



Annual General Meeting

19th June 2025
Draft Minutes

Version & Date	Comments
Version 0.1 25/06/2025	1st set of draft minutes from, prepared by F&AM Pepper for internal review
Version 0.2 15/07/2025	Review and amendments by Officers. Circulated to Members for review.
Version 0.3 06/08/2025	Updated as per comments received from Members with small amendments as well as a factual amendment regarding type of pension on page 14. Draft Minutes V 0.3 published on website

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Annual General Meeting 19th June 2025 Exeter Racecourse

Present:

Chair: Prof. Mike Williams

Vice Chair: Dr Pamela Buchan

Councillors: Dermot McGeough (Devon County Council), Jayne Stansfield (South Gloucestershire Council), Louise Wainwright (Devon County Council), Josh McCarty (Plymouth City Council), Sara Wilson (Devon County Council)

MMO Appointees/ Statutory Members: David Morgan, Simon Thomas, Wayne Thomas, Felicity Sylvester, Guy Baker, Dr Emma Bean, Charlie Ziemann

MMO Representative: Rachel Irish

Officers: Simon Excell (Gloucestershire County Council), Jessica Maunder (Devon County Council Finance), Beverley Phillips (Devon County Council)

D&S IFCA Officers: Sarah Clark (Deputy Chief Officer – DCO), Mat Mander (Chief Officer – CO), Olga Pepper (Finance & Administration Manager – F&AM)

Public: No members of the public present.

Welcome:

The current Chair, Mike Williams, formally welcomed all to the meeting and thanked them for their attendance. The Chair reminded all present about the open-door policy and invited everyone, especially any new Members to contact himself or CO Mander with any enquiries. The Chair wished to record thanks from the Authority to the departed elected members – Cllr Crabb, Cllr Peart, Cllr Hughes and particularly Cllr Twiss, Cllr Dewhirst and Cllr Williams for their involvement in the Authority's matters. Simon Excell conveyed a message of thanks from Cllr Preest to Simon Excell and to the Authority. CO Mander restated the Chair's invitation for all the Members to reach out at any time should they have any questions or comments, highlighting the Authority's reliance on the expertise of its Members. CO Mander reminded the new Members that information about the Authority can be found in the Members' Introduction Pack that they had been provided with.

Action Items:

1. Election of the Chair

CO Mander introduced this Agenda Item. According to the Standing Orders, the Authority must elect its Chair annually and it is the Chief Officer's role to ask for any nominations at the Annual General Meeting. CO Mander invited all to put forward their nominations. Emma Bean wished to nominate Mike Williams. This was seconded by Guy Baker. There were no other nominations. CO Mander asked Mike Williams if he wished to accept and continue as the Chair of Devon and Severn IFCA. Mike Williams accepted and thanked the Senior Management Team, Pamela Buchan and Emma Bean for their support.

2. Election of the Vice Chair

According to the Standing Orders, the Authority must elect its Vice Chair at the Annual General Meeting. The newly elected Chair asked members for their nominations. Guy Baker wished to nominate Pamela Buchan. This was seconded by Cllr McCarty. There were no other nominations. The Chair asked Pamela Buchan if she wished to accept and continue as the Vice Chair of Devon and Severn IFCA. Pamela Buchan accepted.

3. Apologies for absence

F&AM Pepper stated that the following apologies had been received: Cllr Rowsell, Cllr White, Didi Alayli, Mark Day, Dave Saunders, Peter Lappin, Simon Bunn, Brian Glasson, Neil Townsend, Neil Smith, Simon Toms, Cllr Strang, Jon Dornom, Steve Dury, Jasmin Rix.

4. Declarations of Interest

The Chair invited all to bring forward any declarations of interest and to record any declaration of pecuniary interest with CO Mander prior to any meetings in reference to any particular agenda items. In line with the Authority's Standing Orders, Members were reminded that those declaring a pecuniary interest in an agenda item would need to seek dispensation from the Chief Officer to speak, or speak and vote on that agenda item. CO Mander would review any declarations and determine if a dispensation to speak or speak and vote was appropriate. The Chair explained that the Authority relies on the expertise of its members, especially the MMO Appointees who are involved in commercial fishing activities. It would be counterproductive to refuse any members participation in meetings automatically following their declarations of pecuniary interest, hence the reliance on the Chief Officer's discretion in this matter. The Chair reminded all to review their general declarations of interest regularly, preferably twice a year.

5. To consider and approve the Draft Minutes of the Authority Meeting held on 20th March 2025

The draft minutes from 20th of March 2025 were examined page by page. No amendments were suggested.

That the minutes from the Authority Meeting held on 20th of March 2025 are a true and accurate record.

Proposed: Pamela Buchan Seconded: Emma Bean

In favour: 10

Against: 0

Abstain: 5

Felicity Sylvester wished to use this opportunity to recommend that other aspects of the meetings are included in the minutes, for example to reflect that the Members visited Hinkley Point C Nuclear Station after the last Authority meeting, or to share presentations which the Members watched as part of the meetings.

The Chair, CO Mander and DCO Clark agreed that it would be appropriate to include a link to the presentation watched during the meeting on 20th of March in the Minutes.

6. Matters Requiring Urgent Attention

The Chair briefly consulted with CO Mander. There were no matters requiring urgent attention.

7. Questions from the Public

The Chair briefly consulted with CO Mander. There were no questions from the public.

8. To note development regarding D&S IFCA's funding

The Chair introduced this agenda item. As per the Officers' Paper, since its inception, Devon and Severn IFCA has been experiencing financial difficulties relating to the percentage contributions from the funding Local Authorities and overall funding level. These issues are a concern for the funding Local Authorities and for Defra. Since 2019, the Chair had made it his priority to resolve this issue whilst making sure that the Authority remains neutral. The Chair and CO Mander have been in correspondence with a number of Ministers to date, but the progress has been slow. Defra has since started a review into the financial funding structure of D&S IFCA. The Chair and CO Mander had attended numerous meetings with Defra and Defra had consulted with the funding Local Authorities following which it had been Defra's intention to present various options to the Ministers before this year's summer recess. However, this was first delayed by the 2025 Local Elections and subsequently when Defra informed the Chair that the Treasury wanted to reduce the number of government grants. The review would be undertaken by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and would include Defra's New Burdens Funding to IFCAs. Defra has therefore decided to suspend its funding structure review, which is likely to include a public consultation, until the government grant review has been finalised. The Chair asked for an update from Defra and has received an email, text from which was read out to all present:

Text from Ann Harkness Moore's email to the Chair

- *Progressing the review of Devon and Severn IFCA funding has slowed recently while we work through the implications of some changes to the way local government grants are delivered from 26/27. This work is being led by MHCLG and there is currently significant uncertainty around the detail of this proposal though we are expecting MHCLG to launch a public consultation in the next month. These proposals are likely to be implemented from 2026/2027.*
- *At this stage we are exploring alternative options for RDEL funding.*
- *We will continue to work with the AIFCA and Chief Officers as we receive further information, including making local authorities and IFCAs aware of any public consultation.*

The Chair handed over this Agenda Item to CO Mander.

CO Mander highlighted the useful background documents linked within the Officer Paper. To give context CO Mander expressed his understanding that all ten IFCAs are under financial pressure, whilst pointing out

that despite Devon and Severn IFCA having the largest mobile fishing fleet and two separate coasts, its operational budget amounts to only a half of the two best funded IFCAs' budgets. This discrepancy stems from the origins of the Devon and Severn IFCA's funding structure.

The Chair noted that pressure will be kept on Defra to provide further updates. However, Defra is not in charge of the wider Government review process.

The Chair invited questions and comments.

Simon Excell wished to provide further background for the new Members. It was Simon Excell's opinion that the Authority should not assume that Defra is going to deliver on their promises. The progress so far has been disappointing, and the process is very slow generally and now it is being blamed on the recent Local Elections. Devon and Severn IFCA is not currently meeting its statutory duties which was noted in the minutes from the Authority's meeting on 20th March 2025, which is a cause for concern. Simon Excell envisaged that the Officers' Paper introducing the budget for the financial year 2026/2027 would talk about a need to increase the levies and rely more heavily on the General Reserves. Simon Excell noted that the Authority's policies state that the overall level of the General Reserve should not fall below 25% of that financial year's revenue budget. The current reliance on the General Reserves is not financially sustainable. The pressure must be kept on Defra which Simon Excell felt has been the case although without much success. Gloucestershire County Council is happy to engage in any upcoming consultations, but it should be highlighted that the current position is difficult due to the lack of certainty and the fact the Local Authorities cannot afford any increases in contributions.

The Chair confirmed that the Authority has not been able to meet its Statutory Duties due to not being adequately funded, which is at the core of the Chair's and CO Mander's communications to Defra.

Cllr Wainwright was interested to find out to what extent the Officers and the Chair had been lobbying the MPs to help with the matter. The Chair responded that it was inappropriate for D&S IFCA to lobby MPs and get directly involved in matters that concerned only the Local Authorities and Defra. The constituent MP for Brixham, Caroline Voaden, had visited the Brixham offices and it was made clear during the visit, that the financial issues exist, but the Chair wanted to encourage any current Elected Members to contact their MPs to lobby on Devon and Severn IFCA's behalf. The Chair understood however, based on recent news, that many Local Authorities are experiencing their own financial difficulties, including threats of insolvency. The Chair noted that a former Elected Member for Gloucestershire County Council, Cllr Preest was active in this respect and reminded all that there is a limit to what the Officers together with the Chair can achieve. Cllr McGeough asked if there was a template available for the Elected Members to use to write their letters to MPs. CO Mander explained that as an organisation, Devon and Severn IFCA can provide the information as required but it is dependent on how the individual Local Authorities view the situation that will determine the context of the letter. CO Mander recommended that Members referred to the Medium-Term Financial Plan, which forecasts at which stage the Authority's General Reserves would reach the lower limit of 25% of the annual Revenue Budget. CO Mander reminded all that the budget papers are prepared jointly by the Chief Officer and the Devon County Council Treasurer in their capacity as the Section 151 Officer.

The Chair suggested that Simon Excell may be able to share a template following any correspondence issued by Gloucestershire County Council in the past.

Pamela Buchan wished to remind all elected members about the 'Motion for the Ocean' initiative which may be of use as a statement of commitment to point out when lobbying. Many Councils, for example Plymouth City Council and Teignbridge District Council, have joined the initiative.

9. To approve the Terms of Reference for the Byelaw and Permitting Sub-Committee

The Chair introduced this Agenda Item by presenting the Byelaw and Permitting Sub-Committee (B&PSC) to the new Members. The B&PSC can be described as the engine house of the Authority. Devon and Severn IFCA uses byelaws to manage the exploitation of sea fishery. Once the overarching byelaw is in place, operational details are introduced through permit conditions. The Chair explained that this approach is advantageous as it allows a quicker turnaround in terms of implementation of necessary changes to management measures. B&PSC has delegated powers from the Authority to make decisions in terms of byelaw making and the management of the fisheries and marine environment. The B&PSC is open to any Member to join. The Chair wished to encourage any new Members to join. Cllr Wainwright declared an interest in joining the sub-committee.

CO Mander advised Members that the Authority's Standing Orders require the Authority to review the B&PSC's Terms of Reference. According to the Officers there is no need to make any changes.

There were no further questions.

The Chair invited all to approve the Terms of Reference for the Byelaw and Permitting Sub-Committee as per the Officers' Paper.

That the Terms of Reference for the B&PSC, as set out in this Officers' Paper, are agreed by the Authority.

Proposed: Wayne Thomas Seconded: Charlie Ziemann

In favour: 14

Against: 0

Abstain: 1

10. To make appointments to the Byelaw and Permitting Sub-Committee

The Chair introduced this Agenda Item by expressing an assumption that all the existing Members wish to remain on the Sub-Committee. Cllr McCarty declared that he would join in September 2025 but until then he could not commit his time due to family matters. Upon request, the Chair provided information about the frequency of the B&PSC's meetings – the Sub-Committee meets three to four times a year with no set dates. Cllr Wainwright, Cllr Wilson, Cllr Stansfield and Cllr McGeough volunteered to join the B&PSC.

The Chair informed Members about the upcoming B&PSC meeting on 26th of June, however it was understood that this was short notice for any new Members.

That all existing Members of the B&PSC stand for a further twelve months and should therefore be re-appointed en bloc.

Additional Members that have expressed an interest become new Members of the B&PSC.

Proposed Cllr McGeough Seconded Guy Baker

In favour 15

Against 0

Abstain 0

11. To consider the future of the Governance Working Group

CO Mander introduced this Agenda Item. As per the Terms of Reference, the Governance Working Group (GWG) has no delegated powers. Any decisions agreed by the GWG must be confirmed by the Authority. At the time of GWG's inception, it was felt that it would be beneficial to have Members' input in drafting of the Authority's policies and discussing strategies. By the time the matters were introduced to the Full Authority the issues would have been already considered by the GWG. This was based on the belief that there is a large range of interests and expertise amongst the Members which the Authority could draw from in that way. The Members were asked to share their knowledge and get involved by supporting the work of GWG. Although this remains a great concept, it transpired that lack of available time prevents both General and Elected Members from becoming involved and the meetings had poor attendance, which made it difficult to complete any tasks assigned to GWG.

It has been acknowledged that good work had been delivered by the GWG but now, through an update of the Authority's Scheme of Delegation (recently reviewed) this issue could be recognised, and the relationship between the Officers, the Chair, the Vice Chair and the Chair of the B&PSC could be formulated in order to ensure successful delivery of tasks. Subsequently, CO Mander invited the Members to state their willingness to get involved and the Officers would act accordingly. The Officers presented, via the Officers' Paper, two options. Option One is to continue with the GWG, seek nominations for the GWG's Chair, Vice Chair and identify additional members. Option Two is to transfer the supportive role of the GWG to the Chair and Vice Chair of the Authority and the Chair of the B&PSC and amend the Authority's Scheme of Delegation. The Officers would recommend Option Two, due to an administrative burden when arranging the meetings.

The Chair wished to emphasise that there was no intention to be critical of the Members, some of whom already dedicate their time to support the work of the Byelaw and Permitting Sub-Committee. For the General Members, their role is voluntary which makes it difficult to dedicate any extra time. The Elected Members are dealing with a busy workload, and any support currently received from the Members is appreciated. The Chair wished to highlight that Option Two does not mean a removal of the decision making from the Members, but it is a recognition of the delays delivering the work.

The Chair invited questions and comments.

Cllr McCarty thought that it was logical to support Option Two but wished to recommend including a paragraph which would suggest that there would be an opportunity to co-opt any Members who would like to make that commitment in the future to make the most of the expertise available. The Chair agreed, noting that this would encourage the Members to join but regarding an option to co-opt the Chair commented that once the Members co-opt, they should remain co-opted. CO Mander pointed out that the Members would be able to choose to get involved – as per the Officers' Paper. Members would be made aware of the type of tasks which is being progressed.

Pamela Buchan provided some background. The Governance Working Group was set up in 2020 to give more capacity to governance. It is not required to have such group and other IFCA's don't have one. Pamela Buchan has been the Chair of the GWG since its inception. The GWG has always been flexible in terms of its meetings taking place online as and when required to address a variety of tasks. It takes a long time to deliver some of the workstreams and there is a challenge stemming from the way in which the Authority operates meaning a constant change in Members. Currently the task under consideration is the Compliance and Enforcement strategy which is an important and complex matter. Pamela Buchan stated that due to her involvement in the GWG, she would be abstaining from voting in this matter. Pamela Buchan reminded all, that although the two options have been presented by the Officers, any other suggestion can be put forward

by the Members. Choosing Option Two means a heavy workload for the core members of the group and if that option is to be selected, any Members should be allowed to join in.

The Chair invited all to consider an additional wording which will allowing the Members to opt in.

Felicity Sylvester wanted to say thank you to Pamela Buchan for chairing the GWG. Felicity Sylvester found the work of GWG interesting and a useful way for the Members to contribute their expertise to the operations of the Authority through attending the online meetings of which there have not been many. If the GWG was to be disbanded, Felicity Sylvester would be disappointed on behalf of herself and the other Members. All the Members should be invited to become members of the GWG on annual basis. Felicity Sylvester was supportive of Option One and felt strongly that the GWG should remain in the form in which it exists currently.

CO Mander wished to stress the limited support for the GWG from the Members to date pointing out that attempts to elect a Vice Chair of the group have been unsuccessful. CO Mander was concerned that if Option One was chosen, the Authority would need to appoint a GWG's Chair, Vice Chair as well as the Group's other members.

There were no further questions.

The Chair took into account all that was said in the matter, including Felicity Sylvester's and Cllr McCarty's suggestion and invited all to vote.

That Members agree to continue with the GWG and seek nomination from the Chair, Vice Chair and identify additional members.

Proposed Felicity Sylvester Seconder Cllr McGeough

Favour – 3

Against – 8

Abstain - 4

Taking into consideration the result of the vote, the Chair announced that the motion had failed.

The Chair invited the Members to decide on the wording for a motion considering Option Two, as per Cllr McCarty's comment.

Discussions followed to ensure that the best version of the wording is chosen for the motion, including the following points:

- There should be an opportunity for the Members to contribute to the work of the GWG as they wish.
- The expression "co-opted" should be avoided because the group which Members would be able to be "co-opted" to will have been disbanded.
- A correct word should be chosen to suggest that the Members are volunteering to get involved, rather than being nominated by others.
- The Members will be made aware of any upcoming workstreams so there is an opportunity to get involved.
- The Members' involvement should be in accordance with the Scheme of Delegation.
- Administrative burden on the Officers should be considered, regarding Option Two.
- Tasks in the Annual Plan should be taken into consideration when setting out the work of the GWG.

- The Officers should be able to contact directly any Members, whom they feel may be able to provide a useful input.
- For clarity the motion should consist of two parts. One regarding the transfer of responsibilities for the GWG and one offering the Members an opportunity to contribute.

The Chair suggested a motion:

That Members agree to transfer the supportive role of the GWG to the Chair, Vice Chair and Chair of the B&PSC and amend the Authority's Scheme of Delegation

That Members agree that any Authority Member is invited to participate in the governance tasks as outlined in the annual plan.

Proposed Josh McCarty Seconded David Morgan

In favour 12

Against 0

Abstain 3

Members took a 15-minute comfort break.

Cllr McCarty left the meeting.

Upon request of Cllr McCarty, the Chair read out, to be recorded in the minutes, a note of thanks from Plymouth City Council to the Devon and Severn IFCA's Officers for their prompt and effective assistance in reference to the issue of the octopus influx causing issues to the potting activities in the District.

The Chair praised the Officers for the efficiency with which the relevant advice was issued.

12. To approve the Outturn Statement of Accounts Report for 2024/2025

Jessica Maunder from Devon County Council Finance Team introduced the Agenda Item. The final outturn position for the Authority for Financial Year 2024/2025 resulted in a favourable variance of £28,818 which was possible due to the additional funding that was not expected to be available in the following year. The main variances attributing to this favourable position were listed as per the Officers' Paper.

With the budgeted use of reserves of £2,434 there was a net transfer to General Reserves of £26,384 for year 2024/2025. Jessica Maunder highlighted the information about the levels of Reserves as well as the accounting data available to view in the Appendix A at the last page of the document and invited questions and comments.

CO Mander wished to provide context regarding the £10,000 received from the Association of the IFCAs (AIFCA) – this amount had been paid to all the ten IFCAs and it is in reference to the amount of £130,000 received from Defra, reduced from £140,000. This payment was in reference to that discrepancy. As mentioned in the Medium-Term Financial Plan, without the additional Defra funding, there will be a significant gap in the budget which must be funded by the use of the Authority's Reserves or by an increase in the Levies. In the current Financial Year, the amount to be taken out of the Reserves is budgeted at £118,042. CO Mander described that D&S IFCA has another specific type of reserve created from Financial

Administrative Penalty, which contains funds received by the Authority as a result of disposals of legal cases by the Enforcement Team. These funds are not for the Authority to use but belong to the Treasury albeit there is no mechanism in place to pay the funds over. The Authority records the level of these reserves via Officer Papers but does not benefit from them aside from the advantage of the bank interest accrued.

Charlie Ziemman was interested to know if the permit related fees are noted as part of the income. CO Mander responded advising that they were and a more detailed breakdown is available. The income obtained from the sales of permits is designed to cover the administration cost including half the role of the Marine Development Officer. Charlie Ziemman pointed out that Southern IFCA doesn't charge commercial permit applicants and wished to explore a possibility of permitting and charging for angling activities.

CO Mander provided a response. The Authority has plans to introduce a Hand Working Byelaw and the logical step after that would be to consider whether to introduce a Hook and Line Permit Byelaw that would deal with, among other things, recreational angling. CO Mander quoted an example of the pollack fishery which is reduced to bycatch only for the commercial sector, but the recreational management is currently through voluntary measures, even though the stock caught by the recreational sector is estimated to be 50% of the total landings.

Simon Thomas wished to note that most of the pollack caught commercially would be exported whilst pollack caught recreationally is consumed by the angler and should be recognised as contributing to national food security.

Charlie Ziemman wished to be able to have access to data from the fish returns received from angling boats, since any commercial fishers need to provide daily data on what has been caught. Having this information from recreational anglers would be useful.

The Chair pointed out that the issues with this type of management are an example of the Authority's funding limitations.

There were no further questions.

13. To approve D&S IFCA's Financial Probity and Financial and Administrative Regulations

CO Mander introduced this Agenda Item. Standing Orders require the Authority to review Financial Probity and Financial and Administrative Regulations regularly. CO Mander and the Treasurer responsible did not recommend any amendments.

There was no questions or comments.

That the Financial Probity and Financial Administrative Regulations are approved with no amendments

Proposed Pamela Buchan

Seconded Charlie Ziemann

In favour 14

Against 0

Abstain 0

14. To approve D&S IFCA's Standing Orders

CO Mander introduced this Agenda Item by reminding Members about the update to the Standing Order following the AGM in June 2024 which included paragraphs about management of pecuniary interest in the Authority meetings.

Officers recommend that the Standing Orders were approved with no amendments.

There were no questions or comments.

That the Standing Orders are approved with no amendments.

Proposed Wayne Thomas Seconded Emma Bean

In favour 14

Against 0

Abstain 0

15. To note the advice regarding D&S IFCA's Managing Absence Policy and consider amendments as set out in the Officer Paper and Annex A

CO Mander introduced this agenda item. During the Authority meeting in September 2024, the Chair and Vice Chair put forward questions in reference to the Devon and Severn IFCA's Absence Policy. Three issues arose for CO Mander to action by seeking further HR advice. CO Mander did so via the Authority's HR contract with Devon County Council and based on the received advice made appropriate changes to the Policy which were highlighted in the document introduced under Agenda Item 15 – Amendments – D&S IFCA Managing Absence Policy. CO Mander invited the Members to agree to the introduced amendments as in accordance with Annex A. CO Mander pointed out a mistake in reference to Annex named within the Officer Paper – when it is quoted Annex B, it should say Annex A.

CO Mander invited questions and comments.

Pamela Buchan wished for the Members to consider the use of the Chief Officer's discretion as per page twelve of the Policy document in reference to short term absences due to a long-term illness. Pamela Buchan was concerned that although this provides more flexibility compared to reliance on the Bradford Scoring system, it has the potential for uncertainty amongst employees around the fairness of the Chief Officer's potential decisions. Pamela Buchan wished to stress that her comment was not suggesting any distrust in the current Chief Officer but rather pre-empting any possible issues. The Bradford Scoring System could assure fairer treatment of cases but lacks the flexibility.

CO Mander noted that the advice from the Devon County Council's HR department was clear and was followed to draft the amendments. The guidance suggested that caution needs to be exercised when using discretion provisions. The Chief Officer needs to manage any risk by demonstrating that as an organisation, Devon and Severn IFCA is supportive towards its members of staff. Good absence management by line managers and the Chief Officer has been mentioned by Officers. There are further processes available, including the Authority's complaint procedures, should the employees feel that they don't agree with the Chief Officer's decision.

There were no further questions.

The Chair invited the Members to vote:

That the Authority approves the Managing Absence Policy as set out in the Officer Paper and Annex A

Proposed Rachel Irish Seconded Emma Bean

In favour 14

Against 0

Abstain 0

16. To review and consider amendments to the Authority's Local Government Pension Scheme Discretionary Policy as set out in the Officers' Paper and Annex B

CO Mander introduced the Officer Paper by pointing out two components to the matter.

Point 1, the Authority holds a Pension Discretion Policy which should be reviewed regularly. However, the last version of the Policy, approved by the Authority, is dated 2016. During preparations for a recent review, Officers came aware of a version of the Policy from 2018. Upon inspection, it was discovered that the required processes were not followed when introducing the Policy dated 2018, namely the new version of the policy was not presented to the Authority for approval or reported to the relevant body. CO Mander was not certain what the reason was behind the change made to the 2016 Policy. However, there was a possibility, that one of the employees at the time was able to benefit from the added discretion in terms of their early retirement. There was no benefit to the Authority from providing the flexibility of staged retirement to the employee and given the small number of staff employed by the Authority, such flexibility puts considerable pressure on the remaining Officers. CO Mander's position was that Devon and Severn IFCA should not introduce it in its Policy because the update in question didn't follow the required process and the discretion which the update introduces is not present in the Devon County Council's Policy.

Point 2, the Officers are aware of other updates which Devon County Council did implement in their Policy from 2023 and those changes CO Mander felt should be adopted by Devon and Severn IFCA. CO Mander recommended that Members approve the amendments set out in D&S IFCA's reviewed Local Government Pension Scheme Discretionary Policy.

CO Mander invited questions and comments.

Emma Bean was concerned that removal of the said discretion would be problematic for some current employees who may be hoping to benefit from it. CO Mander responded that although the discretion in question is present in the 2018 document it would not have been quoted to any current employees. The 2016 document would have been quoted if required. CO Mander gave the reassurance that no employee was aware of the 2018 version until discovered recently, so no employee would have relied on the provisions as possible conditions of employment.

Simon Excell wished to note for everyone's information that the national normal minimum pension age (NMPA) will be changing in the future. The NMPA is the earliest age most people can start withdrawing money from their personal and workplace pensions. It's currently 55 years but this will increase to 57 from 6 April 2028. The NMPA is set by the UK government. It was suggested that the relevant IFCA documentation / policies will need to be updated accordingly at the appropriate time.

There were no further questions.

That Members approve the amendments set out in D&S IFCA's reviewed Local Government Pension Scheme Discretionary Policy

Proposed Emma Bean

Seconded Simon Thoms

In favour 13

Against 0

Abstain 1

17. To note the Health and Safety Audit and internal report

CO Mander wished to thank DCO Clark for the amount of work delivered in reference to Health and Safety, especially the Safe Systems of Work (SSOW). The Authority has never been in a better situation in terms of managing the Health and Safety risks, which are significant, due to the dangerous work that the officers do. The Officers report incidents annually.

CO Mander invited question and comments.

David Morgan wished to find out more about the incident regarding the trailer becoming detached from the vehicle as per the Officer Paper. DCO Clark explained that the breakaway cable failed, and it has since been serviced and the SSOW reviewed to ensure that this not happens again. CO Mander mentioned that the issue had arisen due to unsuccessful coupling. David Morgan recommended to lift the towing bar to check that all is secure. The Chair recommended that Officers look into double safety chain system. DCO Clark reassured all that the SSOW had already been amended to improve coupling procedures and checks.

There were no further questions or comments.

18. To note the internal Data Audit Report

CO Mander introduced this Agenda Item. The work involved in the Data Audit Report had been driven by PPO Townsend. Following a series of Freedom of Information (FOI) requests and Environmental Information Requests (EIR) the Officers, with the help of the retired Devon County Council's Head of Data, reviewed data management procedures. A Data Register has since been put in place which is a publicly accessible document. This year, for the first time, CO Mander and PPO Townsend conducted an unannounced check of all the Officers' PCs to test the adherence to the Data Protection Register and relevant policies. Aside from files kept on the shared drive, the Officers realised that much data is being stored unnecessarily in emails. Processes have been introduced regarding retention of emails in the hope to reduce any risks. The Officers appreciate their responsibilities and treat data management seriously.

There were two incidents involving data breaches, both reported by the Chief Officer to the Information Commissioner's Office which Devon and Severn IFCA is registered with. CO Mander was advised to apply a self – assessment and to notify any members of public affected by the disclosure of personal information. The Officer responsible for the breaches has since resigned, although not because of the issue.

Thanks to the work of all the Officers and PPO Townsend in particular, CO Mander was satisfied that the risk of disclosure of personal information and the time to deal with FOI or EIR had been reduced significantly.

There were no further questions.

Agenda Items for Information:

19. To receive the AIFCA Report

The Chair recommended the Members read the report and invited them to get in touch to request more information about the AIFCA.

20. Date of next meeting – 18th of September 2025

DRAFT