

# SOUTH YORKSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

11 SEPTEMBER 2023

PRESENT: Councillor C Hogarth (Chair)  
Councillor A Cherryholme (Vice-Chair)

Councillors: T Damms, M Elliot, J Ridler, S Sansome, T Smith,  
S Ball, D Hutchinson, S Ayris, S Alston and Dr A Billings

CFO C Kirby and DCFO T Carlin, L Haigh, S Kelsey AM S  
Dunker, P Fieldhouse and B Eastes (South Yorkshire Fire &  
Rescue Service)

N Copley, S Ghuman and D Thorpe (Barnsley MBC)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor  
B Johnson, M Potter and S Norman.

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received as above.

2 ANNOUNCEMENTS

None.

3 URGENT ITEMS

CFO Kirby provided an update regarding RAAC due to national media coverage which was particularly focused on education establishments. Members heard that the Business Fire Safety team were already aware of one education establishment in South Yorkshire had been found to have RAAC. Measures were already in place at the school to reduce the risk.

In regard to the Service's own estate, Members were informed that the Estates team were confident that RAAC was not present at any of the Service's site. Further surveys would be undertaken to confirm this, and Fire Authority would be informed of any updates to this information.

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

None.

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

None.

6 REPORTS BY MEMBERS

None.

7 RECEIPT OF PETITIONS

None.

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.

9 MINUTES OF THE AUTHORITY MEETING HELD ON 24 JULY 2023

RESOLVED – that the minutes of the meeting held on 24 July be signed by the Chair as a correct record.

10 FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE REPORT Q1 2023/24

L Haigh presented Members with the Financial Performance Report Q1 2023/24 which detailed the likely financial performance for the year ended 31 March 2024.

The key points were noted as follows:-

- At the February meeting, the Authority agreed an annual revenue spend forecast of £64.280m and forecast funding of £62.860m. The forecast deficit of £1.420m would be covered via a drawdown from the Emerging Risk reserve which was set aside for this purpose.
- Forecasts had been updated and at the end of quarter 1 net operating expenditure had increased to £64.370m.
- Funding had seen a significant increase to £64.089m as a result of unexpected inflation included within the S31 Grant Funding. This resulted in a forecast deficit of £0.282m which is £0.693m less deficit compared to the revised budget deficit as presented in February.
- The efficiency target for the year was approximately £1m.
- Members were asked to approve the proposed transfer of revenue grant funds to the Service Improvement reserve due the total being above the delegation threshold.
- The reserves as presented in the paper contained an error and would be revised for Q2. Overall, due to a decreased deficit position from budget, it was forecast there would be less call on reserves than budgeted.

Councillor Ayris if there were plans in place to address the overspends on supplies and services.

L Haigh responded that the Airwaves contract was negotiated by the Home Office rather than individual Fire and Rescue Services.

CFO Kirby provided additional context regarding Systel, it was explained that the 5 plus 5 years maintenance contracts were coming to an end with Systel. The Service had entered a new maintenance arrangement with Systel for the Control system.

Dr Alan Billings asked how the Service reflected inflation in budgets and if the Service used estimated percentages.

L Haigh responded that the Service added or estimated pay inflation depending on the stage of agreement at the time of budgeting and would use general inflation percentage unless aware of a specific contracted increase.

Councillor Sansome asked if the Service used agency staff as a solution to any recruitment difficulties.

S Kelsey responded that on occasion agency staff were utilised and all vacancies were scrutinised as part of an ongoing process.

Councillor Sansome queried if temporary staff knew that they would not receive permanent contracts.

S Kelsey informed Members that temporary contracts were usually for a specific reason such as maternity leave and therefore staff were aware when they commenced their employment.

**RESOLVED** that Members:-

- (i) Noted the forecast outturn deficit of £0.282m which is a reduction of £0.693m compared to the revised budget deficit;
- (ii) Noted the underlying and significant financial risks and uncertainties facing the Service and Sector during the remainder of this financial year and into 2024/25 and beyond;
- (iii) Noted the error in the latest estimated change in General and Earmarked Reserves as set out in Section C of this report which would be revised for Q2;
- (iv) Approved the proposed transfer of revenue grant funds to the Service Improvement reserve; and
- (v) Noted the current position of the capital programme for the financial year ending 2023/24.

11 AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23

D Thorpe presented Audit and Governance Committee Annual Report 2022/23.

Members were informed that the draft report was presented at the Audit and Governance Committee meeting on 24 July 2023 and no material comments or amendments were received.

**RESOLVED** that Members:-

- (i) Considered the Annual Report of its Audit and Governance Committee and, subject to any changes made, agree to publish it on the Authority's website.

## 12 STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE AND ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23

DCFO Carlin presented the Statement of Assurance and Annual Report 2022/23.

The key points were noted as follows:-

- There was an administration error, and a cover report should have been included which included the recommendation to Members to endorse the report and note the assessment of compliance.
- The report covered the financial data; it was explained that the majority of Fire Authorities funding was provided directly by the Government in the form of Revenue Support Grant and Business Rates. The remainder was raised via the precept, which forms part of the council tax bills issued by the District Councils.
- The statutory duties of the Service under various legislation were set out including the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and The Control of Major Accident Hazards (COMAH) Regulations 2015.
- Headline projects were included in the report, which detailed outstanding actions and the closure of certain projects.

Dr Billings queried whether the increase in deliberate secondary fires and whether the Service worked alongside South Yorkshire Police in tackling this issue.

AM S Dunker responded that the Service had seen an increase in deliberate secondary fires in the last year and trends are monitored on a frequent basis. Crews across the Districts were working with South Yorkshire Police and there had been some success with a collaborative approach in Handsworth, Sheffield.

Councillor Smith asked a question regarding fires in prisons across the district.

AM S Dunker explained that prison fires were classified as deliberate primary fires. Local officers attended and co-ordinated emergency plans in prisons.

Councillor Sansome asked why cultural changes were not included in the report.

DCFO Carlin informed Members that this was part of the overarching leadership and development work as detailed in the report.

Councillor Alston queried why response times were not included in the report.

DCFO Carlin responded that the annual report went into more detail regarding response times, and this was also included in the annual performance report.

ACO Strelczenie further explained that this was an area that the Service continued to progress via the Business Intelligence team.

CFO Kirby said that a high-level summary of performance could be included in the report in future years.

**RESOLVED** that:-

- (i) Members endorsed the report and note the level of compliance.
- (ii) A high-level summary of performance would be included in the Statement of Assurance and Annual Report.

13 ELM LANE REBUILD

B Eastes provided Members with a presentation regarding the Elm Lane Rebuild.

The key points were as follows:-

- In October 2022 the Fire Authority approved the construction approach of modular buildings for stations that were deemed to require a replacement.
- Since the meeting in 2022 the Service had successfully appointed a multi-disciplinary contractor, Black Cat Building Consultancy (BCBC). Since appointment, BCBC had used several of their sub-contractors and additional appointments through SYFR to complete pre-construction reviews including land surveys and site surveys.
- When completing surveys an additional opportunity for the site was found whilst also providing training resilience. Therefore, the Service was planning to keep part of Elm Lane and transform the former station into a “search and rescue” scenario. This would require further scoping out by internal experts in parallel to external supplier surveys to prove the integrity of the building. It was estimated that this would cost approximately £50,000 for the surveys and £300,000 for the refurbishment.

Councillor Smith asked if decontamination of the site was needed due to legacy industries.

B Eastes responded that a coal survey had already been completed under which no issues were discovered, and that thorough ecological surveys would take place.

Councillor Ayris queried the timeline of completion for the build and asked if local ward councillors had been made aware of the proposals.

B Eastes responded that the Service were happy with the current timeline for completion. Discussions with ward councillors had not yet taken place however it

was noted that a former Member of the FRA, Councillor Abdul Khayum, was a ward councillor and therefore was aware of the Elm Lane build.

It was also noted that the Elm Lane crew had been consulted on the plans, and briefings with the wider workforce were planned.

Councillor Alston asked if the service had engaged in pre-planning discussions with planning officers at Sheffield City Council and if there had been any alternative plans for the land discussed.

B Eastes informed Members that early discussions with planning officers had commenced. In terms of alternative options, the most cost-effective plan was the repurposing of the old fire station as a training centre as the Service were likely to be granted planning permission for this purpose.

DCFO Carlin further added that the repurposing the old fire station provided an excellent opportunity for the Service to enhance its training offer.

Dr Billings queried how risks surrounding the build were captured and the overall governance structure.

CFO Kirby that internal and external stakeholders are full briefed of risks via work undertaken by BCBC. It was noted that no other Fire and Rescue Services had used modular construction however it was widely used by other public services and due diligence with all stakeholders had taken place. The governance arrangements included regular reporting to the Corporate Management Board and the FRA.

Councillor Alston asked if the service was evaluating the options for use of all of its estate.

DCFO Carlin responded that the Service was undergoing a review of options for its estate portfolio, both in light of the green strategy and the agile working policy. The CMB consultation around future estate options would be the first step in this process.

**RESOLVED** that Members:-

- (i) Continued to support and champion the first modular fire station in the UK
- (ii) Accepted retaining part of the Elm Lane 1973 station on the same site of Elm Lane 2024 and
- (iii) Considered local engagement plans for the Sheffield region.

14 PEOPLE AND CULTURE BOARD UPDATE

S Kelsey presented the People and Culture Board Update.

The key points were noted as follows:-

- The report provided a summary of the items raised and discussed at the People & Culture Board in Quarter 1 2023/24. One meeting was held during this period on 8 June 2023.
- Recommendations from the annual workforce event would be reported to the FRA in the autumn, in the annual Workforce Investment and Efficiency Plan.
- The Board agreed to review the On Call Programme and progress with the new Culture Programme at the next meeting in September 2023.

**RESOLVED** that Members note the contents of the report and provide further scrutiny and support to enable continuing effective management of people issues.

15 ANNUAL EDI REPORT

S Kelsey presented the Annual EDI Report, which included a summary of performance and the various projects and events that had taken place in 2022-23.

This was the second year of providing data against three Local Performance Indicators (LPis). For 2023, the Service also considered how LPis tracked achievement against actions from reports such as HMICFRS and Fit for the Future. The Service was currently reviewing LPis to ensure that they provided the right measure and enabled the Service to show a direct link to the EDI objectives.

Councillor Ayris asked if there was an update on the EDI action plan and the recruitment of the positive action and engagement officer.

S Kelsey responded that there was currently a one-year EDI strategy action plan in which progress against the actions were reported to the Performance and Scrutiny Board. In regard to the positive action and engagement officer, the first round of recruitment was not successful and therefore would be re-advertised.

Dr Billings queried the variance in the course completion rates between operational and corporate staff and asked how the Service obtained feedback.

S Kelsey informed Members that the vast majority of office staff had completed the training and the priority was now operational staff, this was largely due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Staff feedback was obtained via Pulse Survey and the full staff culture survey that would be commencing in September.

Councillor Smith congratulated the Service on the work contained in the report, S Kelsey said she would feed this back to staff.

**RESOLVED** that Members note the update.

16 WORKFORCE DIVERSITY PROFILE 2022/23

S Kelsey presented the Workforce Diversity Profile 2022/23.

Members noted that building an inclusive and diverse workforce remained a priority for the Service, it was reported that the Service had seen a modest change in the diversity of the workforce despite significant work on positive action.

Dr Billings queried the rise in the number of people that did not wish to disclose their sexual orientation on applications.

S Kelsey responded that this was a trend throughout the sector.

Dr Billings referenced the diversity of senior management, and asked if the gender divide was still an issue for the Service.

S Kelsey informed Members that work around management diversity was ongoing and the Service was undertaking significant work around leadership development. In regard to the gender divide, there had been some improvements in senior management but there was still a significant gap in the operational workforce which was a sector wide issue.

**RESOLVED** that Members note the update.

17 SERVICE IMPROVEMENT BOARD UPDATE

ACO Strelczenie presented the Service Improvement Board Update.

The key points were noted as follows:-

- HMICFRS inspection report for SYFR (published January 2023) identified 20 Areas for Improvement (AFIs). All of these AFIs were determined to be high priority. The Board received reports for the AFIs identified in the SYFR inspection reports.
- Following analysis of the State of Fire and Rescue Reports, three actions were determined to be of high priority. One action was outstanding as detailed in Appendix A of the report.
- The Board received three funding bids which included the Specialisms Programme Group Manager, People Positive Action and Engagement Officer and Resource Staffing and Manager.
- At the next Board meeting in September members were expected to scrutinise progress against recommendations from the Grenfell and Manchester Arena inquiries, as well as progress against the Fire Standards.

Councillor Sansome referred to lack of funding as a barrier to completing outstanding actions.

ACO Strelczenie responded that the Service provided the Home Office with an efficiency plan each year, and that funding in the Fire and Rescue sector continued to be challenging.

Councillor Ball asked what barriers were in place in regard to the completion of home safety fire checks and whether local authorities worked in partnership with the Service on this issue.



ACO Strelczenie informed Members that the community safety team had a transient number of staff which had proven to be a barrier. In regard to collaborating with local authorities, all four had helped identify those who needed assisted bin collections.

CFO Kirby provided further context surrounding the term 'backlog' in relation to home safety fire checks as identified by HMICFRS. The Service may be liaising with someone who has a number of vulnerabilities and liaising with partners on a wider approach to interventions and safety measures, and this could take a significant amount of time. As such, cases like this would not be completed until the Service were satisfied that the case could be closed. This did not mean that the Service had not visited the property but many cases like this may remain open for some time.

AM S Dunker explained that the Service attended joint meetings with local authorities to identify vulnerable people who may need home safety checks.

Councillor Alston asked if the Service continued to face difficulties in recruiting drivers.

AM S Dunker responded that this was still an issue, and work was currently underway with Training school to ensure an effective process is in place and develop the offer to a wider group of staff within the service.

ACO Strelczenie added that the Service had been working closely with the FBU on this issue.

**RESOLVED** that the update be noted.

18 CONTINGENCY OFFICERS CONTRACT

**RESOLVED** that the report be deferred to a future Fire Authority meeting.

19 DRAFT MINUTES OF THE AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE HELD ON 24 JULY 2023

**RESOLVED** that the minutes be noted.

20 DRAFT MINUTES OF THE LOCAL PENSION BOARD HELD ON 6 JULY 2023

**RESOLVED** that the minutes be noted.

21 DRAFT MINUTES OF THE YORKSHIRE AND HUMBER EMPLOYERS' ASSOCIATION HELD ON 6 JULY 2023

**RESOLVED** that the minutes be noted.

22 ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION IN THE ABSENCE OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

None.

**Fire and Rescue Authority**  
**Monday 11 September 2023**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Officer(s)</b>	<b>Status / Update</b>
12.	That a high-level summary of performance be included in the Statement of Assurance and Annual Report.	In due course.	DCFO Carlin	

CHAIR