

Lancashire Combined Fire Authority

Monday, 12 January 2026 at 10.30 am in Washington Hall, Leadership and Development Centre, Euxton

Minutes

Present:

Councillors

G Mirfin (Chair)
N Alderson
A Ali OBE
J Ash
A Blake
P Buckley
M Clifford
I Duxbury
J Fox
D Howarth
J Hugo

L Hutchinson
F Jackson
L Parker
A Riggott
M Ritson
S Sidat MBE
D Smith
J Tetlow
R Walsh
E Worthington

40-25/26	Chair's Welcome and Introduction
	The Chair welcomed members to the meeting which had been adjourned from Monday 15 December 2025 as the meeting was not quorate, as there was no representative from one of the constituent authorities. County Councillor D Howarth left the meeting at 10:33. The Chair expressed his thanks to members that had travelled to London to lobby the Fire Minister, Samantha Dixon and Lancashire MP's in relation to the fair funding review and funding for fire authorities. He acknowledged the cross-party working relationships and expressed his ambition to maintain cross-party working. He added that he would continue campaigning activities for central government to recognise the work of fire services in relation to flooding and lobby for funding for flooding activities.
41-25/26	Apologies for Absence
	Apologies were received from County Councillors U Arif and S Asghar and Councillors G Baker and Z Khan.
42-25/26	Disclosure of Pecuniary and non-Pecuniary Interests
	None received.

	County Councillor D Howarth rejoined the meeting at 10:39.
43-25/26	Minutes of Previous Meeting
	It was noted that County Councillor E Worthington was missed off the list of attendees at the previous meeting, this had been corrected in the minutes. The Chair provided an update in relation to the motion that was passed at the previous meeting, lobbying had been undertaken in London and would continue. Resolved: That the Minutes of the CFA held on 15 September 2025 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.
44-25/26	Minutes of meeting Wednesday 3 September 2025 of Performance Committee
	The Chair of Performance Committee, County Councillor E Worthington remarked that she was honoured to chair the Performance Committee and thanked officers for their experience and guidance. She drew members attention to the staff survey engagement and increased number of responses and commended the Comms Team on this increase. She advised that she had experience within research teams and would be willing to provide support. County Councillor E Worthington also commented that Performance had improved and informed members that there had recently been an a-political meeting to discuss funding suggestions which was very beneficial. The Chair added that there had been an increase in wildfire and flooding activities and on behalf of the authority passed his congratulations on to Prevention Support Officer Paul Slee on his recent award for Water Safety. Resolved: That the proceedings of the Performance Committee held on 3 September 2025 be noted and endorsed.
45-25/26	Minutes of meeting Wednesday 24 September 2025 of Resources Committee
	The Chair of Resources Committee, County Councillor A Ali summarised discussions in relation to the revenue budget and future developments and referenced the recent lobbying. He emphasised the importance of effective lobbying at the right time and in the right place. He advised that he and the vice-chair of Resources Committee had signed off a number of tender processes for equipment and advised he was happy to answer any questions relating to these. Resolved: That the proceedings of the Resources Committee held on 24 September 2025 be noted and endorsed.
46-25/26	Minutes of meeting Thursday 23 October 2025 of Member Training and Development Working Group
	County Councillor M Ritson commented that it had been discussed at the working

	group that there had been a number of meeting clashes with fire authority and Lancashire County Council (LCC) meetings, and although Democratic Services now had access to the LCC meeting calendar there had been a further clash. The Member Services Manager advised that the further clash had been a pre-arranged 2025 meeting and going forward into 2026 there should be no further clashes. She asked that should any further clashes be identified these be brought to the attention of Democratic Services. Resolved: That the proceedings of the Member Training and Development Working Group held on 23 October 2025 be noted and endorsed.
47-25/26	Minutes of meeting Monday 17 November 2025 of Planning Committee
	The Chair of Planning Committee, County Councillor I Duxbury drew members attention to the Strategic Assessment of Risk and discussed innovative ways that services were responding to electric vehicle fires, including using large skips filled with water to submerge vehicles. The Deputy Chief Fire Officer (DCFO) explained that responding to electric vehicle fires was discussed by the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) as it was a national issue. Lancashire was trialling the use of fire blankets for use on electric vehicles and worked closely with partners to ensure road safety. He advised that there were challenges in relation to reignition of electric vehicle battery fires. County Councillor I Duxbury added that Planning Committee had also received an update in relation to Business Continuity Planning and identified that business continuity was identified at the recent His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) inspection as an area of significant improvement. He also explained that the Planning Committee had reviewed the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) and service review timeline. Resolved: That the proceedings of the Planning Committee held on 17 November 2025 be noted and endorsed.
48-25/26	Minutes of meeting Wednesday 26 November 2025 of Resources Committee
	Resolved: That the proceedings of the Resources Committee held on 26 November 2025 be noted and endorsed. Councillor J Hugo left the meeting at 10:55.
49-25/26	Proposed amendments to Strategy Group Terms of Reference
	The Clerk to the Authority presented the report to members. The Authority last reviewed the terms of reference of the Strategy Group on 15 September 2025, members were asked to consider some further minor additions to the Terms of Reference of the Strategy Group to reflect the need for confidentiality of those discussions, which was essential to maintain the efficacy and usefulness of the dialogues within the Group and the continued efficacy, efficiency and effectiveness of the Service and its changing needs and

	obligations. Councillor J Hugo rejoined the meeting at 10:57. County Councillor M Clifford requested that a vote be taken and it was unanimously voted to approve the proposed amendments. Resolved: - That the Authority approved the amendments to the Terms of Reference for Strategy Group.
50-25/26	Community Risk Management Plan pre-consultation The Deputy Chief Fire Officer (DCFO) presented the report to members and advised that the draft timeline had been approved by the Planning Committee. Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service's (LFRS's) Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) was a five-year plan for how the service would make Lancashire safer. The service had started work on the next CRMP, which would set out the direction of the Service from 2027 to 2032, based on the greatest risks to the people and communities of Lancashire. The environment LFRS operated within was constantly changing and new risks to communities frequently emerged. It was LFRS's job to make sure it was equipped to deal with these changing risks by adapting services and skills to prevent, protect and respond effectively. To help shape the CRMP and options for how LFRS delivered services in the future, the service wanted to engage and consult with a wide range of stakeholders in two phases. This report detailed plans for phase one of consultation. From week commencing 12 January to 15 March 2026, LFRS would explain the challenges and drivers for change and invite views on its proposed direction of travel. Phase one would allow the service to listen and learn about community and workforce priorities, before drafting its CRMP and developing options for how services may be delivered in the future. There would then be a second phase of consultation in more detail. Key challenges and drivers for change were; • Changing risk: risks changed over time, differed by area and demographic, and needed different interventions to reduce the likelihood of happening or to lessen the consequences. • Changing demand: the number and types of fires attended had gone down and the types of emergencies responded to had changed, with incidents such as assisting other agencies on the rise, and the challenges of dealing with climate change in respect of flooding and wildfire increasing. • Fire engine availability: the number of fire engines available fluctuated during each day and the lowest availability was often when demand was highest, particularly in rural areas where on-call firefighter availability was reduced due to recruitment and retention challenges. LFRS wanted to

balance this to a sustainable model that provided more resources when demand was highest.

- **Lancashire's population:** the makeup of communities was changing and more vulnerable people required tailored prevention support.
- **Budget pressures:** income had not kept pace with rising costs and future funding was uncertain, requiring efficiency savings to ensure financial sustainability.
- **LFRS buildings:** many fire stations were outdated and not fit for modern operational needs, maintenance costs were increasing and vital investment was needed.
- **Technology and innovation:** there were opportunities to modernise the types of vehicles used and how LFRS got the right skilled people and equipment to incidents as quickly and safely as possible.
- **Future investment:** as a high performing fire and rescue service, LFRS needed to continually invest in people, systems, and assets to deliver the best possible services.

Potential areas for change were identified as;

- Re-locating or merging stations and vehicles to better match risk and demand.
- Changing staffing (duty) systems to deploy resources more flexibly based on risk and demand.
- Reviewing the response model for attending emergencies.
- Reviewing the way prevention, protection and support services were delivered.
- Rationalising LFRS's estate and reinvesting in training facilities and more efficient buildings.

The purpose of the consultation was to understand community needs and expectations of LFRS to shape the services CRMP and options for how it delivered services in the future. LFRS also wanted to strengthen trust and confidence between the community and the Service.

In phase one LFRS would share information about its services, financial position, challenges and opportunities and ask for views on:

- The services delivered and what was most important to people.
- The issues and risks the service could face in the future, such as the impact of extreme weather, new technology, and how the area LFRS served grows and changes.
- What people think LFRS should prioritise for investment.
- How LFRS used and organised resources in relation to risk and demand including people, systems and assets.

County Councillor A Ali left the meeting at 11:02.

All the feedback would be analysed independently and used to draft the CRMP 2027-32 and develop options for delivering services in the future before consulting again in more detail in phase two during summer / autumn 2026.

It was noted that due to the adjournment of the December CFA Meeting there had been an amendment to the proposed timeline, with the new consultation start date 12 January 2026.

The proposed timeline was as follows.

- W/c 12 January 2026: Phase one consultation starts.
- W/c 2 February 2026: Mid-point consultation review and implementation of any required adjustments to the consultation plan.
- W/c 9 March 2025: Closure review to determine if sufficient response had been obtained or whether additional activity was required.
- 15 March 2025: Phase one consultation ends.
- January to June 2026: Draft CRMP 2027-32, review core strategies, conduct Service Review and develop options for how services were delivered in the future.
- 13 July 2026 Planning Committee: Draft CRMP and Service Review documents approval to consult.
- July - October 2026: CRMP and Service Review phase two consultation.
- 16 November 2026 Planning Committee: Final draft CRMP and Service Review proposals for consideration and recommending to full Combined Fire Authority.
- 14 December 2026 full CFA: Final CRMP and Service Review proposals for approval.
- 1 April 2027: CRMP 2027-32 and core strategies published.
- 1 April 2027 - 31 March 2032: Service Review implementation.

The DCFO explained that depending on the number of efficiencies required the final CRMP and service review proposals may be taken to the February 2027 meeting rather than the December 2026 meeting.

County Councillor A Ali rejoined the meeting at 11:04.

The Chair commented that fires represented 27% of all incidents attended by Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service (LFRS) with an increase of flooding and special service incidents. The Chief Fire Officer (CFO) explained that the risk in Lancashire was changing and the service recognised that through its strategic assessment of risk. The nature of incidents was changing with the types of incidents attended broadening and falling within the special services category.

The Chair requested that a report be taken to the Performance Committee relating to battery fires.

In response to a question from County Councillor I Duxbury in relation to the number of false alarms that the service attended, the DCFO explained that the full data in relation to false alarms was presented to the Performance Committee, the number of malicious false alarm calls were very low with many calls relating to fire alarm activations at commercial and domestic premises with causes including calls of good intent and apparatus and equipment faults.

In response to a question from County Councillor L Parker in relation to

	engagement with electric vehicle manufacturers, the CFO explained that there was an NFCC working group which focused on electric vehicles, liaising with manufacturers and sharing best practice. He explained that technology was moving quickly and it was important that the service and the NFCC monitored developments, utilised national learning and developed safe responses. He added that LFRS had an internal working group which looked at new items of technology to deal with electric vehicle fires. County Councillor L Parker asked if the service was happy with the level of engagement from manufacturers, the CFO confirmed that the NFCC group was very active in this area, liaising with a number of vehicle manufacturers. The Chair requested that a report be taken to Performance Committee relating to fires within houses of multiple occupancy (HMO's), the Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO) confirmed that this had been requested and would be brought to the next Performance Committee. Resolved: - That the Authority endorsed the first phase of consultation to take place in early 2026. The Service would use the feedback to draft the CRMP 2027-32 and to develop options for how services may be delivered in the future, before consulting again in more detail in phase two during summer / autumn 2026.
51-25/26	Governance Review
	The Clerk presented the report to members. Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service (LFRS) was undertaking a review of internal and external governance to ensure oversight and scrutiny arrangements remained effective and efficient at keeping the public safe from fire and other risks. This would involve codifying and updating existing authority procedures as set out in its constitution, scheme of delegation and standing orders. At the same time, arrangements would be reviewed against best practice, such as the Local Government Association's Improvement and Assurance Framework, and external assurance would be sought. There were several drivers for the review including the introduction by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) of a new assessment of how each fire and rescue service was affected by its authority's governance. Policy and legislation changes were also planned such as the government's plans for strengthening the standards and conduct framework for local authorities in England. The authority was asked to establish a member working group to work with officers to conduct this review ahead of any changes being brought to the authority for approval. As the working group would not have any decision-making powers, there was no requirement for there to be political balance. The Clerk requested that nominations for members to join the working group be submitted to Democratic Services by Monday 19 January 2026 with membership to be confirmed the following week.

	Councillor J Hugo suggested that if possible there should be a member included in the working group from each constituent authority. The Clerk agreed that this would be beneficial. County Councillor M Clifford emphasised that governance would be a focus of the next HMICFRS inspection. He stated that he would be putting his name forward for the working group and suggested that where possible, meetings of the working group could be held after a committee meeting to assist with diary management. The Chair explained that discussions were ongoing to repurpose Audit Committee into an Audit, Governance and Standards Committee. As the Chair of Audit Committee County Councillor M Clifford agreed with this approach and stated that the committee should encompass all aspects. The Clerk confirmed that a paper should be being brought to the February CFA meeting to request this change to Audit Committee. Councillor J Hugo left the meeting at 11:25. The CFO explained that it was proposed that the Governance Working Group meet monthly which would mean there may be some opportunities to hold the Working Group meeting after a committee meeting. He also explained that the Working Group would report directly into Audit Committee. In response to a question from Councillor D Smith in relation to any future implementation of a mayoral model, the Clerk advised that should the Fire Authority fall under a Mayor in the future, they would still need a blueprint of governance for the authority. The CFO added that although the future was uncertain the service was reviewing constitutions from other services within a mayoral/ Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC) governance system to future proof the new constitution. County Councillor M Ritson commented that the potential for the authority to fall under a Mayoral model would impact on other projects going forward and as such should be noted as a risk within larger longer term projects. Resolved: - That the Authority approved the establishment of a Constitution Working Group to ensure member engagement in the review and updating of governance procedures and documents.
52-25/26	Member Champion Activity Report
	The current Member Champions and their areas of responsibility were: • Community Safety – County Councillor Andy Blake • Equality, Diversity and Inclusion – Councillor Salim Sidat • Health and Wellbeing – County Councillor Sohail Asghar • Road Safety – County Councillor Jordan Fox. Reports relating to the activity of the Member Champions were provided on a regular basis to the Authority. This report related to activity for the period up to

	14 December 2025. Member Champions highlighted several details within the reports and expressed thanks to the officers who supported them in their roles. Resolved: That the Authority noted and endorsed the report and acknowledged the work of the respective Champions.
53-25/26	Fire Protection Reports The Deputy Chief Fire Officer (DCFO) presented the report which summarised Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service (LFRS) prosecutions pertaining to fire safety offences under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety Order) 2005. On the 26 September 2025 the prosecution of the Article 5(3) person under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order (FSO) (Mr Rajeshkumar Chechani) was sentenced for breaches of the FSO for a residential care home in Thornton-Cleveleys. The initial inspection and further prohibition of the premises required forty-five residents to be relocated during the Covid-19 period to other care homes over a period of two weeks. This was due to substantial fire safety deficiencies being identified within the premises. Mr Rajeshkumar Chechani was sentenced to 3 months imprisonment suspended for 12 months, given a £10,000 fine and LFRS were awarded £33,000 costs. Three cases sat within the court system, the DCFO advised that since the report had been published there were amendments to the court dates listed. The responsible person for two Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO) premises, (located in Bacup and Darwen) pleaded guilty to breaches of the FSO on the 13 August 2025 at Preston Magistrates Court. A sentencing date had been adjourned until 30 January 2026 at Preston Crown Court. An NHS Trust and maintenance company were due to appear at Blackburn Magistrates Court on the 1 October 2025. This hearing was adjourned until the 22 April 2026 at Preston Crown Court. The responsible persons and a company were to appear at Blackburn Magistrates Court on the 18 February 2026 for breaches of the FSO relating to a nightclub venue. Protection teams continue to investigate and build case files in relation to eleven other premises where offences are believed to have been committed under the FSO. Members noted that there had been five arson convictions during the quarter. The DCFO added that LFRS had been graded as outstanding for it's protection work at the recent HMICFRS inspection. County Councillor M Ritson left the meeting at 11:36.

	In response to a question from County Councillor M Clifford in relation to the sentences received for arson convictions, the ACFO explained that the sentences received were a credit to AM Matt Hamer and his team. The CFO added that the sentences were granted in line with sentencing guidelines and the Clerk added that each case was judged independently and mitigating factors including a guilty plea could impact on the sentence received. County Councillor M Ritson rejoined the meeting and County Councillor D Howarth left the meeting at 11:38. The Chair requested that an item be taken to Performance Committee relating to arson cases and convictions. Resolved: That the report be noted.
54-25/26	Operational Incidents of Interest The Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO) presented the report which provided Members with information relating to operational incidents of note. As the operational period had been very busy, the report detailed only the larger deployments or more complex incidents. As a result, some incidents that Members had been made aware of locally, may not have formed part of the report. Full details of the following incidents were provided in the report: County Councillor D Howarth rejoined the meeting at 11:42. • Residential building fire in Lancaster (26/8/25) • Derelict commercial building fire in Preston (4/9/25) • Domestic building fire in South Shore (7/9/25) • Out of County Incident in West Yorkshire (9/9/25) • Derelict building fire in Bacup (17/9/25) • Sinkhole in Darwen (21/9/25) • Derelict building fire in Blackpool (27/9/25) • Commercial building fire in Fleetwood (28/9/25) • Rescue from water in Blackburn (28/9/25) • Fire in high rise building in Preston (27/10/25) In response to a question from County Councillor M Ritson in relation to the out of county incident in West Yorkshire, the ACFO advised that the investigation into the cause of the incident was being managed by West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service. County Councillor P Buckley left the meeting at 11:43. In response to a question from County Councillor E Worthington in relation to the typical cause of a derelict building fire, the ACFO explained that although there was not a typical cause, derelict buildings were often left insecure. LFRS worked with building owners to ensure derelict buildings were boarded up appropriately.

Area Manager (AM) Phil Jones added that the service worked with district councils to ensure properties were reboarded quickly, with the relevant council recharging the building owners with the cost.

County Councillor P Buckley rejoined the meeting at 11:46.

In response to a question from County Councillor R Walsh in relation to the effectiveness of utilising the second fire engine at two engine stations, the ACFO explained that the service was using resources effectively and performance was reported into the Performance Committee. The service continued to meet its response times and was satisfied it had enough resources to meet demand. County Councillor J Tetlow added that the response time for the first engine to arrive on scene was 5:50 minutes which was very quick. The ACFO added that this response time was comparable to times achieved by some metropolitan services.

Resolved: That the Authority noted and endorsed the report.

The ACFO introduced Station Manager (SM) Louis Davies who gave a presentation to members on the Sinkhole incident in Darwen on 21 September 2025.

The initial call was received at 07:20 with one fire engine, the station manager and drone team in attendance to work with the local authority to ensure the area was safe. Following a multi-agency meeting the service handed the incident back to the local authority at 12:30. The sink hole continued to develop and LFRS reattended at 17:20 and began to work with the mine remediation authority. A number of new hazards emerged including exposed live gas services to properties, the sink hole continuing to expand, the risk of the car and skip entering the sinkhole, the risk of explosion, the exclusion zone limiting firefighter tactics and managing public curiosity.

The multiagency objectives and priorities included the welfare of 60 properties and their residents, managing the risk of damage to the gas network, removing the risk of the car and skip falling into the sink hole, creating a stable environment in which to start filling the hole back in as soon as possible, ensuring the safety of responders and the wider public and creating an access and egress point for specialist fire and rescue equipment and other responding agencies.

Cadent attended and isolated the main gas supply coming into the estate, heaters and hot plates were provided to homes to support the welfare of residents. A gas vacuum was utilised to remove the gas quickly.

Blackburn and Darwen Council assisted in managing the welfare of evacuated residents, facilitated long term road closures and provided a constant site presence. They had also continued to support communities after the emergency phase.

The Mine Remediation Authority provided accurate risk information, sourced and funded a crane, sourced stone for a quicker resolution and provided a constant

	site presence. Attendance by LFRS included a fire engine, station manager, group manager, the Urban Search and Rescue Team (USAR), aerial ladder platform (ALP) and command unit. LFRS gathered initial information, established water supplies should the incident escalate, assisted Cadent to notify residents of the gas supply being turned off, provided lighting at the scene and documented risks and hazards. The use of the ALP allowed for a defensive water application strategy, gathering of incident information and provided a high anchor for the USAR team to utilise. The command unit was utilised to coordinate partner communications and collate resident information. The USAR team attached slings to the vehicle and skip to extract them safely. The ACFO thanked SM Louis Davies for his presentation and commended the multi-agency response. County Councillor M Ritson remarked that he was in attendance during the incident and commended the organised and methodical response upon contacting the fire service. He expressed his thanks to everyone who attended the incident. County Councillor E Worthington left the meeting at 12:07. In response to a question from County Councillor L Parker in relation to the cost of the incident to the service, the ACFO explained that the cost of the crane was covered by the Mine Remediation Authority and there was no additional cost to the fire service outside the use of resources. In response to a further question from County Councillor L Parker the CFO explained that the service was statutory funded to respond to fires and other emergencies, and although the service could calculate a notional cost this was just one incident of many attended throughout the year. At 12:08 County Councillor E Worthington rejoined the meeting and County Councillor R Walsh left the meeting. In response to a question from County Councillor J Tetlow in relation to the relevant searches being carried out ahead of the new build site commencing construction, Councillor D Smith confirmed that the mining authority checks had been completed in relation to coal mines however this was a slate quarry from approximately 1830 and had not been picked up. County Councillor R Walsh rejoined the meeting at 12:10. County Councillor M Ritson asked if the occupants had returned to their houses, Councillor D Smith confirmed that the last update he had received was that the occupants of the three houses affected were still in temporary accommodation. County Councillor D Howarth remarked that the incident was alarming. The Chair thanked SM Louis Davies for a good presentation.
55-25/26	Celebrating our people

	The Assistant Director of Communication and Engagement (ADoCE) presented the report. Following the Service's annual staff celebration event on 20 November 2025, the report set out staff recognition activity and individuals celebrated for a variety of achievements in 2025. As part of the Service's staff recognition activity, more than 50 people were honoured with Long Service Good Conduct Awards, Star Awards, Chief Fire Officer's Commendations, Bravery Awards, Academic Achievements and Humanitarian Medals. Details of all award recipients were included within the report within the agenda pack. The Chair suggested that a round of applause be given for all who had received an award. Resolved: That the Authority noted and endorsed the report and acknowledged the achievements of award recipients.
56-25/26	Member Complaints
	The Monitoring Officer confirmed that there had been no complaints since the last meeting. County Councillor A Riggott requested that this item be renamed to allow an opportunity for members to give positive feedback, this was unanimously agreed. County Councillor A Riggott expressed his thanks to Station Manager Adam Baron, Community Fire Safety Team Leader Rachel Ditchfield and all at Chorley Fire Station who had facilitated his recent visit. Resolved: That the current position be noted.
57-25/26	Date of Next Meeting
	The next meeting of the Authority would be held on Monday 23 February 2026 at 10:30am at the Training Centre, Euxton.
58-25/26	Exclusion of Press and Public
	Resolved: That the press and members of the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business on the grounds that there would be a likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the appropriate paragraph of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, indicated under the heading to the item.
59-25/26	Notes of Strategy Meeting held 3 November 2025
	Resolved: That the proceedings of the Strategy Group held on 3 November 2025 be noted and endorsed.

**LFRS HQ
Fulwood**

**M Nolan
Clerk to CFA**