

Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority Chair's Report of the Meeting held on 24 June 2020

Vote of Thanks and Welcome

The Fire Authority gave a vote of thanks to Councillor Kelly Middleton from Telford & Wrekin Council who left the Fire Authority in May.

The Fire Authority welcomed Councillor James Lavery from Telford & Wrekin Council to the Fire Authority.

Code of Corporate Governance 2019/20

Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority is committed to the principles of effective corporate governance and has, therefore, adopted a Code of Corporate Governance, which is based on guidance issued by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers (SOLACE).

The Fire Authority has conducted its annual review of the Code of Corporate Governance and agreed the recommendation of its Standards, Audit and Performance Committee that the Code be formally adopted.

Appointment of Clerk and Monitoring Officer and Deputy Monitoring Officer

As a consequence of Jonathan Eatough, who has been the Fire Authority's Clerk and Monitoring Officer since December 2008, leaving Telford & Wrekin Council, the Fire Authority considered the appointment of a replacement Clerk and Monitoring Officer.

The Fire Authority agreed to continue to use Telford & Wrekin Council for Monitoring Officer provision and confirmed the appointment of Anthea Lowe, Associate Director: Policy & Governance as the Monitoring Officer. The Fire Authority have requested that Anthea Lowe appoints a suitable Deputy Monitoring Officer to act in her absence.

Statement of Accounts 2019/20

The Fire Authority received a report, setting out the key revenue issues, which have arisen from work on the Statement of Accounts 2019/20.

In February 2019, Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority approved a revenue budget of £22.288m for 2019/20 and set a 2.99% precept increase (equivalent of 5p per week for a Band D household):

The revenue budget was therefore funded as follows:

Council tax income £16.565m; Non-domestic rates from authorities £1.529m; Business rates top-up grant £2.350m; and Government Grant £1.844m; giving £22.288m

The financial outturn was £21.252m with underspends being achieved in pay, legal services, training, development, prevention and technical services budgets and additional income and grant leaving a balance of £1.017m available for distribution to reserves.

The Fire Authority agreed that

- £100,000 should be added to the STP Staff Reserve
- £70,000 should be added to the Equipment Replacement Reserve
- £450,000 should be added to the Income Volatility Reserve; and
- The balance (currently £397,000) should be added to the Major Capital Projects Reserve

It was recognised The General Fund balance is subject to audit and therefore these figures may change.

Draft Integrated Risk Management Plan 2021-25 – Consultation

The Fire Authority has approved the publication of draft Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) 2021-25 for public consultation and the Service's proposed methodology for that consultation process.

The IRMP is the Fire Authority's overall plan for improving public safety. It consists of an overview of fire and rescue related risks and sets out high-level plans for identifying, assessing and mitigating the identified risks.

One of the key objectives of the Strategic Fire Alliance between this Authority and Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service is to align the integrated risk management planning processes for both Services. Officers from both Services have therefore worked collaboratively to develop Shropshire's IRMP and Hereford & Worcester's Community Risk Management Plan 2021-25 (CRMP) using the same approach to identifying and assessing risks and to managing those risks through core prevention, protection and response activities.

There is a statutory requirement for a 12-week period of public consultation to be undertaken before the IRMP is finalised and formally adopted by the Fire Authority. Due to the current Covid-19 pandemic, the consultation will primarily be conducted via an online process utilising the Service's website, press and social media channels and with virtual focus group meetings being held. This will be the Service's first experience of using social media to help with targeting communities for consultation.

The consultation process will commence in July 2020 and consultees will include the general public; the Service's employees and their representative bodies; and other

key groups such as neighbouring fire and rescue services, Police and local authorities. Fire Authority Members will support the consultation process by assisting officers with staff engagement work; using social media to share the IRMP consultation; and using their community knowledge and contacts to match IRMP proposals to the appropriate community groups.

The Scheme for the Payment of Members' Allowances 2020/21

The Fire Authority has agreed its Scheme for the Payment of Members' Allowances 2020/21.

The Scheme has been updated to reflect the recommendations of the review of Member Allowances that was undertaken in November 2019 by the Independent Remuneration Panel of Telford & Wrekin Council.

In addition, the Fire Authority's travel and subsistence allowances will be amended to align them with local authority travel and subsistence schedules.

Service Response to Covid-19

The Fire Authority received an overview of the planning and measures that have been put in place to enable the Service to continue to deliver its services during the pandemic whilst also assisting partners to mitigate the impacts of Covid-19 on vulnerable individuals and communities within the county.

The initial planning stages focussed on resilience planning and the introduction of preventative measures to ensure that the Service could maintain an effective emergency response to incidents and enable its support services to continue to operate effectively. This was facilitated by numerous methods, including

- Suspension or postponement of activities such as non-essential training, multi station exercises, Safe and Well visits and attendance at community events
- Minimising staff movement between stations and restricting access to critical areas such as Fire Control
- Limiting the number of riders on On-Call appliances to five to ensure social distancing principles are adhered to
- Increased cleaning across all the Service's locations
- Provision of mobile devices and access to agile working systems to enable effective homeworking for support staff

Absence rates have been monitored throughout the pandemic and these have remained significantly lower than the initial planning assumptions where the Service was estimating that absence levels could peak at 20%. The highest level of absence for the Service was 7.2% in week commencing 30 March 2020 and as of 24 June 2020, Covid-19 related absence was at 0.7%.

The Service has engaged with a wide range of partners during the course of the pandemic, mainly through the Tactical and Strategic Co-ordination Groups, and

practical support undertaken involves assisting with the delivery of personal protective equipment to primary and social care settings in the county and Service employees supporting Shropshire Council with welfare checks for vulnerable and shielding individuals.

As lockdown measures are relaxed at the national level, the Service is considering its response to these changes and have created a series of corporate objectives to support this restoration phase. The objectives are to make its workplaces safe; to restore full service in a restricted environment; and to remain flexible and adapt quickly. A group of key stakeholders has been established to support these changes and will seek to identify best practice to enable the Service to continue service delivery, support partners and contribute to minimising the spread of Covid-19.

Collaborative and Partnership Working

Partnership working is a key element in the Fire Authority's strategy to meet its vision of "Putting Shropshire's Safety First". It is also a key theme of the Fire Service National Framework. The Fire Authority and the Service are actively involved in a number of partnerships, which are risk assessed for liability and reputation and scrutinised by the Service's Risk Management Group. This Group maintains a partnership register and monitors the outcome and productivity of each of the partnerships.

Over recent years the Service has developed many partnerships, which primarily support its prevention activities providing a means to target some of the most vulnerable people in the community. All partnerships have been risk assessed and measurable objectives set.

The Fire Authority has received a report, giving details of the more significant partnerships, with which the Service is involved, in relation to its prevention and operational response activities and Equality and Diversity.

Appended to the report was a Fire Alliance Update Report. This reported on the progress with each of the four priority projects developed by the Fire Alliance (the Alliance) between Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service and Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service. The Alliance has been in place since 2018 with the purpose of supporting the long-term sustainability of both Services by enhancing their capacity and resilience.

The Alliance currently has four key areas that it has identified as foundation activities that will in time support wider future working. These are Fire Control; Integrated Risk Management Plan; Information and Communications Technology; and Procurement. The Update Report sets out the developments with each of these areas and the next phases of the projects. It also provided a summary of the efficiencies and savings achieved by the Alliance as it takes positive steps forward and becomes embedded in the day to day workings of both Services.

Corporate Risk Management Annual Report 2019/20

The Fire Authority has received an annual report on corporate risk management work during the last 12 months.

Ongoing monitoring of the Service's corporate risk management work is a responsibility of the Service Management Team and the Risk Management Group (RMG) with the Standards, Audit and Performance Committee receiving regular corporate risk management reports.

The RMG's primary function is to ensure that the Authority has an effective and efficient risk management process in place. The Group does this through reviewing the Corporate Risk Register, Departmental Statements of Assurance, Departmental Risk Registers and Internal Audit findings, highlighting, where necessary, issues or areas of concern through to the Service Management Team and/or the appropriate committee.

There are currently eleven open risks on the Service's Corporate Risk Register, which includes two new risks that have been added during this reporting year.



Eric Carter
Chair
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority
June 2020

Background Papers

Agenda and Papers for the Meeting of Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority held on 24 June 2020

The agendas and reports (with the exception of exempt or confidential items) for all Fire Authority meetings and those of its Committees appear on the Brigade's website:

<http://www.shropshirefire.gov.uk>

To access reports go to the Fire Service's website and follow the steps below.

- Click on 'About Us' in the red bar at the top of the page
- Click on 'Fire and Rescue Authority'
- Click on 'Meetings' in the list on the right hand side of the screen
- Click on '24 June 2020' and the various reports and appendices will be listed

If you have any difficulty with the website, please contact Lynn Ince, Executive Support Officer, on 01743 260225.