

SOUTH YORKSHIRE FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY

MONDAY 17TH FEBRUARY 2025

PRESENT

Councillor C Hogarth (Chair)

Councillor A Cherryholme (Vice-Chair)

Councillors: L McClean, D Hutchinson, S Alston, S Ayris, M Morrell and C McKiernan

DCFO A Strelczenie, ACFO S Dunker, L Haigh and S Kelsey (South Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service)

D Peet (South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority)

S Smith (Fire Brigades Union)

R Asquith, D Challenger and C Smallman (Barnsley MBC)

APOLOGIES

CFO Kirby, P Heffernan, M Gillatt, Councillor Ransome, Councillor Knight and Councillor Ridler

ITEM 1 – APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received as above.

ITEM 2 – ANNOUNCEMENTS

None.

ITEM 3 – URGENT ITEMS

None.

ITEM 4 – ITEMS TO BE CONSIDERED IN THE ABSENCE OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

None.

ITEM 5 – DECLERATIONS OF INTEREST BY INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS IN RELATION TO ANY ITEM OF BUSINESS ON THE AGENDA

None.

ITEM 6 – REPORTS BY MEMBERS

None.

ITEM 7 – RECIEPT OF PETITIONS

None.

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

None.

ITEM 9 – MINUTES OF THE AUTHORITY MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 20 JANUARY 2025

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

ITEM 10 – ANNUAL REVENUE BUDGET AND COUNCIL TAX SETTING 2025/26

L Haigh presented the report to Members. The Fire Authority has a requirement to approve the 2025/26 revenue budget and set the council tax and precept by the legislate deadline of 1st March each year.

Members raised concerns regarding the following statement in the report:

‘Efficiencies have been reviewed by Asset Management Board and are considered safe (although not 100% likely) to be delivered.’

L Haigh explained that certain projects carried more risk than others, and a modified approach may be necessary.

A recorded vote was taken and recorded as follows:

- For approving recommendations, A, C, E, F G and H (8) C Hogarth, A Cherryholme, L McClean, D Hutchinson, S Alston, S Ayris, M Morrell and C McKiernan.
- Against the recommendations (0)
- Abstained (0)
- The recommendations were approved.

RESOLVED – That Members:

- i) Approved the Authority's 2025/26 Revenue Budget at Appendix A of the report.
- ii) Noted the S151 Officer's Section 25 Statement (Section M) confirming the robustness of the budget.
- iii) Approved the Capital Investment Strategy (Appendix H) including the updated Capital Programme and new approvals as set out in Section H and Appendix D of the report.
- iv) Endorsed the proposed approach for managing reserves as set out in Section J, noted that if further deficits emerge in the planning period, reserves would be used to address the funding gap.
- v) Noted the Treasury Management Strategy and Policy Statement as approved by the Audit Committee (Section L).
- vi) Approved the fees and charges schedule for 2025/26 at Appendix G of the report.
- vii) Approved a Council Tax Increase of £5 for 2025/26 (Section B).
- viii) Approved the recommended approach to financial management set out in the Executive Summary.

ITEM 11 – COMMUNITY RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN 2025-28

S Dunker presented the Community Risk Management Plan for 2025-28.

Councillor Alston inquired about the details provided on page 111 of the report regarding the resilience of emergency response drivers and whether there had been any success in recruiting new drivers.

S Dunker reported that the projects team was addressing the current drivers within the service, and there had been positive outcomes with newer staff members. Furthermore, contacts had been established with other companies to enhance resilience through training.

Councillor McKiernan requested clarification regarding the necessity of both on-call and full-time appliances.

S Dunker stated that on-call staff were deployed as needed; however, there had been challenges in recruiting on-call personnel. It was noted that the whole-time appliance had been utilised to fill the gap. In situations where both appliances were in use simultaneously, strategic measures would be taken to relocate appliances from different areas to mitigate the risks.

Councillor Ayris queried the consultation process with partners and stakeholders.

S Dunker stated that the Chief Fire Officer wrote directly to the police, neighbouring fire and rescue authorities, and other partners.

RESOLVED – That Members approved the Service's CRMP 2025 to 2028.

ITEM 12 – FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE REPORT QUARTER 3 2024-25

L Haigh provided Members with an overview of the Financial Performance Report for Quarter 3 2024-25.

A further budget adjustment was proposed to reduce employee budgets and increase the direct revenue contribution to capital by £0.534m. The remaining unused investment

£0.200m would be moved to reserves to fund approved service improvement bids (subject to FRA approval).

Councillor Ayris inquired about the effects of tariffs on the capital budget.

L Haigh mentioned that the capital budget was constructed by consolidating bids from capital leads. It was noted that monitoring would continue on potential inflation impacts on both capital and revenue budgets.

RESOLVED – That Members:

- i) Noted the forecast outturn surplus of £0.002m (after budget adjustment) was close to the budgeted surplus (Section A).
- ii) Approved the Q3 budget virements and reserve movements (Section A and Appendix G).
- iii) Noted the underlying and financial risks and uncertainties facing the Service and Sector during the remainder of this financial year (Section A) and into 2025/26 and beyond (Section C).
- iv) Noted the latest estimated change in General and Earmarked Reserves (Section C).
- v) Noted the latest committed position of the capital programme for the financial year ending 2024/25 (Section E).

ITEM 13 – PAY POLICY STATEMENT 2025

S Kelsey presented the Pay Policy Statement for 2025.

RESOLVED – That Members:

- i) Approved the Pay Policy Statement for 2025.
- ii) Reviewed whether the Authority wished to continue the commitment to the Real Living Wage.

ITEM 14 – APPOINTMENT OF LOCAL PENSION BOARD INDEPENDENT MEMBER

D Challenger presented the report, requesting that Members endorsed the recommendation of the Evaluation Panel to appoint, Maddison Brown, to the vacant role of Independent Member, Local Pension Board with effect from 17 February 2025.

It was noted that Members approved the request.

RESOLVED – That Members:

- i) Noted the action to date to recruit an Independent Member of the Local Pension Board.
- ii) Agreed the recommendation of the Evaluation Panel and appoint Maddison Brown to the vacant role of Independent Member of the Local Pension Board.
- iii) Agreed to an appraisal process after the first three-year term of appointment (to 17 February 2028).

ITEM 15 – APPOINTMENT OF AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE INDEPENDENT MEMBER

D Challenger presented the report, requesting that Members endorsed the recommendation of the Evaluation Panel to appoint, Deborah Carrington, to the vacant role of Independent Member, Audit and Governance Committee, with effect from 17 February 2025.

It was noted that Members approved the request.

RESOLVED – That Members:

- i) Noted the action to date to recruit an Independent Member of the Audit and Governance Committee.
- ii) Agreed the recommendation of the Evaluation Panel and appoint Deborah Carrington to the vacant role of Independent Member of the Audit and Governance Committee subject to satisfactory references.
- iii) Agreed to an appraisal process after the first four-year term of appointment (to 17 February 2029).

ITEM 16 – GENDER PAY GAP REPORT 2024

S Kelsey provided Members with an update on Gender Pay Gap for 2024.

The report provided details on salaries and 'bonuses' paid to employees by gender within South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue on the snapshot date of 31 March 2024 and the actions to be taken to address the imbalance.

RESOLVED – That Members noted the content of the report which would be published on the service website www.syfire.gov.uk and Gov.uk.

ITEM 17 – SERVICE IMPROVEMENT BOARD UPDATE

S Dunker presented the Service Improvement Board Update.

Members inquired about information contained within the action log and the revisions to the completion dates. Councillor McKiernan requested that the report highlighted the amended dates alongside targeted completion dates rather than merely indicating that the target was 'on track' with the newly revised completion dates.

S Dunker stated that the actions would be discussed at the Service Improvement Board, and if the target was deemed unachievable, the date would be amended accordingly. It was noted that the team will review and consider the feedback.

Councillor Alston requested an explanation for the delays in filling permanent positions and the substantial number of temporary promotions.

S Dunker noted that temporary promotions had operational impacts on the service over the past 12 to 24 months, leading to challenges in recruiting for new roles.

S. Kelsey stated that the majority of the vacancies had been filled.

RESOLVED – That Members noted the contents of the report and provided further scrutiny and support to enable continuous service improvement.

ITEM 18 – SERVICE DELIVERY BOARD UPDATE

A Strelczenie provided Members with the Service Delivery Board Update.

The Service Delivery Board provides a service forum for principal stakeholders involved in Service Delivery to support the development and improvement of operational emergency response effectiveness.

Councillor Alston requested an update on the ongoing actions listed on pages 253 and 254 of the report.

RESOLVED – That Members noted the contents of the report and provided further scrutiny to support the continuing effective management of the Service Delivery Board.

ITEM 19 – SLA IN HOUSE PROGRESS REPORT

L Haigh presented the SLA in House Progress Report.

It was noted that progress had been made on 4 out of the 5 new roles.

Councillor Ayris asked if there had been any discussions with the different local authorities regarding IT savings.

L Haigh stated that the SLA included the financial, legal, and governance functions. However, the service was consistently reviewing potential efficiency savings and would consider IT if it became relevant in the future.

Councillor Alston inquired whether there were any concerns regarding the timing of the Monitoring Officer recruitment and if the position would be re-advertised.

L Haigh stated that discussions were ongoing regarding the cover arrangements for the Monitoring Officer position, the current plans were 1 day each week from West Yorkshire FRA.

S Kelsey mentioned that the devolution paper released before Christmas influenced candidates' interest in the vacancy. It was noted that using an agency to fill the role may be considered, and this would be discussed with Members along with any plans for the interim.

RESOLVED – That Members noted the progress, the duplication of some costs to 31 March 2025 (not yet quantified) and that the service aimed to deliver savings per annum post 31 March 2025.

ITEM 20 – ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION IN THE ABSENCE OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED – That under Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act and the public interest not to disclose information outweighs the public interest in disclosing it.