

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

2 JUNE 2014

1. OPERATIONAL ASSESSMENT UPDATE

Report of the Chief Fire Officer.

RECOMMENDED

- 1.1 THAT the Committee notes the progress made in addressing the areas for consideration (AFC) detailed on the Operational Assessment (OpA) Improvement Register arising from OpA and Peer Challenge, July 2012.
- 1.2 THAT the Committee sign off as completed the OpA Improvement Register attached as Appendix 1.
- 1.3 THAT the Committee note the ongoing sector refreshment of the OpA toolkit and peer challenge process and the involvement of senior West Midlands Fire Service (WMFS) officers in this.

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report is submitted to provide Members with an update on progress made in addressing the AFC arising out of OpA 2012, which is detailed on the Improvement Register attached as Appendix 1. The Improvement Register has, except for one outstanding ongoing piece of work, been completed. The OpA toolkit and Peer Challenge is currently being reviewed by the Chief Fire Officers' Association (CFOA) in partnership with the Local Government Association (LGA). This paper sets out the involvement of senior WMFS officers in the review process.

3. **BACKGROUND**

OPA Improvement Register

- 3.1 Members will recall that in the Spring and Summer of 2012, the Service volunteered to take part in the OpA process. OpA is the fire sector's own improvement tool and comprises a self assessment and peer challenge process. It is designed to provide an understanding of the Service's performance across the range of its core delivery activity and to provide assurance to both Corporate Board and Authority Members as to the efficiency and effectiveness of the Service and to identify opportunities for improvement.
- 3.2 Following on from the submission of its self assessment in May 2012, the Service received its Peer Challenge in July 2012. The Peer Challenge was undertaken by external experts. The purpose of Peer Challenge is primarily threefold:
- to provide an independent assurance of performance;
 - to identify good practice which could be adopted across the fire sector; and
 - support Service improvement through the identification of AFC.
- 3.3 The Peer Challenge Team detailed their findings in the West Midlands Fire Service OpA Peer Challenge report which was presented to the Fire Authority on 24 September 2012. This report highlighted 38 AFC which the Service agreed to address. It was confirmed at this meeting that the Service would utilise an Improvement Register to monitor Service performance in addressing the AFC raised in OpA and that regular performance updates would be provided to Scrutiny Committee.
- 3.4 The first OpA Improvement Register was presented to the Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 5 November 2012 and progress in addressing the AFC has been monitored by Scrutiny Committee periodically since.

3.5 A summary of the Service's performance in addressing the AFC is up to April 2014 is detailed below.

- At Scrutiny Committee on 4 November 2013, Members were informed that 26 of the 38 AFC had been completed. These areas are shown with a grey background on the Improvement Register attached as Appendix 1.
- Of the 12 outstanding AFC reported at 4 November Scrutiny Committee, ten have now been completed and are shown with a green background.
- Whilst there are two AFC outstanding on the register both are related to a wider ongoing project being led by the Deputy Chief Fire Officer. Given that this project is on target to deliver and has effective management arrangements in place, it is requested that no further updates on the OpA Improvement Register are submitted and the register is signed off as completed. In accordance with the requirements of OpA the Improvement Register is available on the Service's website.

OPA Toolkit and Peer Challenge Refreshment

3.6 An independent evaluation of OPA, whilst making a number of recommendations for change, reflected that in overall terms OPA and Peer Challenge is fit for purpose for supporting service delivery improvement.

3.7 Following on from this CFOA and the LGA are refreshing the toolkit and peer challenge process to ensure that it remains up to date and relevant. WMFS is committed to shaping and influencing sector improvement and has an established track record in supporting the development and improvement of OPA since its inception in 2009. WMFS senior officers will support improvement through the following work approaches.

- **CFO Forum** - This is a sounding board of Chief Fire Officers whose purpose will be to give input to the planning and development work and offer views on the revised approach as it develops. CFO Phil Loach is part of this forum.

- **Development Team** - This is a small cohort that will work collaboratively to ensure the refreshed approach provides the correct balance between updating and future proofing the key areas for assessment and building in the recommendations of the evaluation. Area Commander Sarah Warnes is our representative on this team.

3.8 It is intended that this work will be completed in sufficient time to enable the revised approach to be rolled out in April 2015.

4. **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

In preparing this report an initial Equality Impact Assessment is not required and has not been carried out. The matter contained within this report do not relate to policy change.

5. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

The course of action recommended in this report does not raise issues which should be drawn to the attention of the Authority's Monitoring Officer.

6. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no direct financial implications associated with reviewing or undertaking a self assessment or receiving a peer challenge.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

West Midlands Fire Service Operational Assessment Peer Challenge Report, August 2012.

Fire Authority Report, Agenda item 14, Operational Assessment Peer Challenge Report, 24 September 2012.

Scrutiny Committee Report, Operational Assessment Improvement Register, 5 November 2012, 6 April 2013, 4 November 2013.

Evaluation of the Operational Assessment and Fire Peer Challenge

Programme publication, Cardiff University, March 2014.

The contact name for this report is Phil Hales, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, 0121 380 6907.

PHIL LOACH
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

