

DEVON & SOMERSET FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY

19 December 2024

Present:

Councillors Atkinson, Brazil, Carter, Clayton, Coles (Chair), Fellows, Gilmour, Hendy, Kendall, Lugger, Randall-Johnson, Peart, Power, Roome and Trail BEM

Apologies:

Councillors Best, Biederman, Cook-Woodman, Kerley, Radford, Sellis, Sproston and Sully

DSFRA/39 Minutes

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 31 October 2024 be signed as a correct record.

DSFRA/40 Minutes of Committees

a Appointments & Disciplinary Committee

The Chair of the Committee, Councillor Coles, **MOVED** the Minutes of the meetings held on 6 November 2024 which had considered the appointment of a Deputy Chief Fire Officer.

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

b Resources Committee

The Chair of the Committee, Councillor Peart, **MOVED** the Minutes of the meeting held on 22 November 2024 which had considered, amongst other things:

- A report on Treasury Management performance for quarter 2 of the current (2024-25) financial year as compared to the treasury management strategy; and
- The financial performance for quarter 2 of 2024-25 as measured against the agreed performance indicators together with details of forecast spending to the year-end (31 March 2025) and explanations of any major variations against budget;

RESOLVED

- (a). That the recommendation at Minute RC/24/7 to approve the budget transfers shown in Table 3 of report RC/24/18 (and reproduced below for ease of reference) be approved:

Line Ref	Description	Debit £m	Credit £m
	<i>Movement of the ESMCP reserve into the Change & Improvement Reserve. The delay in the project for the replacement radio network has meant this reserve is better allocated to the Invest to Improve reserve.</i>		
	Increase Change & Improvement Reserve	0.480	
	Decrease ESMCP Reserve		(0.480)
	<i>Transfer some of the reported underspend into the Capital Reserve to ensure borrowing is delayed further in the future.</i>		
32	Transfer to Earmarked Reserve	1.000	
4	Professional & Technical		(0.500)
28	Investment income		(0.500)
		1.480	(1.480)

(b). That, subject to (a). above, the Minutes be adopted in accordance with Standing Orders.

c **Audit & Governance Committee**

The Chair of the Committee, Councillor Roome, **MOVED** the Minutes of the meeting of the Audit & Governance Committee held on 29 November 2024 which had considered, amongst other things:

- An update from the Authority's external auditor, Bishop Fleming, on the position with the audit of financial statements for 2023-24;
- An internal audit 2024-25 progress report submitted by the Devon Assurance Partnership; and
- An internal audit report following up on outstanding actions associated with those audits receiving an opinion of "limited assurance".

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

d **Community Safety Committee**

The Chair of the Committee, Councillor Hendy, **MOVED** the Minutes of the meeting held on 13 December 2024 which had considered, amongst other things:

- A report on performance as at Quarter 2 of the current (2024-245) financial year against those Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) falling within the remit of the Committee and aligned to Authority-approved Strategic Priorities 1 and 2;
- An update on the performance of the Service's Risk Dependent Appliances (RDA) between October 2023 and September 2024; and
- A report detailing the Service's Community Road Risk Safety team activity locally, regionally and nationally.

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

DSFRA/41

Medium Term Financial Plan Update 2024-25 - Quarter 3

The Authority received for information a report of the Treasurer (DSFRA/24/38) which provided an update against the Medium-Term Financial Plan for the Authority's funding, income and expenditure forecasts for the next five years (2024-25 to 2028-29), as required by the Fire & Rescue National Framework for England.

The Treasurer gave a presentation at the meeting following receipt of the Government's financial settlement for 2025-26 which was announced on 18 December 2024. The presentation highlighted the following key points:

- The Revenue Support Grant allocation was £11.882m with the Top Up grant of £11.418m;
- There had been a 2% increase in the National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR) taking this to £5.513m; and
- The Authority would cease to continue to receive grants for rural services, continuation of services and funding guarantee with pension being the only grant continues at £3.5m.

It was noted that the increase in National Insurance for Employers' from 13.8% to 15% from April 2025 was expected to cost the Authority an additional £1.1m. It had been anticipated that there may be a grant towards this to cover 100% of this cost but it was understood now that the grant would cover only 52% of this increase - £0.596m although it was likely this would not be confirmed until February 2025.

The budget assumptions included a 2% pay award across the board and had taken account of other financial pressures and savings identified to address the budget shortfall. The Government had indicated that the Authority would be given the flexibility to raise Council Tax by £5 in addition. Overall, this would result in a £1.469m budget deficit for 2025-26. The Treasurer advised that it was anticipated that this shortfall could be addressed through the use of a budget smoothing reserve and an addition to the vacancy margin for professional and technical staff. Further work would be undertaken on the budget figures before presentation for informal discussion at Members' Forum in January 2025.

The Authority drew attention to the point that, whilst the Government had given the flexibility to raise the Council Tax by £5 to fire and rescue authorities and the MTFP included this provision, the economic climate was such that this may not be affordable for many households in Devon and Somerset. The Treasurer was requested to include the option of a £5 increase in Council Tax alongside that of the original 2.99% in the figures to be presented in January 2025 which he undertook to provide.

DSFRA/42

Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Authority Performance Report 2024-25: Quarter 2

The Authority received for information a report of the Director of Service Delivery (DSFRA/24/39) on performance to the end of Quarter 2 of the 2024-25 financial year against Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) aligned to Authority-approved Strategic Policy Objectives.

In particular, the report focussed on those measures in exception (i.e. requiring improvement) and, where appropriate, the outcome of scrutiny undertaken by the respective committees in relation to these.

The measures in exception were:

- KPI 1.8. – number of persons requiring hospital treatment due to a non-domestic premises fire:
- KPI 2.2. – percentage of level four operational risk sites in date for revalidation;
- KPI 2.8. – percentage availability of risk dependent pumping appliances; and
- KPI 3.16. – operational competence: percentage of staff in Safety at Height and Confined Spaces (SHACS).

The Director of Service Delivery advised that, whilst the numbers involved in measuring KPI 1.8. were small, it was important to continue to monitor performance on this measure.

In relation to KPI 2.2. which had also been in exception in quarter 1, the Director of Service Delivery reported that performance in this area had improved and the next report would show this measure was no longer in exception.

Reference was made to KPI. 2.8. which had been in exception for some time. The Director of Service Delivery explained that this measure was likely to continue in this way in future due to the issues experienced with the availability of On Call staff. The point was made that the Fire Cover Review was examining all areas of risk within the Service. It was anticipated that potential options emanating from the Fire Cover Review would be reported back to the Authority for consideration early in 2025.

The Authority was apprised that there had been issues with the data associated with KPI 3.16. on operational competency under SHACS which was being addressed. A full report thereon would be submitted for consideration at the next meeting of the People Committee.

DSFRA/43 Appointment to Outside Body

The Authority considered a report of the Clerk to the Authority (& Monitoring Officer) (DSFRA/24/40) seeking approval to appoint the Vice Chair of the Audit & Governance Committee, Councillor Kerley, to be the Vice Chair of the Devon Assurance Partnership's Management Committee until the Authority's Annual meeting in 2025.

RESOLVED that the Vice Chair of the Audit & Governance Committee, Councillor Kerley, be appointed as the Authority's representative on the Management Committee of the Devon Assurance Partnership until the Authority's Annual Meeting in June 2025.

DSFRA/44 Local Pension Board - Amendment to Terms of Reference

The Authority considered a report of the Clerk to the Authority (& Monitoring Officer) (DSFRA/24/41) setting out a proposed amendment to the Terms of Reference for the Local Pension Board.

RESOLVED that the amendment to the Terms of Reference for the Local Pension Board set out at Appendix A of report DSFRA/24/41 be approved.

DSFRA/45 Exclusion of the Press and Public

RESOLVED that the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A (as amended) to the Local Government Act 1972, namely:

- information relating to an individual;
- information likely to reveal the identity of an individual; and
- the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

DSFRA/46 **Restricted Minutes of the Appointments & Disciplinary Committee held on 6 November 2024**

(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).

RESOLVED that the Restricted Minutes of the meeting held on 31 October 2024 be signed as a correct record.

DSFRA/47 **Red One Ltd. Financial Consideration**

(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).

Councillor Brazil declared a non-pecuniary interest in this matter by virtue of being an Authority-appointed non-executive director on the Board of Red One Ltd. and did not vote thereon.

The Authority considered a report of the Head of Finance (Treasurer) (DSFRA/24/42) setting out details of a financial consideration for Red One Ltd.

RESOLVED that the financial arrangement detailed in report DSFRA/24/42 be approved.

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

The Meeting started at 2.10 pm and finished at 3.27 pm