

Lancashire Combined Fire Authority

Monday, 27 April 2026 at 10.30 am in Washington Hall, Leadership and Development Centre, Euxton

Minutes

Present:

Councillors

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

J Hugo
L Hutchinson
F Jackson
Z Khan MBE
G Mirfin
L Parker
A Riggott
S Sidat MBE
D Smith
J Tetlow
R Walsh
E Worthington

78-25/26	Chair's Welcome and Introduction
	The Chair announced that it was Member Service Officer Lynsey Barr's last meeting today before she moved on to a new role. On behalf of the authority he thanked Lynsey and wished her well for her new role. Monitoring Officer announcements The Deputy Monitoring Officer (DMO) advised members that the agenda had been reformatted to make it clear which items were for noting and which items required a decision. All items needed to be moved and seconded, items for decision required a vote and other items were just for noting. The previous minutes of the full authority were to be confirmed as accurate and the previous minutes of other meetings were for information and required noting. It was proposed that the part two item within the agenda be dealt with under part one, this would be resolved at item 13, Exclusion of press and public. The authority was within the pre-election period with local elections due to take place on Thursday 7 May 2026. The Local Government Act 1986 placed restrictions on the authority in terms of publicity, the authority could not publish anything which appeared to be designed to affect public support for a political party. In relation to decision-making, business as usual may continue unless there were very good reasons why this should not be the case.

	Chair's welcome and introduction The Chair remarked that it was an important time within the political cycle with elections coming up. He referenced the financial pressures relating to rising inflation levels and requested that the Director of Corporate Services (DoCS) review the possible impact of inflationary pressures on the authority and report his findings to the party leaders within the authority. The chair commented that there were a number of good reports within the agenda pack and highlighted the Performance Committee meeting minutes which included information relating to battery fires, houses of multiple occupancy (HMO's), flooding and dynamic resource management. He remarked that the service continued to perform well and had attended various serious incidents. He commended officers and staff for their hard work.
79-25/26	Apologies for Absence
	Apologies were received from Councillor G Baker and County Councillors J Fox and M Ritson.
80-25/26	Disclosure of Pecuniary and non-Pecuniary Interests
	County Councillor J Tetlow declared a non-pecuniary interest as the chair of the Pension Fund Committee at Lancashire County Council.
81-25/26	Minutes of Previous Meeting
	Resolved: That the Minutes of the CFA held on 23 February 2026 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.
82-25/26	Minutes of meeting Wednesday 11 March 2026 of Performance Committee
	County Councillor E Worthington thanks officers for the detailed reports and requested that members be involved in a wellbeing event with the wellbeing dogs. The Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO) advised members that there was an event taking place in two weeks' time which members were welcome to attend, the event details would be circulated to members. In response to a question from County Councillor E Worthington in relation to the selection of Star award winners, the Assistant Director of Communication and Engagement (ADCE) advised that there were approximately 10 categories which individuals could be nominated under, nominations were received from peers and the judging panel for winners was made up of the previous year's winners. County Councillor M Clifford acknowledged the challenges of scheduling meetings around members commitments but asked that meetings could be avoided at the same time as the Local Government Association Fire Conference. In response to a question from the chair in relation to what support was available

	for staff members struggling with stress and PTSD, the ACFO confirmed that the service had a number of support options in place including critical and long-term psychological support, the firefighter Hope programme and wellbeing dogs. The service was very proactive and had robust psychological support in place. In response to a question from the chair in relation to the services' work with local authorities in relation to fire safety within HMO's, the chief fire officer (CFO) explained that the service worked closely with housing teams across all districts and summarised the different levels of regulatory powers of different partners to ensure effective targeting of risk. The service also engaged with partners through prevention activities such as involvement in health and wellbeing boards. The chair requested that the Blue Light Collaboration Board (BLCB) minutes be shared with members, the CFO confirmed that this would need to be agreed by the BLCB chair, once that person had considered the security sensitivity of any content shared within the meetings and having sought agreement from the partners. The chair thanked officers for their reports and requested that the flooding report be recirculated with geographic areas included. The report was proposed by County Councillor J Ash and seconded by County Councillor R Walsh. Resolved: That the proceedings of the Performance Committee held on 11 March 2026 be noted.
83-25/26	Minutes of meeting Wednesday 25 March 2026 of Resources Committee
	County Councillor A Ali provided a summary of the meeting including the social value report relating to Blackpool fire station. County Councillor J Tetlow provided a summary to members in relation to firefighter pensions. County Councillor P Buckley requested that consideration be given to rescheduling the authorities budget meeting on 15 February 2027 as this was within half term. The DoCS explained that this could be reviewed but the authority was restricted on when this meeting could be held as it needed to be before the Lancashire County Council (LCC) meeting and allow enough time for the CFA to receive the council tax and business rates from collection authorities. Seven members indicated they may be unable to attend the meeting if it remained in half term. The report was proposed by County Councillor I Duxbury and seconded by County Councillor J Tetlow. Resolved: That the proceedings of the Resources Committee held on 25 March 2026 be noted.
84-25/26	Minutes of meeting Thursday 26 March 2026 of Audit Committee

	County Councillor M Clifford provided a summary of the meeting to members. In response to a question from the chair in relation to the Digital, Data and Technology Team (DDaT), the Deputy Chief Fire Officer (DCFO) explained that DDaT was previously two separate teams; ICT hardware and digital, including development and consideration of future technology. The team had been recognised nationally for its work and would be invited to the next Audit Committee to give an update in relation to pagers and the technology used. In response to a question from the chair in relation to the potential for mast failures to affect pagers, the DCFO explained that service was moving away from analogue pagers which relied on masts and app-based mobilisation was being developed. He added that a secondary system would be utilised should the first system fail. The report was proposed by County Councillor E Worthington and seconded by County Councillor J Ash. Resolved: That the proceedings of the Audit Committee held on 26 March 2026 be noted.
85-25/26	Member Champion Activity Report and Member Feedback
	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 26 April 2026. Member Champions and the ACFO highlighted details within the reports and expressed thanks to the officers who supported them in their roles. In response to a question from the chair in relation to the Lancashire Faith Forum and the involvement of methodists, the ACFO explained that the Lancashire Faith Forum involved partner agencies and built trust with faith groups, she would ensure that methodist groups were included. County Councillor L Parker asked for further information relating to the term ‘building trust’, the ACFO explained that this ensured that faith groups had equality of access to services and understanding risks and barriers would allow trust to be built. County Councillor D Howarth asked if trust was also built with non-religious groups, the ACFO confirmed that prevention reviews and the services strategic assessment of risk allowed for vulnerabilities to be identified and the risks associated with those to be understood and used to build trust. Councillor J Hugo remarked that the service was fortunate in that there was generally a large amount of public trust surrounding the fire service which was underpinned by this report and various

community events held including car washes and fundraisers.

In response to a question from the chair in relation to exit interviews, the Director of People and Development (DoPD) explained that the service was digitalising the exit interview process and adapting the questions to be more in depth and capture more information, specifically relating to on-call firefighters who had a higher turnover rate. The chair requested that a report on this be taken to Performance Committee.

County Councillor M Clifford declared a non-pecuniary interest as he was a Director at Cuerden Valley Park. He updated members on the Firelight Project which had been developed by Cuerden Valley Park Trust in collaboration with Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service (LFRS), Lancashire Police and the North West Ambulance Service (NWAS). The project aimed to establish a mental health and wellbeing hub within Cuerden Valley Park to support those serving in Blue Light and associated services. The programme delivered a range of experience-led conservation activities through regular weekly sessions in the park. County Councillor M Clifford invited members to a fundraiser at Cuerden Valley Park for the Firelight Project on 20 June 2026.

In response to a question from Councillor D Smith in relation to food waste recycling, the DCFO confirmed that implementation of this was ongoing within the service. County Councillor D Smith added that this saved approximately £100 per tonne of recycled food waste.

County Councillor L Parker commented that he would like to see more information in relation to flooding and climate change. The CFO explained that a report relating to flooding had recently been taken to the Performance Committee and this could be brought to the Strategy Group alongside requested information on wildfires, and drone technology.

The chair remarked that he was pleased to see that the service had been working with young farmers.

Member feedback

County Councillor M Clifford expressed his thanks to Station Manager Mark Evans who had given a talk on the service at his recent annual parish council meeting.

Councillor J Hugo provided feedback relating to a recent Mayor's Parlour event within Blackpool which a number of firefighters who had been given a commendation for their work at an incident attended. She expressed her gratitude to the officers involved.

Councillor J Hugo had also recently attended a retired members association event at Samlesbury Hall in which a drone demonstration had taken place for which she expressed her thanks to all involved.

The report was proposed by Councillor J Hugo.

Resolved: - That the Authority noted the report and acknowledged the work of the

	respective Champions.
86-25/26	Fire Protection Reports The DCFO presented the report which summarised LFRS prosecutions pertaining to fire safety offences under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety Order) 2005. LFRS currently had four cases within the court system. The responsible person and company for two houses in multiple occupation, in Bacup and Darwen pleaded guilty to breaches of the Fire Safety Order on 13 August 2025 at Preston Magistrates Court, sentencing was set for 16 April 2026 at Preston Crown Court. An NHS Trust and maintenance company appeared at Blackburn Magistrates Court on 1 October 2025, this case related to a fatal fire and breaches of the Fire Safety Order in late 2023. A further plea and case management hearing would be heard at Preston Crown Court on 22 April 2026. The responsible persons and a company were to appear at Blackburn Magistrates Court on 18 February 2026 for breaches of the Fire Safety Order for a Nightclub. One responsible person pleaded guilty to all charges. The other responsible person and company pleaded not guilty. The case had been sent to Preston Crown Court with a hearing date of 23 April 2026. Two companies and a charity were to appear at Blackburn Magistrates Court on 28 January 2026. This related to breaches of the Fire Safety Order for a mixed commercial and residential use student accommodation in Preston. A further hearing would be held on 3 July 2026 at Preston Crown Court. Protection teams continued to investigate and build case files in relation to fourteen premises where offences were believed to have been committed under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety Order) 2005. Members noted that there had been three arson convictions during the quarter with two custodial sentences which totalled over 13 years. There were another 10 arson cases ongoing within the Criminal Justice System. In response to a question from Councillor D Smith in relation to an update on the sentencing date within the report which had passed, the DMO confirmed that the case had been further adjourned. In response to a question from County Councillor J Tetlow in relation to the length of sentencing, the DCFO explained that the service worked with police colleagues but ultimately the decision was made by the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS). The report was proposed by County Councillor J Ash and seconded by County Councillor J Tetlow. Resolved: That the report be noted.

87-25/26	Operational Incidents of Interest
	The ACFO presented the report which provided Members with information relating to operational incidents of note up to 30 March 2026. 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: • Building fire in Burscough (5/2/26) • Mud rescue in Skelmersdale (6/2/26) • Commercial building fire in Blackpool (6/2/26) • Road traffic collision in Tarleton (11/2/26) • Hazardous materials incident in Middleton (18/2/26) • Commercial building fire in Hapton (22/2/26) • Domestic building fire in Preston (3/3/26) • Rescue of person in Preston (9/3/26) • Barn fire in Preston (13/3/26) • Explosion at domestic house in Hambleton (27/3/26) • Commercial building fire in Morecambe (28/3/26) County Councillor N Alderson expressed his thanks for the bravery shown by firefighters at the incident in Hambleton. He asked how the service would have attended should there have been road closures preventing access. The CFO explained that contingency mobilising arrangements were in place should any road closures be known, should road closures not be known the situation would be risk assessed and reported to the control room who would consider sending alternative resources via differing routes. In response to a question from County Councillor E Worthington in relation to the mud rescue in Skelmersdale, the ACFO explained that sand had washed away and left a muddy sea front and it was not uncommon for people to get stuck. She explained that this was a technical rescue involving a boat team. In response to a question from County Councillor I Duxbury in relation to access being blocked by double parking, particularly on terraced streets, the ACFO explained that this was becoming more of a challenge and the service was looking to introduce a more agile fleet to assist with access issues. The CFO added that the service was proactive on social media and with leafleting vehicles where double parking was identified. The chair requested that a report relating to drones be brought to the next fire authority meeting, the CFO suggested that this could be brought to the next Strategy Group meeting. The chair asked how many incidents drones had been deployed to, the DCFO explained that the attendance of drones was pre-determined depending on the incident type and scale. Members received a presentation from Station Manager (SM) Dave Curran and Area Manager (AM) Tom Powell in relation to the commercial building fire in

Blackpool on 6 February 2026.

SM Curran explained that the fire started at Smart Mart, which had significant fire loading due to the nature of products sold. The building was 'land-locked' with several buildings in very close proximity or attached to Smart Mart. Additionally, there were residential buildings in very close proximity and difficulties accessing all sides of the building. SM Curran explained that this was a significant fire with strong winds carrying embers towards residential areas, additionally the fire was only two roads away from the main promenade.

There were 15 fire engines, two aerial ladder platforms, a drone unit, a command support unit, a water tower and a high-volume pump in attendance. Members were shown a series of photographs and videos of the incident and SM Curran explained that the hazards and considerations included a large thick smoke plume, rapid fire spread, structural collapse, establishing water supplies, the impact on businesses and the community and public safety and reassurance including social media messaging. The Blackpool crew knew that they would need a significant amount of water and therefore connected to a hydrant and prepared hoses ready for the arrival of the aerial ladder platform.

The priorities throughout the incident included establishing adequate water supplies, extinguishing the fire to prevent fire spread, evacuation of neighbouring commercial and residential properties, identification of any hazards to maintain firefighter safety, protecting the environment and ensuring an effective fire investigation.

AM Powell explained that LFRS led the incident but was supported by a number of partners including Lancashire Police, Blackpool Council, NWAS, utility companies and the Salvation Army.

Local residents were evacuated and kept updated in relation to the incident. LFRS worked alongside partners for five days with multi-agency meetings continuing throughout to monitor for hotspots, complete the fire investigation, agree post-incident closure responsibilities, reduce the impact on local businesses and the community, return occupants to residential properties and provide community reassurance.

AM Powell summarised that this was a challenging incident with good decision making preventing spread of the fire and limiting damage. Following the incident the building had been demolished.

In response to a question from County Councillor L Parker in relation to additional regulation for 'land-locked buildings' and retrospective planning applications, AM Powell explained that the service was involved in consultation stages of planning applications and the service worked with partners to ensure a robust response to fire safety issues. He added that the service would educate and raise awareness of issues to building owners. The DCFO added that the service was responsible for enforcing fire safety legislation and 'land-locked buildings' were required to have 60 minutes of separation between buildings, owners were also required to work with adjacent building owners to ensure compliance with fire safety

legislation.

In response to a question from County Councillor E Worthington in relation to the cause of the fire, AM Powell explained that the fire investigation had concluded and the cause could not be determined but was likely to be either an electrical fault or deliberate.

In response to a question from County Councillor A Blake in relation to video footage and photographs captured at incidents, AM Powell confirmed that appliances captured CCTV footage, body worn cameras were used by flexi-duty officers and a Media Liaison Officer from the Corporate Communications Team attended to capture video footage. Additionally fire investigations utilised video footage and photographs which then informed organisational learning.

Councillor Fred Jackson expressed his thanks to everyone involved in the incident and commented that this was a good example of partnership working which was appreciated by the residents of Blackpool.

In response to a question from County Councillor L Parker in relation to using social media to interview members of the public to share experiences, the ACFO explained that feedback from the public was used and shared on social media where possible, additionally officers were interviewed for news features. The ADCE added that incidents were often very traumatic for the members of the public involved but the service did use case studies upon conclusion of any investigation.

The CFO explained that this incident was an example of good incident management with resources deployed quickly with risks identified and actions taken. He acknowledged the skills, knowledge and competence of firefighters and the investment in equipment such as drones. He added that the service was an operationally busy service with a diversity of incidents attended.

In response to a question from County Councillor I Duxbury in relation to regulation of businesses with a high level of combustible material, the CFO explained that the law applied equally to all businesses and the building owner should conduct an effective risk assessment relevant to the business and its risks.

In response to a question from County Councillor L Hutchinson in relation to the services capability to manage two large scale incidents simultaneously, the CFO explained that the services mobilising system, dynamic cover tool and Command Support Room ensured that resources were deployed effectively to meet risk. The service had 58 fire engines and historically that arrangements were predicated on managing two ten fire engine incidents simultaneously. Arrangements were in place for mutual aid from neighbouring services such as Manchester and Cheshire and national resilience support through National Coordination Advisory Framework (NCAF) should the service require additional appliances such as in the event of spate conditions or major incidents.

The chair thanked those involved in the incident and the presenting officers.

	The report was proposed by County Councillor R Walsh and seconded by County Councillor E Worthington. Resolved: That the Authority noted the report.
88-25/26	Date of Next Meeting
	The next meeting of the Authority would be held on Monday 15 June 2026 at 10:30am at the Leadership and Development Centre, Euxton.
89-25/26	Exclusion of Press and Public
	The Deputy Monitoring Officer explained that the proposed part two item related to a named person and had been exempt under paragraph one of part 1 of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. However the details contained within the report were within the public domain and it was therefore considered that the item did not require exemption. County Councillor A Ali proposed that item 14 be heard under part one of the agenda. This was seconded by County Councillor A Riggott and agreed unanimously by members. Resolved: That item 14 relating to the appointment of an Independent Person be considered under part 1 of the agenda, without the exclusion of press and public.
90-25/26	Re-appointment of Independent Person
	The DMO presented the report to members. The Localism Act 2011 required the appointment of at least one independent person (IP) whose views must be taken into account when allegations of a breach of the member's code of conduct were being considered. It was however considered best practice for local authorities to have two such IPs, rather than one and the Authority did have two in line with this best practice. The term of one of them was however due to end in May 2026. The Service wished to extend the contract of Julie Byrom for a term of four years to continue the provision of two IPs. County Councillor L Parker requested that the IP contracts be reviewed in a more timely manner going forward, the DMO explained that although the report was brought to this meeting, work and conversations had been ongoing for some time. The service also had a second IP under a current contract with two years remaining. The DMO explained that the authority was in the process of considering the appointment of an Audit IP with specialist knowledge. The report was proposed by County Councillor A Ali and seconded by County Councillor M Clifford and agreed unanimously by members.

	Resolved: That the Authority approved the extension of appointment of Julie Byrom for four years to May 2030.
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**LFRS HQ
Fulwood**

**D Howell
Monitoring Officer to CFA**