

COMMISSIONERS FOR SOUTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

MINUTES OF THE FINANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE HELD ON FRIDAY 25 APRIL 2025 IN MEETING ROOM 8, SWFRS HQ AND REMOTELY VIA TEAMS

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT

Baroness Wilcox of Newport (Chair)
Kirsty Williams

OFFICERS PRESENT:

Assistant Chief Fire Officer Dean Loader – Director of Service Delivery, Lisa Mullan - Head of Finance, Procurement and Property, Gabrielle Greathead – Interim Monitoring Officer, Wayne Thomas - Temporary Head of Corporate Support, Dominic Mika - Director of Strategic Change and Transformation, Steen Gourlay – TIAA Internal Auditor, Charles Rigby – Audit Wales, Christian Landeg-John - Advisor to the Commissioners

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Chief Fire Officer Fin Monahan, Assistant Chief Officer Alison Reed and Senior Procurement Officer Lee Bunkham.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. CHAIRPERSON'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair wished to congratulate Gabrielle Greathead on her maternity leave and thanked her for the significant role she has played in the Committees.

4. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING – 21 MARCH 2025

The Committee agreed the minutes as a true record of discussion and no matters arising.

5. UPDATE ON OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

Kirsty Williams requested that actions are logged with an indicative timeframe to provide confidence that we are delivering on time.

Minute 6: Lisa Mullan to include a narrative on the revenue performance report on what activity is undertaken to achieve the early consultation. This will be picked up early during the scene setting in the September report.

Minute 7: Lisa Mullan explained there will be conversations by the end of June relating to exploring options for lobbying Welsh Government in relation to capital funding for Welsh Fire Services.

REPORTS FOR DECISION

6. REVIEW OF THE COMMITTEE'S TERMS OF REFERENCE

Gabrielle Greathead explained that Section 6 of the Constitution outlines how the Commissioners will appoint regulatory committees, such as the Finance and Audit Committee, to discharge functions set out in Section 11 of the document. Appendix 1 of the report outlines how the committee will ultimately enable the Commissioners to demonstrate a commitment to the efficient and effective deployment of public resources. The Terms of Reference has been updated mainly to reflect the Commissioners involvement.

Kirsty Williams agreed to approve the Terms of Reference with the amendment to the wording used in paragraph 4.6.1.3 to replace the word 'target' as this felt too narrow. The Service is interested in continuous service improvement and performance excellence. Lisa Mullan stated that she has wording that she could insert into this to update the Terms of Reference.

RESOLVED

- 6.1 The Commissioners approved the terms of reference with an amendment to replace the word 'target' under paragraph 4.6.1.3.

REPORTS FOR INFORMATION

7. END OF LIFE OPERATIONAL EQUIPMENT

Dean Loader, Assistant Chief Fire Officer presented a report on the end of life equipment that the Service donated to Ukraine via Fire Aid, UK Search and Rescue, National Resilience and NFCC as a part of the charitable attributes that the Service holds. Over the last 3 years, the Service has donated fire appliances, associated fire equipment and held convoys to transport this equipment. This is the eighth convoy incorporating donations from the Service to frontline efforts in Ukraine. The old equipment has been replaced with new equipment within the budget and Dean Loader noted that this has not affected our response. Lady Wilcox praised the efforts and contribution of the 18 volunteers and wished to write to them personally. Kirsty Williams formally acknowledged the staff that gave up their time to participate in the Convoy.

Kirsty Williams noted that usually end of life operational equipment would go to auction and agreed that resource should be sent to support frontline efforts in Ukraine but wants to ensure that there is oversight and a formal decision making policy on the rationale and how the decision has been reached and that the appropriate procedures have been followed. Lisa Mullan outlined part of the process and noted that the paper will need to come as a decision making paper in future containing all the information such as the list item along with the costings to be aware and transparent of what the value is. Kirsty Williams agreed with Lisa Mullan and Dean Loader should we need to do this at another stage.

RESOLVED

7.1 Lady Wilcox to write a formal letter to the 18 volunteers who supported with the Ukraine Convoy.

7.2 The Commissioners noted the report.

8. PERFORMANCE REPORTS STRATEGIC PERFORMANCE INDICATORS QUARTER 4 2024/25

Dean Loader, Assistant Chief Fire Officer presented a detailed overview of the strategic performance indicators and provided awareness on how the Service has performed. The data gives a reflection on the previous year and measures us on our performance. It was noted that these are no longer called targets and are now called projections. Dean Loader provided a thorough explanation of Appendix 1 and stated that the projections were set in March last year using data for the previous 5 years of each indicator.

Some highlights to note are:

- False alarms: Work commenced in January around AFAs. The intention is to come back mid-term with a new projected outcome as it allows us to see the change from the AFA policy change. This will be brought back to the Autumn meeting.
- Road Traffic Collisions: Fatalities have reduced. Extractions and medical assistance have decreased. We have attended more but the impact has been less severe. There has been a supply shortage of vehicles for RTC extraction practice. The Service is working with the supplier on delivering the vehicles and suggested a hub where crews can collect them from.
- Special Service Calls: Flooding has increased due to the storms, however water rescue has reduced by 2%. The Service has been assisting other agencies. A Duty Group Manager has been embedded in Fire Control (Monday – Friday 09:00 – 17:00) to support challenging calls and provide quick decision making. Commissioners agreed this was a good idea and were pleased to see a positive difference this has made.

- Fire Fatalities and Injuries: There have been 6 fire fatalities with 5 over the age of 65. There have been various causes such as heating, electrical wiring and smoking. There have been fundamental changes in Community Safety and Lady Wilcox stressed that we need to be able to communicate with other agencies and partnerships. Community Safety team are working to bridge the gaps on these.
- Dwelling Fires confined to room of origin: This is the first year we have hit the projection. There has been a lot of awareness from home fire safety checks, messaging over social media and tying in increased awareness and the training done from the thematic review of Operational Excellence.

Lady Wilcox highlighted that we could learn from what the figures show us and use them as evidence to improve our performance. Dean Loader explained this data shows that we make informed actions in the Service. In terms of bariatrics, Kirsty Williams would like reassurance that we have some flexibility to provide mutual support to other partnerships in time of need. Dean Loader explained that there is flexibility around this and we will work with partner agencies when there is a risk to life or critical in nature then Control will mobilise. If there is a grey area then this will be escalated to the Duty Group Manager.

Kirsty Williams asked whether there is scope to work with the Service alongside the CRMP to develop an integrated performance report. This will allow us to hold the Service to account and means that we have assurance that we have comprehensive integrated data and allows us to have a conversation on what we are doing well and areas to improve to be more transparent with the public. Dominic Mika explained that this work is in the chain and leads to the CRMP piece and included in ELT's work. Kirsty Williams welcomed this to ensure that a good system is in place and what that data tells us. Wayne Thomas assured that we have this data available in house and is being used at meetings such as Health and Safety and Service Delivery meetings.

RESOLVED

8.1 The Commissioners noted the report.

9. REGISTER OF GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY

Lady Wilcox noted the register of gifts and hospitality for 2024/2025. Kirsty Williams stated that we could consider a policy whereby we don't accept gifts or cash but we can signpost the public to recognise charities that support firefighters such as the Fire Fighters Charity if they felt they wanted to acknowledge. Dean Loader noted that the public tends to do this.

RESOLVED

9.1 The Commissioners noted the report.

10. AUDIT WALES – ANNUAL AUDIT SUMMARY 2024

Charles Rigby from Audit Wales summarised the work Audit Wales completed in 2024 which rounds off the previous calendar year. A draft report will be given to the officers in due course. Kirsty Williams thanked the officers that have worked with Audit Wales. Lady Wilcox was pleased to see the positivity within the report.

RESOLVED

10.1 The Commissioners noted the report.

11. FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME FOR FINANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

The July committee will be split into two parts due to the number of reports to allow adequate time for discussion. It was queried whether there should be a Revenue Monitoring Report at every meeting however due to the Finance team size it is not possible to do so. Lisa Mullan will bring the Revenue Outturn Report which provides a lessons learnt and stated that we would know these details in August, but given the timelines of the committee meeting it would be brought to the September meeting. Lisa Mullan reiterated that if there were any issues then the Commissioners would be notified.

11.1 The Commissioners noted the Forward Work Programme.

12. TO CONSIDER ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRPERSON DEEMS URGENT (PART 1 OF 2)

No such business was brought forward.

13. ITEMS TO REPORT BACK TO THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

There were no items to report back to the Board of Commissioners.

