

**NON CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES
MINUTES OF SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAM HELD ON 18 MARCH 2025**

Present: Mark Matthews, Chief Fire Officer
 Dave Norris, Deputy Chief Fire Officer
 Hannah Youldon, Assistant Chief Fire Officer
 Duncan Savage, Assistant Director of Resources/Treasurer
 Doug Marshall, Assistant Director of People Services
 Justine Cadogan, Assistant Director of Digital, Technology & Change
 George O'Reilly, T/Area Manager Protection
 Elizabeth Curtis, Communications & Marketing Manager
 Sue Walsh, Executive Assistant

Apologies: Matt Lloyd, Assistant Director of Response and Risk Reduction

		Action
38/25	<p>Minutes of the Meeting held 13 February 2025</p> <p>The non-confidential minutes of the meeting held on 13 February 2025 were approved as an accurate record.</p>	
39/25	<p>Matters Arising</p> <p>None.</p>	
40/25	<p>Action Points from Matrix</p> <p><u>19/24 Strategic Review of Training</u> ADoRRR stated that a formal report would be brought back to SLT in April in order to provide a response to the Enfuse report (Strategic Review of Training Phase 1). It was noted this would be part of the Phase II scoping stage.</p> <p><u>09/25 Internal Audit Strategy and Plan 2025-26</u> ADoR/T had prepared and finalised a list of potential audits for 2025/26 for SLT to review and consider This would be discussed in further detail under agenda item 11. Action complete.</p> <p><u>23/25 Revenue and Capital Budget 2024/25 and Capital Programme 2024/25 to 2027/28 Monitoring at Month 10</u> ADoR/T advised that the written report would be discussed in further detail under agenda item 4. Action complete.</p> <p><u>25/25 HQ Consolidation Options</u> ADoR/T advised that the written report would be discussed in further detail under agenda item 13. Action complete.</p> <p><u>30/25 Devolution</u> CFO had written to Chief Executives at BHCC, ESCC and WSCC regarding Devolution, ahead of the interim proposals due for submission to MHCLG on 21 March 2025. Action complete.</p>	<p>ADoRRR Apr 25</p>
41/25	<p>Revenue and Capital Budget 2024/25 and Capital Programme 2024/25 to 2027/28 Monitoring at Month 10</p> <p>The Finance Manager reported on the Revenue and Capital Budget 2024/25 and Capital Programme 2024/25 to 2028/29 provisional outturn.</p> <p>A net revenue underspend to the sum of £621,000 had been identified, due to a number of underspends, offset against a variety of pressures.</p>	

The forecast has reduced by £585,000 since P8, the significant movements were as follows:

- £100,000 Treasury Management
- £78,000 Reduction in external training
- £67,000 Prevention underspends
- £38,000 Additional FRP Vacancies
- £33,000 AD OSR vacancy

Since the Fire Authority approved the original 2024/25 Capital Budget and 5-year Capital Strategy of £28,683,000 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 additional budget of £566,000 for Estates capital projects agreed at the Policy & Resources Panel in July 2024.

The current year Capital Budget was approved by the Fire Authority at £8,949,000 and updated to £11,245,000 (Property £8,472,000 and Fleet and Equipment £2,773,000) including slippage of £1,624,000 brought forward from 2023/24, allocation of spend in advance of £35,000 from 2023/24 and additional budget for Estates projects of £705,000 agreed at the Policy & Resources Panel in July 2024.

The position on reserves shows an opening balance of £13,309,00. The forecast net drawdown from reserves is £4,992,000, an increase of £1,990,000 compared to the planned drawdown of £3,002,000. This results in an estimated closing balance of £8,317,000.

Current borrowing is £9,015,000 with loans subject to fixed interest rates. Loans totalling £465,000 have been repaid during the year. Additional borrowing of £1,674,000 is expected to fund the capital programme.

ACFO had reviewed previous data and queried whether the current bi-monthly reporting provided SLT with sufficient oversight. The Finance Manager confirmed that focus would be given to the Response and Risk Reduction Directorate and other key areas on a monthly basis, whilst other budgets would be reviewed on a less regular basis. Going forwards, Oracle should also assist with reporting.

It was confirmed that the current projected underspend figure would be reasonably close to the outturn at the end of 2024/25. Treasury Management over the last 2 years had followed an atypical pattern and there were areas for improvement.

Vacancy at 1% was included within the report and it was noted that the £15,000 for webcasting had not been required, so would be moved back into contingency.

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

Following a broad discussion, SLT also approved the transfer of £6,000 from AD Admin to offset Future Foundations savings; the transfer of £2,000 from Cost of Democracy to offset Future Foundations savings and a carry forward

	of £41,000 in relation to estates condition surveys that would not be completed in 2024/25.	
42/25	<p>Call Over</p> <p>The following reports were not called over, and therefore all recommendations contained within them were agreed:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Annual Statement of Assurance 2024-25 - Productivity and Efficiency Plan 2025-26 - Ops P&P Briefing Note - ESN 	
43/25	<p>Annual Statement of Assurance 2024-25</p> <p>ACFO presented the draft Annual Statement of Assurance as required by the FRS National Framework 2018 for Fire Authority sign-off and submission to the Home Office.</p> <p>This provided a high-level and broad outline of the activities which the Fire Authority and ESFRS have undertaken over the last 12 months and wherever possible, it is aligned with statutory duties, expectations of HMICFRS and the Strategic Plans we set out to achieve last year.</p> <p>SLT ratified the Annual Statement of Assurance for the Fire Authority to agree to its publication and agreed to send this to Home Office as required by the Fire and Rescue National Framework 2018.</p>	
44/25	<p>Assessment of the Corporate Framework and Annual Governance Statement for 2024-25</p> <p>ADoR/T set out how the Fire Authority has assessed the effectiveness of its governance arrangements and to seek approval of the Annual Governance Statement in line with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.</p> <p>The review has been carried out by the Assurance, Performance & Governance Group of Senior Officers in line with the Authority's Local Code of Corporate Governance.</p> <p>As part of this review, no gaps in assurance over key risks or significant governance issues have been identified. The Fire Authority has, however, identified a range of improvements to its corporate governance framework. Action Plans are in place to address the necessary improvements and these will be monitored during the year. CFO requested that these improvements were clearly defined, setting out the tangible outcomes relating to 2025/26 with clear timelines for delivery. These will be refined and updated by Assistant Directors before being submitted to the Fire Authority.</p> <p>The Annual Governance Statement will be included in the draft Statement of Accounts 2024/25 when these are published on 31 May 2025 and will be reported for approval to the Scrutiny & Audit Panel on 24 April 2025.</p> <p>SLT discussed the historic reference to the Collaboration Framework and whether this should be updated, removed or Assistant Directors report on their own collaboration areas and include as an Appendix to KLOE document. DCFO and ACFO considered how that could be achieved, noting that the current pillar document is reviewed by the APGG and contains a section on collaboration. This would be picked up as a Governance issue at APGG and</p>	

	<p>the wording in the Annual Governance Statement adjusted to read that 'this would be regularly monitored through APGG'.</p> <p>SLT also reviewed compliance with the internal control framework and the processes involved and would continue to develop and finalise this as part of the Organisational Learning Framework.</p> <p>Sustainability and Carbon Management would remain on the action plan as would be delivered this year. Records Retention Scheme & Schedule, ADoDTC would include further detail in this area.</p> <p>ADoDTC also reminded SLT about ensuring clarity on what we want it to look like and what we want to achieve. All owners agreed to update their points and send back to Democratic Services by 28 March 2025. This section only would be re-circulated to SLT for their information.</p> <p>SLT:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) agreed the outstanding wording and ownerships as set out within comments in Appendices 1 and 3, subject to above discussions and final governance objectives. b) confirmed they were satisfied with the level of assurance provided to them through this report and the Fire Authority's governance framework and processes c) identified any significant governance issues that should be included in the Authority's Annual Governance Statement; and d) approved the Annual Governance Statement for consideration by Scrutiny & Audit Panel. 	
45/25	<p>Productivity and Efficiency Plan 2025-26</p> <p>ACFO confirmed that the relevant meetings were now in place. This would be brought back to SLT at the next meeting in April.</p>	<p>ACFO Apr 25</p>
46/25	<p>Internal Audit Strategy & Plan 2025-26</p> <p>ADoR/T provided an Internal Audit Plan for East Sussex Fire Authority covering the period 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026. This service is usually delivered based on a standard annual budget of 70 audit days. The budget for 2024/25 was set at 90 days.</p> <p>This draft strategy proposes a 82 day programme, including 5 days carried forward from 2024/25. SLT needs to consider whether this coverage is justified by the level of risk and the requirement for assurance.</p> <p>The primary reasons for expanding the plan from 70 to 82 days are the continued focus on the Oracle Implementation project which will replace the Service's existing SAP ERP system with Oracle Fusion, with Phase 2 Go Live planned for mid-April 2025. There is also a higher number of days budgeted for follow up work given the five 2024/25 audits with partial or minimal assurance.</p> <p>The daily rate for Internal Audit has yet to be confirmed but assuming a rise of 3% to cover pay and NICs increases would give £390 or £31,980 for 82 days. If 5 days are carried forward from 2024/25 the pressure on the 2025/26 budget would be approximately £4,500 which will need to be approved from the 2025/26 contingency.</p>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Use of P-cards</u> SLT agreed to defer this audit for a year and had a wider discussion around current process and use. It was agreed that this work could be picked up internally not necessarily via Internal Audit. • <u>Estates Capital Project Delivery</u> A review of the Wholetime Design Guide Refurbishments would take place in Quarter 2, in order to feed into the Strategy. • <u>IT Audit Review</u> ACFO requested further details which ADoDTC would provide. Moved to Quarter 4 • <u>Oracle Implementation</u> SLT held a general discussion. • <u>Follow Up Audits</u> The 5 follow up reviews have all been progressed enough to fit in with the timing for Quarter 1 but there was ability to flex this if necessary. • <u>Management and Advice</u> It was noted that the 20 days allocated to this and the Follow Up Audits was over 20% of the total days. It was noted that the Management & Advice covered the production of the plan and annual report, regular liaison with ADoR/T and attendance at Panel meetings. • <u>Firefighters Pension Scheme Management and Administration</u> This was definitely required but would be moved to a more appropriate timeframe, likely Quarter 2. <p>The viewpoint from Internal Audit was to remove too much, would be to risk seeing an untrue reflection of the position. A review on contracts would be considered going forwards.</p> <p>There was also a reminder that the HR Payroll Audit was still outstanding for 2024/25, this data would be required to fully inform the overall IA Opinion.</p> <p>SLT:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) reviewed the proposed internal audit plan for 2025/26 ensuring that coverage is appropriate in the light of the risks the Authority faces; b) approved the plan as amended above, prior to submission to the Scrutiny & Audit Panel on 24 April 2025; c) noted that if 5 days are carried forward from 2024/25, the pressure on the 2025/26 budget would be approximately £1,500. SLT agreed to fund this from contingency if it cannot be contained within the Finance budget* d) confirmed any changes to the suggested timings and key contacts. <p>*NB based on an approved 74 day programme.</p>	
47/25	<p>Internal Audit Report – Firefighters Pension Scheme – Retirement</p> <p>ADoPS reported the findings of the internal audit review of FPS Retirement and the proposed actions to be taken as a result to improve governance and control.</p> <p>This internal audit was undertaken as an addition to the agreed plan for 2024/25 following two cases of where errors had occurred in the retirement estimates provided to FPS members. These errors occurred at a time when a number of national pensions issues have increased the workload for both ESFRS as scheme manager and West Yorkshire Pension Fund (WYPF) as scheme administrators. 2024/25 has also seen a significant increase in FPS retirements from a historic average of 12 per annum to over 30.</p> <p>The audit gives a partial assurance opinion which means that there are</p>	

	<p>weaknesses in the system of control and/or the level of non-compliance is such as to put the achievement of the system or service objectives at risk.</p> <p>The report makes 5 findings of which four are medium risk and one is low risk. The main actions proposed by the Service are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The development of up-to-date policies and procedures for FPS retirement as part of a wider review of all pensions documentation - Clarifying roles and responsibilities with WYPF - A review of pension records to identify and where necessary correct those with a break in contributions - The agreement of an approach for re-procurement of the FPS administration contract and a review of performance measures and monitoring. <p>Delivery of the agreed actions will be tracked through the InPhase monitoring system (which is overseen by the Assurance, Performance and Governance Group) and a follow up review will be included in the 2025/26 Internal Audit Strategy and Plan.</p> <p>SLT commented on and approved the management response to the audit report so that it can be finalised and noted that the report will be taken to Scrutiny & Audit Panel on 24 April 2025.</p>	
48/25	<p>Internal Communications Review – Core Brief</p> <p>CMM set out the high-level findings of the Internal Comms Review, focusing on Core Brief and set out 7 proposals for further development, including engagement with Rep Bodies.</p> <p>Seven proposals for developing Core Brief have been drawn up following staff engagement which found that staff support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tighter controls on content to make sure it is relevant and important • Issuing Core Briefs as soon as needed (like Health and Safety Bulletins) rather than waiting for end of month • A move away from wet signatures and look to find technology which will provide us with same/similar assurance • Putting an emphasis on personal responsibility to learn and understand <p>SLT discussed the proposed types of communication, content and wider learning. There was also a discussion on ownership, which DCFO and ACFO would discuss outside of SLT. It was clarified that ADoRRR is currently responsible for sign off, SLT agreed this would remain in place for the blue bulletins.</p> <p>SLT:</p> <p>a) commented on and approve the 7 proposals, recognising that further legal advice will be sought as the proposals develop:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposal 1 Amend the purpose - agreed • Proposal 2 Frequency - agreed • Proposal 3 Risk based approach - clearer criteria required • Proposal 4 Manual notes – discussion on policy changes, updates and consultation meetings. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposal 5 Risk assessments – SLT agreed to update critical and operationally relevant ones, but would take a risk-based approach on others (4 and 5). • Proposal 6 Withdrawing items - agreed • Proposal 7 Sign off process - agreed and would provide an audit trail that it had been read and understood (electronic system) <p>b) agree that engagement with Rep Bodies can begin ahead of formal consultation on a pre-meet basis.</p> <p>c) considered where this policy now best sits and how much oversight it requires on further progress. This would be discussed further outside of SLT, but it was confirmed that the Communication Engagement Policy, sat with Comms.</p>	
49/25	<p>Corporate Risk Register Review Quarter 4 2024-25</p> <p>ADoR/T stated that this report discusses the Quarter 4 position for 2024-25. It details the corporate risks identified and how they have or are being mitigated.</p> <p>CR13 Financial & operational impacts of global supply chain disruption has been reassessed, and it is proposed to reduce the likelihood score to 2 resulting in a risk score of 4 (Tolerable). It is recommended this risk is removed and monitored within CR2 Future financial viability.</p> <p>Updates for 5 risks are yet to be received (no later than 31 March 2025) ahead of the Scrutiny & Audit Panel on 24 April 2025.</p> <p>DCFO reiterated the need for departmental risks in addition to the overarching Corporate Risk and whether this should sit at Board level and be picked up by their respective members and also hold a Strategic Risk Register for SLT to consider the high-level risks. A regular in-person risk workshop would be beneficial and also guidance from PMO for Project Managers. ACFO was preparing a plan for Assistant Directors on their corporate role, with tasks that are required throughout the year.</p> <p>The proposal for a 2-tier Corporate Risk Register, including progress, planning and governance would be followed up.</p> <p>SLT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) agreed the Quarter 4 Corporate Risk Register, including changes made since Quarter 3 2024/25; b) requested updates for CR8, CR9, CR17, CR18 and CR21 by 31 March 2025 c) agreed to remove CR13 following a reduction in risk score; but would keep a watching brief on it going forwards. d) identified any further information or assurance required from Risk Owners. 	
50/25	<p>Ops P&P Briefing Note – ESN</p> <p>ACFO provided SLT with an overview of the Emergency Services Network Programme for their information and awareness.</p> <p>An internal working group had been set up and the Ops P&P Manager who was also Regional Lead. ADoR/T provided a short update on the financial aspects noting that the Home Office had suggested that the discounts applied</p>	

	<p>would reduce the cost of airwave by £270k per year, creating a net saving of £222k (allowing for the removal of the grant and subject to final confirmation). Further significant savings options were also likely in 2026/27. SLT noted the contents of the briefing note.</p>	
51/25	<p>Strategic Performance Report Quarter 3 2024-25</p> <p>The Planning and Intelligence Manager presented the Strategic Performance Report Quarter 3 2024/25 to SLT.</p> <p>ADoR/T commented on a number of inconsistencies in the report which were clarified. This included sickness and HSV's. Starting from Quarter 1 2025/26 KPI's would ensure that any changes are picked up and refreshed starting in the new year. ACFO would add to the Assistant Director list (Tier 1 & 2).</p> <p>SLT considered the Strategic Performance report and suggested any amendments prior to it being presented at the Scrutiny and Audit Panel.</p> <p>SLT acknowledged and thanked the Planning and Intelligence Manager for her contribution and positive changes during the last 16 years, ahead of her departure from ESFRS at the end of March 2025.</p>	
52/25	<p>Oracle/Fusion Update</p> <p>Sara Pirie (Oracle Implementation Senior Project Manager) provided a verbal update to SLT on the implementation and roll out of Oracle Fusion.</p> <p>The key activities and dates (Phase 2) were outlined. Training had now begun, which would be followed by ESCC formal sign off and a transaction freeze.</p> <p>The ongoing comms update around training was very active and being rolled out with increased website hits. There had been some key risks and issues including SME availability, missing establishment data, and a complex reconciliation process with the PCF system, Firewatch and SAP. It was noted there was no collaborative agreement for Phase 2 Go-live.</p> <p>Phase 3 of the Oracle Fusion implementation would include the Payroll function and a parallel payment run, for which resources would be required.</p> <p>New users would receive OGL training online and SME's support and a record of issues/lessons learnt was also be created. Hyper care for 3 months was also available.</p> <p>A formal financial report would be brought to SLT in April and would include funding and resources costs. The current key risks and issues (red status) were summarised.</p> <p>Financial & Governance Training for SLT would take place on 19 March 2025. The collaboration agreement and KPI's were yet to be finalised. This risk was acknowledged, but plans were in place to resolve and keep this to a minimum.</p>	
53/25	<p>SLT Forward Plan 2025 and FA/Members Seminar Forward Plan</p> <p>SLT noted the forward plans for 2025, which was a useful overview for the coming months.</p>	

	<p><u>Managers Seminar – 2 April – SM level – clarity on topics</u> FF/Complaints/sexual harassment in workplace - add follow up from SLT Away Day.</p> <p><u>Panels</u> Primary Authority Partnership & Internal Audit Overtime moved from April to next S&A Panel in July Include IA FPS Retirement report for April's S&A Panel IA Turnout & Attendance Allowance no longer going to Panels?</p> <p><u>Members Seminars</u></p> <p><u>26 March</u> The 3 topics were agreed as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HMICFRS initial precis – DCFO • Fort Road – ACFO to do verbal update • Lithium Batteries – T/AMoP (George) <p><u>22 May</u> SLT agreed the current topics as per the forward plan</p>	
54/25	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p><u>Devolution and LGR</u> DCFO provided a short verbal update on the broad timelines, elections and local impacts of Devolution. Those areas which were included in the Priority Programme (Devo Six) had initially met on 17 March. ADoR/T had done some financial analysis and advised that a Financial Leads Group had now been set up.</p> <p><u>Strategic Protection Forum</u> AMoP provided a verbal update around the potential income streams update regarding the remediation acceleration plan and the information requested in Mayoral areas initially. Homes England will oversee the cladding scheme. ESFRS would receive a list of buildings by the end of April which would include buildings above 11m and without approved cladding. ESFRS would aim to secure additional funding for medium rise buildings in collaboration with BHCC and possibly also ESCC. T/ADoP and ADoR/T would follow this up outside of the meeting.</p> <p><u>London Luton Airport Debrief</u> ACFO provided a short verbal update on SSRI's which had been reviewed internally and were in good shape. There were 3 airports in our area and 2 across the border. The 2 outstanding SSRI's would be completed within East Sussex.</p> <p><u>SLT Annual Leave 2025</u> CFO reminded SLT to book this in advance with as much notice as possible and share with respective EA's.</p>	<p>ADoP/ ADoR/T Apr 25</p>
55/25	<p>Date of Next Meeting</p> <p>The next meeting will be held on 23 April 2025</p>	