

NON CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES
MINUTES OF SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAM HELD ON 11 DECEMBER 2024

Present: Dawn Whittaker, Chief Fire Officer
 Dave Norris, Deputy Chief Fire Officer
 Mark Matthews, Assistant Chief Fire Officer (designate)
 Duncan Savage, Assistant Director of Resources/Treasurer
 Hannah Youldon, Assistant Director of Operational Support & Resilience
 Doug Marshall, Assistant Director of People Services
 Matt Lloyd, Assistant Director of Response and Risk Reduction
 Justine Cadogan, Assistant Director of Digital, Technology & Change
 George O'Reilly, T/Area Manager Protection
 Elizabeth Curtis, Communications & Marketing Manager
 Sue Walsh, Executive Assistant
 Alyson Lumb, Executive Support Officer

Apologies: None.

		Action
231/24	Minutes of the Meeting held 13 November 2024 The non-confidential minutes of the meeting held on 13 November 2024 were approved as an accurate record.	
232/24	Matters Arising None.	
233/24	Action Points from Matrix <u>190/24 Wholetime Vacancy Management and Trainee Course</u> This would be discussed in further detail under agenda item 13. Action complete. <u>210/24 Revenue and Capital Budget 2024/25 and Capital Programme 2024/25 to 2027/28 Monitoring at Month 7 (Future Foundations)</u> This would be discussed in further detail under agenda item 9. Action complete.	
234/24	Revenue and Capital Budget 2024/25 and Capital Programme 2024/25 to 2027/28 Monitoring at Month 8 This is the third report to SLT for the 2024/25 financial year and highlights the findings from the Month 8 monitoring. A net revenue underspend to the sum of £38,000 has been identified. This is due to the following underspends: • £424,000 Vacancies across the service • £300,000 Treasury Management interest receivable • £130,000 reduction in borrowing costs • £70,000 Engineering department Offset by the following pressures: • £364,000 Groups Wholetime, Overtime + On-call • £118,000 Unallocated savings • £100,000 External training • £93,000 Unfunded pensions • £73,000 Hydrants	

- £67,000 On-call training
- £60,000 Ill health retirements
- £53,000 Communications

The forecast has reduced by £1,218,000 since P4, the significant movements are:

- £491,000 Groups Wholetime, Overtime + On-call
- £200,000 External interest receivable
- £130,000 Reduction in borrowing costs
- £80,000 PMO vacancies

Since the original 2024/25 Capital Budget and five year Capital Strategy of £28,683,000 was approved by the Fire Authority on 8 February 2024, the Capital Strategy has been increased to £30,793,000 to include slippage of £1,624,000 and allocation of spend in advance of £35,000 from 2023/24, along with £566,000 for Estates capital projects.

Officers have reviewed the capital plans for 2024/25 and report underspend on delivery of projects to the value of £3,180,000 (28%).

The position on reserves shows an opening balance of £13,309,00. The forecast net drawdown from reserves is £5,247,000, an increase of £2,245,000 compared to the planned drawdown of £3,002,000. This results in an estimated closing balance of £8,062,000

ADoR/T noted that overall, this was a better position than in P4, but that focus must be kept on expenditure especially within the Groups and Training, as flexibility would be reduced in future years. The risk around pay award was noted and there was a discussion on Capital spend.

ADoRRR provided a short verbal update, stating that nothing would change until 1 January 2025, when an increase in overtime would create a pressure. There were a total of 30 staff who were not available for various reasons including long term sick, which also created crewing pressures. Going forwards, Have a Go Days were planned for January and February and plans were in place to assist with seasonal pressures.

It was noted that the achieved savings for this year regarding vacancies had been reached, but DCFO noted caution with regards to industrial relations. ADoPS provided a view from a Workforce Planning perspective which differed slightly from other reports.

CMM enquired about the anticipated reduction in interest rates, which led to short discussion on potential changes and approach. ADoR/T provided an update on spend controls – given the improvement in the forecast outturn, the focus would be on p-card spend rather than spend controls more generally. It was confirmed that any ear marked reserves would not be reallocated without formal decision by SLT.

SLT noted the risks to the revenue budget and the projected underspend, Capital Programme, increased net forecast drawdown from reserves, grants available and spending plans, and also the monitoring of savings taken in 2024/25, ITG strategy position, and current year investments and borrowing.

SLT approved the:

- (i) transfer of £80,000 of underspend in PMO to offset Future

	Foundations savings; (ii) transfer of £13,000 of underspend in Communications to offset Future Foundations savings; in principle (iii) transfer of £50,000 budget for redundancy costs in Engineering to contingency; (iv) drawdown of up to £63,000 from Future Foundations reserve to fund Future Foundations costs The next formal Revenue and Capital Budget 2024/25 (P10) report would be brought to SLT in February.	
235/24	Call Over The following report was not called over, and therefore all recommendations contained within them were agreed:- - Procurement Act 2023 - Update	
236/24	Strategic Service Planning and Medium-Term Financial Plan Update 2025-26 to 2029-30 The Finance Manager updated on the outcomes from the Star Chamber process to inform the Fire Authority's Medium Term Service Planning Strategy and Medium Term Financial Plan for 2025/26 to 2029/30. This report is presented at a time when key pieces of financial information are not yet available: • Local Government Finance Settlement expected w/c 16 December 2024 • Final council taxbase and collection fund figures expected mid-January 2024 • Final business rates information due 31 January 2024 The latest update to Fire Authority on 5 December 2024 indicated a budget gap of up to £3.8m. A number of savings options and flexibilities have been identified which total £2.779m. The draft Estates, Fleet and IT capital programme totals £29.320m over the MTFP period. This is an increase of £6.918m compared to the previously approved capital programme. In this context it is essential that the SLT takes urgent action to identify its approach to delivering a balanced budget from 2025/26 onwards so that it can be signalled in the budget report to the Policy & Resources Panel, for which the deadline is 3 January 2025. This will include a review of the Estates Strategy and Capital Programme which has become unaffordable in its current form. SLT held a discussion around the current position and would ensure the Group Leaders were fully informed and prepared going forwards into 2025. SLT considered: (i) and agreed the pressures, bids, savings and flexibilities set out in the report to deliver a balanced revenue budget for 2025/26 (ii) noted the current position on the capital programme and agree that further reductions are identified to bring the programme back within the	

	agreed funding envelope (iii) further its approach to delivering the significant additional savings that will be necessary to balance the budget for 2025/26 should the budget gap reach £3.8m	
237/24	Future Foundations Programme - Update DCFO provided a summary of the work carried out to date and an overview for 2025. DCFO formally thanked ADoOSR for stepping into the SRO role on a temporary basis, but confirmed this would be undertaken by another Assistant Director in the New Year. ADoOSR provided SLT with an update on progress of the Future Foundation programme of work and provide an updated budget expenditure overview and future budgetary needs, particularly for 2025/26. The Future Foundations (Phase 1) had saved £415,000, which included mapping out projects and the implementation of an interim structure. It was noted that vacancies had not yet been filled. A further saving of £215,000 would be required during 2025/26. CMM sought clarity that the IRMP did not form part of Phase 2 of the Future Foundation Programme; which was confirmed. SLT noted and agreed the phasing of the Future Foundation Programme; and approved, in principle, the budgetary requirements of Phase 2 of the Future Foundation Programme, accepting that this will need to be worked through alongside other Star Chamber bids.	
238/24	Future Foundations – HQ Consolidation The Estates Manager provided an overview of the purpose and outcomes, current position, noting that the options have been developed in sufficient detail to determine a cost/benefit analysis and make use of the existing configuration of space. The headline consolidation options; 1A, 1B, 2 and 3 were based on cost, annual savings, strategic need, smarter working and One Team Ethos and would be undertaken across a 3 phased strategy in order to maintain £80,000 savings. There was a discussion around the timing of this decision for HQ (Phase 1) and how it incorporated into the wider review for the whole ESFRS estate (Phase 2). ADoR/T stated that Phase 1 would serve as enabler to do the groundwork for the next stages. SLT also noted and considered the HR, contractual and cultural element, which would be required for this piece of work in order to reach the final position. SLT agreed to crystallise and finalise Option 3 (re-configure existing HQ function into a reduced footprint in Amberly and retaining Mallory House, with dedicated HR space and additional PO requirements) for formal sign off at SLT in February. This report would provide an outline and brief, staff impacts, comms, learning and informing, details of Phases 2 and 3 including costs and the dependencies on Office 365 and Records and Retention Policies.	ADoR/T Feb 25

	SLT acknowledged this approach would not deliver the full £80,000 savings but were comfortable with the revised approach. It was agreed for a listening lunch around the broader Estates options would be beneficial to support cultural thinking.	
239/24	Internal Audit – Internal Communication and Feedback CMM stated that this report provided the findings of the internal audit review of Internal Communications and Feedback and the proposed actions to be taken as a result to improve governance and control. The audit gives a partial assurance opinion. Of the 25 workstreams, only 5 had been reviewed, so it was acknowledged this was a lens view only, but it had included a cross section of all staff. Of those 5 findings, 4 were medium risk (one has already been completed) and one was low risk. A Staff Survey was being run and the results would be shared accordingly. Big news items and rolling reviews had received positive findings and the quality control of communication was highlighted. SLT: (i) Commented on and approved the management response to the audit report so that it can be finalised (ii) Agreed that a “whole service” approach is needed and support People Services in delivering that (iii) Note that the report will be taken to Scrutiny and Audit Panel on 16 January 2025 ADoR/T advised that other Internal Audits were also in the pipeline and that 5 reports were due at the Scrutiny & Audit Panel on 16 January 2025. It was agreed that ‘Consistent themes’ would be added as a specific item to the next APGG agenda in order to review, feedback and provide learning opportunities.	
240/24	Corporate Risk Register Review Quarter 3 2024-25 ADoR/T reported and reviewed the Corporate Risk Register Quarter 3. Updates for 5 risks are yet to be received and these are requested no later than 20 December 2024, ahead of the Scrutiny & Audit Panel on 16 January 2025. Following an enquiry about supply chain, ADoOSR stated that it had not really ever recovered and vehicles continued to take longer to arrive in the country. CR1 Health & Safety compliance – ADoOSR would update and review this going forward. CR7 Inability to respond effectively to a cyber incident – this was currently volatile. CR17 Firefighter Pension Scheme – EMT would be reviewing the risk and likely increase the mitigated risk. SLT: a) Agreed the Q3 Corporate Risk Register, including changes made since Q2 2024/25; b) Requested updates for CR9, CR10, CR17, CR18 and CR21 by 20	

	December 2024; these were due from ADoPS and ADoDTC. c) Identified any further information or assurance required from Risk Owners.	
241/24	Wholetime Vacancy Management and Trainee Course ADoPS provided an overview of current Wholetime vacancies, expected vacancies and a proposal to initiate wholetime recruitment campaign planning immediately. The Service has 6 vacant FF posts and 3 vacant WM/CM posts. A further 3 FF post will be vacant before end of March 2025 due to confirmed retirements/career break. It is also envisaged there will be an additional 5 vacancies created by long term sick non-returners or IHR. The 9 current vacancies identified are not being covered by the supernumerary staff and as such the Service is relying upon the use of overtime to cover the shortages. The service has 9 external candidates transfer pool. Of the 7 in the historic pool reported to SLT in Oct, only 4 have converted to trainees who will join an acquisition course delivered by Surrey in Jan. This leaves a potential 17 vacancies identified with a planned 13 available external candidates to cover them. This position will improve if our LTS number continues to reduce. Funding of £176k was agreed by SLT for the acquisition course beginning in January and onboarding of trainees. Due to the numbers changing from 7 to 4, it is predicted this cost will reduce to £104k. It is proposed to utilise the remaining £72k to fund the necessary cost of recruitment in this financial year. Further work will be needed through workforce planning to decide the exact number of Firefighters we need to replace over the next 3 years and the most effective method of training delivery for them. ADoPS stated that the report also highlights the anticipated retirement profile of 36 operational posts who are aged over 50 and who have done 25yrs+ service. The current trend being seen now is for on-call firefighters transferring in, rather than starting as wholetime, which means an additional training requirement. Although the wholetime recruitment process can be condensed in some areas, the timescales could not, so a 6-month lead in time remained the minimum. SLT reviewed the training options; in addition to running an in-house wholetime trainee course; options included Fire Service College, which was 6-8 weeks but conversion training was still required; and a collaborative course with Surrey FRS, which allowed for more influence on what was trained. Re-engagement and apprenticeships options were also discussed along with cost drivers. ADoR/T shared his proposed recommendations and SLT considered more regular recruitment in the future. SLT : a) noted the most up to date situation with regards to operational vacancies	

	b) approved to fund £129,000 in 2024/25 through £110,000 from People Strategy and £19,000 from contingency c) noted that there is insufficient funding for any of the proposed options for 2025/26 and that further work needs to be completed to reduce costs and/or identify additional sources of funding. d) approved, in principle, initiating a wholetime recruitment in the New Year, producing a training delivery plan and options, which would be brought back to SLT in February.	ADoPS Feb 25
242/24	Lewes Crewing ADoRRR provided a verbal overview on the current position with regards to crewing. The formal written report would follow upon receipt of legal advice. This pilot would be considered solely for Lewes and provide pods for those in-posted to Lewes on a short-term/temporary basis. Salary allowances and other details were outlined. If 2 firefighters were working on that scheme, and 2 pods were in positioned there, it would self-funding. This also provided flexibility with regards to other parts of this process. Consideration was given to available space to locate the pods at Lewes Fire Station. In principle, SLT were supportive of the pilot scheme. This would be taken to FBU Consultation meeting on 17 January 2025 prior to formal ratification at SLT on 23 January 2025.	ADoRRR Jan 25
243/24	Procurement Act 2023 The Procurement Manager updated SLT on the introduction of the new legislation governing public contracts, the Procurement Act 2023 (the Act), intended for go live in February 2025. There are currently over 350 different procurement regulations spread over a number of different regimes, for different types of procurement including defence and security. The new Act will consolidate these into a single regime and is intended to take effect from 25 February 2025. This paper sets out a high-level summary of the legislative requirements and the new associated Procurement Standing Order (PSO) thresholds. It also sets out the action the Procurement Department will take to ensure colleagues are fully supported during the transition, have sufficient understanding of the new regime and can continue to procure compliantly, with minimal disruption. SLT noted the implications of the Procurement Act 2023 and did not request any further information.	
244/24	Strategic Performance Report Quarter 2 2024 The Planning and Intelligence Manager presented the Strategic Performance Report Quarter 2 and provided an overview of the position. Priority 2a – HSVs – we will reach the 9000 target – SLT requested providing additional commentary	

	Priority 3 – the anticipated spike in sickness due to time of year was noted SLT considered the strategic performance report and the performance report and suggest any amendments prior to it being presented at the Scrutiny and Audit Panel on 16 January 2025. SLT also noted the addition of the new AFA KPIs that went live in Quarter 1 2024/25.	
245/24	Oracle Implementation Update The Oracle Implementation Programme (formerly MBOS) is progressing according to a phased approach approved by the ESCC Corporate Management Team (CMT). This report provides an update on the programme's current status, key milestones, risks, and required actions to meet the proposed go-live for Phase 2 in early April 2025. Critical challenges remain, particularly concerning the requisitioning process, the readiness of the Redwood User Interface to deliver requisitioning self-service, resource gaps, and the tight timelines between key phases. Key stakeholders' buy-in is required to address these risks. It was proposed to not fully roll out the requisitions or receipting just yet, due to the updates expected from Oracle, which would also mean staff would need to be trained twice within 6 months. A change request via the Strategic Change Board was required. SLT noted: a) the Oracle implementation update emphasises the significant complexity and the extensive efforts currently underway to ensure its success. b) there is a critical need for support in sourcing additional external resources to address capacity requirements and maintain momentum as the project progresses.	
246/24	SLT Forward Plan 2025 and FA/Members Seminar Forward Plan SLT noted the forward plans for 2025, which was a useful overview for the coming months. IRMP Implementation Update - not Jan but next S&A in April Sustainability Action Plan - roll forward from FA in Feb – to next FA in June Members Seminar in Jan – comms around Wholetime Recruitment - tie in with Benenden item.	
247/24	Any Other Business <u>Bright Ideas</u> There had been a request to shorten the timeframe for the consultation period, which SLT would give consideration to. <u>WFS Development & Training Weekend</u> CMM would speak with Kate Sands but advised that 8 people had registered interest already. Confirmed names for the 4 available spaces would be required by end of January/early February. <u>Ladder exercise</u> There was a high-rise exercise being run on 4 January 2025, with the option to be involved.	

	<u>Occupational Health Briefing Paper</u> ADoPS would circulate this to SLT for awareness after the meeting. <u>Fire & Rescue Data Platform</u> ADoOSR provided a verbal update and stated that Chris Baker is now our Service Lead. A SRO was being considered, noting this would be a tri-service approach. Home Office sessions were taking place this week, together with a large impact assessment. It was unlikely that ESFRS would be an early adopter, but there was a cost implication to being a late adopter. <u>YOPD</u> Paul Evans was now involved with the Bexhill branch and would welcome a conversation with ADoRRR or the Strategic Prevention Manager in the New Year. <u>4i Decommission</u> ADoOSR to provide a verbal update in February in order to formally close this down.	ADoOSR Feb 25
248/24	Date of Next Meeting The next meeting will be held on 23 January 2025	