergency incidents.
- 5.2. The Service initiated several projects under the Safer Together Programme to introduce measures to mitigate the risks identified. One of these projects was the introduction of a new duty system for On Call firefighters known as Pay for Availability (P4A). P4A was designed to support the recruitment and retention of staff into On Call roles and consequently enable the improvement of fire engine availability. This duty system was introduced in a staggered approach with the first group of six stations adopting P4A in October 2020 and the last group in December 2021. At the time, it was not possible to achieve a collective agreement with the Fire Brigades' Union (FBU) to introduce the new system, therefore, it was introduced with stations signing up on a voluntary agreement reached in accordance with the Industrial Relations 1 form (IR1) with the Fire & Rescue Services Association (FRSA). Within that agreement, it was set out that a review of P4A would take place from 12 months of implementation. That review is currently underway. 6 stations remain on the old system currently. So far, the review has identified potential areas for efficiency improvements.

Areas of focus identified

- 5.3. The first areas of focus have been identified as below.
- Consider stopping availability payments when the pump goes off the run (not available) Potential saving if availability and incident levels remain consistent. this was part of the original concepts.
 - Consider removing the provision for crews to receive payment for availability and payment for work activity at the same time (e.g., when at incidents, undertaking station duties etc.). this was part of the original concept.

5.4. **Further possible areas of focus may be:**

- Consider whether the inclusion of seven additional specialist appliance crew, for National Resilience assets, is providing value for money. The provision costs the service approximately £185K per year and is not funded through the government New Dimensions Grant.
- Consider reviewing the approach to the crewing of specials, in particular Aerial Ladder Platforms (ALPs), Water Browsers and Heavy Rescue Tenders. Currently the additional 18 on-call personnel employed to crew these resources cost the service approximately £475K per year.

5.5. Potential Financial Benefits to any changes include:

1. Currently there are several scenarios in which firefighters are paid for availability, even when their pump is off the run and there is a very low likelihood of those firefighters being called into action. This is estimated to have cost the service more **than £400k** in 2022/23 and is on course to do the same in 2023/24. This cost could be avoided if the P4A terms were to change.

Overall, making the changes outlined above where crews would receive a payment for activity and not for availability, could potentially save **over £465K** (plus on costs) based on activity levels for 2022/23.

2. At present crews receive a payment for availability and activity at the same time. Examples of work activities; attending an incident, drill nights and standard testing of equipment. The following section explores the potential opportunities where payment for availability or payment for work activity occurs at any one time.

5.6. It should be noted however, that to make these changes the Service would look to gain collective agreement to ensure the Service had one standardised on call system in place across DSFRS, as previous experience has demonstrated the difficulties in manging numerous different systems at once. This would mean that the Service would seek to bring the remaining 6 stations onto P4A which may reduce some of the stated financial benefits, but would provide consistency across the service which is agreed by the representative bodies. As such, we have conservatively assumed a saving of **£0.250m**, however, this is very likely to increase.

5.7. ***Any potential risks***

Risk	Mitigation
Financial savings made from changes may be absorbed into the cost of onboarding 6 more stations to P4A	The Service will ensure it accounts for this in its financial forecasting.
The Service may not gain collective agreement.	If collective agreement cannot be gained, the Service will need to further review P4A as a system to ensure long term sustainability. The relevant legal, operational, and financial considerations will be taken if a decision is made to adopt it or not. The Fire Authority maintain the right to consider if P4A has been successful as part of the original implementation agreement as part of the Safer Together Programme

6. UNWANTED FIRE SIGNALS

- 6.1. Fire alarms sound to alert people inside a building that there is a fire so they can escape and call the fire service. However, faults with systems and other issues can cause alarms to sound when there is no fire. The impact of mobilising appliances when they are not needed is not just financial. In addition to the monetary cost of mobilising appliances unnecessarily, the Service also:
- Increases its carbon footprint and contributes to poor air quality in the environment.
 - Increases road risk both to own personnel and the public.
 - Causes disruption to on-call personnel which impacts local businesses and the local economy when staff are disturbed from primary employment.
 - Disruption to whole-time work routines, interrupting crucial operational risk, prevention, protection, and training activities all of which are designed to keep our staff and the public safe.
- 6.2. It is clear, if we reduce unnecessary mobilisations to incidents where our crews are not used, we can provide a more efficient and effective service to the communities of Devon and Somerset.
- 6.3. This is an issue that is prevalent across the Fire Sector and several FRS have already changed their approach to unwanted fire signals or are in the process of doing so and have used or are using the National Fire Chiefs Council guidance documents for reducing attendance at Unwanted Fire Signals. For example, Scotland has implanted a policy to reduce unwanted fire signals, only attending where there is a sleeping risk such as hospitals, care homes and domestic settings during certain hours.

- 6.4. Fire services have for many years continued to attend fire alarms in non-domestic premises. In 2007 the regulatory reform order made it the responsibility of the 'responsible person' to provide a risk assessment and to deal with fire alarms and to investigate their origin.
- 6.5. The scale of the problem is large. The Service attended 4,946 incidents from fire alarm signals last year from 10,126 calls. Of these, less than 3% are because of fires and often are either out on or arrival or require little fire-fighting action, for example isolating at power source. Only 7 attendances out of over 4,946 mobilisations required firefighting with a hose reel jet.
- 6.6. Unwanted fire signals can be broken down into the following categories: -
- Alarm Commercial/Industrial (e.g. Factory);
 - Alarm Retail/Public assembly (e.g. Swimming Pool);
 - Alarm Residential (e.g. Hotel); and
 - Alarm domestic (House).
- 6.7. The Service is investigating and proposing to:
- Develop of outline proposal for call challenge for domestic and residential alarms to support Fire Control to help reduce mobilisations to unwanted fire signals;
 - Change our attendance model at non-sleeping risk, to attend only if there are signs of fire, Commercial/Industrial and public assembly (extending some of our non-attendance policies currently in place);
 - Investigate if alarms in the residential category can be sub-divided for improved call challenge.

Anticipated benefits from any changes to unwanted fire alarms

- 6.8. The Service will ensure any changes made are risk assessed and therefore will not be recommending a blanket non-attendance to any automatic fire alarm (overall costs to the service annually of unwanted fire signals are in the region of £500k) that alerts control, however if the Service was to review how it responds by:
- Reviewing its attendance at non-sleeping risk (commercial industrial and public assembly)
- 6.9. There is a potential financial saving of approx. **£69k per annum**. Additional cost avoidance would also likely be made from:
- Introducing formalised Domestic and Residential alarms call challenge.

- 6.10. However, this is not quantified currently. Before implementing any changes to this key area, the Service, would ensure it consults and engages appropriately with key stakeholder groups. It must be stated, however, that the non- financial benefit of any changes that would reduce unwanted fire signals are that the Service’s resources would be available to respond to real emergencies when needed, as well as not drawing staff away from community safety and operational preparedness activities.
- 6.11. It should be noted that the Service would send the full pre-determined attendance to any property where a 999 call reports a fire or smell of smoke.
- 6.12. ***Associated risks with changes to unwanted fire signal policy***

Risk	Mitigation
Impact on community through non-attendance for the small percentage of fire alarm signals that result in fires due to delayed attendance	Continuous evaluation to ensure risk is mitigated as far as practicable
Fail to deliver on our HMI requirements which aim to improve our overall scoring if unwanted fire signals are not reduced.	Clear rationale for any changes that are or are not made based on risk communicated to the HMI and additional work to reduce unwanted fire signals also cited.
Not gaining Community and Rep body buy in to implement proposed changes.	Clear consultation and engagement plan to be in place for all key stakeholders.
Reduced payments to on-call by non-attendance may affect morale/retention	Clear rationale of drivers for change and benefits to the community they serve to be communicated to staff via robust comms plan.

7. OTHER WORK PROGRESSING ACROSS SERVICE.

- 7.1. The ELT is also reviewing several areas of work across departments to ensure that efficiency gains are being acted upon, for example, there is also a review of:
- Light Fleet;
 - Standby Cover moves of operational resources;
 - Pre-Determined Attendance in line with our NFSP partners;
 - Flexi Duty Officer and rota review;
 - Ongoing professional and technical services capability modelling and reviews;
 - Environmental strategy; and
 - Review of estates strategy and requirements.

8. CONCLUSION

- 8.1. A Business case is under preparation for each of the areas for change identified within this report. It is anticipated that, with the exception of the AFA proposals, the planned changes would be undertaken within the CFOs delegated powers.
- 8.2. The CRMP for 2022-27 indicated that, if there was any review of the proposals contained within it that resulted in significant change to the service that communities received, these would be consulted upon further as required.
- 8.3. Details of any consultation to be undertaken will be reported to the Authority in due course.

GAVIN ELLIS
Chief Fire Officer

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