

THE REPORT



1213



Prevention Protection Response

Making West Midlands Safer

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE SERVICE

www.wmfs.net

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INTRODUCTION AND FOREWORD

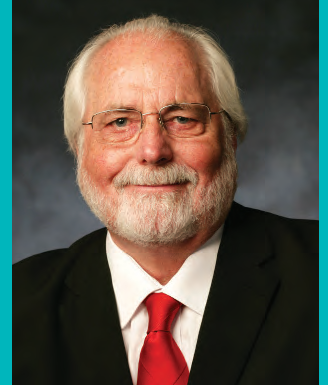
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These continue to be tough times for West Midlands Fire Service, as our belt tightens further and we are hugely grateful to the people of the West Midlands for supporting us through an increase in our council tax precept, but this only softens the blow somewhat.

Our Building upon Success Programme continues to drive significant changes, enabling us to maintain vital prevention, protection and response services on a more limited budget. This has not been easy; sacrifices have been made and our staff have had to be resilient and innovative in equal measure. The Brigade Response Vehicles (BRV) concept in particular is revolutionising the way we deliver our response services and is now being rolled out across the brigade, giving us more flexibility and allowing us to better match resources to risk.

While we continue to see a positive downward trend in fires and incidents, 2012/13 saw one of the biggest and potentially most dangerous fires in the West Midlands in recent years. The fire at the Alcohols distillery in Langley Green involved potentially explosive materials and led to the evacuation of hundreds of homes but firefighters were able to bring it under control and limit the damage to the surrounding area.

Of course early in 2013/14 we have already had to respond to another huge and complex incident. The fire at a paper and plastic recycling plant in Smethwick involved 200 firefighters and over 40 appliances, including a number from our colleagues in Staffordshire and Hereford and Worcester, making it one of the largest in living memory. Both these incidents highlight the importance of maintaining sufficient resources to tackle risk even if we respond to fewer incidents. Large fires may happen less often, but we still have to have the resources available to tackle them when they do.



John Edwards

John Edwards
**Chair West Midlands
Fire & Rescue Authority**



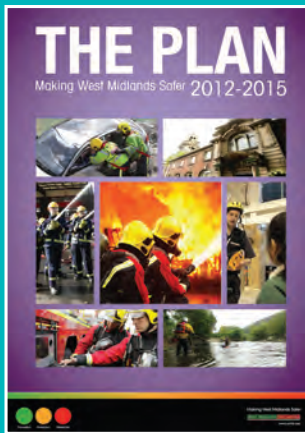
Vijith Randeniya

Vijith Randeniya OBE
**Chief Fire Officer
West Midlands Fire Service**

INTRODUCTION AND FOREWORD

Despite all these challenges we continue to see a great many successes. We have successfully reduced accidental and deliberate house fires as well as deaths and injuries that result. We have won the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) Emergency Services Sector award for Occupational Health and Safety for a third year out of four and our Aspire awards in October once again highlighted the range of talent, commitment and bravery exhibited by our staff every day of the year.

Our communities expect and deserve a world class service, and we remain committed to our five minute response time for life threatening incidents – the fastest response standard in the country. We will continue to work extremely hard to continue to deliver it despite the ongoing financial challenges, which we expect to last well beyond 2015. These may be difficult times, but we have the will to succeed.



PROVISION OF SERVICES AND THE COMMUNITIES WE SERVE

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Profile 2012/2013

Area (in hectares):	90,164
Population:	2,736,460
Dwellings:	1,222,501
Non-domestic premises:	93,236
Fire Stations:	38

Employees 2012/2013

Wholtime Uniformed Employees:	1,627
Fire Control Employees:	67
Non-Uniformed Employees (full time equivalent):	417
Total Employees	2,111

Vehicles 2012/2013

Operational Vehicles: (This includes one Incident Command Unit and one Command Support Vehicle)	84
Reserve Appliances	16
Total	100

The following table provides an overview of headline numbers in relation to our core services of preventing, protecting and responding in 2012/13.

Operational Responses 2012/2013

Fires:	9,375
Other Emergency Incidents:	4,901
False Alarms – Good Intent:	2,786
Automatic Detection Systems:	6,344
Malicious:	783
Total	24,189

Prevention Activity

Home Safety Checks (HSC):	22,665
HSC at high risk properties:	11,323 (50%)
Vulnerable People Cases undertaken	823

Protection Activity

Fire Safety Inspections:	1635
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West Midlands Fire Service (WMFS) serves a population of over 2.7 million people living in a million dwellings. It covers the cities of Birmingham, Coventry and Wolverhampton and the Metropolitan Boroughs of Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull and Walsall.

(A detailed map of our community fire stations can be found by [clicking here](#)).

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The population served by WMFS is made up of the following proportion of ethnicities:-

White – 70%

**Asian or
Asian British – 19%**

**Black African/
Caribbean or Black
British – 6%**

Mixed Origin – 3%

Other – 2%

(Statistics taken from the Office of National statistics: June 2009 Experimental Statistics)

PROVISION OF SERVICES AND THE COMMUNITIES WE SERVE

Each of the seven authorities that make up the West Midlands area has different population demographics including proportions and percentage of age groups. The West Midlands has a greater black and minority ethnic population in comparison to other regions and national levels, which has increased over the last five years.

WMFS is accountable to the public via the West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority (WMFRA), made up of 27 Elected Members. This is headed by the Chair of the Fire Authority. WMFS is managed directly by the Chief Fire Officer (CFO) and the senior management team.



PROVISION OF SERVICES AND THE COMMUNITIES WE SERVE

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Our three year rolling corporate strategy, 'The Plan' provides an overview of the responsibilities of the Authority and senior management team and how we achieve our vision of 'Making West Midlands Safer', through our four key priorities:

Communities and Partnerships

We recognise that there are communities and individuals who are more at risk from safety related issues in the home, including fire.

By working with our partners we will tackle a range of issues including healthier living, anti-social behaviour, supporting independent living and safer business premises. This multi-agency approach will produce the best results for members of the communities we serve.

Response

By making sure we have the right people in the right place at the right time, with the right skills and equipment, we will make a real impact on saving lives and protecting our local community in an emergency.

We are able to plan and allocate resources to ensure we are managing risk effectively.

People

We are an organisation that embraces diversity through our staff, the way we engage with the public, and how we build and deliver our services.

By understanding and acknowledging individual difference, we can create environments and deliver services that include everybody.

Our people trust and respect each other and those we serve.

Value for Money

We are committed to providing a high quality, Value for Money (VFM) service and already have a sustained track record of delivering service improvements. We recognise the need to place a greater emphasis on VFM if we are to respond to external influences and the challenges we face in delivering the high quality services expected by our communities with less resources.

The many examples in this document demonstrate our commitment to these priorities.

The Plan can be accessed via our website –

www.wmfs.net.

'The Plan' continues to focus on the four priorities enabling the organisation to achieve our goals of:-

- Preventing fires and other emergencies by community involvement and education
- Protecting property and people by providing advice and enforcing appropriate legislation
- Providing an effective emergency response service when needed

OUR SUCCESSES OVER THE LAST YEAR

WMFS has worked hard during the past year to ensure risk to its communities is reduced.

The Plan 2012 – 2015 detailed the key outcomes the Service aimed to achieve during 2012/2013. Some examples of success against these outcomes are highlighted below through the improvements we see in our key performance indicators. Further examples are detailed throughout this document.

In aiming to:

- ▶ Reduce the number and severity of fires, injuries and deaths
- ▶ Work with partners to improve the safety, health and wellbeing of our local communities
- ▶ Protect business from risk of fire in order to support the economy

There have been fewer **accidental house and business fires. House fires** in particular; these have decreased by 5.9% (105) in 2012/13 compared to 2011/12.

These reductions follow on from similar falls last year and indicate that the good work our firefighters, fire safety inspectors and community based staff do in engaging the public at events, through inspections of business premises and Home Safety Checks, continues to reap rewards. We are also working hard

to ensure that our resources are effectively targeted to deliver services to the most vulnerable people in our communities.

The number of West Midlands homes and vehicles targeted by arsonists dropped significantly in 2012/2013. There have been **fewer deliberate fires in houses**, these have reduced by 26% on 2011/2012 levels (93 less incidents). In addition **deliberate vehicle fires** fell by 248 (down 31% to 563)

and **deliberate rubbish fires** were down 41% by 1800 to a total of 2486. Whilst it is likely the long spells of wet weather will have had an impact, the work carried out with our partners is also making a positive difference instead of is also having a positive impact - at the moment we have both. Tackling arson remains an organisational priority and initiatives in this area have included liaising with social landlords in relation to responsible waste management and

OUR SUCCESSES OVER THE LAST YEAR

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delivery of the Year 8 'Your Choice' schools presentation 'Feel the Heat'.

Sickness Absence is the lowest ever recorded for uniformed staff at an average of 4.48 working days/shifts per employee, compared to 4.7 in 2011/2012. Non-Uniformed and Fire Control employee

sickness has also reduced. In 2011/2012 it was 10.3 days/shifts per employee, this year it has improved to 9.81 days/shifts. Managers working with professional Human Resources and Occupational Health teams have been successful in supporting employees in work.



COMMUNITIES AND PARTNERSHIPS

Fire Control

West Midlands Fire Service and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service are continuing to work in partnership to combine the provision of fire control services to operate from the existing West Midlands Fire Control at West Midlands Fire Service Headquarters. Further resilience and improvements are being considered and initial discussions are underway with London Fire Brigade and the North West Control to develop the plan of linking the fire control centres of the three main cities in England.

The shared fire control call handling and mobilising system will enable a singular approach to managing fire appliance and firefighter resources for both Fire Authorities. By sharing common operational procedures, ways of working and the management of data, there will be an increased understanding of risk across the area

covered by Authorities, thereby improving community and fire-fighter safety.

Over the last twelve months of work the interim phase of the project has achieved success by enabling Staffordshire to utilise the existing WMFS Command and Control system ahead of the single-site full solution.

This interim arrangement has given Staffordshire the ability to use a new information system in their appliances, automatic vehicle location for more accurate mobilising, improved site specific risk information and provide the project with a valuable stepping stone to successful completion targeted for April 2014.



Vulnerable People

We aim to work with partners and local communities to target individuals more at risk from safety related issues in the home, including fire. Some examples of where we have made a difference throughout 2012/2013 are:



Community Volunteers, Coventry

Community Volunteers provide home safety checks to individuals and families in Coventry who may be more vulnerable and at increased risk of accidental fires in their homes.

They have provided information to over 350 individuals who

previously would not have routinely accessed home safety services from us.

The Community Volunteers have been introduced to areas of Coventry that have individuals at risk that live in areas of low incidents and are therefore not routinely

targeted by our operational personnel.

This proactive approach has enabled us to increase access to our home safety services without diverting our personnel from those areas of Coventry where we know the risk is greatest.

**For a free Home Fire
Safety Check call free
on 0800 389 5525
or [click here](#)**

Vulnerable Persons Officers

WMFS is heavily involved in prevention based activities, including home safety checks which have evolved to become smarter in identifying and targeting vulnerable people. To maximise pooled resources we seek to work with partners and other agencies to effectively identify and target the most vulnerable members of the community.

A high number of people who die in fires in the home are classed as vulnerable to varying degrees. To effectively target the complexities of varying vulnerabilities the role of Vulnerable Persons Officers (VPOs) was developed. VPOs are both firefighters and support staff who undergo additional training to identify various vulnerabilities that include mental health, deaf, blind, learning difficulties and general ill health.

Several cases which may have resulted in

“fire deaths” have been prevented by VPOs working closely with other agencies.

One such example was a person in their late eighties who was a heavy smoker and a strong determined character that had refused help for many years. After several fires in the home that were directly related to smoking, assertive actions were taken by WMFS, social services and AGE UK to mitigate the additional risks of fire. However following a number of repeat

calls, social services determined with the agencies involved that the risks to the individual were so high that it would be in the best interests of the individual if they were relocated into sheltered accommodation where they could live safely with additional care and support. To effectively target a variety of vulnerabilities and a preventable fire death or injury.

Sandwell and Vulnerable People

Sandwell Borough Command has been working in partnership with Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council (MBC) and Riverside Homes to educate residents about prevention and safety in the home in order to reduce the number of fires and injuries.

Since the partnership was formed, WMFS has trained approximately 100 Sandwell MBC and Riverside Homes staff on safety in the home which has enabled us to deliver an additional 540 Home Safety Checks to vulnerable people in Sandwell.

We are also developing a training package where staff members from partner

organisations can take part in online interactive training to support face to face training.

WMFS had experienced difficulties in reaching some residents who were reluctant to let firefighters enter their home. We identified that staff at Sandwell MBC and Riverside Homes had already formed relationships with residents and it

was agreed to work in partnership in an effort to reach them.

By sharing our resources and knowledge to help target and educate our most vulnerable residents in their own home.

COMMUNITIES AND PARTNERSHIPS

Schoolchildren triumph in Schools' Safety Challenge Final

The final of the WMFS brand new online Schools' Safety Challenge grand final, took place at the Brigade's innovative safety village, Safeside.

After several weeks of taking part in online challenges at school and quizzes at fire stations, eight schools from across the West Midlands went on to represent their areas in the Brigade Final, where they showed off their fire and community safety knowledge.

It was a close-fought contest, with strong performances from all of the finalists, but St. Nicholas Catholic Primary School - representing the Birmingham North Command Area - took the top spot, with second place going to Our Lady of the Wayside Roman Catholic (RC) Primary School from Solihull. Loxdale Primary School from Wolverhampton took third place.

The schools that won their local heats and competed in the Grand Final were:

- Our Lady of Fatima Catholic Primary School – Birmingham South
- St. John Fisher Catholic Primary School – Coventry
- Lapal Primary School –Dudley
- Loxdale Primary School – Wolverhampton
- Lower Farm Primary School – Walsall
- St. Nicholas Catholic Primary School – Birmingham North
- Bleak House Primary School – Sandwell
- Our Lady of the Wayside RC Primary School - Solihull.

Teachers, families and friends all attended the final to cheer on the

teams, with Command Area Lord Mayors, Councillor John Edwards, Chair of (WMFRA) and Vij Randeniya (CFO), also there to see the pupils in action.



Back row L to R: Craig Lannie from Sprue Safety Products Ltd, Cllr John Edwards, Chair of (WMFRA), and Vij Randeniya, (CFO) – with children from the winning team - St. Nicholas Catholic Primary School - representing the Birmingham North Command

In Schools Education

Fire Safety is delivered to thousands of children by our firefighters. This continues to be our most efficient and effective form of education providing good safety information at all Key Stages in a child's development.



This begins with Foundation Stage children (nursery and reception age) with the delivery of basic safety messages upon which to build as children grow and develop.

As part of the national curriculum the Great Fire Safety Pack based on the Great Fire of London is well placed to provide the link between the history of the fire service and fire safety today.

Historically year 5 pupils have received fire and road safety input through our traditional Spark pack. From September 2013 it will be delivered to Year 4 pupils so filling a void in the availability of safety education.

Key Stage 3-4 Educators continue to deliver Your Choice packages into secondary schools.

Special Educational Needs (SEN) Educators

visits continue to increase with more schools, colleges, groups, residential and care homes taking on board valuable safety information from this special group of firefighters. The SEN programmes at Safeside and our new programme at Handsworth are proving to be extremely popular.

Road Safety

Through targeted action with our partners, we aim to improve road safety through educating the public about the consequences of dangerous driving.

Drive Assist Road Safety Events

During the last year the Road Casualty Reduction Team (RCRT) has arranged, supported and assisted in various Drive Assist events across the West Midlands.

These events have taken place at Walsall Football Club's Bescot Stadium (March & October), the NEC (March) and Bournville College (May).

Schools and colleges from the local area are asked to participate and an average of 120 students attends each day. These events run from 1-5 days, educating up to 600 students during a 5 day event and consist of road safety education from the RCRT, West Midlands Police (WMP) and other external stakeholders.

The RCRT's input is tailored to the students and the issues that have arisen within that area. The package, which includes a simulated road accident, is made up of various elements:

- Driver Safety
- Passenger Safety
- Pedestrian Safety





Firefighters carry out the safe removal of casualties while the RCRT provides a commentary. A question and answer session is carried out with the students on what learning has taken place and how they may change their behaviours in the future.

The RCRT also works in tandem with the police on **Roadside Education Days (RED)** where drivers who have committed minor offences are offered education rather than prosecution. Work also takes place with the Motor Insurers' Bureau (MIB) to

educate motorists on the importance of having insurance and the RCRT has supported a national campaign targeting uninsured drivers and seizing vehicles.



Arson and Anti-Social Behaviour

We work with partners to educate the public about the dangers of arson related incidents and address anti-social behaviours.

'I Predict a Riot' Youth Engagement Project

Following the civil disturbances in August 2011, WMFS sought to increase the role it plays in engaging young people in local community projects.

WMFS has, for a long time, shown its commitment to the youth agenda through the creation of the Young Firefighters Association back in 1985 and more recently, its F.I.R.E programmes, which engage young people that are involved in the criminal justice system. The civil disturbances demonstrated a need for wider engagement,

and the fire service was eager to lead the way in getting young people to understand the impact that committing crime, such as arson, has on individuals, families and the wider community.

Walsall's command Youth Development Officer, Lee Wilkes, developed a unique multi agency learning programme, designed to help young people identify and analyse the impact of arson and anti-social behaviour.

The two hour workshops delivered over a six month period, were facilitated in partnership

with colleagues from WMP and Walsall Magistrates Court. The session used video clips to analyse footage from the civil disturbances and youngsters were required to identify the different crimes committed and the impact they will have on the perpetrator, their family and the wider community.

The Learning programme has also introduced scenario based exercises into the workshop; providing young people with limited resources and tasking them to respond

to the incidents they see in front of them. Lee explained, "This really gives young people an insight into the challenges the emergency services face on a daily basis – responding to a range of incidents with conflicting timescales, making difficult decisions and determining the resources and staff to mobilise in response".

The final part of the session included a visit to Walsall Magistrates Court, which brought the reality of committing a crime to life. Lee explained, "This is

an important part of the agenda and really gets the young people thinking about the consequences of committing a crime. For many youngsters, it's the first time they have ever entered a court room and the whole experience proves to be both daunting and thought provoking".

Following analysis of our incidents and analysis of the attainment levels in the local Walsall schools, the learning programme was then extended to specific schools and youth groups in the

Walsall borough. The workshop was targeted at year 9 pupils (age 13/14) and delivered to as many Schools in the Walsall Borough as possible before the onset of the summer holidays.

This programme was successfully delivered to 816 young people during May, June and July 2012.

Advise and Enforce

Through advising and enforcing on fire safety issues across the business community we support local business to comply with fire safety legislation therefore reducing the risk of fire and increasing prosperity. The work undertaken in preparation for the Olympics during 2012 provides a focused example of our role in the community and the outcomes achieved.

The Olympics - 2012

WMFS 'Protection' Olympic plan established a framework for conducting a fire safety audit campaign across all Olympic training venues and Olympic team accommodation. The campaign also enabled us to support partner agencies by conducting 'During Performance' Fire Safety audits prior to each Olympic Event at the City of Coventry Stadium and a 'During Performance' inspection of the 'Torch Relay' Super Event at Cannon Hill Park.

The campaign ensured that hoteliers and boarding houses were emailed, informing them of their fire safety responsibilities and advising them that WMFS would be undertaking sample fire safety audits to ensure compliance. As part of the campaign we undertook 79 sample fire safety audits to ensure compliance and we took enforcement action where necessary. Action was taken against a number of hoteliers for serious breaches of fire safety legislation and the campaign resulted in

reduced risk across the premises inspected. The cost of the campaign across WMFS area was approximately £22,000 which is small when compared to the potential financial cost of a fire death and the value of a life. We therefore believe that the campaign provided significant value for money and ensured Olympic Teams and their families, Corporate Bodies, and the general public were able to participate in a safe and enjoyable Olympic Games.

Dealing Effectively with Incidents

Through effective planning and preparation for known risks and emergencies we are able to make a real impact in the event of a fire or other emergency. We aim to attend all high risk incidents within a 5 minute timeframe.

The following are just a few examples of the 24,189 incidents we attended during 2012/2013:

Distillery Fire, Hall Street, Oldbury

At 09.58 on the 26 November 2012 WMFS Fire Control staff received several calls reporting a severe fire and explosion at a commercial premises in Hall Street, Oldbury.

Five fire appliances from around Birmingham and the Black Country were initially sent to the scene. On arrival, firefighters were confronted by a huge blaze in a three storey gin distillery occupying some 12,000 square feet, and involving 4,000 litres of highly flammable fluid. A further ten appliances including a hydraulic platform were requested to attend.

Nearby residents were evacuated and one man believed to have sustained flash burns, was taken to hospital by ambulance. Surrounding roads were closed and rail services in the area were stopped.

At 14:50 there were more than 100 firefighters on the scene tackling the blaze with a 100 metre exclusion cordon in place, residents in homes nearby were advised to keep windows and doors closed. Crews worked with the Environment Agency to prevent water run-off to the River Tame.

Assistant Chief Fire Officer Phil Loach said: "This was an extremely challenging incident and we worked hard with our emergency services colleagues and other supporting agencies to bring the incident to a safe conclusion".



Factory Fire at Canley, Coventry

At 13.02 on Wednesday 9 May 2012, WMFS Fire Control received calls requesting Firefighters to attend the scene of an incident at UYT Ltd, a car component manufacturer in Canley, Coventry.

In total 12 fire appliances were mobilised the first arriving to the scene within three minutes. This provided the support necessary to enable a fast response and to prevent fire spread. In total, 58 Firefighters were at the scene; six of whom wore breathing apparatus to enable them to tackle the fire

from inside the building at close range.

Vij Randeniya, Chief Fire Officer said, "I am delighted with the speed and efficiency demonstrated by my Firefighters and Fire Control staff. The fact that we were able to mobilise so quickly and tackle this fire within such a short space of time really is great

news, not only for the factory's owners and workers, but the local community as a whole. I am also delighted to hear that a sprinkler system was installed at the premises. This, alongside a skilled firefighting response, played a significant role in minimising the impact and spread of the fire."



Arrow Environmental Services, West Bromwich

At 13.35 on Friday 25 May 2012 WMFS received several calls reporting a severe fire in Kelvin Way in West Bromwich.

Six fire appliances, approximately 30 firefighters from community fire stations around the Black Country area, were rapidly mobilised with the first fire appliance arriving on the scene within five minutes.

The incident involved a severe fire in a single storey factory unit of corrugated steel construction believed to be used for the recycling and waste management of industrial oils.

Neighbouring factory units were evacuated with all people quickly accounted for and no reports of any casualties. A number of large oil drums on-site generated a plume of thick black smoke and fire crews wearing breathing apparatus tackled the blaze.

Group Commander Nigel Sowden said: "Crews worked extremely effectively in arduous conditions to safely extinguish the blaze."

Heavy Rain Causes Chaos Across the West Midlands

On Thursday 28 June 2012 chaos hit the West Midlands as rain and thunderstorms battered the area leaving many in a state of panic.

West Midlands Fire Service's Fire Control staff dealt with 282 incidents in just over an hour and a half, as pleas for help came in from people trapped in vehicles and their homes.

Two elderly ladies were rescued from a home in Old Hill, Wolverhampton as flood water caused a wall to collapse.

At The Rock Hotel in Tettenhall, a 61 year old male became trapped in his vehicle and was unable to

open the door due to the sheer volume of flood water. He was rescued by crews from Wednesbury fire station.

Two elderly passengers trapped in their car in over three feet of water in Weoley Castle, Birmingham were rescued by Firefighters from Northfield, Bournbrook and Perry Barr.

At Yew Tree Lane in Frankley, severe flooding on the roadway led to passengers becoming trapped in their vehicles. An

off duty police officer and a farm worker came to the rescue of one person, whilst Firefighters from Northfield rescued others.

Vij Randeniya, Chief Fire Officer said, "My Firefighters and staff have worked incredibly hard to respond to individuals across the West Midlands who found themselves in danger and I am delighted with the excellent service they have provided."



Top West Midlands Fire Officer honoured with Queen's Fire Service Medal

We have a workforce who are highly skilled, flexible and dynamic delivering excellent services for the communities of the West Midlands and beyond.



Group Commander Bill Gough has been awarded the Queen's Fire Service Medal (QFSM) in the Birthday

honours. The QFSM recognises firefighters who have given distinguished service and shown extraordinary devotion to duty.

Bill has been working for the WMFS and serving the community since the age of 19, when he began working with the City of Birmingham Fire and Ambulance Service.

During a distinguished career spanning four decades, Bill has become a leading figure in the field of crisis and risk management. Much of his work has been recognised and adopted by Fire and Rescue Services across the United Kingdom.

PEOPLE

MBE for Coventry Firefighter

WMFS is delighted that firefighter Richard Stanton has been made a Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) in the New Year's honours.

Mr Stanton, who has been a firefighter with WMFS for more than 23 years, has received the accolade in recognition of his service to the communities of the West Midlands as a firefighter and for the cave diving rescue

services that he carries out on a voluntary basis both in the UK and abroad.

In October 2010 Richard was asked by the French authorities to assist in locating an experienced diver who was lost in the Ardeche region's daunting

Draggonniere Gaude cave system and was instrumental in the safe recovery of the diver. Another notable rescue was that of six British soldiers who had become trapped in rising flood water in a cave in Mexico.

WMFS retains Payroll Quality Award

WMFS Payroll and Pensions section has retained their prestigious Payroll Quality Partnership accredited status from the Chartered Institute of

Payroll Professionals.

WMFS is the only Fire and Rescue in the country to hold the accolade which recognises the

Service's commitment to staff training and development in the field of payroll and pensions.

Young Firefighters to Represent Great Britain

Young Firefighters from Wednesbury Fire Station are British Champions after taking part in the trials for the International Technical Committee for the Prevention and Extinction Of Fire Drill Competition 2012.

These fantastic results now mean that the young firefighters from Wednesbury along with Greater Manchester Fire Cadets will travel to France in July 2013 to

represent Great Britain in the International Young Firefighter Olympiad.

The team trained exceptionally hard for six months and have been rewarded for their efforts

by representing Great Britain. The training will continue in the hope that they can achieve there dream of being the best in Europe.

Firefighter praised for saving lives while on holiday

Paul McCarron a firefighter on Blue Watch at Sutton Coldfield Community Fire Station has been widely praised after saving the lives of scores of people while on holiday with his family and friends in Majorca.

Paul was relaxing with his wife, when she spotted flames shooting out of one of the windows on the top floor of an apartment block, near to their hotel. Paul and his friend Richard Ross rushed to the scene and found the six-storey apartment

block well alight. They managed to raise the alarm in the building,

rescued one individual and led a large number to safety.



PEOPLE

A blazing success – WMFS picks up safety and health award



WMFS has picked up a national Emergency Services award for its efforts to keep firefighters and staff healthy and safe. Despite strong competition from other emergency services organisations across the UK, WMFS scooped the accolade - which recognises the service's commitment to best health and safety management practice.

Although WMFS has picked up several RoSPA Gold awards for safety and health in previous years, it is only the second time that the organisation has received the award topping the entire emergency services sector.

Celebrating WMFS excellence

Breathtaking bravery and outstanding dedication to keeping the West Midlands safe provided the focus for WMFS Aspire 2012 Awards.

Firefighters, support staff and members of the public from across the region were honoured with ten awards presented in front of 500 guests at the ICC in Birmingham.

Firefighter Paul McCarron, of Sutton Coldfield fire station's Blue Watch, was named Hero of the Year, along with his friend Richard Ross, for their remarkable efforts in leading nearly 40 people to safety from a burning apartment block while they were on holiday in Majorca.

Following an online public vote, this year's Fire Station of the Year title went to Stourbridge, in recognition of impressive team effort in improving local communities' safety. The ICC audience heard details of youth initiatives, road and home safety work, and efforts to reduce arson and anti-social behaviour which clinched the title for the station's firefighters and staff.

CFO Randeniya presented the awards with Steve Hanson, Marks and Spencer's Fire Health and Safety Manager - Property and Store Development. The company's generous sponsorship covered the full cost of the Aspire 2012 event.

Outstanding Contribution to West Midlands Fire Service

Watch Commander Gavin Pardoe, Dudley Fire Station, Purple Watch

Partnership Achievement

Coventry Operations Command

Operational Excellence

Sheldon Fire Station, White Watch - Watch Commander Mark Engers, Firefighters Leigh Kelly, Richard Simmonds and Vincent Marshall, and former WMFS Firefighter Gareth Bond

PEOPLE

Community Engagement

The Aurora Team (brigade-wide)

Volunteers Award

Coventry community volunteers Jack King and Carol Bolton

Innovation and Creativity

Watch Commanders Darren North and Peter Luckin of Operational Training Support/the WMFS Academy

Environmental Award

Elaine Debenham of the headquarters-based Safety, Health and Environment team

Support Section of the Year

Quality Assurance and Control Section, WMFS Academy

Fire Station of the Year

Stourbridge Community Fire Station

Hero of the Year

Firefighter Paul McCarron of Sutton Coldfield Fire Station, Blue Watch and Richard Ross

Long Service and Good Conduct Medals awarded

WMFS has honoured staff who have completed 20 years of exemplary service.

23 Long Service and Good Conduct Medals and awards were presented to a group of uniformed and non-uniformed staff during a ceremony at WMFS Headquarters in March and 26 were presented during a ceremony in June.

At the March ceremony the medals and awards were presented by Colonel (Retd) Thomas D C Lloyd, Deputy Lord Lieutenant of the West Midlands and at the June ceremony by Major Sylvia Parkin, MBE TD, DL.

Vij Randenyia (CFO) said: "West Midlands Fire Service exists to serve the public and make the West Midlands safer. We strive for excellence in all that we do in order

to provide a world class service and we are only able to do this because of the hard work, professionalism and dedication of the people who work for the organisation.

The recipients of the Long Service Good Conduct medal deserve recognition and I would like to personally express my gratitude to each and every one."



Organisational Development

The **Business Educational Safety Team (BEST)** at the Academy have had an extremely busy time delivering courses in fire safety and bespoke training for commercial partners including Nationwide Building Society Partnership and Marks and Spencer and Birmingham Community Healthcare NHS Trust.

BEST have worked passionately to raise the profile of WMFS through their interactions with commercial organisations in an effort to educate them in respect of fire safety and to make their workplaces safer places to work for their employees. At the same time BEST have focussed their efforts on generating income to support and deliver the commercial objectives of WMFS.

An example of how BEST have been able to deliver both the business and commercial objectives of WMFS can be seen through the **F1 Motor Sport Fire Response Training**.

This is a very popular course and has been running now for the past 3 years. This year we have attracted another F1 team – Mercedes F1, in addition to McLaren F1 and Sahara Force India F1 team.

Force India has commended BEST for **excellent customer service, professional advice and support; and quality training interventions**. Force India have been so impressed with BEST that they have in turn promoted the team and WMFS to other F1 racing teams. This is a fantastic achievement for BEST and accolade for WMFS.

West Midlands Fire Service is recognised for Investors in People

In 2012 West Midlands Fire Service met the Investors in People (IiP) Standard and was recognised as Investors in People. The assessors expressed their congratulations on this recognition which has been achieved at a time of unprecedented change underlining the strong commitment to supporting and developing people.

Working towards achieving the standard, benefits both our employees and the Service as it sets a level of good practice for improving performance through its people. It provides a framework for improving performance through a planned approach to setting and communicating service objectives and developing people to meet these objectives.



They have a number of positive benefits including, flexibility, the class leading “gross” carrying capacity, low fuel consumption and low CO2 emissions. In addition the purchase cost is around a quarter of that of the traditional engine, it has significantly lower running and maintenance costs and it is crewed by three staff rather than the usual five. This means that moving forward the BRVs are vitally important to us, in a climate of reducing resources and falling staffing levels.

VALUE FOR MONEY

Brigade Response Vehicles (BRV)

In terms of dealing with all emergency situations the traditional fire service vehicle has been a Pump Rescue Ladder (a.k.a. a big red fire engine). This approach is inflexible and offers something of a “one size fits all” solution that is resource intensive and fails to achieve our key priority of being a Value for Money Service. A large number of incidents that we attend are of a more minor nature and do not necessarily need a large vehicle with a crew of five.

Work has therefore been ongoing to examine the fleet and investigate possible alternatives. A variety of these Brigade Response Vehicles (BRVs) have been trialled at Coventry, Dudley and Tipton. A key part of the work

has been to determine that risk to firefighters or the public was not raised as a result of the introduction of the alternative vehicles. In addition we needed to ensure that our 5 minute response times to the most significant

(Category A) incidents, was not compromised. This work has enabled us to arrive at a modified Toyota Hilux Invincible, crewed with an officer and two fire fighters as our preferred vehicle.



Restructure of Fire Safety

In April 2010 a review was undertaken of Fire Safety as part of the Building upon Success (BuS) Programme, to look at efficiencies following the actual and anticipated budget reductions as a result of the ongoing Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) process. This review has resulted in a restructure of the Fire Safety function to provide a more effective and efficient fire safety service.

Following a trial to test an approach to Location Independent Working (LIW) and a Fire Safety Administration Review, a new structure has been designed to utilise Fire Service Headquarters as a single Fire Safety Centre and implement LIW across Fire Safety.

This has resulted in savings of £205,300 through the restructuring of management posts. This is in addition to the £1m already saved by reducing the inspecting officers numbers from 88 down to 66.



VALUE FOR MONEY

Operational Assessment 2012

In support of our commitment to continuous improvement, we recently took part in the fire sector specific Operational Assessment (OPA) process which is the fire sector 'industry standard' improvement tool. The OPA comprises of a self assessment against sector agreed key areas and is supported by an external peer challenge, providing a consistent framework for Fire and Rescue Authorities to assess how well we lead, prioritise and deliver our core prevention, protection and response activities to our community and is designed to:

- form a structured and consistent basis to drive continuous improvement
- provide elected members and corporate board with information that allows them to challenge operational service delivery to ensure that it is efficient, effective and robust.

The external peer challenge, as well as providing for an independent view and validation of our self assessment findings, was a constructive and supportive process aimed at helping us to improve our service.

The West Midlands Fire Service Peer Challenge Report provides a very positive commentary on our performance and highlighted a number of strengths including:

- The Chief Fire Officer is committed to driving improvement and efficiency
- The West Midlands Fire Service brand is highly regarded across organisations and partners
- Most areas of performance in the provision of services are good and improving
- Response is a strong area with good performance
- Home Safety Checks are targeted at vulnerable groups

As a publicly funded organisation, it is important that we are transparent in how we are performing and are accountable for improving our performance. Therefore the Peer Challenge Report is available on our website. As is normal with any process designed to encourage continuous improvement, a number of areas for consideration have been identified. As a public organisation the Improvement Register sets out how we are addressing the areas for consideration raised in the report, progress against which is reported to the Authority's Scrutiny Committee. The Improvement Register is also available on our website.

OUR PERFORMANCE

For the financial year 2012/2013 the authority's external auditor has provided independent assurance to our community that we use our budget in the right way and provide value for money.

Our financial and governance statements are an important means by which we account for our stewardship of public funds. The auditor has issued an 'unqualified' opinion, meaning we have followed accounting rules appropriately and our financial statements accurately represent our financial position.

We have also received an unqualified conclusion for our value for money arrangements stating we have proper arrangements in place to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of our resources.

More detailed information regarding the work undertaken by the authority's external auditor is contained within their annual report and annual audit letter, which is available by [clicking here](#).

OUR PERFORMANCE

Health and Safety

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WMFS is committed to achieving high standards of health and safety and compliance with health and safety law and regulations. It is concerned for the health and safety of its employees and others who may be affected by its activities, e.g. public, visitors and contractors.

Attending fires and other emergency incidents is a risky occupation and WMFS has many safe systems of work in place, supported by training and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), which minimises the risks to Firefighters and other staff who attend.

Safe systems at work are also in place for non-uniformed employees, visitors and contractors.

Health and Safety Information Statement

During the financial year April 2012 to March 2013, a total of 136 injuries were reported to the Safety, Health and Environmental Team relating to our activity in this period. This was a decrease of 14% on the previous year and our lowest number of injuries on record.

Of the 136 injuries, WMFS reported 15 injuries to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995 (RIDDOR). There were no fatal accidents.

This RIDDOR figure was one of the lowest achieved by WMFS.

OUR PERFORMANCE

	Actual 2011/2012	Target 2012/2013	Actual 2012/2013
Total injuries	158	142	136
Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995 (RIDDOR)	18	18	15

WMFS consults with the Representative Bodies on health and safety through a health and safety committee structure and on a routine basis.



Our Annual Health & Safety Performance Report 2012/2013 includes the following:-

- ▶ Supporting employees to enable them to achieve excellent health and safety at work
- ▶ Enabling activities to take place with suitable and sensible controls proportionate to the risk
- ▶ Taking a sensible common sense approach to health and safety and busting myths
- ▶ Enabling employees to be risk aware not risk averse
- ▶ The full Annual Health & Safety Performance Report 2012/2013 can be viewed by [clicking here](#)

Performance Indicator Number	Description	Actual 2011 – 2012	Forecast 2012 – 2013	Actual 2012 – 2013
PI 1	The number of accidental fires in dwellings	1,773	1,800	1,668
PI 2	The number of injuries from accidental fires in dwellings (taken to hospital for treatment)	78	87	61
PI 3	The number of deaths from accidental fires in dwellings	18	0	7
PI 4	The number of arson fires in dwellings	361	376	268
PI 5	The number of accidental fires in non-domestic premises	631	607	612
PI 6	The number of arson fires in non-domestic premises	273	259	166
PI 7	The number of arson vehicle fires	811	771	563
PI 8	The number of arson rubbish fires	4,286	4,218	2,486
PI 9	The number of malicious false alarm calls received by the Brigade	3,313	3,412	2,876
PI 11	The number of false alarm calls due to automatic fire alarms in non-domestic properties	3,301	None set due to change to call challenge policy	3,195
PI 12	The number of false alarm calls due to automatic fire alarms in dwellings	3,103	3,034	3,149
PI 13	The percentage of dwelling fires where a working smoke alarm was fitted	68%	69%	72%
PI 14	The number of Home Fire Safety Checks conducted by the Brigade	38,481	40,000	22,665
PI 16	The percentage of Home Fire Safety checks delivered to those at high risk	51%	70%	50%

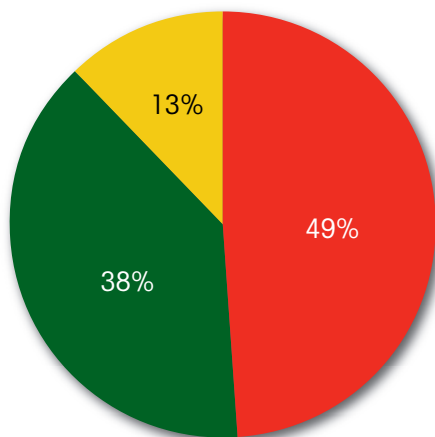
OUR PERFORMANCE

Performance Indicator Number	Description	Actual 2011 – 2012	Forecast 2012 – 2013	Actual 2012 – 2013
PI 17	The percentage of Uniformed employees with a disability	2.2%	2.5%	2.27%
PI 18	The percentage of non-uniformed and Fire Control employees with a disability	5.7%	5.5%	6.01%
PI 19	The percentage of all employees with a disability	3.1%	3.6%	3.26%
PI 20	The percentage of women firefighters	4.4%	4.5%	4.30%
PI 21	The percentage of uniformed staff from ethnic minority communities	12.6%	13.0%	12.35%
PI 22	The percentage of non-uniformed and Fire Control staff from ethnic minority communities	18.0%	22.0%	15.12%
PI 23	The number of all staff from ethnic minority communities	14.0%	14.7%	13.08%
PI 26	The average number of working days/shifts lost due to sickness – Uniformed employees	4.7	4.7	4.48
PI 27	The average number of working days/shifts lost due to sickness – non-uniformed and Fire Control staff	10.3	9.3	9.81
PI 28	The average number of working days/shifts lost due to sickness – All employees	6	5.8	5.69

FINANCIAL SUMMARY 2012/2013

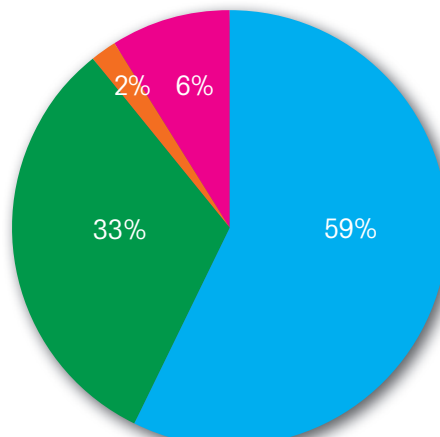
How much did the service cost and how was the service funded in 2012/2013?

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Breakdown of costs

■	employees	49%
■	pensions	38%
■	running costs	13%



Various sources of funding

■	business rates	59%
■	council tax	33%
■	interest and other income	6%
■	government grant	2%

Balances and Reserves

The Authority must consider the level of general balances it wishes to maintain before it can decide the level of council tax to charge in any year.

In order to set a balanced budget in 2012/13 the Authority assumed no movement in general balances. The level of general balances increased in the year by £2.237m, leaving £8.957m general balances at the end of the financial year.

The Authority holds general balances as funding to meet any unforeseen events which it may need to respond to. Interest is earned on any unused balances.

The majority of the Net cost of Fire Service expenditure relates to firefighting and rescue operations (£103m) and community fire safety work (£14m).

The total income of the Authority in 2012/13 was £118m.

The majority of funding comes from the Government in the form of a share of business rates and grant.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY 2012/2013

Balances and Reserves

In addition, as part of the closedown of accounts process, consideration needs to be given to the level of earmarked reserves required. These are amounts set aside to meet specific anticipated future demands. The level of earmarked reserves increased by the end of the year by £1.542m. This brought the total level of these reserves to £24.609m. Interest is earned on any balances until expenditure is committed against the demands identified.

Capital Expenditure and Funding

In 2012/13, the Authority spent £1.938m on capital projects.

The expenditure was incurred on the following:

	£m
Land & Buildings	1.108
ICT & Equipment	0.420
Vehicles	0.410

The total expenditure was financed directly by the application of capital grants.

No borrowing was undertaken to assist with purchase of assets during 2012/13. Borrowing in earlier years meant that at the end of 2012/13, the Authority had total loans of £43.221m (the interest and principal on any loans needs to be met from future revenue budgets). The value of fixed assets held by the Authority as at 31 March 2013 which the loans had helped fund was £134m, of which approximately 92% related to land and buildings and 8% related to vehicles and equipment.

Further information is available in our Corporate Strategy (The Plan) available by clicking [here](#).

CONTACTS

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For further information about your Fire Service, you can contact our customer care team by using one of the methods listed below.

Public Relations Team

West Midlands Fire Service Headquarters

99 Vauxhall Road

Birmingham

B7 4HW

Tel: Customer Care Hotline – **0121 380 7404**
(24 Hour answerphone)

E-mail: **contact@wmfs.net**

OTHER FORMATS

The Authority is committed to equality of opportunity but must demonstrate value for money. Whilst all requests for our leaflets and publications to be reproduced in alternative formats and languages will be considered, where possible we will seek other methods of communication.

Please call **0121 380 7015** (24 hour answerphone).