

SOUTH YORKSHIRE FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY

MONDAY 24 NOVEMBER 2025

Present

Councillor A Cherryholme (Chair)

Councillor R Taylor (Vice Chair)

Councillors: S Alston, B Anderson, S Ayris, S Ball, R Bannister, M Elliott, M Morrell & J Ridler

David Peet (South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority SYMCA)

South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue (SYFR): , DFO Andrew Strelczenie, ACFO Simon Dunker, Linda Haigh (Director of Finance & Procurement), Steve Locking (ICT & Digital Business Manager) Sajid Boota (Financial Services Manager), Jill Nanson (Culture Programme Lead) AM Paul Heffernan, (Area Manager South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service), Chris Mee (Group Manager), Martin McCarthy (Monitoring Officer), Zoe Duddell, Rob Longley (Authority Governance Team)

Item 1 Apologies

CFO Chris Kirby, AM John Billings, Sue Kelsey (Director of People and Culture)

Kilvinder Vigurs (Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime)

Andrew Bosmans (Independent Member – Chair of Local Pension Board)

Item 2 – Announcements

The Chair provided condolences to former FRA Chair Councillor Charlie Hogarth's family after his recent passing and Members held a minute's silence in his honour.

Item 3 – Urgent items

None

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

The Monitoring Officer highlighted to Members that agenda Item 19 PPE Equipment is exempt from the public.

Item 5 – Matters Arising/Actions

None

Item 6– Declarations of interest by individual members in relation to any item of business on the agenda

None

Item 7 – Reports by members

A Member informed the FRA that two candidates didn't attend their planned interviews for the role of Independent Member for the Audit & Governance Committee so the position would go back out to advertisement.

A Member enquired about FRA Members having ID badges as this had previously requested. ACFO Dunker advised this was discussed with the CFO and he would enquire on the status of the request and progress if required.

Item 8 – Receipt of petitions

None

Item 9 – 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

None

10. Minutes of the Fire Authority meeting held on Monday 20 October 2025

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Authority meeting held on Monday 20 October 2025 were signed by the Chair as a correct record.

11. Minutes of the Local Pension Board held on Wednesday 8 October 2025

RESOLVED - That the minutes of the Local Pension Board held on Wednesday 8 October 2025 were signed by the Chair as a correct record.

12. SLA Post Implementation Update

The SLA Post Implementation Update was presented by the Director of Finance & Procurement.

In response to a Member raising they thought the initial appointment of the Monitoring Officer was a short-term solution the Director of Finance & Procurement advised that as part of the SLA this had been extended to 30 September 2026 to ensure the position is covered and to allow for more details to be sought regarding the impact of Devolution. Adding if the position needed to be amended in the meantime this would be brought back to the FRA Members.

RESOLVED - That Members noted the survey outcome and the ongoing appointment of Martin McCarthy as Clerk and Monitoring Officer.

13. Local Pensions Board Annual Update 2024-25

The Local Pensions Board Annual Update 2024-25 was presented by the Director of Finance & Procurement.

A Member sought clarification on the risk of potential fines being issued against reportable breaches, asking if the liability fell on SYFR.

Director of Finance & Procurement advised their understanding was that if issued a fine would come to the FRA adding however that several other Fire and Rescue Services and Pension Schemes are in the same position as SYFR and they are not aware of any fines being levied at this point but would advise Members if the position changes.

In response to a Member questioning if the governance of the Firefighter pensions scheme would be reviewed the Director of Finance & Procurement advised there were early indications that a proposal was under consideration to take Local Pension Boards into a National Pension Board for firefighter schemes. There had been no further updates in the last few months, but this would be fed back to the FRA once more information became available.

The Director of Finance & Procurement advised the Firefighter Pension Scheme an unfunded scheme and as such did not have funds to invest.

The Monitoring Officer informed Members that the current Chair of the Local Pensions Board, Andrew Bosmans, was stepping down from that position in January 2026 and a report would be brought to the next Authority meeting.

RESOLVED - That Members noted the tenth Annual Report of the Local Pension Board for 2024/25.

14. Asset Management Board October Update

The Asset Management Board October Update was presented by the Director of Finance & Procurement who advised Members that since this and the following report were created a Local Government Finance Policy statement had been released (on Friday 21 November). The Finance Team were working through the statement however it did show that Fire & Rescue Services will have a real terms protection and gave more positive information than previously expected, which could have possibly been a 2% reduction in government funding.

In response to a Member expressing concern over funding for SYFR with the Local Government Authority (LGA) and National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) calling for a review outside of the Fair Funding Review the Director of Finance & Procurement advised there has been a sustained campaign with local letters having been sent from the CFO and co-signed by the FRA Chair. Adding SYFR will continue to make representations if required

The DCFO added he attended a conference a few weeks prior at which the Fire Minister was present. They were sympathetic to the funding concerns that had been raised to them via letters from Fire and Rescue Services.

The DCFO advised Members one of the concerns that the organisation has, like many other Fire and Rescue Services was continued investment in estates, appliance replacement strategy and health and safety issues such as fire contaminates, advising of a possible different approach subject to sustainable funding from government grants in terms of making sure that estates were fit for purpose. This would allow for investment the right technology, equipment and appliances to continue to reduce the cost and increase efficiency.

RESOLVED - That Members:

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

15. Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2026-29

The Medium-Term Financial Plan 2026-29 was presented by the Director of Finance & Procurement.

Minutes:

The Director of Finance & Procurement noted more would be known once figures had been confirmed in December 2025 and a budget setting paper would be presented at February's FRA. That paper and the budget would also be discussed with Members at the January 2026 CAG meeting.

The Director of Finance & Procurement added that the real terms protection announced on Friday did put a different context to the report, however it would be looked at in more detail once funding is confirmed and SYFR would be well prepared for the budget paper in February.

The DCFO added that budget preparation was a difficult task to undertake but that it was usual practice for the MTFP to be presented to FRA Members in November with early figures, which may change in the future, in preparation for the budget paper the following February.

In response to a Member enquiring if there would still be a need for a £5 increase in council tax if a pay award was granted Director of Finance & Procurement advised that obviously it was a matter for the Authority to determine, however taking the precept at £5 would continue to build resilience to the Authority's budget and help maintain future objectives set out in the Authority's CRMP.

In response to a Member seeking assurance regarding the reserves in Annex F being reduced significantly the Director of Finance & Procurement explained the 4 main movements in reserves balances. Firstly, the insurance reserve had been reviewed and a new proposed minimum of £0.6m had been agreed by SLT based on uninsured risk. Secondly, the emerging risk reserve would be reduced to nil and spent on capital investments. Thirdly the general reserve would be reduced to a benchmark used by other Fire and Rescue Services of 5% of net expenditure, this was nearer £4m than the previous balance held of £5m. Finally, the reserve built for minimum revenue provision would no longer be required due to the updated MRP policy which prudently charges MRP on a straight-line basis as assets are used and so additional reserves are not required and can be released. This means that the new target reserve balance is under £5m, however, this reduction does mean that there will be less resilience to respond to financial risks reactively, so more proactive management of financial risks will be essential.

RESOLVED - That Members:

- a) Approved the updated Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for 2026/27 to 2028/29, acknowledging the key assumptions and modelling scenarios underpinning the forecast (see Annex A).
- b) Endorsed the reserves management approach as detailed in Section J, including the planned reduction and use of reserves, and noted the projected reserves position through March 2029 (see Annex F).
- c) Approved the allocation of £18.9 million for capital investment over the MTFP period, as set out in Annex D, with funding sourced from reserves, revenue contributions, and new borrowing as required.
- d) Noted the principal risks to the MTFP forecast, including uncertainties in government funding, pay awards, inflation, and other emerging risks, and acknowledged that the plan will be updated as new information becomes available (see Section K)
- e) Approved the revised Treasury Management Policy Statement recommended by the Section 151 to maintain a sustainable capital funding position. (Annex I)

16. Financial Performance Quarterly Report Q2 2025-26

The Financial Performance Quarterly Report Q2 2025-26 was presented by the Director of Finance & Procurement.

RESOLVED - That Members:

- a) Approved the forecast outturn deficit of £1.001m and the voluntary contribution to Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) of £1.7m. (Section A);
- b) Noted the financial risks and uncertainties facing the Service and Sector during the remainder of this financial year (Section A);
- c) Approved the increased use of reserves to fund capital and note the estimated change in General and Earmarked Reserves (Section C); and
- d) Noted the forecast position of the capital programme for the financial year ending 2025/26 (Section E).
- e) Noted the actual and forecast cashflows, loans and investments (Annex F).

17. Digital Transformation Update

The Digital Transformation Update was presented by ICT & Digital Business Manager.

RESOLVED - That Members noted the Digital Transformation Programme 2025 Update.

Items for discussion in the absence of the Public and Press

18. PPE & Equipment Management Project

The PPE Equipment report was presented by the Area Manager and the Group / Operational Risk Manager.

RESOLVED – That Members approved the investment and implementation of the iTrack PPE system.