

SOUTH YORKSHIRE FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY

MONDAY 16 JUNE 2025

Present

Councillor A Cherryholme (Chair)

Councillor R Taylor (Vice Chair)

Councillors: S Alston, B Anderson, S Ayris, S Ball, M Elliott, L McClean, M Morrell, R Reed, J Ridler

CFO Chris Kirby, ACFO Simon Dunker, Sue Kelsey (Director of People and Culture), Linda Haigh (Director of Finance and Procurement), Steve Locking (ICT & Digital Business Manager), Mark Lloyd (Procurement Manager), AM Paul Heffernan (South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service), Martin McCarthy (Monitoring Officer), Zoe Duddell, Rob Longley (Authority Governance Team)

Apologies

DCFO Andrew Strelczenie, AM Matt Gillatt, AM John Billings, David Peet (South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority)

Item 2 – Announcements

CFO Kirby advised he provided representation for South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue (SYFR) at the funeral of Firefighter Jennie Logan who was one of the two Firefighters that had been killed in Bicester, Oxfordshire in May 2025. He confirmed it was a very well attended event clearly marking the respect for Firefighters who pay the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty.

Item 3 – Urgent items

Nothing to note

Item 4 – Items to be considered in the absence of the public and press

Nothing to note

Item 5 – Declarations of interest by individual members in relation to any item of business on the agenda

Nothing to note

Item 6 – Reports by members

Nothing to note

Item 7 – Receipt of petitions

Nothing to note

Item 8 – To receive any questions or communications from the public, or communications submitted by the chair or the clerk and to pass such resolutions thereon as the standing orders permit and as may be deemed expedient

Nothing to note

Item 9 – Minutes of the Authority meeting held on Monday 28 April 2025

Minutes:

The Director of People and Culture noted on Page 20 that the People related Fire and Rescue Authority (FRA) is not a sub-committee and that it will be a full Fire and Rescue Authority meeting with a People focus. Minutes to be amended to reflect correct terminology.

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Authority meeting held on 28 April 2025 are signed by the Chair as a correct record once amended as per the above minutes.

Item 10– Minutes of the Local Pensions Board held on 30 April 2025

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Local Pensions Board held on 30 April 2025 are signed by the Chair as a correct record.

Minutes:

Councillor Ayris noted he was grateful for the tariff risk report being presented in a timely manner by the Director of Finance and Procurement during the Audit and Governance Committee.

Item 11– Minutes of the Audit and Governance Committee meeting held on 23 May 2025

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Audit and Governance Committee meeting held on 23 May 2025 are signed by the Chair as a correct record.

ITEMS FOR DECISION

Item 12 - Constitution Update

To inform Members of the changes made to the Constitution following the termination of the Service Level Agreement with Barnsley MBC.

The Constitution is reviewed at least annually in accordance with the articles contained therein and allows for other amendments to be made as appropriate. These are reported to the Authority following consideration by the Statutory Officers supporting the Authority.

Minutes:

The Monitoring Officer thanked the Director of Finance and Procurement for her work on the amendments. The Monitoring Officer advised once approved all updates to the Constitution would be consolidated and shared electronically with Members and advised if any points of the Constitution are unclear, he is happy to take Members through this.

In response to Councillor S Alston questioning if there was anything in the Constitution that would stop projects being divided up so that they came to less than £500,000 therefore not needing to be brought to the Fire Authority, the Director of Finance and Procurement advised there are general principles when managing public money that you don't break projects down to get under the delegation limit. She advised that the Capital Programme is shared with the Fire and Rescue Authority.

Councillor S Ayris asked about uncertainty about Fire and Rescue Authority and if there would be any future proofing to regulations following the discussions around the white paper on devolution.

The Monitoring Officer confirmed Members would be provided with guidance in the transition and any issues would be addressed. He confirmed if any changes in legislation were made these would be brought to the Fire and Rescue Authority and the Constitution will be updated. Councillor S Ayris provided thanks to SYFR members for work on the Constitution.

RESOLVED – That Members:

a) Noted the amendments made to the Constitution and agreed to the adoption with immediate effect.

Item 13 – Service Improvement Board Update

The ACFO, Director of Service Improvement, provided Members with a summary of the items raised and discussed at the Service Improvement Board in Quarter 4 2024/25.

One meeting was held during this period on 11 March 2025. The Service Improvement Board provides a strategic and critical role as a guardian of South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue's (SYFR) service improvement actions, which include the Areas for Improvement identified in His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) inspection reports.

HMICFRS visited SYFR for the Round 3 inspection in February and March 2025. This report provides an update on our inspection.

RESOLVED – That Members:

- a) Noted the contents of the report and provide further scrutiny and support to enable continuous service improvement.

Item 14 – Digital Transformation Programme Update

The ICT & Digital Business Manager provided Members with an update on the Digital Transformation Programme.

The Digital Transformation is considered a fundamental enabler for both modernising and making further improvements in the efficiency and productivity planning. In 2019 South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue, (SYFR) developed its first Digital and ICT Development Plan and Programme. Since then, an annual update and incremental development plan has been put in place and delivered. This new plan represents 2025 version of Digital Transformation, and when fully delivered, will signify a significant digital shift in SYFR's operating and business model across all functions and services. The estimated cost of implementing and delivering the Programme is contained within the 2025/26 Capital Investment Budget.

RESOLVED – That Members:

- a) Endorsed the Digital Transformation 2025

Item 15 - Productivity and Efficiency 2025/6 plan and 2024/5 update

The ACFO and Director of Finance and Procurement provided Members with a report on Productivity and Efficiency for 2025/6 plan and a 2024/5 update.

The Productivity and Efficiency Plan 2025/26 had been prepared in line with the Home Office guidance issued in February 2025 and details the Service's plans for increasing productivity and creating efficiency savings.

The National Framework sets a requirement that Fire and Rescue Authorities produce and publish annual efficiency plans in 2025/26 with plans that cover the productivity and efficiencies initiatives in 2024/25, and their intentions for continuing efficiencies and productivity in 2025/26 onwards.

Minutes:

The Director of Finance and Procurement advised the efficiency reported in this document is slightly different than how it has been reported in the quarterly financial report due to changes in Guidance from the Home Office which excludes certain items that had previously been counted from reporting as efficiencies but which are recorded as efficiencies in the FRA report. The main difference being income generation, recorded as an efficiency in the FRA report but in the report to the Home Office this is reported on a separate income annex. She confirmed it is the same information but that it is just presented differently.

The ACFO advised the real time live data presented in the report has been lifted from ORCA and that all Members have access to this system. The ACFO noted whilst this report focuses on emergency response staff, the Performance Framework will focus on the whole service and will provide a greater degree of reporting which will be fed into the FRA.

The ACFO highlighted a slight decrease in home fire visits but with an increase in the complexity in the people SYFR are engaging with, also noting that fire safety visits and safeguarding referrals have both increased.

In response to Councillor S Alston enquiring about the removal of contingency legal services and seeking assurance this wasn't putting SYFR at risk, the Director of Finance and Procurement advised that part of the budget previously sat within the Executive Team and hadn't been used in several years, as part of the SLA SYFR now have external contracts in place

so the team can access the legal support they need the cost of this will be reviewed and monitored.

Councillor S Ball requested more detail on what the strategic shift entails and how SYFR ensure that the 3.2% reduction in home fire safety visits does not compromise safety outcomes for vulnerable populations. The ACFO advised a station plan is developed and will look at local risk, so targets are moved station by station depending on their assessments. The plans are developed and supported by managers when looking at their local needs and depending on complexity of needs these visits may take longer.

The CFO added the Fire Service nationally, not just in South Yorkshire, needs to get better recording what work is undertaken acknowledging there is a lot of other work that SYFR are asking crews to do. He recognised that SYFR are not counting everything they do and that this needs to improve and that SYFR will continue to make improvements to ensure the public are getting value for money.

Councillor S Ball noted it is a fantastic to see an increase in safeguarding referrals but sought assurance on what mechanisms were in place to ensure the referrals result in timely and effective interventions.

The CFO advised people visited are specifically targeted and a lot of work is done with partners to identify vulnerability to fire as well as vulnerability to other things. SYFR continue to refine their approach to provide a service to those who need it most, referrals are then made to Police or the relevant local authority Safeguarding Officers, an element of collaboration is undertaken but ultimately the case is handed on. SYFR are then not getting too much of an update from the Local Authority in terms of progress due to GDPR and the information being confidential from that point onwards.

The ACFO advised Safeguarding teams leading the work sit on all local authority safeguarding panels and that leads are engaged, SYFR has worked to develop and use a standardised template allowing information to be received more effectively.

RESOLVED – That Members:

- a) Noted the report which is required to be published.

Item 16 - Financial Performance Report Q4 / Outturn Report 2024-25

The Director of Finance and Procurement provided Members with an overview of the Financial Performance Report Q4 / Outturn Report 2024-25.

At Quarter 4 (Q4), a further budget adjustment is proposed to reflect additional income and interest received and reduced energy budgets increasing the direct revenue contribution to capital by a further £0.550m (subject to Fire and Rescue Authority (FRA) approval Annex G).

Following the above, the revenue outturn for the 2024/25 financial year is forecast to be a small surplus of £0.011m, compared to the approved budget surplus of £0.027m. The surplus will be a contribution to the Emerging Risk Reserve as approved.

RESOLVED – That Members:

- a) Approved the forecast outturn surplus of £0.011m (after budget adjustment).
(Section A);
- b) Approved the five budget virements marked for FRA approval (Section A and Annex G);
- c) Approved the final position of the capital outturn of £4.406m for the financial year ending 24/25 (Section E).

Item 17 - Firefighter Pensions - Progress on Immediate detriment and Matthews

The Director of Finance and Procurement provided Members with progress on the Immediate detriment and Matthew's update.

This report provides an update on the progress of addressing legal rulings on pension cases against the Local Government Association (LGA) proposed timeline.

Despite significant efforts, several key issues remain unresolved, and new challenges have emerged. This report outlines these developments and their implications for South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue (SYFR) members and pensioners.

Minutes:

The Director of Finance and Procurement provided a further update that since the report was written confirming West Yorkshire Pension Fund are (WYPF) have processed 264 cases and, if run on the 30 June date provided, those members would get their statements.

In response to Councillor S Alston questioning if there was a time scale known for a fine and/or complaint being logged the Director of Finance and Procurement advised if issued, fines will come from the Pensions Regulator, WYP has been liaising with the regulator to advising on process, what action is being taken and they are up to date with current progress, The Director of Finance and procurement said she was not aware that any other Service had been fined. She confirmed that if members were unhappy with the services response to local complaints, further complaints could be made via the Pensions Ombudsman, acknowledging it remains a risk and SYFR won't know any further details until it is all resolved by the WYPF.

Councillor S Ball questioned the reasons behind the delay and sought confirmation if SYFR were earning interest on the money held until the issue is resolved and would this be used to pay any fines, if issued.

The Director of Finance and Procurement acknowledged the issue is very complex with several changes made to the guidance and tax legalisation provided from the HMRC and Government. The WYPF have experienced issues with updates to their systems, they did expand taking on an additional 24 Fire and Rescue Services and confirmed they have tried to recruit, unsuccessfully because there are many pension funds going through detriment challenges and the job is a specialist skill.

The Director of Finance and Procurement confirmed SYFR are no longer holding a reserve, some cases that had been paid in advance of the guidance being issued at risk would be claimed through the WYPF. She confirmed that SYFR invest spare cash in the markets. She also advised if a fine was issued this would be against SYFR and they would look at agreement with WYPF, also confirming there is guidance for compensation available to members.

The CFO recognised and shared frustration across the sector and acknowledged this had been ongoing since April 2015. He advised the Government had put a plan in place in terms of

remediation to resolve the issue however it is very complex and SYFR are doing all they can to try to speed up this process.

RESOLVED – That Members:

- a) Considered the report provided sufficient assurance on progress against the LGA timeline and noted the actions being taken to address the outstanding issues.

Item 18 - Asset Management Board Update Q4

The Director of Finance and Procurement provided Members with an Asset Management Board Update Q4 report.

The Asset Management Board (AMB) provides a strategic and critical role as a guardian of South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue's (SYFR) assets. The AMB's objectives are to achieve sustainable finances and efficient (and effective and compliant) use of property, fleet, operational equipment, information assets and stock.

This report provides a summary of the quarterly Asset Management Board held in April 2025.

RESOLVED – That Members:

- a) Noted the contents of the report and to provide further scrutiny and support to enable continuous and effective management of assets.

Item 19 - The Procurement Service - An Annual Update

The Procurement Manager provided Members with The Procurement Service - An Annual Update.

This report is presented at the request of the Chief Fire Officer to provide an annual update for the Procurement Service for 2024/25 alongside financial reporting at the start of the financial year.

The report covers current governance arrangements, the legislative updates related to the introduction of the Procurement Act and category reviews for current

procurement activity including savings and waivers. The final section provides details of service delivery for 2025/26 and priorities for the procurement service

Minutes:

Councillor S Alston sought confirmation of a start date in relation to Point 12 in the report for work at Elm Lane as it stated to start in Summer 2025. The Procurement Manager advised they are hopeful for this to begin in August 2025 and that an announcement will be made once confirmed. The ACFO added that the tender for this work closed on 13 June 2025.

Councillor Ball enquired what were the key savings achieved by the procurement services team in 2024/25 and what future savings are anticipated in 2025/26. The Procurement Manager advised a list can be provided to members and that Points 24 & 25 in the report shows a look ahead for 2025/26.

RESOLVED – That Members:

- a) Noted the contents of this report and endorsed the ongoing positive work of the Procurement Services team.

Item 20 - Fit for the Future Update

ACFO Dunker provided Members with a Fit for the Future Update.

RESOLVED – That Members:

- a) Noted the contents of the report and will provide further scrutiny on progress towards Fit for the Future.

Item 20 - Items for discussion in the absence of the press and public

Nothing to note

Summary of actions

Actions	Owner	Status	Timeframe
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Meeting 16 June To approve and consolidate the Constitution changes. To share with Members and publish on Fire Authority website	M McCarthy, Z Duddell, R Longley	NEW	Ongoing work is underway to be finalised and published by the end of August 2026
Meeting 28 April An introduction to the IMPROVES tool is included in Members' induction.	J Nanson, Z Duddell, R Longley	ONGOING	J Nanson to provide wording to Governance Officers to be added to Induction Pack currently being created. July 2025
Meeting 28 April Provide a six-monthly culture updates to the FRA so that assurance can be provided.	J Nanson	ONGOING	To be taken to meeting on 20 October 2025
Meeting 16 June Remove reference to sub-committee on Page 20 on the minutes for the Authority Meeting 28 April 2025	Z Duddell	NEW/ DISCHARGED	Minutes amended and final version published to website
Meeting 16 June To provide Councillor Ball with a list of key savings made in 2024/25	M Lloyd	NEW/ DISCHARGED	M Lloyd confirmed after the meeting he showed Cllr Ball a list of the savings.
Meeting 28 April The IMPROVES tool is embedded in the terms	J Nanson	DISCHARGED	Presented at Performance and

of reference for the new FRA boards that will be focused on People and Culture (until this meeting is established it is suggested that Performance and Scrutiny Board has a standing agenda item on culture that will encompass the current EDI one).			Scrutiny Board on 10 July 2025
Meeting 28 April The questions in the IMPROVES tool are transferred into an aide memoire.	J Nanson	DISCHARGED	Information has been added to the aide memoire
Meeting 28 April Review finance risk scoring for tariffs	L Haigh	DISCHARGED	Presented at Audit and Governance Committee 23 May 2025
Meeting 28 April For the IMPROVES Tool to be presented at the next CAG on Thursday 12 June 2025 so Members receive an update on our culture improvement journey to date and future plans.	J Nanson	DISCHARGED	Presented at CAG meeting 12 June 2025