

EAST SUSSEX FIRE AUTHORITY

Report of a meeting of the East Sussex Fire Authority held at County Hall, St. Anne's Crescent, Lewes BN7 1UE at 10:30 hours on Thursday, 12 June 2025.

Councillors Evans (Chair), Lambert (Vice-Chair), Asaduzzaman, Azad, Dowling, Geary, Goddard, Hill, Lyons, Maples, Marlow-Eastwood, O'Quinn, Osborne, Pragnell, Redstone, Scott, and Ungar

The agenda and non-confidential reports can be read on the East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service's website at <http://www.esfrs.org/about-us/east-sussex-fire-authority/fire-authority-meetings/> A brief synopsis and the decisions relating to key items is set out below.

1. ELECTION OF CHAIRPERSON

- 1.1 Members resolved to appoint Councillor Amanda Evans as Chair of the Fire Authority for the year 2025/26.

2. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRPERSON

- 2.1 Members resolved to appoint Councillor Carolyn Lambert as Vice-Chair of the Fire Authority for the year 2025/26.

3. POLITICAL REPRESENTATION ON THE PANELS OF THE FIRE AUTHORITY

- 3.1 The Authority received a report seeking to secure political balance on its Panels in accordance with the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990 and agree to the resultant Membership to the Panels of the Fire Authority.

- 3.2 The Fire Authority was required to keep under review the allocation of seats on Committees and other bodies to ensure, so far as practicable, that they reflected the political groups on the Authority. The rules governing this representation were outlined in the report. There remained four political groups on the Fire Authority and the political make-up was:

Conservatives	7
Labour	5
Liberal Democrat	3
Green	2
Independent	1

- 3.3 The Panels are the Authority's committees, set up in accordance with Standing Order 41, and their terms of reference are shown in the Constitution. The size of each Panel is not constituted but agreed by the Fire Authority. To ensure each Panel was representative of the overall membership of the Fire Authority it was agreed that the size of each Panel remain at 7 members.

- 3.4 There was a discussion on the proportionality figures from the constituent bodies, the calculations involved and the legislation, referenced in the body of the report, which dictated how these figures were reached. Confirmation had been sought and received from East Sussex County Council that their allocation to the Fire Authority was properly calculated and, whilst there was interest in future allocations, Members were reassured that the figures had been properly calculated in accordance with the regulations governing political proportionality.
- 3.5 The Authority agreed appointments to each Lead Member Role. The Membership of each panel was confirmed at the meeting. The Authority confirmed the Panel arrangements, political representation, and membership of each panel. They agreed that the political balance provisions shall not apply to the membership of the Principal Officer Appointments Panel. The Authority appointed Cllr Paul Redstone as Chairperson of the Policy & Resources Panel and Cllr Peter Pragnell as Chairperson of the Scrutiny & Audit Panel in accordance with Standing Order 41.13 and that the remaining Panels would appoint a chairperson at their first meeting under Standing Order 41.14.

4. FIRE AUTHORITY AND PANEL MEETINGS 2025 AND 2026

- 4.1 The Fire Authority received and noted the dates of meetings of the Fire Authority and Panels through until its meeting in December 2026.

5. TREASURY MANAGEMENT – STEWARDSHIP REPORT 2024/25

- 5.1 The Fire Authority received the Annual Treasury Management Stewardship Report, a requirement of the Fire Authority's reporting procedures, informing Members of Treasury Management performance and compliance with Prudential Indicators for 2024/25. The Authority had complied with its approved Treasury Management Strategy and Prudential Indicators for the year.
- 5.2 The Bank of England base rate was cut on three occasions during 2024/25 from 5.25% to 4.50%. A further series of cuts was anticipated into 2025/26. The average rate of interest received in 2024/25 through Treasury Management activity was 5.08% reflecting the Authority's continuing prioritisation of security and liquidity over yield. The Authority was informed that no new borrowing had been undertaken and three loans totalling £0.402m were repaid during the year, with total loan debt outstanding being £9.015m as at 31 March 2025 and the average interest rate was 4.48%.
- 5.3 Decisions on investment had been taken in the context of the prevailing economic climate, the approved capital programme, and the requirement to fund it over the medium term. No investment in longer duration funds was made. The economic environment continued to evolve rapidly and was summarised by MUFG, Treasury Advisors, at Appendix 1 to the report. Opportunities were being explored to secure investment returns within the acceptable risk parameters set out in the Authority's agreed Strategy. The Authority had invested in fixed term deposits to 'ladder' maturities in a falling interest rate environment. Investments can be placed to Environmental, Social & Governance (ESG) funds that meet the Authority's policy criteria for security and liquidity and when they offer comparable or better returns than similar non ESG funds. There had been no suitable opportunities during the year, but the Authority had made greater use of the Local Authority market to invest short term.

- 5.4 There was a lengthy discussion regarding the potential financial impact to the Authority of the Government's Devolution programme, accepting that at this stage there remained insufficient information for there to be any detail, Officers reassured Members that they were involved in discussions with other affected Authorities and would provide an update when there was more known. The Authority discussed its concerns that there had been no mention of Fire at all in the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review. Members were keen to see Government ringfence Fire funding as part of the Devolution programme and would continue to support all lobbying efforts. The Authority agreed to note the Treasury Management performance for 2024/25.

COUNCILLOR AMANDA EVANS
CHAIR OF EAST SUSSEX FIRE AUTHORITY

12 June 2025