

# West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority

## Scrutiny Committee

**You are summoned to attend the meeting of Scrutiny Committee to be held on**

**Monday, 04 December 2023 at 10:30**

**At Fire Service Headquarters, 99 Vauxhall Road, Nechells, Birmingham B7 4HW  
and digitally via Microsoft Teams**

**for the purpose of transacting the following business:**

## **Agenda – Public Session**

**Item No.**

<b>1</b>	<b>To receive apologies for absence (if any)</b>	
<b>2</b>	<b>Declarations of interests</b>	
<b>3</b>	<b>Minutes of the Previous Scrutiny Committee held on 11 September 2023</b>	<b>3 - 8</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Scrutiny Review of Training and Development</b>	<b>9 - 24</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Scrutiny Committee Reviews 2024-25</b>	<b>25 - 28</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>Dispute Resolution Report</b>	<b>29 - 42</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>HMICFRS Spotlight report update [Verbal Report]</b>	
<b>8</b>	<b>Fire Control Performance Report Q2 2023-24</b>	<b>43 - 47</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2023-24</b>	<b>48 - 51</b>
<b>10</b>	<b>Date of next meeting</b>	

### **Distribution:**

Gurdial Atwal - Member, David Barrie - Member, Jasbinder Dehar - Vice Chair of the Scrutiny Committee, Gavin Lloyd - Chair, Catherine Miks - Member, Matthew Ward - Member, Vera Waters - Member

This meeting of the West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority will be held at Fire Service Headquarters.

The meeting will also be held digitally via Microsoft Teams allowing observers to access remotely. To access the meeting, please contact a member of the Portfolio, West Midlands Fire Service, who will be able to provide login details (please note that Microsoft Teams is not required to join a meeting) or provide guidance if you wish to attend in person at HQ.

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**Minutes of the Scrutiny Committee**

**11 September 2023**

Item 3

Conducted as a public meeting at Headquarters and digitally via Microsoft Teams

**Present:** Councillor Lloyd (Chair), Councillor Miks, Councillor Atwal, Councillor Kettle  
**Virtual:** Councillor Dehar, Councillor Waters,  
**Officers:** Richard Stanton, Sam Burton, Karan Gowreesunker, Tom Embury.

Please note, Councillor Kettle attended on behalf of Councillor Barrie.  
Councillor Atwal arrived at 10.43am (Agenda Item 4)

01/23 **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Councillor Barrie.

02/23 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest received.

03/23 **Minutes of the Scrutiny Committee held on 17 July 2023**

Resolved:

1. That the minutes of the Scrutiny Committee held on 17 July 2023 were approved as an accurate record.

At the request of Sam Burton an update was provided on Agenda Item 5 first: Scrutiny Committee engagement sessions part of Scrutiny Review of Training and Career Development. Followed by Agenda Item 4; Scrutiny Committee Engagement Sessions as part of the Scrutiny.

04/23 **Scrutiny Committee engagement sessions as part of Scrutiny Review of Training and Career Development [Verbal Report]**

Sam Burton, Head of Inclusion and Development advised the Competency Risk Assessment (CRA) has been progressing well and there has been good engagement from key stakeholders. The Trainee Firefighter Development Programme (TFDP) was refreshed in August and is also

progressing well with positive feedback received. Following the data received from OI, some cultural changes were identified and will be working on how this is improved for future training.

Regarding Distributed Training Model (method of operational training across brigade buildings, DTM), there is a diverse team of middle managers delivering that review. This has been brought to and discussed at SET meetings (Strategic Enabling Team). This is to conclude early January where recommendations will be presented.

There has been an in-depth review of how we deliver our leadership Programmes across the service. Our Organisational Learning and Personal Development (OLPD) team has worked with stakeholders to develop competencies for that Pathway. A report of this is due to be submitted in November.

05/23

**Scrutiny Committee engagement sessions as part of Scrutiny [Verbal Report]**

Sam Burton thanked Councillors for their support in attending the member led session which was taking place later that afternoon (11 September 13.00- 15.30hrs). A further session with a watch is taking place at Canley fire station on 25 September.

Alongside these sessions, a stakeholder group with trainee firefighters is also being developed. This should take place after 25 September.

Sam Burton advised that Tom Embury, Deputy Clerk to the Authority has created questions for each session which will enable members to focus on specific areas. The main points from that meeting will be captured and feedback will go to Scrutiny as a report in November.

Tom Embury advised this will be discussed further at the end of this meeting.

Councillor Miks requested that in the final report, what might be useful is Statistics that show total amount of applicants,

repeat applicants and how many firefighters leave the service early.

Resolved.

1. To include useful statistics within the report which will be presented in November.

ACFO Richard Stanton wanted to highlight to the committee members that this is Sam Burton's last scrutiny meeting and thanked her for her support and hard work.

06/23

### **HMICFRS Spotlight report [Verbal Report]**

Richard Stanton, Assistant Chief Fire Officer provided an update on the HMICFRS spotlight report recommendations. A presentation was shared with members of the meeting.

Richard Stanton advised that there are a total of 35 recommendations, and these have been RAG rated (Red, Amber and Green) to indicate progress. WMFS have already achieved 8 recommendations (Green) and are working towards a further 10 of these recommendations (Amber). There are 2 in which WMFS are not yet working towards but are awaiting input on other organisations (Red). The other 15 do not apply to WMFS but to other organisations (Grey).

As an organisation we are waiting for the Fire Standard to be published which will inform next steps on the 2 red rated items.

Richard Stanton provided further details regarding the items highlighted in Red and Amber.

Progress has been made regarding recommendation 9 which is currently listed as Amber. The consultation has concluded regarding DBS checks. By the end of November all checks should be in place and therefore, the service is ahead of the required deadline of December 2023.

Regarding recommendation 12, this is currently deferred as is dependent on Recommendation 11 from HMICFRS. WMFS cannot take any action until the above is complete.

Similarly, recommendation 14 has also been deferred as action is dependent on Recommendation 13.

Recommendation 21 regarding 360-degree feedback; the process is in place for all senior leaders and managers. This is currently at 70% completion. The latest update provided advised that any system changes required, and anticipated guidance and communication will be in place by 1 October. Staff have methods of feedback through their IPDR and regular 1:2:1.

Recommendation 22 then looks at rolling Recommendation 21 to the wider service. When the system of choice is confirmed, we will be able to move from 70% completion to 100% completion.

Recommendation 23 is still in progress. Leading and Developing People gap analysis was completed 1 June. Outstanding Items are the leading and developing people Fire Standards and Employee Sentiment System which can be moved to 100 once we confirm what other systems are available to understand staff sentiment on a more periodic and frequent basis.

Regarding Recommendation 32, Crew Commander Development Programme has now been developed. Phase 1 in September will review feedback. Phase 2 will provide development opportunities, awareness sessions and support against the areas that were identified in September. This will enable Phase 3 to be completed in October 2023.

Recommendation 33; regarding plans developed to promote progressions pathways for existing staff in non-operational roles and put plans in place to reduce any inequalities of opportunity. Karen Gowreesunker will be leading the role as head of people development and inclusion. Information received from the data will establish a pathway that supports progression for all.

The Committee were informed that the HMICFRS have set out a plan to embark on a thematic inspection focused on discipline, grievance, and complaint handling. There are 10 Fire Rescue Services who have selected for this which

includes WMFS. They'll be inspecting the service between 2-16 December 2023 and documents are being prepared for that review. There won't be an individual report per service but an overall sector report. They will receive hot debrief feedback about what they found within WMFS and any of the recommendations.

Following concerns, members were re-assured that this a thematic inspection that will lead to an overall report which will allow individual services a 30- 60-minute hot debrief with the CFO highlighting what they found with each service. There is a risk, however, that anything reported that may raise concern within other FRS may also be associated with WMFS.

Details of thematic inspection will be discussed in the Members Engagement Forum which is to take place on the 18 September.

Following queries regarding the feedback provided in the report, Richard provided assurance that the report will be published by the HMICFRS based on their findings.

Cllr Lloyd advised members that at the end of AGM, Scrutiny will have a chance to provide their end of year report and ensure that all members, including those who are not within Scrutiny, are aware of the reports and overall outcomes.

07/23

### **Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2023-24**

Tom Embury, presented the Scrutiny Committee Work Programme for 2023-2024

The training development and final report will be presented to the Scrutiny meeting in December. The Fire Control performance report has been deferred on the basis that we did not have sufficient additional information since the last report in July.

No changes requested.

08/23

### **Any other Business**

Tom Embury provided details regarding the session scheduled this afternoon.

The meeting finished at 11.05 hours.



# **WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**

## **SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Item 4

**4 DECEMBER 2023**

### **1. SCRUTINY REVIEW OF TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT**

Report of the Chair of Scrutiny Committee

RECOMMENDED

- 1.1 THAT the Committee considers and approves the learning and recommendations from the Scrutiny Review of Training and Development.

### **2. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

For the Committee to receive the final report from the review which provides a summary of the findings and recommendations for improvement which conclude this review.

### **3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 At Scrutiny Committee on 24 April 2023, members agreed a terms of reference for a Scrutiny Review of Training and Development. This set out four specific aims for the review:

- Establish if the training and development approach taken by West Midlands Fire Service achieves the needs of the Service, in particular groups that are underrepresented in leadership roles.
- Identify the role of innovation and technology to enable approaches to training and development in improving effectiveness, efficiency and accessibility for all staff with particular attention to Neurodiversity.
- Actions to ensure inclusiveness and equality in how training is developed and delivered for all staff, especially those from groups which are currently underrepresented within the service.

- Staff and specifically recruit experiences of training and development – what works well, and where further improvement could be made.
- 3.2 The review also aimed to explore in more depth how the service is delivering or going to deliver recommendations 26, 32 and 33 or the HMICFRS Spotlight Report on Culture and Values.
- 3.3 As part of the member-led approach to the review, Scrutiny Committee Members ran three engagement sessions with key stakeholder groups as part of review process. These were:
- Focus Group Session with WMFS Stakeholder Groups (Affinity, AFSA, FireOut, Inspire and Neurodiversity) held at Headquarters on 11 September 2023.
  - Focus Group Session with watches held at Canley Fire Station on 25 September 2023.
  - Focus Group Session with trainee firefighters at Walsall Fire Station on 26 October 2023.

#### **4. DISTRIBUTED TRAINING MODEL REVIEW**

- 4.1 At the same time that this review was being developed, the service has been undertaking an internal review of our Distributed Training Model.
- 4.2 The DTM review is aimed at understanding the benefits and disbenefits of the existing mode, and developing a training model which delivers the most efficient and effective development to our staff across the suite of core competencies.
- 4.3 The review will ensure that our staff can be assertive, effective and safe at operational incidents, while also ensuring the effective use of resources and funding.
- 4.4 The DTM review team were able to follow the sessions highlighted in paragraph 3.3.

- 4.5 The review will report to SET in January 2024.

## **5. KEY LEARNING AND FINDINGS FROM THE REVIEW**

- 5.1 Below is an overview of the key learning and findings from the background research and three engagement sessions held as part of the review.

### **5.2 Overall experience of training**

- 5.2.1 There were some strong views expressed about the weakness of the Distributed Training Model (DTM), and specifically the fact that this had mostly become assessment, rather than training focused. Some of those we spoke to felt that we were only expecting people to meet a minimum standard and no more, and that some staff were happy to only do the minimum, rather than push for excellence.
- 5.2.2 Beyond the basic level, which it was felt was delivered well, there was a desire to see an improvement in the consistency of the support and training available to operational crews. Often, the skills of a watch would be dependent upon the expertise and assessors that may be based at that watch or station. There was recognition that competitions and similar events allowed crews to train more and aim for excellence, but that this was self-driven, and not a requirement.
- 5.2.3 Station based assessors were seen to be of varying quality, especially as they did not receive additional training as part of becoming an assessor. Therefore, their competency is reliant either on skills already developed or work done outside of usual training. FREC training was given as an example of an area where the officers who deliver the training are specifically trained to a higher standard, including external CPD, but this isn't the case for most other specialisms.
- 5.2.4 Good station-based assessors were felt to have a high workload, especially those passionate about their area of expertise who would have to spend a lot of their own time either providing additional support to colleagues or preparing for training and assessment events. A single training session might require many hours of additional work to

organise and then write up feedback for participants. This was made harder because of the lack of technology offered to assessors – such as laptops or mobile phones, making it hard to do this work away from station. The workload was also felt to impact on assessor's own training and skills and could be impacted by the need to support others, making it more difficult to, for example, get time to wear BA.

- 5.2.5 There was a concern that this workload, and the negative approach to development from some individuals, would put off other staff members from becoming assessors. The workload, with no additional financial benefit, and the large amounts of paperwork for some specialisms, was seen as a barrier.
- 5.2.6 Incident command training was highlighted as a particular area of weakness, especially for those at Watch and Crew manager level, where they had less access to a centralised resource and the “Command Fridays” that Flexi Duty System (FDS) officers have access to (which is Station and Group Manager level). Again, this is something that is impacted by the quality of support on any given watch or station – some operational staff who may wish to progress are limited by the skills of their superiors on station, who would need to provide support. Some would actively discourage others from trying to progress.
- 5.2.7 There was a view that more centralised training would be beneficial, or at least more centrally directed training provided by a pool of more expert trainers, delivered more locally. Conversely, it was recognised that centralised approaches took up a lot of time in travel, and that it reduced the overall resources available to respond to emergencies.
- 5.2.8 Time is regarded as a challenge, both because crews and officers have so many other priorities – from prevention and engagement work to administration which whilst priorities and important areas of work, distracts from training. Because time can rarely be held exclusively for training, operational incidents can be very disruptive to training, especially where it has to be delivered all in one go and a crew/officer cannot be off the run for the whole period.

- 5.2.9 Access to equipment was a challenge, as this could either require that it be booked long in advance – making ad hoc or rapid follow up training difficult or could not be accessed at all, because it had gone missing or ended up somewhere other than the centralised stores.
- 5.2.10 The other “soft” skills required for crews to undertake Prevention work such as Safe and Wells and community engagement are not a part of core training, and although information is available, it is largely online or via e-learning. The skills do develop naturally over time, and some are better placed for it than others. Again, people’s confidence in this area may be dependent upon the support they have around them from their managers and watch, with people sharing their skills and experience.
- 5.2.11 Training for non-operational staff was recognised as much more ad hoc, and less well organised as there is no central list of competencies. Training and upskilling has to be more self-motivated. This in turn has impacts on progression.

### 5.3 **Overall experience of development and progression**

- 5.3.1 It was felt that supervisory managers in particular need more support to help develop their staff. The experience of those we spoke to was very mixed, with some supervisory managers being great inspirations who helped them on in their careers, while others were very much barriers who had “old school” attitudes which meant they feel everyone has to “do their time” before they can progress.
- 5.3.2 Feedback indicated a desire to see an all-round improvement in talent management skills within the organisation, to enable officers at all levels to spot talented individuals and help them to progress. This needed to extend beyond the usual routes for progression and promotion and better recognise the range of people’s skills and their learning styles.

- 5.3.3 Linked to this, it was felt there was a need to improve retention (especially for underrepresented groups, see Section 6.4) and understanding of why people feel they need to leave the service – such as through the exit interview process. In this area we may be missing opportunities to understand what support could be offered to keep someone with the service, or to help them understand a potential path of progression within the organisation.
- 5.3.4 From the smaller number of green book staff we spoke with, there was felt to be fewer opportunities to progress within the organisation both because there are fewer green book roles, but also because the processes used for progression were designed around the operational, grey-book workforce. The smaller number of roles open to green book staff, and the more specialist nature of their roles means they will have fewer opportunities and less experience when it comes to promotion processes, especially when “up against” grey-book colleagues who may have had dozens of opportunities to pursue such a process.
- 5.3.5 Although it was recognised that the NFCC Leadership Framework was a positive development, there was concern that this produced “clones” in terms of management style and approach, as all officers meet the same standards and undertake a lot of the same training. This may have limitations on the diversity of leadership styles and approaches to management.

#### 5.4 **Underrepresented groups specific experience of training and development**

- 5.4.1 Many of the points covered within 6.2 have particular resonance for staff from underrepresented groups. Identifying talent is particularly important for underrepresented groups if we are to ensure these groups progress and form part of our supervisory, middle and senior management cohort. We know that some groups are particularly underrepresented at certain management levels, and those we spoke to believe more could be done to support groups through these processes.

- 5.4.2 In our discussion with Networking Groups, it was strongly expressed that there is a need to increase understanding of the value of diversity amongst staff, and why interventions such as positive action has benefit for the service.
- 5.4.3 It was also recognised that role models in leadership positions and just in the role were important both for encouraging people to join the service and for those who may wish to progress within it. However, those in such a role have to give a lot of their own time and energy to being a role model, especially when they may be one of only very few in that position. Others seeing this may be put off playing a similar role both because of the workload and because of a desire to fit in within existing fire service culture.
- 5.4.4 The same is true of our networking groups, which play an important role in supporting underrepresented groups and informing the services policies and initiatives around DICE. However, while they do receive support from the service, they are largely a voluntary endeavour, and there are risks to their longer-term sustainability if they continue to be reliant upon good-will.
- 5.4.5 There was recognition of the importance of development opportunities specially aimed at underrepresented groups, such as the Women in the Fire Service Conference. Our Networking Groups
- 5.4.6 We heard that those that do put themselves forward, and who are seeking to advance in the organisation have faced poor attitudes and in some cases abuse, be that internal or external. They encouraged a more proactive approach to tackling abuse of those that put themselves forward as role models, for example online, and more effort to tackle those that claim that women, BAME or other candidates are promoted because of that fact, rather than on merit. It was claimed other fire services had taken a stronger line on this in defending their staff.

## **5.5 The role of innovation and technology in training and development**

5.5.1 It was noted that the move towards increasing amounts of e-learning, while understandable from an efficiency perspective, meant operational staff had over a hundred courses a year to complete. There was a desire for more face-to-face learning, and a greater recognition of different learning styles. Those with neurodiversity, specifically dyslexia or ADHD, struggle with reading and engaging with large amounts of written training.

5.5.2 It was felt that the suggested approach to a “Distributed Training Team” could utilise new technologies to improve the training offered on a station while also reducing the impact of that training approach, for example by utilising more sustainable vehicles to bring equipment necessary for training, rather than relying on bringing equipment on PRLs.

## **5.6 Twelve-week Trainee Firefighter Development Programme**

5.6.1 Feedback from Trainees around the extended, 12-week course was very positive. Trainees found the content of the course engaging, and even where aspects were difficult or challenging, understood why they were necessary, and felt supported in meeting the challenge.

5.6.2 Those interviewed were confident in how they could raise concerns and issues with their trainers, line managers or through other channels such as VIVUP. The trainees welcomed the ongoing support that would be provided to them by the training team even once they start on station.

5.6.3 Recruits felt that while their relationships as a group were positive, more could be done to help them bond as a unit, especially early in the programme when new to one another.

5.6.4 Trainees reflected on the intensity of the course and travel to and from training locations and discussed the importance of maintaining work-life balance, although there was also recognition this differed depending on age, location and family circumstances.



- 5.6.5 Trainees highlighted First Response Emergency Care (FREC) as a particularly intense and complex part of the course, and therefore somewhere where additional time and focus would be welcome.
- 5.6.6 In multiple areas trainees would like to see more practical exercises alongside theoretical or classroom-based work for some areas, especially in the early days of the course when there is a particular focus on classroom-based activity.
- 5.6.7 Trainees and trainers both recognised that additional equipment and resources would have a positive benefit, especially as equipment used is often older than that used on station (e.g., appliances with manual rather than digital pumps), and there have been challenges with equipment breakdowns and wear and tear.

## 5.7 **Delivering on the HMICFRS Spotlight Report on Culture and Values**

- 5.7.1 Recommendation 26 from the Spotlight Report calls on Chief Fire Officers to “work with the Home Office [and NFCC] to consider how they can improve the training and support they offer to staff in management and leadership development. This should include authority members in respect of their assurance leadership roles and should ensure that opportunities are offered fairly across all staff groups.”
- 5.7.2 Recommendation 32 requires that “chief fire officers should, as a priority, specify in succession plans how they intend to improve diversity across all levels of the service. This should include offering increased direct-entry opportunities.” The Senior Officer team is already working with an external consultancy to better understand opportunities for improvement on diversity in middle and senior management.
- 5.7.3 Recommendation 33 requires that “Chief Fire Officers should develop plans to promote progression paths for existing staff in non-operational roles and put plans in place to reduce any inequalities of opportunity.” Career development pathways will be introduced early 2024 as the first step to developing this.

## **6. RECOMMENDATIONS AND FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

6.1 The below recommendations are categorised by the different elements of the agreed terms of reference of the review.

6.2 In making these recommendations, the Committee understands that the service is undertaking improvement work in a number of areas, and appreciates that the service is operating within significant financial constraints which may limit the capacity to implement such changes.

### **6.3 Improving the training experience**

#### **6.3.1 Recommendation – Investment in training equipment**

Officers are recommended to investigate how the service can invest in additional training equipment to allow stations/watches to undertake more ad hoc training in a wider range of areas, without needing to wait a long time for equipment. A more effective approach to storage and distribution may also assist, so less equipment is misplaced or damaged. This has been similarly recognised for trainees under 6.4.1. below.

#### **6.3.2 Recommendation – Consider balance of online and face-to-face learning**

It is apparent that a significant number of staff struggle to engage with e-learning and would prefer more face-to-face training. Although e-learning clearly provides benefits in terms of accessibility and cost, officers should seek to understand how this balance might be changed and more can be done to support those whose learning style is not suited to a largely text-based approach.

Officers are currently reviewing the current suite of e-learning packages to identify, given the topic covered, their suitability as an e-learn and whether alternative approaches would be more valuable.

#### **6.3.3 Recommendation – Improve support for station-based assessors**

Station based assessors do a hugely important job and at their best are critical to driving excellence in the service. However, they are hampered by the weight of their workload and a lack of equipment to improve their effectiveness, and it appears there is a significant difference in the quality and workload of those undertaking the role. Officers are recommended to explore how SBAs could be provided with access to electronic equipment, such as laptops, to support their work, and more protected time within their role as a means of encouraging more people to become SBAs and as a means to recognising the significant additional effort required to do the job well.

6.3.4 Further Consideration – Consider more station-based training around prevention activity and community engagement

Prevention and community engagement are a core part of the fire service's work. While resources are available, they are mostly text-based and online. Officers should consider how they can provide more station-based and face-to-face skills training for all crews to support them in engaging and communicating with more vulnerable members of the community. Complex Needs Officers, who already have enhanced skills, could play a role in supporting this.

6.3.5 Further Considerations – Development of Distributed Training Team

Although it is recognised that there are resource and financial limitations, officers are encouraged to consider whether more could be done to provide a Distributed Training Team approach, rather than a heavy reliance on station-based assessment (which can still have a role). Some elements of this are already being recognised in the DTM Review.

6.4 **Trainee experience**

6.4.1 Recommendation – Consider increased equipment and resource provision for training school

Officers should consider what can be done to provide trainees with access to newer equipment to improve the

training experience and ensure trainees are well prepared when they go onto station. Given the vital role that TFDP plays in setting up our firefighters to succeed in their future careers, officers should consider whether the level of resources, including training staff, could be increased.

6.4.2 Recommendation – Continue to ensure trainees are aware of support options

We were pleased to see that Trainees were well aware of the range of support that would be offered to them both while undertaking their training and once they were on station, including access to the service's mental health support, confidential reporting line and ongoing support from training school officers once they go on to station. We recommend that officers continue to monitor this level of understanding to ensure all trainees in future feel similarly supported.

6.4.3 Further Consideration –steps to improve team bonding for trainees

Bonding with their colleagues and feeling a sense of belonging is key to supporting our trainees to succeed. Based on the feedback received, officers should consider the feasibility of a short residential portion of the training course would be helpful. It is important to recognise that some trainees will have caring and other commitments, and that suitable flexibilities are considered, and to recognise the recent changes already made to this trainee course.

6.5 **Supporting underrepresented groups to train and develop**

6.5.1 Recommendation – Specific focus on progression into supervisory and middle manager posts for underrepresented groups.

Although WMFS has clearly improved the proportions of underrepresented groups in its workforce – with more improvement to come – it is equally important representation improves at every level. Officers are advised to make better use of the data collected on BAME, Women and other underrepresented groups at supervisory, middle and senior

manager levels to understand what barriers may exist for those groups to progress into those roles. We recommend also that the service more explicitly communicate the benefits of a representative workforce not just in general but at every level of the workforce.

6.5.2 Recommendation – Implement additional training for supervisory managers to support training and development consistently

It is clear that supervisory managers (such as those at Crew and Watch Manager level) play a critical role in supporting their staff to develop and progress within the organisation. However, it appears the training they receive in this area is patchy and therefore an individual's experience can change significantly depending on who their supervisory managers are. Supporting and coaching others is a specific skill and requires training to be delivered effectively, so officers should consider how coaching and people development can form part of the Supervisory and Middle Manager Development Programmes.

6.5.3 Recommendation – Invest additional support in Stakeholder groups, including protected time for those leading them.

The stakeholder groups (Affinity, AFSA, FireOUT, Inspire and Neurodiversity) play an important role in supporting the service's efforts to be a more inclusive and diverse employer that can adapt to the needs of underrepresented groups.

The individuals who run these networks do amazing work in their own time and also act as inspirational leaders within the service. It is clear that this places a particular burden on them on top of their day-to-day roles. There is a risk that this will prove a barrier to the future leaders of this group. The service should consider introducing protected time for those leading the groups, as well as more specific financial support for their work, especially if they are to be expected to play a more formal part in service processes.

6.5.4 Further Consideration – Make better use of exit interview process to understand reasons for leaving.

Retention of underrepresented groups is as important as recruiting more, particularly as existing staff are often role models for those that may join in future. Staff will leave the service for many reasons, including many that have nothing to do with working conditions or the service's conduct as an employer. However, it will be important for the service to understand the reasons why, and in particular for underrepresented groups. Officers should consider how more comprehensive information can be collected from exit data, and whether this might be reported to the Scrutiny Committee.

## 6.6 **Ensuring diversity in leadership**

### 6.6.1 **Recommendation – strengthen support for talented individuals including making adjustments**

Talent management is key to ensuring high potential individuals are supported to succeed. In particular, strengthening support, and making greater adjustments for those from underrepresented groups would help support greater diversity in all parts of the service. In particular accounting for neurodiversity as a part of talent programmes is recommended.

### 6.6.2 **Recommendation – Collect data on unsuccessful candidates from underrepresented groups**

Understanding not only the background of successful but also unsuccessful candidates (both internal and external) for roles at all levels of the service is important to understand whether unconscious bias or other issues may be impacting on the selection process and limiting opportunities for underrepresented groups. Officers are recommended to start collating and scrutinising this data, with a view to reporting on a regular basis to Scrutiny Committee.

### 6.6.3 **Further Consideration – Consider wider use of independent interview panels**

Although the service's progression pathway is based on good practice and based on the recognised NFCC Leadership Framework, it is important that this does not limit the breadth of candidates that are considered for roles and

that there is a diversity of thought and leadership styles as well as of ethnicity, gender etc. Officers are asked to consider whether independent interview panels may support the service in identifying a wider diversity of leadership talent for the future.

**7. TIMESCALE FOR FEEDBACK**

- 7.1 The Committee asks that Officers provide a response on the above recommendations for a future Scrutiny Committee meeting in six months' time, including an update on the outcomes of the review of the Distributed Training Model once it has been completed.

**8. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

In preparing this report an initial Equality Impact Assessment not required and has not been carried out. The matters contained in this report do not currently relate to a policy change. Initial Equality Impact Assessment(s) will be completed for changes to policy, process or practice resulting from the implementation of the recommendations from the review.

**9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no known legal implications arising from this report.

**10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

**11. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no environmental implications arising from this report.

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 24 April 2023 – Scrutiny Review of Training and Development: Terms of Reference
- 17 July 2023 – Scrutiny Review of Training and Development: Progress Report
- [HMICFRS Spotlight Report on Culture and Values](#)

The contact for this report is Head of Development and Inclusion  
Karen Gowreesunker – karen.gowreesunker@wmfs.net

**CLLR GAVIN LLOYD**  
**CHAIR OF SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**



**WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**

Item 5

**SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**4 DECEMBER 2023**

**1. SCRUTINY COMMITTEE REVIEWS 2024/25**

Report of the Clerk.

- 1.1 THAT the Scrutiny Committee consider the next themes for review to commence in 2024.
- 1.2 THAT the Scrutiny Committee consider for future review, a review of the Grievance and Disciplinary process and Blue Light Collaboration and determine which theme will be reviewed commencing with in April 2024.
- 1.3 THAT the Scrutiny Committee schedule the review within the Committee's work programme for 2024.
- 1.4 THAT the Scrutiny Committee consider the approach to engaging with Members to refresh themes for future scrutiny reviews during 2024/25.

**2. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

This report is submitted for the Scrutiny Committee to discuss the themes previously discussed with Members to be considered for review by the Scrutiny Committee, with a view to approve and schedule such a review within the Committee's work programme.

**3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The Terms of Reference for the Scrutiny Committee sets out the role of the Committee, the main purpose of the Scrutiny function being to scrutinise decisions made or to be made, based on 'public safety' aligned to the following definitions:
- 3.2 **Pre scrutiny**, which enables changes proposed to strategic policy decisions to be scrutinised. These are decisions which if implemented, would change the strategic priorities and outcomes agreed by the Fire Authority

Pre scrutiny can inform policy development and/or hold the Authority to account.

- 3.3 **Post scrutiny**, which enables the Fire Authority to seek assurance around operational decisions already made by the CFO and other officers in the delivery of strategic priorities and outcomes. Post scrutiny can scrutinise performance of specific issues and/or hold officers to account.
- 3.4 As part of its role and functions, the Committee can carry out more than one review as selected by the Committee. Such reviews will be Member led and evidence based, and will produce SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and timely) recommendations to the Authority’.
- 3.5 On agreement of the theme for post scrutiny during 2024, a terms of reference will be drafted for agreement at the April 2024 Scrutiny Committee meeting.

#### 4. **CONSIDERATIONS FOR SCRUTINY REVIEW THEMES**

- 4.1 Themes identified for previous scrutiny have been:
  - Business Continuity Arrangements
  - Prevention – Safe and Well
  - Operational training and effectiveness
  - Discipline Policy
- 4.2 All these themes except for the discipline policy have been subject to a scrutiny review since 2019, with the most recent reported as another agenda item for today’s meeting – the review of Operational Training and Effectiveness. During a recent Joint Consultative Panel meeting it was highlighted that the Grievance and Disciplinary policy could form the theme for the Committees initial review in 2024.
- 4.3 In addition recent discussions which have taken place during Collaboration and Transformation Committee meetings regarding Blue Light Collaboration, could also be considered for scrutiny review.

- 4.4 In considering which review will be undertaken by the Committee next year, Members can note that His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) are undertaking a themed inspection of the handling of misconduct in fire and rescue services in England. The Service has been chosen as one of ten fire and rescue services to take part in this process and will be inspected during December 2023. Initial outcomes from this inspection will be communicated prior to April 2024, with a sector report to be issued in June 2024.
- 4.5 It is suggested, depending on the theme agreed for scrutiny review, the committee explore the benefit from external professional input.
- 4.6 Members of the Committee may also want to consider re-engaging through an additional discussion with the Fire Authority during 2024, to consider refreshed themes for future scrutiny reviews.

## 5. **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

In preparing this report, an initial Equality Impact Assessment is not required and has not been carried out. The matters contained within this report will not lead to a policy change.

## 6. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 There are no particular legal requirements for the Authority to establish a Scrutiny Committee; it is however, considered good practice for authorities to have a vehicle through which monitoring and review of the Authority's policies and practices can be undertaken.
- 6.2 There are no direct legal implications arising out of this report.

## 7. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications arising as a result of the content of this report. Advice may be provided internally by Officers at no direct cost to the Authority, supporting the Committee in its work. The Scrutiny Committee can, if required, access resources to be able to engage external professional advice where applicable.

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

### Scrutiny Committee Terms of Reference

The contact name for this report is Karen Gowreesunker, Clerk to the Authority, telephone number 0121 380 6678.

Karen Gowreesunker  
Clerk to the Authority

**WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY****SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Item 6

**4<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2023****1. DISPUTE RESOLUTION REPORT**

Report of the Chief Fire Officer RECOMMENDED

- 1.1 THAT the contents of the Dispute Resolution Report for the below period are agreed:

- 01/07/2023 – 30/09/2023 (3-month reporting period)

**2. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

For members of the Scrutiny Committee to agree the Dispute Resolution Report regarding the number, type and outcomes of discipline and grievance hearings and other dispute resolution including Employment Tribunal activity that have occurred during the period listed above.

**3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 This report provides a summary of the number, type and outcomes of disciplinary, grievance, debriefs, collective grievances and any reported failure to agree or failure to consult. This report will also provide detail around the Employment Tribunals that are lodged within the reporting time.
- 3.2 Within this report we will identify any lessons learned from the application of our then current practices but also a full and comprehensive review and stakeholder engagement in relation to the disciplinary and grievance policies.

## 4. **SUMMARY OF CASES**

### 4.1 **Grievances**

During this 3-month reporting period we have had 6 grievances that were lodged.

- 4 - Grievances from individuals
- 2 - Collective grievances.

#### **1: Grievance G15 – Disability Discrimination**

This individual raised a grievance regarding working upstairs in HQ. The environment was not suitable for their neurodiverse needs, and these were not addressed. There were also allegations of bullying by the individual's line manager, which were investigated under a different process.

The outcome: The bullying aspect from the line management was taken out and investigated separately.

The outcome of this grievance was not upheld, support measures were offered and put in place to satisfy the elements of this grievance.

Appeal: No appeal lodged

Length: 53 days, this duration was due to the individual being off sick.

#### **2: Grievance G16 – Bullying, Intimidation, Harassment & Breach of flexi-time policy**

This individual raised a grievance around the way they were spoken to by another member of their team and their general behaviours, which they deemed as being bullying.

This grievance alleged that there were performance related issues which had an impact on the department.

There were allegations that this individual spoke in a derogatory manner towards other colleagues.

The clockings did not reflect the work activity, there were too many manual clockings working from home which resulted to having a lot of time away from work.

The outcome: The grievance was upheld and the case is now being

managed under the disciplinary policy.

Appeal: N/A

Length: 115 days, this length is due to the employee who raised the grievance having time off sick. The individual who the grievance was against did not engage fully and has also been off sick.

### **3: Grievance G17 (Collective) – Victimisation**

This was a collective grievance received from a group email account. It was alleging victimisation and bullying behaviours from the manager of the team. This case was managed under the disciplinary process.

The outcome: This was managed under disciplinary.

Appeal: N/A

Length: 2 days

### **4: Grievance G18 (Collective) – Work Relations**

This was a collective grievance regarding the amendment to out-of-hours shift patterns, where the individuals felt that this should have been managed under negotiation and not consultation.

The outcome: Grievance not Upheld.

Appeal: Still in process

Length: 113 days

### **5: Grievance G19 – Discrimination**

This grievance was raised alleging that an organisational recruitment process did not cater for an individual's neuro-diverse needs with no reasonable adjustments made.

The outcome: Grievance Fully Upheld

Appeal: N/A

Length: 53 days

### **6: Grievance G20 – Work Practices**

This grievance was raised concerning the work practices of two individuals

within their team. It was alleged that they were not undertaking their duties fully and were fraudulently clocking in and out. There were also allegations of bullying behaviour towards other team members.

The outcome: Upheld and notified that the findings were being investigated under the disciplinary process.

Appeal: None

Length: 78 days, this was due to other team members being interviewed, the individual was off sick. This grievance was regarding 2 colleagues who also were off work sick during the interview process.

Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Sexual Orientation	Disability	Religion
43	Male	White British - English/Welsh/Northern Irish/British	Prefer not to state	Yes	Christian
48	Female	White British - English/Welsh/Northern Irish/British	Heterosexual	No	None
		Collective			
		Collective			
45	Male	White British - English/Welsh/Northern Irish/British	Heterosexual	No	Christian
57	Female	White - Irish	Heterosexual	No	Christian

Following analysis of the equality data there has been no impact on any specific group. The above table will confirm a full breakdown of the equality data for each case.

## 4.2 **Disciplinary Cases**

There were 16 disciplinary cases in total for this 3-month reporting period. 11 were gross misconduct and 5 were misconduct.



#### 4.2.1 **Gross Misconduct 11 cases:**

##### **Disciplinary 1 (D10-23) – Potential Criminal Charges**

Investigation into allegations of criminal charges following a dispute with their neighbour. Throughout the investigation, the individual has given their version of events but due to the relevant court hearing taking place in 2024, we have not yet been able to gain a full understanding of the event.

The Service has decided to pause on this investigation and not go to a hearing due to the Court date being in March 2024.

Outcome: Currently the Service has paused on this process to allow legal proceedings to take place. Due to go to court March 2024.

Length: On hold

##### **Discipline 2 (D23-23) Stalking, Harassment & Secondary Employment**

Investigation as a result of WMP informing the service of the arrest and bail of an employee in relation to stalking and harassment offences. The employee had not declared his arrest to WMFS. In addition to this the investigation revealed the individual failed to declare his secondary employment to WMFS.

Position: The individual was dismissed and has not appealed the decision.

Length: 114 days. This is due to delays in obtaining information from WMP and video footage.

##### **Discipline 3 (D24-23) Illegally Sharing of images**

Investigation as a result of WMP informing the service of the sharing of sensitive images taken at Fire Service incidents. An individual had taken photographs whilst at incidents and had shared these images via WhatsApp with non-Fire Service employees.

Position: The individual was dismissed and has not appealed the decision.

Length: 44 days.

**Discipline 4 (D25-23) Sex Discrimination**

Investigation as a result of an individual admitting making unwanted sexual advances toward a member of their team during activities deemed to be an extension of the workplace.

Position: Dismissal without notice

Length: 68 days

Appeal: No appeal lodged

**Discipline 5 (D27-23) Fraudulent Clocking Time**

Investigation as a result of a grievance raised where another employee allegedly witnesses fraudulently clocking in and out of work, which is a breach of the Flexi-Time Guidance.

Position: 18 month final written warning

Length: 75 days

Appeal: No appeal lodged

**Discipline 6 (D28-23) Fraudulent Clocking Time**

Investigation as a result of a grievance raised where another employee allegedly witnesses fraudulently clocking in and out of work, which is a breach of the Flexi-Time Guidance.

Position: 18 month final written warning

Length: 75 days

Appeal: No appeal lodged yet

### **Discipline 7 (D32-23) Sexual Harassment**

Investigation of an individual for criminal conduct (sexual offences) against another member of their team during a night out which is deemed as an extension of a workplace.

Due to individual mental health issues and relying on external services to view CCTV footage, this investigation has taken longer than anticipated.

Position: Ongoing

Length: 76 days

### **Discipline 8 (D33-23) Fraudulent Clocking Time**

Investigation as a result of a grievance raised where another employee allegedly witnesses fraudulently clocking in and out of work, which is a breach of the Flexi-Time Guidance.

Position: 18 month final written warning

Length: 64 days

Appeal: No appeal lodged yet

### **Discipline 9 (D34-23) Theft**

Investigation as a result of intelligence received from WMP regarding a member of staff repeatedly stealing items from a shop. There was video evidence to support this allegation.

Outcome: Dismissal without notice

Length: 59 days

Appeal: TBC

### **Discipline 10 (D35-23) Breach of Policy**

Investigation into an individual undertaking activity whilst booked sick from work, with the individual had posting such activities on social media platform Facebook. This individual then proceeded to try and change their sickness booking to annual leave when questioned.

Position: Ongoing

Length: 55 days

**Discipline 11 (D36-23) Usage of drugs**

This individual reported to work under the influence of drugs (cocaine) and alcohol, which was proven by a with-cause test.

Outcome: Dismissal without notice

Length: 40 days

Appeal: Appeal lodged, awaiting to confirm hearing date

4.2.2 **Misconduct 5 cases:**

**Discipline 1 (D15-23) Misconduct – Bullying & Harassment**

Alleged inappropriate conduct of a middle manager involving potential bullying towards team colleagues over several years.

There were 2 accounts of confidential reporting to suggest that there had been some potential bullying and harassment and general concerns.

The investigation found that there was no evidence of bullying, there was some evidence of inappropriate behaviour which then determined the award.

Outcome: 6 month first written warning

Length: 159 days

Appeal: Lodged, hearing date 27<sup>th</sup> November 2023

**Discipline 2 (D17-23) Misconduct - Performance & Capability**

Investigation looking into the alleged conduct and behaviours of

an employee in relation to their development plan, not taking direction from their line manager and demonstrating poor performance.

On the 6<sup>th</sup> November 2023 following the completion of the investigation, the Hearing Manager wrote to the employee to confirm that we are aware that the individual has submitted their resignation to take place 1<sup>st</sup> December 2023 and in light of this action, no benefit in scheduling a hearing at misconduct level and therefore will place on their record that had the employee remained in employment with WMFS, an outcome of the misconduct hearing would have been awarded.

Position: Employee submitted retirement

Length: 99 days

### **Discipline 3 (D22-23) Misconduct - Bullying & Harassment**

This investigation was regarding bullying and harassment of a colleague including calling station phones, turning up at the individual's house and sending abusive messages.

Position: 6 month first written warning

Length: 105 days

Appeal: No appeal lodged

### **Discipline 4 (D26-23) Misconduct - Bullying & Harassment**

This investigation was the result of a collective grievance fact-find alleging bullying and harassment from a supervisory manager to various team members within the same department.

Position: 6 month first written warning

Length: 71 days

Appeal: No appeal lodged

### **Discipline 5 (D29-23) Misconduct - Inappropriate Text Messages**

This investigation is the result of an individual who has sent text

messages to another employee about other members of staff. The content of these messages potentially do not align to our core values or policies.

Position: Paused, whilst the 7 grievances are being investigated.

Length: 84 days

Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Sexual Orientation	Disability	Religion
D10-23	Male	White British - English/Welsh/Northern Irish/British	Heterosexual	No	Christian
D15-23	Female	White British - English/Welsh/Northern Irish/British	Heterosexual	No	Christian
D17-23	Male	White British - English/Welsh/Northern Irish/British	Heterosexual	No	None
D22-23	Female	White British - English/Welsh/Northern Irish/British	Gay/Lesbian	Not stated	Not stated
D23-23	Male	Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	Heterosexual	No	Muslim
D25-23	Male	Asian or Asian British - Indian	Heterosexual	No	Sikh
D26-23	Female	White British - English/Welsh/Northern Irish/British	Heterosexual	No	Christian
D27-23	Female	White British - English/Welsh/Northern Irish/British	Not stated	Not stated	Not stated
D28-23	Female	White British - English/Welsh/Northern Irish/British	Heterosexual	Prefer not to state	Christian
D29-23	Female	Mixed - White and Asian	Gay/Lesbian	No	Buddhist
D30-23	Male	White - Irish	Not stated	No	Not stated
D32-23	Male	White - Irish	Heterosexual	No	None
D33-23	Female	White - Irish	Heterosexual	No	Christian
D34-23	Female	Prefer not to state	Not stated	Not stated	None
D35-23	Female	White British - English/Welsh/Northern Irish/British	Bisexual	No	None
D36-23	Male	White British - English/Welsh/Northern Irish/British	Heterosexual	No	None

Following analysis of the equality data, unlike previous reporting periods there is evidence that higher proportion of females than males have undergone disciplinary proceedings.

Females make up 26% of the workforce and 56% of all disciplinaries. Therefore, this could be perceived as a significant proportion in comparison to male employees.

Of the females identified within this reporting period, approximately one third fall under a sexual orientation other than heterosexual.

## **5. EMPLOYMENT TRIBUNALS**

### **5.1 Three employment tribunals submitted in the previous reporting period:**

- (1) An Employment Tribunal claim has been submitted under unfair dismissal and race discrimination. The Tribunal hearing was listed from 23<sup>rd</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> May 2023. All claims were dismissed by the Tribunal Judge.
- (2) An Employment Tribunal case has been received under constructive dismissal and age discrimination. Tribunal hearing listed from 16<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> October 2023. However, due to a lack of judicial resources, this hearing has been postponed to 2024.
- (3) An employee has submitted three ETs, the first submitted 15<sup>th</sup> July 2022 and a further 2 on 17<sup>th</sup> April 2023, which have been consolidated and will be heard in one hearing. The Tribunal Hearing is listed from 8<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> January 2024 and if required, a remedy hearing date of 7<sup>th</sup> May 2024. Claims are for sex discrimination, disability discrimination and harassment & victimisation.

### **5.2 Five new employment tribunals and two ACAS conciliation submitted within this reporting period:**

- (4) (As above) One employee has submitted three ETs, the first submitted 15<sup>th</sup> July 2022 and a further 2, which fall under this reporting period, on 17<sup>th</sup> April 2023, which have been consolidated and will be heard in one hearing. The Tribunal Hearing is listed from 8<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> January 2024 and if required, a remedy hearing date of 7<sup>th</sup> May 2024. Claims are for sex discrimination, disability discrimination and harassment & victimisation.



- (5) An Employment Tribunal case was submitted under Constructive Dismissal, Disability, Age & Sex Discrimination. The claimant has since withdrawn from the ET process.
- (6) An Employment Tribunal case was submitted under unfair dismissal. Tribunal hearing was held, originally listed from 5<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> October 2023. However, during the first day of the hearing, 5<sup>th</sup> October, the judge dismissed the case citing that the claimant submitted his claim after the deadline date, therefore under the law the judge did not have jurisdiction to hear the case.
- (7) An Employment Tribunal case has been submitted under race discrimination and discrimination under the grounds of religion/belief. A preliminary hearing took place on 16<sup>th</sup> November 2023 where the judge confirmed that the hearing would be listed for November 2024.
- (8) An ACAS conciliation submission was made; however, it was settled under the internal grievance procedure, this case was linked to KIT payments within the Maternity Policy.
- (9) An ACAS conciliation submission was made for unfair dismissal. A preliminary hearing is scheduled for 5<sup>th</sup> December 2023 for the judge to confirm if this will go to an ET Hearing.

## 6. **DEBRIEFS**

PSS Management and Organisational Intelligence will manage the debrief process following the conclusion of disciplinary and grievance case. If there is a requirement for a structured debrief, this will be arranged and managed by Organisational Intelligence and PSS Management. In this period, we have sent out debrief requests for six cases and have received 19 responses.

## 7. **POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

The Disciplinary and Grievance policies are available for all employees on MESH. The disciplinary policy has been reviewed, amended and the latest version has been published following consultation.

Grievance policy is currently in consultation with the view of publication towards the end of 2023.

8. **CONFIDENTIAL REPORTING LINE**

Between 01/07/2023 – 30/09/2023 we have received 14 complaints via the confidential reporting line, each case has been looked into and a response has been provided of the progress and current status.

9. **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

In preparing this report an initial Equality Impact Assessment is not required and has not been carried out. The Service's policies that are applied in all case management have been subject to full Equality Impact Assessments.

10. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

11. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no direct financial implications to this report.

**BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- Disciplinary Policy 2/1
- Grievance Policy 2/2

The contact officer for this report is Richard Stanton, Assistant Chief Fire Officer 07973 810054.

WAYNE BROWN  
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

# **WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**

## **SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Item 8

**4<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2023**

### **1. FIRE CONTROL PERFORMANCE REPORT – Q2 2023/24**

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

RECOMMENDED

- 1.1 THAT the operational performance of Fire Control for Q2 be noted.

### **2. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

This report is submitted to provide the committee with an update of the operational performance of Fire Control. The report covers a 3-month period.

### **3. BACKGROUND**

#### **3.1 Emergency Calls Received and Call Handling**

Fire Control receives the emergency calls and effectively manages the resources for both Staffordshire and West Midlands Fire and Rescue Services.

Staffordshire and West Midlands Fire Control received 19,921 emergency calls between 1 July 2023 and 30 September 2023 across both brigade areas.

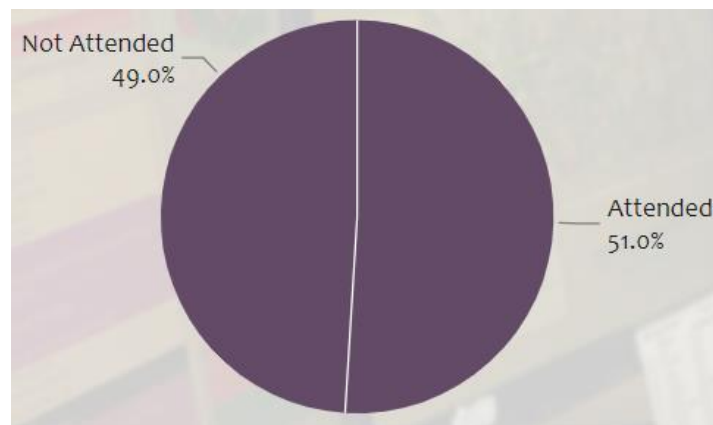
This is a 29% decrease in the number of calls received from the same quarter in 22/23. This is because of a reduction in severe weather-related incidents than the period than the previous year when extreme heat conditions were experienced.

The number of calls received for Q2 23/24 was split 15,049 calls for the West Midlands (75.5%), 4,304 calls for Staffordshire (21.6%) and 568 calls from outside of service areas (2.8%). This ratio continues to be consistent with the previous reporting periods.

Of the 15,049 emergency calls received for WMFS across the reporting period; Fire Control mobilised to 7,668 (50.9%) of incidents.

Of the 4,304 emergency calls received for Staffordshire FRS across the reporting period, Fire Control mobilised to 2,195 (50.9%) of incidents.

The exact proportion of incidents mobilised to for both Staffordshire and West Midlands demonstrates that Fire Control are applying procedures consistently for call challenge of automatic fire alarms and special service calls across both services.



### **3.2 Call Handling**

A key performance indicator for Fire Control is the length of time from answering a 999 call to mobilising appliances to category 1 (life and property) incidents. For these critical incident types, we aim to mobilise in under 80 seconds.

Fire Control's continued focus on mobilising with the required urgency is a key factor in survivability and limiting damage to property. The median call handling for the reporting period was 92 seconds, this is a 3 second reduction on the previous quarter.

Positively, we continue to see a quarter on quarter reduction of call handling times.

Quarter 4 22/23	101 seconds
Quarter 1 23/24	95 seconds
Quarter 2 23/24	92 seconds

This is due to the introduction of a new call salutation and method of address gathering and searching.

### **3.3 Emergency Call Ring Time**

Emergency call ring time demonstrates the reactivity and responsiveness of Fire Control when answering emergency calls.

Q2 has seen the average call ring time increase from 8.87 seconds in Q1 to 11.32, which is a 22% increase. The number of connections made remains relative with an average of 4,504 in Q1 and 4,413 in Q2.

The increase in call ring time, directly correlates with the reduction of shifts that were at optimum staffing levels throughout Q2.

### **3.4 Dynamic Mobilising**

Dynamic mobilising involves using resources flexibly and efficiently in our approach to emergency call management and mobilising, resulting in a proportionate and appropriate initial incident response.

The approach enables Fire Control to reduce and increase an incident response to achieve the best match for the incident needs, which includes selecting the most appropriate number and type of resource.

Fire Control continue to utilise several tools to support decision making including –

- Dynamic emergency call handling
- Information gathered at the time of call
- Location of the incident, both geographically and demographically
- Repeat calls
- Footage and images from 999eye
- Number and type of incidents in progress
- Weather
- Time of day

Fire Control dynamically amended the initial level of response 660 times throughout the quarter (6.7% of all incidents mobilized to), increasing the attendance 377 times and reducing the attendance 283 times. The dynamic mobilising decisions are supporting the most efficient use of resources across Staffordshire and West Midlands brigade areas.

On the occasions Fire Control reduced the attendance, three of the incidents resulted in a subsequent make up (1.3%). Recognising that additional resources may be required for additional equipment or due to incident escalation between the point of mobilising to in attendance, the target has been set at 2% of all reduced attendances.

The three incidents include two where specific equipment was required and one where an assistance message was received 35 minutes after crews arrived at the incident. This demonstrates that the decisions to reduce the attendance by Fire Control initially were the correct ones.

## CASE STUDY

### 3.5 **999Eye**

Intelligence led mobilisation and resource management enables Fire Control to send the most appropriate number and type of resource based on the level of risk, this directly contributes to the achievement of our risk-based attendance standards.

999eye is enhancing the quality of intelligence and information that is received within Fire Control, thereby enabling Fire Control personnel to make more informed dynamic mobilisations using this technology; further supporting our key aim of sending the right level of resource to the right incident type.

In Q2 23/24 Fire Control used 999eye 4,705 times, this was for 23.6% of all calls received (including repeat calls). This is slightly down from 5,350 in Q1 which is due to a combination of fewer calls this quarter, and some variance on the incident types within those calls.

## CASE STUDY

### **3.6 Automated Fire Alarm Calls (WMFS only)**

Fire Control continue to be an integral function supporting the introduction of CRMP projects by ensuring a proportional level of response to incidents, including those involving Automated Fire Alarms.

A total of 4,660 AFA calls were received for the reporting period. This equates to 31% of all emergency calls received for the quarter for WMFS.

Whilst Fire Control call challenged and did not respond to 61.1% of these calls, there is still an ongoing impact on time spent managing these types of call. Approximately 155 hours in the quarter was spent handling these types of calls based on an average of 2 minutes per call.

### **4. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

In preparing this report an initial Equality Impact Assessment is not required and has not been carried out.

### **5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

### **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

### **7. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no environmental implications arising from this report.

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

\*

The contact name for this report is Alex Shapland Head of Response

Wayne Brown  
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

Ref. AU/SC/2023/Dec/92111235

**WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY  
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2023/24**

Date of Meeting	Item	Responsible Officer	Completed
<b>2023</b>			
17 July 2023	Scrutiny Review – Training and Career Development	ACFO/Head of Diversity and Inclusion	17 July 2023
	Dispute Resolution Report	ACFO/Head of People	17 July 2023
	Diversity, Inclusion, Cohesion and Equality Update	ACFO/ Head of Development and Inclusion	17 July 2023
	Fire Control Performance Report	ACFO/Head of Response	17 July 2023
	Minutes of the previous Scrutiny Committee	Democratic Services Officer	17 July 2023
	Scrutiny Committee Work Plan 2023-24	Democratic Services Officer	17 July 2023
September 2023 (Dates TBC)	Scrutiny Committee engagement sessions as part of Scrutiny Review of Training and Career Development	ACFO/Head of Development and Inclusion	Verbal Update 11 <sup>th</sup> September
11 September 2023	Scrutiny Review - Training and Career Development	ACFO/ Head of People	Verbal 11 <sup>th</sup> September
	HMI FRS Spotlight report update	ACFO/Head of People	Verbal Update 11 <sup>th</sup> September



## OFFICIAL

	Fire Control Performance Report	ACFO/ Head of Response	Deferred
	Minutes of the previous Scrutiny Committee	Democratic Services Officer	11 <sup>th</sup> September
	Scrutiny Committee Work Plan 2023-24	Democratic Services Officer	11 <sup>th</sup> September
04 December 2023	Scrutiny Review - Training and Career Development Final Report	ACFO/ Head of Inclusion and Development	4 <sup>th</sup> December
	Dispute Resolution Report	ACFO/ Head of People	4 <sup>th</sup> December
	Diversity, Inclusion, Cohesion and Equality Update	ACFO/Head of Development and Inclusion	Deferred
	HMI FRS Spotlight report update	ACFO/ Head of People	Verbal Update 4 <sup>th</sup> December
	Fire Control Performance Report	ACFO/Head of Response	4 <sup>th</sup> December
	Minutes of the previous Scrutiny Committee	Democratic Services Officer	4 <sup>th</sup> December
	Next Scrutiny Review – Options	Clerk/Relevant Officers	4 <sup>th</sup> December
	Scrutiny Committee Work Plan 2023-24	Democratic Services Officer	4 <sup>th</sup> December
	<b>2024</b>		
Date of Meeting	Item	Responsible Officer	Completed

## OFFICIAL

22 April 2024	Fire Control Performance Report	ACFO/ Head of Response	
	*Update on the Progress of the Scrutiny Review of Safe & Well	Head of Prevention	
	Scrutiny Committee – Terms of Reference	Democratic Services Officer	
	Next Scrutiny Review – Agreement of Terms of Reference	Clerk	
	HMI FRS Spotlight report update	ACFO/ Head of People	
	Diversity, Inclusion, Cohesion and Equality Update	ACFO/Head of Development and Inclusion	
	Minutes of the previous Scrutiny Committee	Democratic Services Officer	
	Scrutiny Committee Work Plan 2022-23	Democratic Services Officer	
15 July 2024	Dispute Resolution Report	ACFO/Head of People	
	Diversity, Inclusion, Cohesion and Equality Update	ACFO/ Head of Development and Inclusion	
	Fire Control Performance Report	ACFO/ Head of Response	
	Annual Report of the Scrutiny Committee	Chair of Scrutiny Committee	

OFFICIAL

	Next Scrutiny Review	Deputy Clerk/Relevant Officers	
	Minutes of the previous Scrutiny Committee	Democratic Services Officer	
	Scrutiny Committee Work Plan 2024-25	Democratic Services Officer	

To report as appropriate:

- Updates on reviews

Note: separate meetings of any review working group are to be scheduled if and when required.