

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

15 APRIL 2024

1. PORTFOLIO MANAGEMENT (3PT)

Report of the Head of Portfolio

RECOMMENDED

- 1.1 THAT the contents of the report be noted.

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 2.1 This report provides a summary of the progression of the delivery of Portfolio Management towards delivering 'Our Plan'. The updates provided are based on the continual assessment of investment and business benefits of projects being delivered through the three Programmes of Community Risk Reduction, Enabling Services and People.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 To inform Members of the approach taken under Portfolio Management and the resulting outcomes of the workstreams within current Programmes and Projects which support the Service to deliver continuous improvement and transformation.
- 3.2 This report will lead into the subsequent Fire Authority reports that support the delivery of the Strategy in one or more of the Programmes.

4. DELIVERABLES

- 4.1 The Programme Executives (Brigade Managers) are accountable to the Portfolio Executive (Chief Executive Officer (CEO) through their programme objectives to deliver the Strategy of the WMFS. The Portfolio is led by the CEO to enable the delivery of the Authority's Strategic priorities aligned to Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) objectives.

- 4.2 The Portfolio is ultimately accountable for the Programmes and will provide assurance that the aims and objectives are being achieved. The Programmes are accountable for Projects.
- 4.3 The recent Programme achievements are detailed below and supported through the Programme deliverables.

5. **PEOPLE PROGRAMME HIGHLIGHTS-**

5.1 Trainee Firefighter Development Programme

The newly improved 12-week Trainee Firefighter Development Programme (TFDP) has now completed two courses since its commencement in mid-2023. The TFDP is monitored and evaluated across both trainers and trainees as the course progresses to support learning and further improvement. This has enabled a change across some modules to support increased time where modules are more complex, more interactive approaches to some development sessions and depending on needs, specific support for individuals who are neurodivergent.

5.2 Distributed Training Model (DTM) Review

A review of our DTM commenced in September 2023 and has recently been concluded with 'areas of consideration' for improvement. A multi-disciplined team engaged widely across both operational staff, as well as our training team, Station Based Assessor and Subject Matter Experts to gain a comprehensive understanding of both risks and opportunities that exist with the current DTM. The areas of consideration are now being considered alongside the outcomes of the recent scrutiny review of training to create a plan for improvement. This will align to the principles of the DTM and will engage both trainers and staff in any new ways of working.

5.3 Incident Command Assessment

The Service trains and assesses incident commanders internally through our Command Development Centre. A review of Incident Command was commissioned and undertaken in 2023. A number of recommendations were made to strengthen our approach to Incident Command.

One of the recommendations has been to ensure all incident command assessments are accredited through a recognised framework. This provides individuals with investment in their professional development with a recognised qualification and supports assurance and mitigation of risk for the Service.

This will initially be achieved through some incident commanders receiving accreditation through external providers. However, staff within our Command Development Centre (CDC) will be developed over a 12–18-month period as accredited assessors for incident command. This will enable our CDC to become an accredited centre for incident command assessments and generates the opportunity for income generation in future years.

5.4 Top 50 Inclusive Employers

In December 2023 WMFS was awarded number one Inclusive UK company. We have achieved a top ten ranking for several years, but this is the first time any organisation has been awarded number one for two years in a row. The award has enabled us to support several organisations in the top 50 to share good practice, including other FRS, Crown Commercial services and Private. These organisations have sought information around Brave Space and our progress around neurodiversity.

5.5 Stakeholder Groups

Our stakeholder groups continue to work actively across the organisation supporting the development of our people and the improvement of organisational processes. Both recruitment and promotion processes have improved with the contributions of our groups and particularly in recent months the Neurodiversity Group has supported the development of the trainee firefighter development programme, recruitment and promotion processes, enabling a focus on reasonable adjustments for neurodivergent applicants.

5.6 All Hands to the Pump – Understanding our Culture.

The Service is at the early stages of commencing research in partnership with Birmingham University. Working with Professor Sophie King-Hill this research will seek to understand more about how WMFS can be an inclusive environment in which all staff can thrive.

A group of staff representative of the Service attended a workshop held at Birmingham University in October to help define the area of research to ensure that this is closely aligned to our needs as a fire service.

5.7 Occupational Health Services

Occupational Health services provided to our staff offer a range of interventions focusing on both mental and physical health, supporting individuals getting back to work in a safe and healthy way; wellbeing being a priority for the Service.

Occupational Health services provide significant support to staff at all levels daily and through some significant events throughout the last 12 months.

Our approach to Occupational Health services is currently being reviewed with an objective of understanding how we can provide more prevention-focused interventions that enable our staff to remain at work. This involves looking at prevention from a wider perspective and will consider mechanisms sitting outside of the Occupational Health function and importantly the role of line managers.

5.8 Thematic Inspection Update

The Home Secretary commissioned His Majesty's Inspectorate of Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) to undertake a thematic inspection of the handling of misconduct in fire and rescue services in England. WMFS took part in this inspection and HMICFRS were welcomed into the service between 4th and 22nd December 2023.

This inspection involved document, data and case file reviews, focus group discussions with employees across the Service, and interviews with Director and Heads of service. In addition, a survey was sent to all employees. Feedback during the "hot debrief" provided to the CFO indicated that WMFS had the highest employee return rate across all the ten Fire and Rescue Services reviewed.

The debrief, which took place in January 2024, provided positive feedback into the way that WMFS handles misconduct matters. A report will be produced on the collective findings from all ten sample services

in June 2024.

5.9 Policy Update

The Service continues to make excellent progress on development of people policies, ensuring that they remain legislatively compliant, inclusive and progressive.

Over the last quarter, we have launched updated dignity at work, grievance and family leave policies.

Work is currently underway of developing a “Representing WMFS” – an all-encompassing code of conduct which will cover several areas from uniform and appearance to professional boundaries and use of social media.

5.10 Pay & Grading Update

Work continues on our pay and grading review for non-operational (green book) pay and grading structures. We are currently in phase one of this review, which seeks to understand and evaluate our current practices. This phase will conclude with a report from an external provider on recommendations for improvement.

5.11 UKG

WMFS will shortly be replacing SMART (the current time and attendance system) with UKG. Good progress is being made to implement the new system with effect from 30 June 2024.

Confidence amongst employees is high and there is a detailed training plan to ensure that implementation is a positive experience. More information will be provided on development and launch in future reports.

5.12 Pensions Update

The pensions team are in a period of significant change; with a change of payroll and pension manager, leavers within the team and implementation of legislative updates. These elements are meaning that employee and/or pensioner experience is not where we want it to

be.

However, a clear mitigation plan has been put in place so that the scheme manager is able to track and report on progress to the Pension Board. The next 12 months will be a challenging period for WMFS and for the sector in terms of implementation of pension changes, and therefore regular updates will be provided to the Fire Authority moving forward.

5.13 RACE Code Assessment

RSM Consulting completed a RACE Equality Code Assessment and subsequently produced a report issued to WMFS in October 2023. The RACE Equality Code (REC) provides best practice guidance that helps organisations to understand not only what is required of them by their sector, regulator and/or their stakeholders but also how to apply what is required.

The organisation demonstrated compliance with the Code by:

- (a) outlining how it will apply the main principles,
- (b) complying with the provisions on a comply or explain basis and
- (c) providing explanations of how they will achieve any of the Must provisions that were assessed as partial compliance.

The Assessment had four key stages:

- Pre-assessment Process;
- Governance Assessment;
- Self-Assessment and
- Inclusion Support Questionnaire.

WMFS completed all the required stages of the assessment and demonstrated that we will need to address 12 areas to achieve the required level of compliance as identified in the RACE Action Plan (RAP). However, the completion of the assessment processes provided confidence that WMFS are applying the principles of the RACE Equality Code.

6. **COMMUNITY REDUCTION RISK PROGRAMME (CRR)- HIGHLIGHTS**

Fire Control

In Fire Control three new entrants have started on their Fire Control training course and have joined the current TFDP course. Fire Control are now using an innovative artificial intelligence training tool for call handling to support development of Trainee Firefighter (Control) during their new entrants training course.

Response

New BA sets have been received from MSA and delivered to stations. Training is well underway with the new sets going live on 29 April 2024 over a 4-day period.

National Water Deployments

Derbyshire, October 2023 - WMFS deployed a Type B Boat Team consisting of six personnel along with a Welfare Officer to assist with wide scale floodings following a request for assistance in Derbyshire from the 20 - 22 October 2023. The role of the team was to assist with evacuation of those who required it and to reassure and support the affected communities.

Nottingham, January 2024 - A further request for national assistance was received on Saturday 6 January 2024, and once again a Type B Boat Team consisting of six personnel, along with a Welfare Officer, were deployed for the weekend to assist with wide scale floodings.

International Deployments

Morocco, September 2023 - Following a devastating 6.8 magnitude earthquake and subsequent loss of life in Morocco on 8 September 2023, members of West Midlands Fire Service deployed to Morocco as part of the United Kingdom International Search and Rescue (UKISAR) team response. The deployment, sanctioned by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) was accepted on 10 September 2023 for a medium-sized deployment of 60 personnel, 7 of which were WMFS colleagues.

Malawi Capacity Building, February 2024 – Following the international deployment in March 2023, a member of our International Search and Rescue Team has returned to Malawi as part of a Capacity Building Project. Supported by the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office and the World Food Programme, it is aimed at training operational teams in water rescue and boat operations, with a further element aimed at education of strategic decision makers from regional and district coordination teams.

Prevention

During the later part of 2023, a review of the Prevention Team based at HQ was completed followed by a subsequent process of re-structure.

Previously the team was structured on a thematic basis around the area of work i.e. Road Safety, Children and Young People, Education, Partnerships etc.

The proposal was to restructure the team based on the functions they perform in terms of three main areas:

1. **Development & Improvement Team** - focus on improving the services we provide.
2. **Support Team** – Support for areas to deliver prevention activity.
3. **Delivery Team** – Delivery of prevention activity directly to the community.

The new structure and way of working will provide:

- Clearer roles and priorities for teams in prevention.
- Improved focus on providing support for Operations Teams to deliver prevention activities.
- Clear communication links between all functions within Prevention and with Operations.
- Flexible to the changing demands in Operations.
- Named Prevention Team contacts for stations.
- Effective triage/monitoring tool for low-risk Prevention Team activities.
- Flexible to changing risks in the community.
- Use of data to support the shape the future development of services and packages.
- Utilise digital technology to support prevention.

The new structure is being implemented currently with staff moving into new teams and some people into new roles.

The second phase of the review is currently underway, looking at the delivery models of the following Prevention Specialist services

- **Complex Needs Officer (CNO)** – work with adults whose multiple and complex needs mean they have the highest risk and vulnerability to fire.
- **Deaf Team** – provide Safe & Well delivery for those who require BSL interpretation for communication of home fire safety advice and guidance.
- **SEND Educators** – safety education in educational establishments for those with special educational needs and disability.
- **Fire Safety Tutors (FST)** – deliver education and support for children and young people who have unsafe and unhealthy behaviours with fire (fire setting).
- **Key Stage 3 & 4 Educators** – delivery of ‘Your Choice’ Road Safety and Arson prevention education to children in these year groups .

The consultation for the second phase is due to be completed in March 2024 and will be implemented following approval.

Protection

Understanding and mitigating the risk of fires in tall buildings.

Following the publication of the Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry recommendations, fire services are required to improve their provision for reducing the likelihood and impact of fires in high rise buildings through more effective regulation and enforcement of fire safety legislation. The Protection team continue to work with partners such as local authorities and residents to ensure that existing tall buildings are maintained and protected to the highest standards of safety. WMFS now provides regional leadership to the new Building Safety Regulator (via the Health & Safety Executive) for the planning and certification of new high-rise buildings, hospitals and care homes.

Refresh of the Risk Based Inspection Programme (RBIP).

The RBIP contains a suite of risk intelligence which allows WMFS to target its fire safety activities at the highest risk properties. This intelligence includes data from a range of sources including historic incidents, and data from partners such as OFSTED and the CQC.

Data which informs the RBIP is currently undergoing a full revision, to include the most up to date and in-depth risk information available. This allows us to be assured that our regulatory activity is effectively targeted; those properties deemed to be highest risk will receive more frequent and more probing interventions from fire safety inspectors. This updated information will then be fed into our newly developed electronic systems and will be available in real time to our inspectors.

Operations

The Strategic Enabling Team have agreed an approach to improve the shortage of drivers currently experienced within Operations. This has involved increasing the capacity over the next 12 months within driver training to ensure an uplift in initial LGV and Emergency Response Driving courses throughout 2024-2025. Enabling this has seen work across programmes that has freed up driver training capacity with no additional costs to the Service, with improvements in the driver establishment expected over the next 12 months.

The last HMICFRS inspection highlighted an Area for Improvement (AFI) being how the Service utilises its estates with respect to collaboration with partners around the sharing of building assets. Since these findings, the Service has developed a service position as part of the Asset Management Plan, clearly linking our approach to the sharing of estates with partners to the Community Risk Management Plan and our statutory duties. Wrapped around this is a more structured approach to cost recovery allowing for consistency in approach across our building assets with multiple partners. Currently, the Service is engaged with blue light partners around the use of a number of our fire stations, with discussions ongoing.

7. **ENABLING SERVICES PROGRAMME – HIGHLIGHTS**

7.1 Digital; Data and Technology

Cyber Security

Our focus on cyber has resulted in several legacy systems continuing to be decommissioned improving our cyber posture. We continue to mature our cyber security understanding, working with suppliers and industry leaders to create a plan to invest to resolve areas for improvement highlighted by audit and the cyber assessment framework.

Corporate Gazetteer

We have continued to focus on data quality and have awarded a contract to software providers to improve our position on addressing data. This will improve the efficiency of our targeted activities and improve firefighter safety through improved data quality and pooling of all information we hold about addressable entities.

Recruitment & Retention

We have concluded a significant recruitment campaign and filled all vacant posts, reaching a position of stability within the digital and data teams. As these new roles bed in, our risks have reduced and our capacity to deliver against our needs has been restored.

7.2 Communications

Annual Carol Concert

The Service held the annual Carol Concert at St Martins in the Bullring on 10 December 2023. The service was extremely well attended and, as per normal, the Education Impact Academy Trust consisting of Wilson Stuart, Queensbury, Mayfield Schools and The Hive College stole the show with their enthusiasm and outfits for their Nativity Play. We look forward to another rousing performance this year.

Long Service and Good Conduct Medals

After a break from Long Service and Good Conduct due to the passing of Her Late Majesty, the Service is now in receipt of His Majesty's new medals, and as such we now look forward to recognising members of staff who have completed 20 years of service.

CFO Wayne Brown Funeral

Organising funerals for Service personnel is something that we all want to get right for the family and as a fitting way to say 'thank you' to the individual. The funeral for CFO Wayne Brown on 1 March 2024 was particularly challenging due to being based in London and working and liaising with many partners such as London Fire Brigade. That said, the sun shone (for the first time in ages), Southwark Cathedral was full to capacity with members of Wayne's family, friends and of course the Fire Service family, and the streets were lined with more than 300 firefighters from around the country.

Whilst clearly a very sad occasion, the day was masterfully organised making it a great send off. Thank you to all who attended, either in London or at St Martin in the Bullring.

7.3 Finance & Procurement

7.3.1 Budget Setting

The 2024-25 budget was approved at Fire Authority on 19 February 2024. The net budget requirement is £133.6 million, which includes a use of reserves of £1.1 million and an efficiency target of £1.9 million. This will be achieved through zero-based budgeting and a review of temporary and over-established posts.

Total funding due is £130.6 million which includes a 2.99% increase in the Council Tax precept, bringing the B and D equivalent charge to £75.20, an annual increase of £2.18 per household.

The 4-year capital programme was also approved totalling £27.3 million.

7.3.2 Securing Social Value in new Contracts

There is a need to consider social value when tendering and awarding service contracts. The Authority has successfully awarded several new contracts which include an element of social value. This has included:

- Cleaning consumables contract: Donate £1,000 to cover membership of Inclusive Employers, an offer to share learning at stakeholder groups and to supply t-shirts for community events.
- Uniform contract: Offer to sponsor a neurodiversity event and share their experiences, to supply printed t-shirts and epaulettes for events and support a community event with 5 days of their employees' time.

9. **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 9.1 In preparing this report an initial Equality Impact Assessment is not required and has not been carried out because the matters contained in this report will not lead to a policy change.
- 9.2 Areas of policy changes that are identified in Project(s) are subject to an Equality Impact Assessment.

10. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

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

11. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

12. **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 12.1 There are no environmental implications arising from this report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

12301233 FRA Portfolio Management (3PT) - Feb 23.docx

1076238 FRA Portfolio Management (3PT) - June 23 (1).docx

22209231 Q2 - FRA Portfolio Management (3PT).docx

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