



Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority Chair's Report of the Meeting held on 21 February 2024

Capital Programmes, Treasury Management Statement and Capital Strategy

The Fire Authority confirmed its 2024/25 to 2028/29 capital programmes, and approved its Capital Strategy for the same period, together with its Treasury Strategy Statement for 2024/25.

Adequacy of Reserves and Robustness of Budget

The Fire Authority agreed the reserves, recommended by its Strategy and Resources Committee, and noted the Treasurer's assurances covering the robustness of the 2024/25 budget and adequacy of the reserves.

Revenue Budget 2024/25

The Fire Authority considered recommendations made by its Strategy and Resources Committee in relation to the revenue budget for 2024/25.

The Committee had recommended, and the Fire Authority approved, a precept increase of 2.99% in 2024/25.

Revenue Budget: 2023/24 Precept

The Fire Authority agreed:

- A net budget requirement of £29,198,100
- A total precept of £20,123,327 to be levied on the billing authorities
- A Council Tax resulting in a basic amount of Council Tax at Band D of £114.49
- The amount payable by billing authorities for 2023/24, as follows:

Council	Precept £
Shropshire Council	13,646,194
Borough of Telford & Wrekin Council	6,477,133
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	20,123,327

Annual Plan 2024/25

The Fire Authority has agreed the proposed format of its Annual Plan 2024/25. Authority has been delegated to the Fire Authority's Strategy and Resources Committee to agree the setting of corporate performance indicators and associated tolerances. This issue will be considered at the Committee's meeting on 21 March 2024.

Responsibility for agreeing the final layout and wording of the Annual Plan 2024/25 has been delegated to the Chief Fire Officer, in consultation with the Chair of the Fire Authority.

Annual Review of Charges for Special Services 2024/25

The Fire Authority has agreed that its special service charges be uplifted by 5%, which is the pay increase that has been awarded to firefighters for 2024/25.

As the standard method of increasing the special service charges is the application of the firefighter pay award for the year concerned, the Fire Authority has delegated this exercise to officers. Any future exceptions from this approach will be brought to the Fire Authority for consideration.

Amendments to the Pay Policy Statement 2024/25

The Fire Authority has conducted its annual review of the Pay Policy Statement and agreed changes to reflect the non-uniform pay award for 2023 and the revised National Joint Council pay award for Brigade Managers.

The amended Statement, as agreed by the Fire Authority will now be published as required under the Localism Act 2011, with updates being made as further pay awards are agreed.

Government Consultation Response to the Fire Reform White Paper

The "Reforming Our Fire and Rescue Service" consultation paper was first published in May 2022 and the fire sector, stakeholders and the public were given the opportunity to respond with their views. The consultation has now concluded, and the government has published its response. The Fire Authority received a summary report setting out the Government's vision for fire reform which is centred around three main themes:

People Talent and inclusion

The White Paper outlines plans to help fire professionals to further develop their skills and ensure that everyone could thrive in their work.

It also sets out the intention to build on existing progress to provide effective leadership of the sector and building capacity, embedding values, and nurturing talent within services.

Funding will be made available to support and widen the direct entry schemes which will allow more non-operational professionals to lead Fire and Rescue Services (FRSs).

Pay and role

The government will work with fire employers and unions to crucially review the National Joint Council (NJC) own mechanisms, operations, and transparency. This should be completed by early 2024.

If this does not result in meaningful change, the government will explore other routes to ensure a modern, fair pay system which constructively enables role reform in England.

Professionalism

Creating a College of Fire and Rescue

To assist in strengthening the overall professionalism of services it is proposed that a College of Fire and Rescue be created, with the most appropriate deliver model for this to be developed. Such a college would have responsibility for professional standards.

Raising standards

The White Paper will propose creation of a statutory code of ethics. Furthermore, the Home Office will place future responsibility for professional standards with the College of Fire and Rescue.

Governance

Governance Change

Although the White Paper outlined support for a single point of accountability for fire governance, it is not proposed to mandate the transfer of governance to Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs). Voluntary transfers and those facilitated in local devolution deals will be supported.

Operational Independence

Legislation will be introduced at the earliest opportunity to give chief officers operational independence, with FRAs retaining responsibility for their services.

Clarity will also be given on providing a clear separation of strategic and operational planning requirements, and overall governance.

The full document that will be set before Parliament can be accessed via the following link:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/657888bc095987000d95df2a/E02947034_Fire_Reform_Consultation_Resp_Accessible.pdf



David Minnery
Chair
Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority
February 2024

Background Papers

Agenda and Papers for the meeting of Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority held on 21 February 2024

The agendas and reports (except for exempt or confidential items) for all Fire Authority meetings and those of its committees appear on the Service's website:

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

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

- Click on 'About Us' 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 '21 February 2024' and the various reports and appendices will be listed

If you have any difficulty with the website, please contact Lynn Ince, Executive Support Supervisor via lynn.ince@shropshirefire.gov.uk .