

Report to North Somerset Council on Avon Fire Authority, July 2023

The AGM of the Fire Authority took place on 13 June 2023.

New members were welcomed to the authority following the local elections. There is a significant change as half of the members are new. The political balance has now changed as a result of the elections and there are now 6 Liberal Democrats, 5 Labour, 5 Conservatives, 3 Green Party and 1 Independent member, as well as the PCC.

Cllr Brenda Massey was re-elected as chair of the authority. This will be her final year as a member of the authority. Cllr Ben Nutland, a Lib Dem councillor from South Gloucestershire was elected as vice-chair.

Following a review of the governance of the authority, a new committee structure has been put in place with the intention of streamlining business, avoiding delays and duplications, and to reduce the officer time spent producing reports. There are now two committees instead of three. There have also been changes to procurement policy and changes to the delegation of recruitment to Chief Fire Officer/CEO.

Members considered the financial updates.

- There was a small underspend in the net revenue budget for 2022-23 of £417,000, which is seen as a positive outturn position given the additional pay and inflationary pressures.
- Under the capital programme, during 2022-23, the authority invested £1.47m in its premises, £2.56m in its fleet, and £0.12m in operational equipment.
There has been a significant underspend of £2.12m on premises, which was principally due to the pausing of projects to rebuild fire stations in Weston-super-Mare and Bath. These projects will still go ahead, but the rising costs and, in the case of Bath, reaching agreements with other services have delayed them.
There has also been an underspend of £500,000 in fleet due to supply issues which have delayed completion of appliance orders. We are assured that these delays will not affect operational service.
- Finally members approved the reserves strategy, and general reserves remained consistent at £1.5million which is the recommended level.

The authority resolved to refer senior officers' pay for an independent review to ensure they are aligned to national averages for the relevant population band and ensure that salary percentages reflect the responsibilities of senior officers.

Robert Payne

