

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE SERVICE

# **Annual Report of the Scrutiny Committee 2016/17**

## 1. Background

The Scrutiny Committee was established by the Fire Authority at its Annual General Meeting in 2012. Its purpose is to:

- inform policy development
- hold officers and the Service to account
- conduct reviews into specific issues

The key benefits of the Committee can be seen as:

- Complementing the strategic and policy formulation and development work of the Authority and Service.
- Developing the skills of Members to enable them to investigate below the surface of policies, strategies and processes.
- Providing a useful oversight and an element of 'challenge' to performance improvement processes and continuous improvement.
- Encouraging public involvement in the policy process.
- Supporting the development of an environment that stimulates a more reflective, evaluative and evidence based culture within the Authority and Service.

The Terms of Reference for the Committee can be found at Appendix A of this report.

## 2. Meetings

During 2016/17, the Committee met on the following dates:

• 05 September 2016
• 10 October 2016
• 14 November 2016
• 20 February 2017
• 27 March 2017
• 12 June 2017

### 3. Members & Attendance Record

	05/09/16	10/10/16	14/11/16	20/02/17	27/03/17	12/06/17
Councillor Barrie	√	√	√	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	√
Councillor Brackenridge	<b>X</b>	√	√	√	√	<b>X</b>
Councillor Dad	<b>X</b>	√	√	√	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
Councillor Hogarth	√	√	<b>X</b>	√	√	<b>X</b>
Councillor Skinner	√	√	√	√	√	√
Councillor Spence	√	√	√	<b>X</b>	√	√
Councillor Tranter	<b>X</b>	√	√	√	√	<b>X</b>
Councillor Young	√	√	<b>X</b>	√	√	√
Councillor Clinton (sub)						√
Councillor P Singh (sub)						√

Senior Officers from the Authority are also present as appropriate.

Working Groups are also appointed to consider scrutiny reviews. The Committee are to undertake a maximum of two such reviews each year. Each Working Group has a minimum of three Members allocated to it.

### 4. Business

During the year the Committee conducted the following business:

- Quarterly Analysis of Corporate Performance against 'The Plan'
- Diversity, Inclusion, Cohesion and Equality quarterly updates
- Dispute Resolution Monitoring
- Work programme selection
- Working Group Review of Partnerships (progress of outcomes monitored)
- Working Group Review of Data Sharing (review completed with proposals submitted and agreed, progress of outcomes monitored)

- Working Group Review of Positive Action and Firefighter Recruitment (initial scoping document submitted and working group established – it is expected that this review will be completed in 2017/18)

## **5. The Committee's main achievements**

The Committee believes its key achievements during the year included:

- Regular updates on the outcomes and progress of the review of partnerships (undertaken during 2015/16) were provided at the bequest of Members of the Committee who wanted ensure progress was monitored.
- The working group review of partnerships had identified that the Service's data sharing arrangements were a potential area for concern and improvement. As a result of the recommendation from the findings of the review of partnerships, the Committee agreed to examine this area and undertook a review of data sharing. The review led to a number of recommendations to be implemented, the outcomes of which will continue to be monitored by the Committee as progress is made.
- The Service carried out a firefighter recruitment campaign during 2016/17 (a process that remains ongoing, with new recruits joining the Service in a phased approach). In doing so, the Service took a pro-active approach to aiming for an improve representation of under-represented characteristics using principles of positive action. Additionally, the Home Office have highlighted the issue of underrepresented groups within the workforce profile nationally and the need for the sector as a whole to address this. As a result of these developments both locally and nationally, a review of the Service's approach to positive action and firefighter recruitment will be undertaken, to include the examination of the associated protocols and procedures, analysing their effectiveness, and identifying and removing barriers where present. The review has been scoped and a Member led working party has been agreed. It is intended that the review

will be completed, and its findings submitted, during year 2017/18.

- An update was provided on the outcomes and progress made to date of the review of Safeside which had been carried out in 2013. The update reflected the changes at Safeside which had been made following recommendations from the review of partnerships, and that the environment that Safeside operated in had changed significantly since the review was conducted. The update raised a potential issue regarding the funding of transport and how to address the issue (transport had been raised by many education establishments as an obstacle potentially stopping attendance). An interim solution had been achieved and the subject would be submitted for consideration by the Committee during 2017/18.
- The robust monitoring of the Service's performance in the areas of Diversity, Inclusion, Cohesion and Equality, analysis of Corporate Performance against 'The Plan', workforce profile indicators and dispute resolutions.

### **Terms of Reference for the Scrutiny Committee**

#### **Scrutiny Committee**

To carry out a maximum of two scrutiny reviews per annum selected by the Committee. Such reviews will be member-led and evidence based, and will produce SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and timely) recommendations to the Executive Committee.

To track and monitor the implementation of review recommendations that are accepted by the Executive Committee.

To summon any officer or member of the Authority to give account in respect of reviews or any other relevant matter.

To manage, in consultation with the Strategic Enabler for Finance and Resources, a specific budget for the purpose of buying in any necessary external advice and support in connection with the reviews.

To receive and scrutinise performance information including progress against the Community Safety Strategy and 'The Plan', the Service's objectives and corporate performance indicators and review performance targets.

To have responsibility for scrutiny of Diversity, Inclusion, Cohesion and Equality and diversity throughout the West Midlands Fire Service and to review policies and monitor performance in relation thereto.

To monitor and scrutinise as appropriate the Authority's HR policies.

To monitor and scrutinise sickness levels, promotion policies and employee exit information.

To receive information and statistics on grievance monitoring and to report outcomes to the Joint Consultative Panel.

To ensure that the Authority is meeting its duties under Health & Safety and environmental and other relevant legislation.

To deal with any matters referred to it by the full Authority, the Policy Planning Forum or Executive Committee, the Chief Fire Officer, Clerk, Monitoring Officer or Treasurer, not within its work programme.

To refer any matter for consideration by the Authority, another Committee or an officer where considered appropriate.

To submit its minutes and an Annual Report to the Authority.

In order to allow for separation of the scrutiny and decision making functions, members of the Scrutiny Committee shall not sit on the Executive Committee.

The Committee will sit in public with minimum exceptions.

In addition to its programmed meetings, the Committee will hold additional meetings, as and when required, in order to efficiently manage its workload.