

**Appendix 1****Statement of Assurance 2021/22****Introduction**

Fire and Rescue Authorities must provide annual assurance on financial, governance and operational matters and show how they have had due regard to the expectations set out in their Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP).

The West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority (WMFRA, also titled the Authority) is required to publish an annual Statement of Assurance as part of the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England. The Statement of Assurance for West Midlands Fire Service (WMFS) is published annually, to provide an easy and accessible way for communities, government, local authorities, and partners to assess the Authority's performance and governance arrangements.

National guidance on the content of Statements of Assurance published in May 2013 suggests that where Authorities have already set out relevant information that is clear, accessible and user friendly within existing documents, they may wish to include extracts or links to these documents within their Statement of Assurance. This Statement includes extracts or links to key documents where relevant. This document sets out the approach taken to ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place in terms of governance and operational delivery. It is intended to provide transparent information about its financial, governance and operational affairs.

**Foreword – Chair & Chief Fire Officer**

Welcome to the annual Statement of Assurance from Councillor Greg Brackenridge, Chair of WMFRA, and Wayne Brown, Chief Fire Officer of WMFS.

This Statement of Assurance provides the reassurance that in 2021/22 your Fire and Rescue Service contributed to our vision of 'Making the West Midlands, Safer, Stronger and Healthier'.

During 2021/22 we continued to emerge from the devastating impact of the coronavirus pandemic, with the roll-out of vaccinations supporting the eventual lifting of restrictions. It has been a year that has continued to be one of the most challenging and transformational periods WMFS has ever faced. As we all transition to living with COVID, we have been determined to build upon the valuable learning from this challenging time, as we begin to transform many of the ways we work.

We're incredibly proud of how everyone at WMFS responded to meet the challenges of COVID 19. We prioritised the health and wellbeing of our staff, enabling them to keep delivering our core services and our staff have continued to be ready, willing, and able to provide a wide range of additional support for the most vulnerable members of our communities.

Whilst our outstanding emergency response has continued as normal throughout the pandemic, and the majority of serious incidents were attended in under five minutes, all other areas of the Service have continued to swiftly flex and adapt ways of working. Evolving government guidance and announcements meant staff had to

meet challenges head on, ensuring the most vulnerable were front and centre to every decision made. The new ways of working and innovative use of technology have enabled flexible and efficient home working and allowed for the continuation and adaptation of critical prevention and protection activities.

One of the outcomes of the pandemic has been the strengthening of existing partnerships and the many new partnerships that have been formed. These partnerships will prove vital to future collaborative projects and initiatives and these valuable collaborations with councils, our blue light colleagues and other organisations are the bedrock of the support we offer to the more vulnerable members of our communities.

We are also satisfied that during 2021/22 the business of the service has been conducted in accordance with good standards and that public money has been accurately accounted for.

As Chair of the WMFRA and Chief Fire Officer of WMFS, we can say that although we don't fully know what lies beyond the pandemic, what we can say with certainty is that WMFS will continue to put its communities front and centre to ensure we deliver our vision.

## **Finance**

The WMFRA places significant importance on ensuring that its financial management arrangements are in line with the expectations of a public body. As a public service the Authority are responsible for ensuring that public money is properly accounted for and spent in a way that provides value for money.

## **Statement of Accounts**

The Authority's 2021/2022 Statement of Accounts is prepared in accordance with CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom, under International Financial Reporting Standards. The Authority's accounts for the financial year 2021/22 consist of the following:

- The Comprehensive Income and Expenditure statement, the Authority's main revenue account, covering income and expenditure on all services
- The Movement in Reserves Statement, which shows movement in the year on different reserves held by the Authority
- The Balance Sheet, which sets out the financial position of the Authority at the 31 March 2022
- The Cash Flow Statement, showing movements in cash and cash equivalents during the year and the cash position at the end of the year
- The Pension Fund Account, which summarises the movements relating to the firefighters' pension schemes

The majority of the net cost of Fire Service expenditure relates to the cost of services, £126.1m. The total Provision of Services in 2021/2022 shows a deficit of £61.777m. Within this deficit is total expenditure of the Authority which for 2021/2022 was £177.589m.

The total income of the Authority in 2021/2022 was **£115.812m**. *(figures highlighted to be confirmed prior to Home Office publication).*

The Department of Levelling, Housing and Communities provided a range of financial support packages throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, totalling circa £6.8M over a period of three financial years, from March 2020. This funding covered the additional costs incurred due to the pandemic, to support the costs of services and offset other income losses.

In respect to the McCloud / Sargeant Ruling and Immediate Detriment, the Service continues to monitor and engage with developments outward of this and how prospective guidance from the Government impacts upon finance forecasts and governance arrangements.

### **Governance**

The Authority is required to produce an “Annual Governance Statement” which is published in July each year at the same time as the “Annual Statement of Accounts”. The Governance Statement is based on an ongoing process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of the Authority’s policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised, and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.

It explains how our service manages its governance and internal control arrangements and measures the effectiveness of those arrangements.

### **Governance Assurance**

WMFRA is a Joint Authority established under the Local Government Act 1985, amended “The Fire and Rescue Authority (Membership) Order 2017”. It is a supervisory body that ensure that WMFS perform efficiently and in the best interests of the public and the community it serves.

WMFRA have statutory responsibilities laid down in legislation including (but not limited to) the:-

- Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004
- Civil Contingencies Act 2004
- Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
- Fire and Rescue Services (Emergencies) (England) Order 2007
- Localism Act 2011
- Fire and Rescue National Framework for England 2018
- The Policing and Crime Act 2017
- The Health and Safety Work Act 1974
- Fire Safety Act 2021

WMFRA is led by its Chair, Councillor Greg Brackenridge and it comprises of fifteen elected Members who represent the seven local authorities that make up the West Midlands, the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner and two co-opted Members (one representing health and one representing business).

The seven local authorities are:- Birmingham, Coventry, Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull, Walsall, and Wolverhampton.

WMFRA have a Constitution that outlines how it carries out its affairs. It explains how decisions are made and brings together in one document the detailed rules and procedures that govern the behaviour of those who work for or represent the Authority.

The Authority Members have developed and adopted a local Code of Corporate Governance document which incorporates how the Authority meets the seven principles of good governance. The Fire Authority ensures that its governance structures comply with the seven core principles and sub-principles of the CIPFA/SOLACE – ‘Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework 2016’.

These principles are adhered to via the processes outlined in the Constitution.

To enable the authority to carry out its duties effectively, in addition to the Fire Authority meetings there are several committees and regular forums that include

- Appointments, Standards and Appeals Committee
- Audit and Risk Committee
- Collaboration and Transformation Committee
- Joint Consultative Panel
- Pension Board
- Policy Planning Forum
- Scrutiny Committee

You can find out more about the Fire Authority and its Members on the website, [www.wmfs.net](http://www.wmfs.net) In addition, there is a [Committee Management Information System](#) (CMIS) which provides details of all Authority and Committee meetings, reports, minutes, and records of decisions.

### **External Audit**

The accounts are audited by independent external auditors (Grant Thornton UK LLP) who in addition to auditing the accounts, also provide assurance that the Authority has the correct arrangements in place for securing economy, efficiency, and effectiveness in its use of resources. The full external audit work programme and the risk-based approach are explained in Grant Thornton’s Audit Plan. Their findings and their opinion on the Authority’s accounts and the value for money is included within the Audit Findings Report. As a result of the external audit work in 2020/21,

there were no significant matters arising that required the Authority to implement an action for improvement. The Auditor's Annual Report on West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority 2021-22 (previously the Annual Audit Letter) summarises the key findings for the year.

### **Internal Audit**

Our Internal Audits are carried out by Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council, the outcomes of which are reported to the WMFRA Audit and Risk Committee. The Annual Audit Plan is agreed by the Committee and progress reported on a quarterly basis. The 2020/21 annual Audit Plan included the following nine areas of review: Absence Management, Accounts Receivable and Payable, Budgetary Control, Data Protection, Fixed Asset Accounts, Governance, Payroll and Risk Management. Of these, eight were rated with Substantial Assurance and one Limited Assurance.

The 2021/22 Annual Audit Plan included the following 11 areas of review:

Seven areas rated with Substantial Assurance:

- Data Protection
- Environmental Protection Targets
- Fixed Asset Accounting
- Accounts Payable
- Budgetary Control
- Accounts Receivable
- Risk Management

Three areas rated with Reasonable Assurance:

- Fire Stations – Management of Fuel
- Workforce Planning
- Governance

One further area, Payroll, remained in progress at the time of writing. (status to be confirmed prior to Home Office publication).

Each audit assesses

- The level of risk to the Authority assigned to each auditable area (high, medium, or low)
- The number and type of recommendations accepted by management

- The level of assurance given to each system under review - Substantial Assurance, Reasonable Assurance (positive opinions), Limited Assurance, No Assurance (negative opinions)

Other sources of assurance on which the Authority may rely include:-

- The work of the External Auditors (currently Grant Thornton)
- The result of any quality accreditation
- The outcome of visits by HM Revenue & Customs
- Other pieces of consultancy or third-party work designed to alert the Authority to areas of improvement
- Other external review agencies

### **Data Transparency & Accountability**

In preparing this Statement of Assurance, the Authority has considered the principles of transparency, promoting openness and accountability through reporting on local decision making, public spending and democratic processes.

All relevant information is published on the West Midlands Fire Service website in line with the Local Government Transparency Code 2015, including information on how the Authority has spent its public money, demonstrating the Authority's commitment to transparency and accountability.

## **OPERATIONAL**

### **Community Risk Management Plan**

The Service has been in the forefront of the development of a CRMP framework nationally, through its contribution and engagement with the National Fire Chief Council (NFCC) project. WMFS implements its CRMP in conjunction with its medium-term financial plan and Annual Plan which together comprise our three-rolling strategy for implementing our Service Delivery Model.

In recognition of both the changing CRMP, role of a fire and rescue service and government expectations, WMFRA approved the development of CRMP proposals in February 2021, following a review of our CRMP throughout 2020 and factoring in the outcomes of the public consultation exercise carried out in late 2020. The CRMP proposals comprise of Current Risks, Emerging Risks, Enhanced Community Risk Reduction and Digital Transformation. These proposals have been developed and formed into the following CRMP objectives:

- Dynamic Mobilising
- Automated Fire Alarms
- Risk Based Crewing / Blended Fleet

- Reducing Health inequalities
- Emerging Risks

These objectives have been developed as part of five projects and have been progressed throughout 2021/22, with the evaluation of the pilot schemes informing the development and approval of the setting of the CRMP objectives in February 2022.

- Dynamic Mobilising

Originally identified as a continuation of the 'survivability research' that the Service carried out in 2016 which provided a sound evidence base to the overall timeline for the survival of a victim of fire in the home (and other emergency incidents) and the impact that a 5-minute response time could have on risk to life. The dynamic mobilising research has been undertaken with intention to understand how, by reviewing our approaches to response interventions (where this is appropriate), we can ensure the most appropriate availability of resources for Category 1 incidents where there is threat of serious harm to life and/or property.

- Automated Fire Alarms

The review of our approach to Automatic Fire Alarms (AFA) has enabled the consideration of options which will provide a risk-based approach to dynamically mobilising our people and resources to AFAs. Mobilising resources to fires/life risk incidents where the site is not managed will not change.

Alternative options to responding to sleeping risk AFAs, such as Student Accommodation, will further protect the Service Delivery Model, to ensure resources are available for immediate deployment to high-risk incidents.

- Risk Based Crewing / Blended Fleet

Risk Based Crewing provides an alternative approach to managing risk and finance through our fleet, to ensure we are delivering value for money, whilst providing the best services to meet the diverse needs of our communities. It focuses on lower risk incidents such as secondary fires or special service calls. The aim is to empower fire control and operational officers to make risk-based decisions regarding the right level of resources to mobilise based on knowledge, experience and professional judgement. This approach builds on our already successful dynamic mobilising concept.

The focus of a blended fleet is to continuously explore the opportunities in transforming our use of resources and how these can be further enhanced, through adapting and changing our fleet and how it is used. Critical to the future of our blended fleet is not only how it can adapt to changing approaches to the delivery of prevention, protection and response activities but also how external influencing factors such as innovation, sector research and environmental considerations will impact the type of vehicles required for the future

- Reducing Health Inequalities

Reducing Health Inequalities objective aims to:

- enhance the 'Up Stream' approach to firefighting through the development of a co-ordinated suite of activities that reduce health inequalities across the life course of a vulnerable person
- reduce the risk and vulnerability to fire and other emergencies and create more resilient communities.

This work is focussing on the areas of People, Digital and Data, as well as Partnerships and Collaboration, to enable a whole systems approach to the development of interventions to enable the objective to be met.

- **Emerging Risks**

The Service recognises the future impact of external and environmental changes, events which will have an impact on how we deliver our services as well as the skills required of our people to achieve this. The number and severity of incidents we attend are influenced by climate change, the threat of terrorism and big infrastructure projects, e.g., construction of the HS2 rail line. We need to be ready to respond to all foreseeable risks, which means improving our skills and resources plus partnerships with other organisations.

This has seen the introduction of a third Technical Rescue Station located at Sutton Coldfield (which went live in May 2022) which will provide our communities with enhanced capability and capacity to deal with identified emerging risks in an agile and flexible manner. This additional provision will increase levels of assurance and resilience in the delivery of our specialist response capability and National Resilience requirements including enhancing our safeguarding contribution to the 'Prevent Strategy' around extremism and terrorism.

### **Mutual Aid Arrangements**

WMFRA has mutual aid arrangements in place with all the surrounding Fire and Rescue Services (FRS). These arrangements include the provision of support in the event of large-scale incidents or in instances where resources of an FRS may be greatly reduced. WMFRA is a partner in the West Midlands Conurbation Local Resilience Forum (LRF), the statutory multi-agency partnership which ensures all category one and two responders including emergency services, fulfil their roles and responsibilities as set out in the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. The forum enables planning to be in place in preparation for localised incidents and emergencies which may impact upon the communities within the West Midlands.

In parallel, the Police and Crime Act 2017 places a duty on Fire, Police and Ambulance services to collaborate to improve the efficiency and the effectiveness of emergency services. WMFS work with partners to optimise multi-agency response and resilience through enhanced working relationships, in line with the Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Programme (JESIP). Experiences during the COVID 19 Pandemic including the establishment of the Strategic Co-ordinating Group have reinforced the commitment of partners, rationalised ways of working, and increased collaboration.



The Service supports the UK-wide emergency approach as part of National Resilience and the Service has enhanced capabilities to support responding to major emergencies such as terrorist attacks, industrial and domestic accidents, and natural disasters, providing support UK wide. The Service is a partner in the Multi-Agency Specialist Assessment Team (MASAT) which provides initial assessment of potential Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear or Explosive (CBRNE) incidents. Our Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) and International Search and Rescue (ISAR) Teams provide enhanced capabilities for a wide variety of incidents including rescues from collapsed buildings, floods, height, and confined spaces. We continue to enhance our capabilities further with the provision of the third Technical Rescue Unit at Sutton Coldfield, developed throughout 2021/22 and operational as of May 2022.

### **Health Safety & Wellbeing**

The Service is committed to complying with its duties under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and associated legislation for health, safety, and well-being. In line with delivering a “safer, stronger and healthier West Midlands”, it is important to maintain focus on ensuring that the service continues to develop a positive approach to employee health, safety, and wellbeing and to protect others from harm from its activities. To this end, the aim is for an assertive, effective, and safe approach when responding to emergencies.

The Service has re-evaluated the focus of wellbeing and delivery by our Occupational Health Teams, with a mixture of internal and external provision. We continue to strive to provide a comprehensive package of support to all our staff, across a wide range of areas from physical to emotional wellbeing. This approach as included the recommencing of regular ‘Brave Space Talks’, a series of open debates hosted by a panel of volunteers with each session focussing on a particular topic of inclusion, providing staff the opportunity and a safe environment to talk openly within Our Values. There are three core elements that underpin much of our role as a fire service - our people, value for money and our digital approach. Staff culture, values and behaviours are at the very core of our service delivery. Regardless of role, we want all staff to understand how significant their contribution is and how it fits in to the bigger picture in terms of helping us to achieve our priorities.

To support this approach, the Service has adopted the National Core Code of Ethics. These ethics form the foundation of Our Values, and the adoption of them has enabled the review and refresh of our approach to Ethics, Values and Behaviours. Our Values set out how we can all be the best that we can be in everything that we do. They encompass the things that are important to us as a Service. United by our values, they support us to achieve our Vision and deliver our Strategy. By working together, using the values as our guide, we can continue to create an environment that allows everyone to thrive.

Effective safeguarding is integral to the delivery of WMFS strategic objectives, specifically Prevention and Protection. Following the review of Safeguarding within the Service and the appointment of a Safeguarding Manager within the People Support Services Team who has continued to engage and work with key

stakeholders and employees, embedding a safeguarding culture based upon robust policies and procedures including the development of the Safeguarding Toolkit and the establishment of the Safeguarding Oversight and Assurance Group whose purpose is to ensure oversight of safeguarding activity in the Service and to provide assurance of its quality, outcomes, and impact.

### **External Operational Assurance**

Our Plan forms part of the WMFS rolling three-year strategy. The operational year of 2021/2022 and the continuing effects of the pandemic has continued to be one of the most challenging and transformational periods WMFS has ever faced. While our outstanding emergency response has continued as normal throughout the pandemic, all other areas of the Service continue to swiftly flex and adapt to new ways of working.

The Service continues to engage through NFCC working groups and partnerships. The Service was a significant contributor to the development of the Core Code of Ethics for the fire sector. The Service is pro-active in the development, consultation and implementation of the Fire Standards including the full utilisation of the implementation tools that are available. These support the planning, gap analysis, and evaluation of the level of compliance, as part of the ongoing development of the Service and the commitment to professionalism and continuous improvement. We continue to be committed to the aim and objectives of His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire Rescue Services (HMICFRS), fully supporting the inspection process.

The round one inspection resulted in HMICFRS judging the performance of the Service as 'good' against all three pillars of efficiency, effectiveness, and people. We were the only Fire and Rescue Service to be judged as 'outstanding' for its response to fires and other emergencies. We are incredibly proud of this achievement, and we are committed to maintaining such a high level of performance as well as continually improving across all three pillars by building upon the findings of HMICFRS, the ongoing work developing our CRMP objectives, our people, value for money, and digital approach. During 2021/22 there has been an increased engagement with HMICFRS in preparation for the Round Two inspection of the Service which will commenced in March 2022 with the findings due to be published in January 2023.

The WMFRA governance of the Service had been amended during 2020/21 in accordance with the then emerging legislation and with due regard to the WMFRA Constitution. During the period 3 April 2020 – 7 May 2021, the Local Authorities (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority Meetings) (England) Regulations 2020 had been applied to all WMFRA business. With meetings of the full Fire Authority recommencing as of October 2020 utilising a hybrid approach enabling a mixture of attendance in person and virtually, the Annual General Meeting in June 2021 marked a return to business as usual and the reconvening of all committees, panels and fora of the Authority.

## **Internal Operational Assurance**

We have overhauled our policy development and monitoring structure to ensure the Service's policies, structures, systems, processes and people enable compliance and excellence in all that the Service does. It supports the Service in its aim to be a 'self-aware' 'learning organisation', embracing an evidence-based approach enabling the Service's commitment to continuous improvement.

The Business Continuity Planning Team which was established in response to the pandemic and comprises of middle managers and specialist roles which support the senior leadership team, has remained in place as a virtual group to advise on consultation exercises for organisational preparedness, examples include heatwave, fuel disruption, and supply chain disruption.

Procurement and contractual assurance have been elevated as a result of the pandemic and the start of the conflict in Ukraine.

## **The performance of WMFS during 2021/22**

Staff skills competency, values and behaviours are at the very core of our service delivery. Regardless of role, we want all staff to understand how significant their contribution is and how it fits in to the bigger picture in terms of helping us to achieve our response, prevention, and protection priorities. Embracing awareness of value for money and progression of a digital approach to working underpins our service improvements and cultural development.

## **Response**

WMFS know that its five-minute response is based on evidence and knowledge of risk and that it saves lives, homes, and businesses. We have continued to deliver within our defined response times throughout 2021/22.

During 2021/22 our Fire Control handled 48,931 calls, in an average of 77 seconds per call. Our firefighters attended 26,621 incidents and they arrived at the most serious in an average of just 4 minutes 42 secs. Increases in the number of calls handled and the number of incidents attended compared to 2020/21 reflected the ceasing of Covid lockdowns and related restrictions.

People who use their smartphone to call us on 999 can now also be asked to send photos or videos of what they can see. We came up with the idea of '999Eye' and developed it with Capita and it is now embedded within our call handling procedures, proving to be an invaluable tool providing officers with greater situational awareness and enhancing decision-making processes. It was used 9,087 times throughout 2021/22 to help operators in our Fire Control ensure that the most appropriate resources were sent to incidents. The application of 999eye also supports our CRMP projects and has proven instrumental in pilots including risk-based crewing.

## **Prevention**

The prevention work focuses on reducing people's vulnerability to the type of emergencies to which the Service responds. WMFS also have specialist prevention

and partnership teams who support its firefighters in reducing anti-social behaviour, including arson, and improving road safety.

By utilising technology, we have been able to offer 'virtual' Safe and Well visits to people's homes or safety audits of tall buildings. These remote Safe and Well visits enabled us to continue to provide valuable fire safety advice to our communities whilst continuing to live within the confines of the pandemic.

A review of Safe and Well by the WMFRA Scrutiny Committee commenced in February 2022 with the purpose of exploring the effectiveness of Safe and Wells, impacts upon the number of emergency incidents WMFS attends, improvements of safety (and health) of those most vulnerable to fire within our communities, and ensuring activity is targeted based on local, regional and national data, with alignment to national frameworks. The review will be progressed throughout 2022/23 including the commissioning of surveys for both staff and members of the public to ensure engagement and to gain important insight and feedback to support the review. It is anticipated that the review will be concluded by the end of 2022, with the findings to be reported to the full Fire Authority and to be factored into the ongoing development of our prevention activities. These developments in conjunction with the pilot CRMP projects and a co-ordinated set of activities will contribute to the overall objective and delivery of reducing health inequalities within our communities, which in turn will reduce risk and vulnerability to fire and other emergency incidents.

We carried out 36,988 Safe & Well visits, delivered both face to face and remotely, in 2021/22, of which over 41% originated from partner referrals.

We have handed out 12,000 pieces of equipment such as smoke alarms, hearing impaired alarms, mailbox protectors and fire-retardant bedding. Interventions such as these contributed to a 7.7% reduction in the number of casualties.

Although 912 people were killed or seriously injured on West Midlands roads in 2021/22 this was down nearly 3.2% from 2019/20. Despite COVID, our firefighters and Road Casualty Reduction Team engaged digitally with 5,685 children and young people, delivering key road safety messages, representing nearly a 57% increase compared to the height of the pandemic.

## **Protection**

The protection work focuses on helping businesses to thrive, making the West Midlands stronger. WMFS advises companies how best to comply with fire safety legislation, to keep its staff and customers safe. Considering the pandemic, the Service has utilised technology to facilitate virtual audits where applicable, to complement the existing approach to visit sites. In 2021/22 we carried out 8,510 Safe and Strong visits providing advice to businesses regarding fire prevention and protecting staff, buildings and contents.

In 2021/22 we recorded 391 accidental fires in non-domestic properties.

We have three vehicles and a team dedicated to bringing down the number of 'unwanted fire signals' from automatic fire alarms.

We attended 5,927 false alarms caused by fire alarm systems.

The Service continues to deliver against the outcomes of the Grenfell Inquiry and conducting the necessary assurance work against any findings. Examples include the development of digital solutions to support the recording and sharing of Fire Survival Guidance information at Tall Building incidents between Fire Control and the Incident Ground, extending our collaborative working with external partner agencies to utilise CCTV camera networks to provide a live feed of incidents as they evolve, and implementing the greater governance of policy and training materials that are available for staff.

Operational crews and Fire Safety Officers worked together to visit and review high rise residential buildings across the West Midlands, enabling the Service to support the Building Risk Review programme. Work progressing the Building Risk Review has continued including the establishment and digitisation of a repository of Site-Specific Risk Information (SSRI). Our approach to SSRI for Tall Buildings has been reviewed, with a gap analysis undertaken, the outcomes of which have led to the commissioning of the Tall Buildings Review whereby all such types of premises are being revisited and SSRI updated. This is being done using a collaborative approach to the Prevention, Protection and Response aspects to SSRI on Tall Buildings, ensuring that the people who are at risk are placed at the centre of the activity, with teams working closely with these respective departments to ensure the needs of the vulnerable members of our community are considered during visits to sites. In addition to ensuring the provision of up to date and comprehensive SSRI, the Operational Procedure Guidance (OPG) Fires in Tall Buildings was launched in August 2021 reflecting the review of the existing policy framework and ensuring alignment with National Operational Guidance (NOG), both being developments that will support operational crews to be assertive, effective, and safe at an incident involving a Tall Building.

### **How do WMFS do it?**

The successful delivery of 'Our Plan' is enabled by 3PT, a project management framework that has been developed by the Service and which provides the strategic link between our CRMP and operational front line delivery model. The acronym 3PT stands for Portfolio, Programme, Projects and Tasks, and it is how the Service conducts the management of change in the form of Projects and Programmes within the whole Service (the Portfolio).

As a forward-looking service with big aspirations and committed to excellence and continuous improvement, it is essential that we improve how we plan for the future. As the environment we operate in can be volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) having a robust framework can minimise many risks as we navigate our way towards a Safer, Stronger & Healthier future. 3PT provides WMFS with a strong evidence base for all the workstreams we deliver, which we can use to draw upon to provide organisational learnings that enhances our decision-making practices.

## **Statement of Assurance 2022/23**

The next reporting year will feature how the Service not only continues to return to a position of business as usual and deliver within an environment of 'living with COVID' but also continues to build upon the new ways of working developed and adapted during the pandemic and since. Having been approved in February 2022, we will continue to develop and evaluate our CRMP objectives evaluated as the implementation of the pilot schemes progress throughout the year. These will continue to be an integral part of the revised three-year strategy and ongoing resource and service transformation and illustrate how the Service continues to represent a genuine commitment to embrace continuous service development to the benefit of the communities it represents and serves.

The opening of our third Technical Rescue Unit Station at Sutton Coldfield provides our communities with an enhanced capability and capacity to deal with identified emerging risks in an agile and flexible manner. This additional provision further increases levels of assurance and resilience in the delivery of WMFS specialist response capability and National Resilience requirements, and enhances our contribution to the 'Prevent Strategy' around extremism and terrorism.

Birmingham hosted the Commonwealth Games in 2022/23, and events will be taking place across the city and throughout the county of the West Midlands. WMFS was actively involved in the preparation and planning for the event, and we had a key role working with partners, to ensure the safety of everyone at the games. We were also honoured to host the United Kingdom Rescue Organisation's 'Festival of Rescue', a few weeks after the games, in Birmingham. We will work hard to ensure that both spectacles showcase the very best of what the West Midlands has to offer, whilst we continue to deliver our wide range of services that make the West Midlands safer, stronger, and healthier.