

DEVON & SOMERSET FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY

(Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Authority)

25 March 2024

Present:

Councillors Cook-Woodman (Chair), Biederman (Vice-Chair), Best, Brazil, Carter, Coles, Fellows, Gilmour, Hendy, Kendall, Randall-Johnson, Peart, Slade, Sully and Trail BEM

Apologies:

Councillors Atkinson, Chesterton, Clayton, Kerley, Patel, Power, Radford, Roome, Sellis and Sproston

DSFRA/23/40 Director of Finance & Corporate Services (Treasurer)

The Authority paid tribute to the work and contribution to the effective and efficient operation of the Authority of the current Director of Finance & Corporate Services, Shayne Scott, who would depart the organisation on 5 April 2024.

DSFRA/23/41 Arrangements for Authority Proper Financial Officer (Treasurer)

The Authority considered a report of the Clerk & Monitoring Officer (DSFRA/24/11) on the resignation, with effect from 5 April 2024, of the current Director of Finance & Resources and statutory officer for the proper administration of the Authority's financial affairs under Section 112 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988.

The report set out proposals to address the subsequent vacancy and which would also allow for the appointment of a new Chief Fire Officer and any subsequent changes in Service Executive Board level.

RESOLVED that, on resignation of the current post holder, the existing Service Head of Finance be appointed as the Authority's proper officer for the administration of financial affairs, in accordance with Section 112 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, for a period of twelve months to allow sufficient time for the appointment of a new Chief Fire Officer and review of Service Executive Board structure thereafter.

DSFRA/23/42 Localism Act 2011 - Pay Policy Statement 2024-25

The Authority considered a report of the Clerk & Monitoring Officer (DSFRA/24/12) to which was attached the proposed Pay Policy Statement to operate for the Authority for the forthcoming (2024-25) financial year.

The Localism Act 2011 required such a statement, setting out the Authority's policy towards a range of issues relating to the pay of its workforce (particularly senior staff and the lowest paid employees), to be approved prior to the commencement of each financial year and published, as a minimum, on the Authority's website.

The proposed Pay Policy Statement for 2023-24 had been updated to reflect current pay levels of senior officers and other staff and changes in relation to statutory officer appointments (Monitoring Officer and Section 112 [proper financial administration] officer) but other than that was unchanged from the previous year.

RESOLVED that the Pay Policy Statement for the 2024-25 financial year, as appended to report DSFRA/24/12, be approved and published on the Authority's website.

DSFRA/23/43 Appointments to Committees

(Councillor Brazil declared a non-pecuniary interest in this item by virtue of being an Authority-appointed non-executive director on the Board of Red One Ltd. and took no part in the voting thereon).

The Authority considered a report of the Clerk & Monitoring Officer (DSFRA/24/13) on changes in Committee appointments for the current (2023-24) municipal year stemming from establishment, at the Authority budget meeting on 16 February 2024, of a new Shareholder Committee and the consequential impacts on political proportionality for appointments to committee places.

RESOLVED

- (a). That Councillors Biederman, Cook-Woodman, Coles, Hendy, Peart, Slade and Sully be appointed to serve on the Shareholder Committee until the Authority annual meeting in 2024;
- (b). That, in accordance with Standing Orders:
 - (i). Councillor Cook-Woodman be appointed Chair of the Shareholder Committee until the Authority annual meeting in 2024; and
 - (ii). Councillor Peart be appointed Vice-Chair of the Shareholder Committee until the Authority annual meeting in 2024;
- (c). That the overall position on appointments to committees be reviewed to inform subsequent appointments for the 2024-25 municipal year at the Authority annual meeting in 2024.

DSFRA/23/44 Digital, Data and Technology (DDaT) Transformation Update

The Authority received, for information, a report of the Director of Finance & Corporate Services (Treasurer) (DSFRA/24/14) on progress with Service Digital, Data and Technology (DDaT) transformation.

The DDaT Department (formerly known as ICT) had been subject to five audit and performance reviews since 2020 which had identified that, while the Service performed well in some areas, the department was not fully meeting customer needs.

At its extraordinary meeting on 31 October 2023, the Authority had resolved to support internal reform of the department as opposed to outsourcing the function (Minute DSFRA/23/24 refers). The report identified progress made in relation to:

- Strategic leadership;
- Function cost;
- Build v buy and the cost for this;
- Engagement with service users; and
- Understanding of the DDaT function from service users.

DSFRA/23/45 Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Authority Performance Report 2023-24: Quarter Three

The Authority received, for information, a report of the Assistant Director, Corporate Services (DSFRA/24/15) summarising performance for the first three quarters of the current (2023-24) financial year against a selection of key performance indicators (KPIs) aligned to the four Authority-approved Strategic Priorities of:

- Targeted prevention and protection activities to reduce risks in communities, improve health, safety and wellbeing and supporting the local economy;
- Use of operational resources to provide an effective emergency response to meet local and national risks identified in the Community Risk Management Plan;
- Staff feel valued, supported, safe and well-trained to deliver a high-performing fire and rescue service; and
- Accountability and use of resources efficiently to deliver a high-performing, sustainable service demonstrating public value.

Detailed performance reports relating to all KPIs were submitted to relevant Authority committees on a quarterly basis thereby allowing for a high level of scrutiny.

The current report to the Authority was in response to a recommendation from the external auditor, Grant Thornton, that such a summary report be made to each full Authority meeting thereby enabling full oversight of key performance and financial issues. The report identified that eight of the 53 KPIs had a “requires improvement” status. All eight had been subject to review with exception reports, providing additional information and actions taken or proposed to improve performance, detailed in the report.

The Authority commented that future performance reports to the full Authority might benefit from the inclusion of reference to any previous discussions or requests by the relevant Committees in relation to the KPIs that were the subject of the report.

DSFRA/23/46 **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/24/16) on progress against actions to address those Areas for Improvement identified by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary & Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) following its last inspection of the Service in 2022.

The report identified that:

- All actions to address the Cause for Concern had been completed, with the subsequent closure recommendation approved by the HMICFRS Governance Board. This would now be presented to the Service Executive Board for review and approval;
- Three Areas for Improvement had been marked as "closed"; and
- Seven Areas for Improvement were currently recorded as "In progress – off track". In each case, the reasons for this were set out.

b **Culture Recommendations Update**

The Authority received, for information, a report of the Chief Fire Officer (DSFRA/24/17) on progress to address those recommendations contained in the report on values and culture in fire and rescue services published in March 2023 by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary & Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS).

Of the twenty recommendations for the fire and rescue sector:

- Fifteen had been closed, with evidence reviewed by the HMICFRS Governance Board and approved by the Service Executive Board;
- One was completed but awaiting approval by the Service Executive Board for closure; and
- Four were still in progress, with the recommendation deadline not met.

This information had been submitted to HMICFRS which had requested all fire and rescue services to provide a final update on the status of progress against the recommendations by 19 March 2024.

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