



WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

Monday, 11 December 2023 at 11:00

**To be held at Fire Service HQ and digitally via
Microsoft Teams**

Distribution of Councillors	
<u>Birmingham</u>	D Barrie B Mahmood G Atwal S Spence
<u>Coventry</u>	C Miks G Lloyd
<u>Dudley</u>	I Kettle W Little
<u>Sandwell</u>	P Kaur R Jalil
<u>Solihull</u>	P Hogarth MBE
<u>Walsall</u>	V Waters M Ward
<u>Wolverhampton</u>	G Brackenridge J Dehar
<u>Police & Crime Commissioner</u>	S Foster
<u>Representative - Assistant PCC</u>	Wasim Ali
<u>Co-opted Members</u>	Professor S Brake ABCA – Dave Brown
<u>Independent Member</u>	Mr M Ager
<u>Observers</u>	P Gwynn, UNISON
	D Gough, Fire Officer's Association
	S Hitchins, Fire Brigades Union

Please note: Meetings of the political groups will be held at 10.00 am.

Fire Authority

You are summoned to attend the meeting of Fire Authority to be held on
Monday, 11 December 2023 at 11:00

At Fire Service Headquarters, 99 Vauxhall Road, Nechells,
Birmingham B7 4HW

and digitally via Microsoft Teams

for the purpose of transacting the following business:

Agenda – Public Session

- 1 To receive apologies for absence (if any)
- 2 Declarations of interests
- 3 Chair's announcements
- 4 Chief Fire Officer's Announcements
- 5 Minutes of the previous Fire and Rescue Authority held on 23 October 23 5 - 14
- 6 Treasury Management Mid-Year Review Report 2023-24 15 - 34
- 7 Refreshed Member Code of Conduct 35 - 56
- 8 An Analysis of Progress of Quarterly Performance Against Our Plan Qtr 2 2023-24 57 - 78
- 9 Portfolio Management (3PT) - Q3 79 - 90
- 10 Minutes of Previous Public Committee Meetings 91 - 116
- 11 Date of next meeting

Agenda (not open to public and press)

Agenda prepared by Chandni Patel

Portfolio, West Midlands Fire Service

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This agenda and supporting documents are also available electronically on the [West Midlands Fire Service Committee Management Information System](#)

This meeting of the West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority will be held at Fire Service Headquarters.

The meeting will also be held digitally via Microsoft Teams allowing observers to access remotely. To access the meeting, please contact a member of the Portfolio Team, West Midlands Fire Service, who will be able to provide login details (please note that Microsoft Teams is not required to join a meeting) or provide guidance if you wish to attend in person at HQ.

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Clerk Telephone:	0121 380 6678
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WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

Item 5

23 OCTOBER 2023 AT 11.00 HOURS

**CONDUCTED AS A PUBLIC MEETING AT HEADQUARTERS AND
DIGITALLY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS**

- Present: Councillor Brackenridge (Chair),
Councillor Miks (Vice Chair),
Councillor Atwal, Councillor Barrie, Councillor Dehar,
Councillor Hogarth, Councillor Kaur, Councillor Kettle,
Councillor Jalil, Councillor Lloyd, Councillor Mahmood,
Councillor Little, Councillor Waters, Sasha Hitchins - Fire
Brigade's Union.
- Virtual: Professor S Brake, Co-opted member, Paul Gwynn –
Unison, Gary Proctor - Fire Officers Association, Dave Brown
- Co-opted member.

31/23 To receive Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Kaur

32/23 Declarations of Interest

No Declaration of Interest were declared.

33/23 Chair's Announcements

Cllr Brackenridge welcomed the DCFO Jo Bowcock, Section 151 Officer Sofia Mahmood and Cllr Matthew Ward to the Authority.

Cllr Brackenridge reminded members of the letter sent on behalf of the Authority to Ministers at the Department of Levelling Up. This letter recognised the need to deliver an efficient service that provides value for money; however, this will be impacted if the levels of inflation are not in line with individuals' income.

Cllr Brackenridge also made members aware of the forthcoming AFSA Winter conference which is to take place in Leeds. The Chair reminded members of the importance of these events to engage with different stakeholder groups.

34/23 **Chief Fire Officer's Announcements**

Wayne Brown, Chief Fire Officer (CFO) welcomed all attendees to the meeting with a special welcome to Cllr Matthew Ward.

The Chief provided an update on the Area manager Process and congratulated Steve Ball and Marc Hudson on being successful.

Lee Brathwaite will be joining WMFS from Royal Berkshire FRS, on Secondment from 1st December as the Temporary Area Manager.

The go-live date for brand-new trial vehicles to operate from our three multi-pump stations has been confirmed. An IVECO and a Mercedes are set to trial from 10th October 2023 for six months. It has already been rolled out in Highgate and Walsall. Plans are now in place to rotate the two trial vehicles between our three multi-pump stations.

Maternity Pay up to 52 has now been approved and are looking to roll this out next year.

The Chair congratulated those who have been promoted and is in support of the 52 weeks of maternity.

35/23 **Minutes of the Fire and Rescue Authority held on 13 February 2023**

Resolved

1. That the minutes of the Fire Authority meeting held on 26th June 2023 be approved as a correct record.

36/23 **Pensions Scheme Update**

Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO) Richard Stanton provided an update on the Pensions Scheme update. The team continue to deliver against the work plan agreed with the Pension Regulator.

Section 3.3.2 provides an update regarding the last Pension Board and it was agreed that the board would transfer its risk register to the same format as is used across the service.

Section 3.4.2 provides a performance breakdown against select key indicators as of 31st August 2023.

Section 3.5 relates to the three submissions received through the Internal Dispute Resolution Procedure (IDRP), one of which was determined not to be addressed as an IDRP. At stage one, these are dealt with by the ACFO and Director for People, with none yet progressing to stage two.

The Chair thanked Cllr Miks for all her hard work regarding the Independent Pensions meeting. The Chair extended his thanks to the officers who have continuously worked on improving pension outcomes and continuously engaged with the relevant stakeholders.

37/23 **Contract Awards Summary for Period to 30 September 2023**

Section 151 officer, Sofia Mahmood, provided an update on this report and highlighted that the contract has been awarded. This is valued at £250,000.

As part of the Authority's Constitution, it is required that a retrospective, twice yearly summary report of tender contract awards in excess of £250,000 be submitted to the Fire Authority for information purposes. To note, the BA contract has been awarded.

All recommendations were agreed.

38/23 **Q2- FRA Portfolio Management (3PT)**

Wayne Brown provided an update regarding section 5.1 of the report. RBC went live on 4th July 2023 at the Service's three "multi-pump" stations, Coventry, Highgate, and Walsall. The feedback via our Joint Working Party (JWP) has so far been positive, with an increased fleet availability (vehicles on the run), fewer standbys (where firefighters are based at a station other than their usual home station) and improved staff morale.

5.3 refers to the BRV replacement. The service needs to replace a significant amount of BRVs in the next 12 months as existing vehicles reach their end of service life.

Regarding 6.3, Prevention have improved the systems and processes used to manage Complex Needs (CN) cases, which support those in our communities who are at the most risk and the highest levels of vulnerability to fire.

Regarding 6.2 Protection WMFS are leading the regional team, working with the NFCC and the Health and Safety Executive to ensure services across our region, meet the upcoming "Go Live" date of 1st October 2023 for new legislation.

Several Fire Safety Advisors (FSA's) and Fire Safety Inspectors (FSI's) have recently passed fire safety qualifications at level 3 and level 4, increasing our ability to protect buildings and businesses across the West Midlands communities.

6.3.1 following collaboration; MSA Safety was awarded the contract to supply the new BA sets and associated equipment for the next ten years. Work is underway to prepare our staff to use the new equipment when rolled out next year.

The NFCC have now applied the same guidance for Fire Control (FC). In total, over the next 18 months, there will be circa 20 pieces of guidance for FC that will require developing into product packs for the Service to deliver. Work on this project has begun with 1 piece having now been fully implemented into the Service, Survival Guidance was released in July 2023 and went live in September 2023.

Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Simon Barry, provided an update on the Enabling Services Programme.

Regarding 7.1 HQ and Inclusion and Collaboration, following completion of the first phase of the project work is undergoing to move the classroom- based learning element of the Trainee Firefighter Development Programme (TFDP) to the ground floor of HQ, with a desired outcome of a more enhanced connection for our trainees from their first day. This should be completed for the next recruit intake in January 2024.

The launch of our 'We Are' campaign went live in the middle of September. The refresh of our WMFS branding also went live at the same time.

Regarding, 7.6 a post-implementation evaluation process has begun with Oracle to help identify further areas where we can maximise our existing investment by realising further benefits.

Richard Stanton provided an update regarding the People Programme.

Regarding 8.2, Trainee Firefighter Development Programme (TFDP) revised Programme, the course structure has developed from an 8-week programme into a 12-week programme; the revised programme commenced in August. The course is now more focused on culture, values and behaviours.

The overall feedback received has been positive for both trainees and trainers.

To note: There have been changes to legislation meaning that Fire and Rescue Services will be able to carry out criminal record checks for all employees. All firefighters are now eligible for these DBS checks. There have currently been 750 of these checks completed. This was one of the key recommendations from the spotlight report and we have been making good progress.

There have been some changes made to Maternity provision and we have made a positive step forward. There has been a Circa £120,000 for both maternity and paternity cover and are currently looking at policy changes.

Following queries, Richard Stanton confirmed that there is a provisional date of 1st January for Maternity pay to be applied. Through consultation, we will take on feedback from all members and will be monitoring the impact from a retention, cost and attractions perspective.

The Chair clarified that this will be for both green and grey book

Sasha Hitchens, Fire Brigades' Union welcomed the maternity cover for 52 weeks.

Regarding 5.1 FBU has concerns coupled with multi-pump stations as they have received apprehensions regionally concerning their longevity of them.

Wayne Brown advised that as a service we are aware of these concerns and are discussing them with the relevant people.

Councillor Ward raised a question regarding the sustainability of vehicles and how the service is trying to encourage a more greener fleet.

Wayne Brown advised that the fleet is being reviewed as part of our Sustainability project which does look at how we can help the environment

Following queries regarding Maternity, Richard Stanton confirmed that adoption will feature as part of the policy and will also look to go live in January.

Paul Gywnn advised that we would like on record, before the announcement, they were not engaged as part of the consultation process.

Wayne Brown advised we want to be as good an employer as much we can be. Consultations and engagement will form part of the process. This will also need to go to JCP where further opportunities will be provided for all to provide their feedback.

Cllr Lloyd highlighted section 6.5 Operations and thanked WMFS for their on-going support for Ian Hughes,

Following queries, Wayne Brown clarified WMFS has recently trialled and purchased a new larger drone to further enhance our drone capabilities. It can fly in different weather conditions, unlike our smaller drones allowing it to be mobilised to more incidents.

Utilising these drones requires pilot training and part of maintaining that license is to practise. Having smaller groups means better control and ensuring they have the required training regularly.

The Chair reaffirmed that we have good capabilities within the service and continuously growing and improving. We need to ensure we are confident in people's capabilities and using those skills effectively.

All recommendations are agreed

39/23 **CRMP Consultation Evaluation Report**

Hannah Spencer provided an update on the consultation evaluation report.

Regarding Item 2.1 Hannah confirmed that a total of 5651 responses were received.

Results showed Public and partner trust is higher than overall staff trust. Work is currently being done to understand the context.

The majority of respondents that have used our Prevention, Protection and Response services have rated them as excellent or good. The most common themes for not using our services include not knowing what is available followed by not knowing how to access services.

The report contains an evaluation and aligns the next steps which will come at a later stage.

The most common barrier shown is the perception of the role of the Firefighter. Public partners and staff suggested the same top 5 with access to life-saving equipment being first.

There is currently work being done to confirm how it will impact our CRMP and a draft plan will be reviewed in December.

Following today's meeting there will be communications to the public with a brief overview of the consultation results.

The Chair thanked all the officers who were part of the consultation process and all the work done so far.

All recommendations were agreed.

40/23 **Budget Monitoring P05 August 2023**

Sofia Mahmood (Section 151 Officer) provided an update regarding the report which looks at the position from August 2023.

Appendix A compares the profiled revenue budget to the end of August 2023 to the actual spend. This shows an overspend of £70k, equivalent to 0.2% of the YTD (year-to-date) budget. It also compares the annual budget to the forecast year-end spend. This shows a forecast overspend of £130k, equivalent to 0.1% of the annual budget.

We are forecasted to underspend due to the vehicle upgrade programme, as we are awaiting a response to the BVR position as it has been delayed to next year.

The Chair thanked the finance team for all their hard work.

All recommendations are agreed.

41/23 **Planned Procurement Exercise for 2023-24 (Private Agenda)**

Sofia provided an update on this report. This report looks to gain approval for planned procurement. This is for the continuation of the leadership and development programme, within the service. We are expecting the contract to cost £500,000 for the full term, however, this is expected to be funded by the apprenticeship levy.

All recommendations agreed

42/23 **Action to Prosecute**

Wayne Brown advised there are two cases that we have progressed with legal proceedings in line with our statutory duty. Wayne Brown thanked for the excellent work done by the Fire Safety and protection inspection officers.

Resolved

1. That it be agreed that the Action to Prosecute update be noted.

Following queries Wayne Brown advised that when we take any legal case to prosecution and get a positive outcome, we do communicate that both internally and externally. This will include the areas in which the inspection failed and any risks. There are certain areas, however, we will not share due to legal reasons.

The Chair advised that asking the courts to take a stronger line may help, as one of the issues is that fines don't work as well.

Cllr Miks queried whether the public is aware of who to contact if they feel certain buildings are in breach of any safety regulations.

Another query was regarding the increase of Fire by lithium-ion batteries in e-scooters which was raised in the Fire Commission board. Cllr Miks thanked Douglas Jones who provided a report on a specific incident regarding e-scooters and batteries.

All recommendations agreed on Item 12.

The Chair thanked all for attending the meeting.

The meeting ended at 12:35 hours.

WEST MIDLANDSFIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

Item 6

11 DECEMBER 2023

1. TREASURY MANAGEMENT – MID YEAR REVIEW REPORT 2023/24

Report of the Treasurer.

RECOMMENDED

- 1.1. THAT the Authority note the Treasury Management update including prudential and treasury indicators.

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To note the mid-year performance of the Treasury Management function, following presentation to Audit & Risk Committee on 27 November 2023.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Authority approved the Treasury Management Strategy as part of the Budget and Precept 2023/24 and Budget Forecast 2024/25 to 2025/26 report on 13 February 2023.
- 3.2 The Treasury Management Strategy requires a mid-year treasury management report to update members with the progress of the capital position, amending prudential indicators as necessary and detailing whether any policies require revision.
- 3.3 This should meet the requirements of both the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management (the Code) and the CIPFA Prudential Code of Capital Finance in Local Authorities (the Prudential Code). The Authority is required to comply with both Codes through regulations issued under the Local Government Act 2003.
- 3.4 The Authority's treasury management functions are provided by Sandwell Council and their appointed advisors.

4. **TREASURY MANAGEMENT – MID YEAR REPORT**

4.1 Appendix C details the elements required as part of the mid-year review.

4.2 The key areas to note are:

- There are no changes to the Prudential Indicators from that approved in February 2023 as part of the Annual Budget.
- The capital programme forecast position for 2023/24 is £6.177m, reduced from an approved budget of £9.191m due to slippage.
- There is no borrowing budgeted or expected for 2023/24.
- The current level of borrowing is £32m.
- The current level of investment is £36m, with forecast investment income in 2023/24 of £1m

5. **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

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

6. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no direct legal implications associated with the implementation of the recommendations set out in this report.

7. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

These are contained within the report and relate to the revised capital programme forecast for 2023/24 and the current level of borrowing and investments.

8. **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no specific environmental impact of this report, as it does not relate to a policy change.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Budget and Precept 2023/24 and Budget Forecast 2024/25 to 2025/26 –
Authority 13 February 2023

The contact for this report is Sofia Mahmood, Head of Finance and
Procurement (S151).

**SOFIA MAHMOOD,
SECTION 151**

APPENDIX C

Item 6

Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy

**Mid-Year Review Report
2023/24**

Date of issuance: 04.10.23

This report is intended for the use and assistance of customers of Link Group. It should not be regarded as a substitute for the exercise by the recipient of its own judgement. Link Group exists to provide its clients with advice primarily on borrowing and investment. We are not legal experts and we have not obtained legal advice in giving our opinions and interpretations in this paper. Clients are advised to seek expert legal advice before taking action as a result of any advice given in this paper. Whilst Link Group makes every effort to ensure that all information provided by it is accurate and complete, it does not guarantee the correctness or the due receipt of such information and will not be held responsible for any errors therein or omissions arising there from. Furthermore, Link Group shall not be held liable in contract, tort or otherwise for any loss or damage (whether direct, or indirect or consequential) resulting from negligence, delay or failure on the part of Link Group or its officers, employees or agents in procuring, presenting, communicating or otherwise providing information or advice whether sustained by Link Group customer or any third party directly or indirectly making use of such information or advice, including but not limited to any loss or damage resulting as a consequence of inaccuracy or errors in such information or advice. All information supplied by Link Group should only be used as a factor to assist in the making of a business decision and should not be used as a sole basis for any decision.

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1. Background

1.1 Capital Strategy

In December 2021, the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy, (CIPFA), issued revised Prudential and Treasury Management Codes. These require all local authorities to prepare a Capital Strategy which is to provide the following: -

- a high-level overview of how capital expenditure, capital financing and treasury management activity contribute to the provision of services;
- an overview of how the associated risk is managed;
- the implications for future financial sustainability.

1.2 Treasury Management

The Authority operates a balanced budget, which broadly means cash raised during the year will meet its cash expenditure. Part of the treasury management operations ensure this cash flow is adequately planned, with surplus monies being invested in low-risk counterparties, providing adequate liquidity initially before considering optimising investment return.

The second main function of the treasury management service is the funding of the Authority's capital plans. These capital plans provide a guide to the borrowing need of the Authority, essentially the longer-term cash flow planning to ensure the Authority can meet its capital spending operations. This management of longer-term cash may involve arranging long or short-term loans, or using longer term cash flow surpluses, and on occasion any debt previously drawn may be restructured to meet Authority risk or cost objectives.

Accordingly, treasury management is defined as:

"The management of the local authority's borrowing, investments and cash flows, its banking, money market and capital market transactions; the effective control of the risks associated with those activities; and the pursuit of optimum performance consistent with those risks."

2. Introduction

This report has been written in accordance with the requirements of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's (CIPFA) Code of Practice on Treasury Management (revised 2021).

The primary requirements of the Code are as follows:

1. Creation and maintenance of a Treasury Management Policy Statement which sets out the policies and objectives of the Authority's treasury management activities.

2. Creation and maintenance of Treasury Management Practices which set out the manner in which the Authority will seek to achieve those policies and objectives.
3. Receipt by Authority of an annual Treasury Management Strategy Statement - including the Annual Investment Strategy and Minimum Revenue Provision Policy - for the year ahead, a Mid-year Review Report and an Annual Report, (stewardship report), covering activities during the previous year.
4. Delegation by the Authority of responsibilities for implementing and monitoring treasury management policies and practices and for the execution and administration of treasury management decisions.
5. Delegation by the Authority of the role of scrutiny of treasury management strategy and policies to a specific named body. For this Authority the delegated body is the Audit & Risk Committee:

This mid-year report has been prepared in compliance with CIPFA's Code of Practice on Treasury Management, and covers the following:

- An economic update for the first half of the 2023/24 financial year;
- A review of the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy;
- The Authority's capital expenditure, as set out in the Capital Strategy, and prudential indicators;
- A review of the Authority's investment portfolio for 2023/24;
- A review of the Authority's borrowing strategy for 2023/24;
- A review of any debt rescheduling undertaken during 2023/24;
- A review of compliance with Treasury and Prudential Limits for 2023/24.

Recommendations

The *Audit & Risk Committee* is asked to recommend the following to the full Authority:

- Note the report, the treasury activity and recommend approval of any changes to the prudential indicators.

3. Economics and Interest Rates

3.1 Economics Update

- The first half of 2023/24 saw:
 - Interest rates rise by a further 100bps, taking Bank Rate from 4.25% to 5.25% and, possibly, the peak in the tightening cycle.
 - Short, medium and long-dated gilts remain elevated as inflation continually surprised to the upside.
 - A 0.5% m/m decline in real GDP in July, mainly due to more strikes.
 - CPI inflation falling from 8.7% in April to 6.7% in August, its lowest rate since February 2022, but still the highest in the G7.
 - Core CPI inflation declining to 6.2% in August from 7.1% in April and May, a then 31 years high.
 - A cooling in labour market conditions, but no evidence yet that it has led to an easing in wage growth (as the 3myy growth of average earnings rose to 7.8% in August, excluding bonuses).
- The 0.5% m/m fall in GDP in July suggests that underlying growth has lost momentum since earlier in the year. Some of the weakness in July was due to there being almost twice as many working days lost to strikes in July (281,000) than in June (160,000). But with output falling in 10 out of the 17 sectors, there is an air of underlying weakness.
- The fall in the composite Purchasing Managers Index from 48.6 in August to 46.8 in September left it at its lowest level since COVID-19 lockdowns reduced activity in January 2021. At face value, it is consistent with the 0.2% q/q rise in real GDP in the period April to June, being followed by a contraction of up to 1% in the second half of 2023.
- The 0.4% m/m rebound in retail sales volumes in August is not as good as it looks as it partly reflected a pickup in sales after the unusually wet weather in July. Sales volumes in August were 0.2% below their level in May, suggesting much of the resilience in retail activity in the first half of the year has faded.
- As the growing drag from higher interest rates intensifies over the next six months, we think the economy will continue to lose momentum and soon fall into a mild recession. Strong labour demand, fast wage growth and government handouts have all supported household incomes over the past year. And with CPI inflation past its peak and expected to decline further, the economy has got through the cost-of-living crisis without recession. But even though the worst of the falls in real household disposable incomes are behind us, the phasing out of financial support packages provided by the government during the energy crisis means real incomes are unlikely to grow strongly. Higher interest rates will soon bite harder too. We expect the Bank of England to keep interest rates at the probable peak of 5.25% until the second half of 2024. Mortgage rates are likely to stay above 5.0% for around a year.

- The tightness of the labour market continued to ease, with employment in the three months to July falling by 207,000. The further decline in the number of job vacancies from 1.017m in July to 0.989m in August suggests that the labour market has loosened a bit further since July. That is the first time it has fallen below 1m since July 2021. At 3.0% in July, and likely to have fallen to 2.9% in August, the job vacancy rate is getting closer to 2.5%, which would be consistent with slower wage growth. Meanwhile, the 48,000 decline in the supply of workers in the three months to July offset some of the loosening in the tightness of the labour market. That was due to a 63,000 increase in inactivity in the three months to July as more people left the labour market due to long term sickness or to enter education. The supply of labour is still 0.3% below its pre-pandemic February 2020 level.
- But the cooling in labour market conditions still has not fed through to an easing in wage growth. While the monthly rate of earnings growth eased sharply from an upwardly revised +2.2% in June to -0.9% in July, a lot of that was due to the one-off bonus payments for NHS staff in June not being repeated in July. The headline 3myy rate rose from 8.4% (revised up from 8.2%) to 8.5%, which meant UK wage growth remains much faster than in the US and in the Euro-zone. Moreover, while the Bank of England's closely watched measure of regular private sector wage growth eased a touch in July, from 8.2% 3myy in June to 8.1% 3myy, it is still well above the Bank of England's prediction for it to fall to 6.9% in September.
- CPI inflation declined from 6.8% in July to 6.7% in August, the lowest rate since February 2022. The biggest positive surprise was the drop in core CPI inflation, which declined from 6.9% to 6.2%. That reverses all the rise since March and means the gap between the UK and elsewhere has shrunk (US core inflation is 4.4% and in the Euro-zone it is 5.3%). Core goods inflation fell from 5.9% to 5.2% and the further easing in core goods producer price inflation, from 2.2% in July to a 29-month low of 1.5% in August, suggests it will eventually fall close to zero. But the really positive development was the fall in services inflation from 7.4% to 6.8%. That also reverses most of the rise since March and takes it below the forecast of 7.2% the Bank of England published in early August.
- In its latest monetary policy meeting on 20 September, the Bank of England left interest rates unchanged at 5.25%. The weak August CPI inflation release, the recent loosening in the labour market and the downbeat activity surveys appear to have convinced the Bank of England that it has already raised rates far enough. The minutes show the decision was "finely balanced". Five MPC members (Bailey, Broadbent, Dhingra, Pill and Ramsden) voted for no change and the other four (Cunliffe, Greene, Haskel and Mann) voted for a 25bps hike.
- Like the US Fed, the Bank of England wants the markets to believe in the higher for longer narrative. The statement did not say that rates have peaked and once again said if there was evidence of more persistent inflation pressures "further tightening in policy would be required". Governor Bailey stated, "we'll be watching closely to see if further increases are needed". The Bank also retained the hawkish guidance that rates will stay "sufficiently restrictive for sufficiently long".

- This narrative makes sense as the Bank of England does not want the markets to decide that a peak in rates will be soon followed by rate cuts, which would loosen financial conditions and undermine its attempts to quash inflation. The language also gives the Bank of England the flexibility to respond to new developments. A rebound in services inflation, another surge in wage growth and/or a further leap in oil prices could conceivably force it to raise rates at the next meeting on 2nd November, or even pause in November and raise rates in December.
- The yield on 10-year Gilts fell from a peak of 4.74% on 17th August to 4.44% on 29th September, mainly on the back of investors revising down their interest rate expectations. But even after their recent pullback, the rise in Gilt yields has exceeded the rise in most other Developed Market government yields since the start of the year. Looking forward, once inflation falls back, Gilt yields are set to reduce further. A (mild) recession over the next couple of quarters will support this outlook if it helps to loosen the labour market (higher unemployment/lower wage increases).
- The pound weakened from its cycle high of \$1.30 in the middle of July to \$1.21 in late September. In the first half of the year, the pound bounced back strongly from the Truss debacle last autumn. That rebound was in large part driven by the substantial shift up in UK interest rate expectations. However, over the past couple of months, interest rate expectations have dropped sharply as inflation started to come down, growth faltered, and the Bank of England called an end to its hiking cycle.
- The FTSE 100 has gained more than 2% since the end of August, from around 7,440 on 31st August to 7,608 on 29th September. The rebound has been primarily driven by higher energy prices which boosted the valuations of energy companies. The FTSE 100's relatively high concentration of energy companies helps to explain why UK equities outperformed both US and Euro-zone equities in September. Nonetheless, as recently as 21st April the FTSE 100 stood at 7,914.

3.2 Interest Rate Forecasts

The Authority has appointed Link Group via Sandwell Council as its treasury advisors and part of their service is to assist the Authority to formulate a view on interest rates. The PWLB rate forecasts below are based on the Certainty Rate (the standard rate minus 20 bps) which has been accessible to most authorities since 1st November 2012.

The latest forecast on 25th September sets out a view that short, medium and long-dated interest rates will be elevated for some little while, as the Bank of England seeks to squeeze inflation out of the economy.

Our PWLB rate forecasts below are based on the Certainty Rate (the standard rate minus 20 bps, calculated as gilts plus 80bps) which has been accessible to most authorities since 1st November 2012.

Link Group Interest Rate View	25.09.23													
	Dec-23	Mar-24	Jun-24	Sep-24	Dec-24	Mar-25	Jun-25	Sep-25	Dec-25	Mar-26	Jun-26	Sep-26	Dec-26	
BANK RATE	5.25	5.25	5.25	5.00	4.50	4.00	3.50	3.00	2.75	2.75	2.75	2.75	2.75	
3 month ave earnings	5.30	5.30	5.30	5.00	4.50	4.00	3.50	3.00	2.80	2.80	2.80	2.80	2.80	
6 month ave earnings	5.60	5.50	5.40	5.10	4.60	4.10	3.60	3.10	2.90	2.90	2.90	2.90	2.90	
12 month ave earnings	5.80	5.70	5.50	5.20	4.70	4.20	3.70	3.20	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	3.00	
5 yr PWLB	5.10	5.00	4.90	4.70	4.40	4.20	4.00	3.90	3.70	3.70	3.60	3.60	3.50	
10 yr PWLB	5.00	4.90	4.80	4.60	4.40	4.20	4.00	3.80	3.70	3.60	3.60	3.50	3.50	
25 yr PWLB	5.40	5.20	5.10	4.90	4.70	4.40	4.30	4.10	4.00	3.90	3.80	3.80	3.80	
50 yr PWLB	5.20	5.00	4.90	4.70	4.50	4.20	4.10	3.90	3.80	3.70	3.60	3.60	3.60	

4. Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy Update

The Treasury Management Strategy Statement, (TMSS), for 2023/24 was approved by the Authority on 13 February 2023. There are no policy changes to the TMSS; the details in this report update the position in the light of the updated economic position and budgetary changes already approved.

Prudential Indicator 2023/24	Original £m	Revised Prudential Indicator £m
Authorised Limit	39	39
Operational Boundary	36	36
Capital Financing Requirement	32	32

5. The Authority's Capital Position (Prudential Indicators)

This part of the report is structured to update:

- The Authority's capital expenditure plans;
- How these plans are being financed;
- The impact of the changes in the capital expenditure plans on the prudential indicators and the underlying need to borrow; and
- Compliance with the limits in place for borrowing activity.

5.1 Prudential Indicator for Capital Expenditure

This table shows the actual spend as at October-23 for capital expenditure and the revised budget requirement for 2023/24 since the capital programme was agreed at the Budget.

The main variance is the deferral of the vehicle replacement programme due to additional trials for brigade response vehicles.

Capital Expenditure by Service	2023/24 Approved Budget £m	Current Position – October 23 £m	2023/24 Forecast Outturn £m
Vehicle Replacement Programme	6,678	1,285	4,315
Boiler Replacement Programme	148	50	209
Rewires	167	-	-
Roof Replacement	325	54	505
Windows & Doors Replacement	677	9	677
Drill Tower & Burns Facility Upgrade	432	13	357
HQ Modernisation	44	26	71
C&C Upgrade-Vision 4/ESMCP	-	11	43
Fire Ground Radio Replacement	290	-	-
MDT Replacement	430	-	-
Total capital expenditure	9,191	1,448	6,177

5.2 Changes to the Financing of the Capital Programme

The table below draws together the main strategy elements of the capital expenditure plans (above), highlighting the original supported and unsupported elements of the capital programme, and the expected financing arrangements of this capital expenditure. There is no additional borrowing element, which would increase the underlying indebtedness of the Authority by way of the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR).

5.3

Capital Expenditure	2023/24 Approved Budget £m	Current Position £m	2023/24 Forecast Outturn £m
Total capital expenditure			
Financed by:			
Capital receipts	2,749	-	2,749
Capital grants	-	11	43
Capital reserves	-	-	-
Revenue	6,442	1,437	3,385
Total financing	9,191	1,448	6,177
Borrowing requirement	-	-	-

Changes to the Prudential Indicators for the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR), External Debt and the Operational Boundary

The table below shows the CFR, which is the underlying external need to incur borrowing for a capital purpose. It also shows the expected debt position over the period, which is termed the Operational Boundary.

Prudential Indicator – Capital Financing Requirement

We are on target to achieve the original forecast Capital Financing Requirement.

Prudential Indicator – the Operational Boundary for external debt

	2023/24 Original Estimate £m		2023/24 Revised Estimate £m
Prudential Indicator – Capital Financing Requirement			
Total CFR	32		32
Prudential Indicator – the Operational Boundary for external debt			
Borrowing	36		36
Total debt (year end position)	30		30

5.4 Limits to Borrowing Activity

The first key control over the treasury activity is a prudential indicator to ensure that over the medium term, net borrowing (borrowings less investments) will only be for a capital purpose. **Gross external borrowing** should not, except in the short term, exceed the total of CFR in the preceding year plus the estimates of any additional CFR for 2023/24 and next two financial years. This allows some flexibility for limited early borrowing for future years. The Authority has approved a policy for borrowing in advance of need which will be adhered to if this proves prudent.

	2023/24 Original Estimate £m	2023/24 Revised Estimate £m
Borrowing	30	30
CFR (year end position)	32	32

A further prudential indicator controls the overall level of borrowing. This is **the Authorised Limit** which represents the limit beyond which borrowing is prohibited and needs to be set and revised by Members. It reflects the level of borrowing which, while not desired, could be afforded in the short term, but is not sustainable in the longer term. It is the expected maximum borrowing need with some headroom for unexpected movements. This is the statutory limit determined under section 3 (1) of the Local Government Act 2003.

Authorised limit for external debt	2023/24 Original Indicator	2023/24 Revised Indicator
Borrowing	40	40

6. Borrowing

The Authority's capital financing requirement (CFR) for 2023/24 is £32m. The CFR denotes the Authority's underlying need to borrow for capital purposes. If the CFR is positive the Authority may borrow from the PWLB or the market (external borrowing), or from internal balances on a temporary basis (internal borrowing). The balance of external and internal borrowing is generally driven by market conditions. Table 5.4 shows the Authority has borrowings of £30m and has for several years utilised revenue cash flow funds in lieu of borrowing. This is a prudent and cost-effective approach in the current economic climate but will require ongoing monitoring if further upside risk to gilt yields prevails.

The capital programme is being kept under regular review due to the effects of inflationary pressures, shortages of materials and labour. Our borrowing strategy will, therefore, also be regularly reviewed and then revised, if necessary, to achieve optimum value and risk exposure in the long-term.

It is anticipated that further borrowing will not be undertaken during this financial year but is likely to be required in 2024/25.

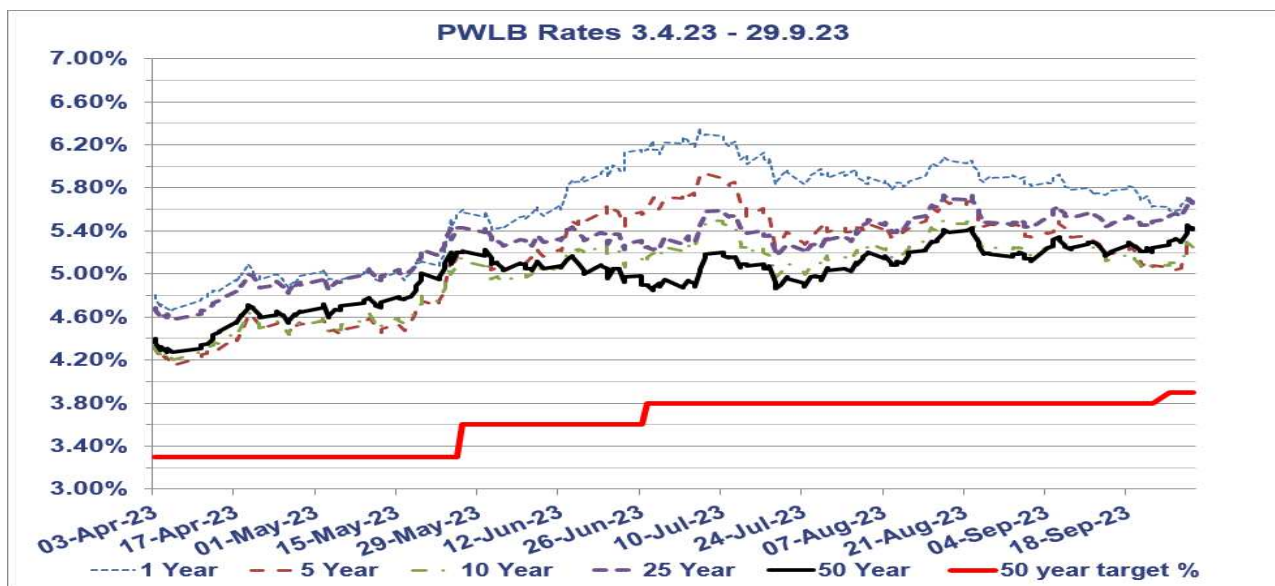
PWLB maturity certainty rates (gilts plus 80bps) year to date to 29th September 2023

Gilt yields and PWLB certainty rates were on a generally rising trend throughout the first half of 2023/24. At the beginning of April, the 5-year rate was the cheapest part of the curve and touched 4.14% whilst the 25-year rate was relatively expensive at 4.58%.

July saw short-dated rates peak at their most expensive. The 1-year rate spiked to 6.36% and the 5-year rate to 5.93%. Although, in due course, short-dated rate expectations fell, the medium dates shifted higher through August and the 10-year rate pushed higher to 5.51% and the 25-year rate to 5.73%. The 50-year rate was 4.27% on 5th April but rose to 5.45% on 28th September.

We forecast rates to fall back over the next two to three years as inflation dampens. The CPI measure of inflation is expected to fall below 2% in the second half of 2024, and we forecast 50-year rates to stand at 3.90% by the end of September 2025. However, there is considerable gilt issuance to be digested by the market over the next couple of years, as a minimum, so there is a high degree of uncertainty as to whether rates will fall that far.

PWLB RATES 03.04.23 - 29.09.23



HIGH/LOW/AVERAGE PWLB RATES FOR 01.04.23 – 29.09.23

	1 Year	5 Year	10 Year	25 Year	50 Year
Low	4.65%	4.14%	4.20%	4.58%	4.27%
Date	06/04/2023	06/04/2023	06/04/2023	06/04/2023	05/04/2023
High	6.36%	5.93%	5.51%	5.73%	5.45%
Date	06/07/2023	07/07/2023	22/08/2023	17/08/2023	28/09/2023
Average	5.62%	5.16%	5.01%	5.29%	5.00%
Spread	1.71%	1.79%	1.31%	1.15%	1.18%

7. Debt Rescheduling

Debt rescheduling opportunities have increased over the course of the past six months and will be considered if giving rise to long-term savings. However, no debt rescheduling has been undertaken to date in the current financial year.

8. Compliance with Treasury and Prudential Limits

It is a statutory duty for the Authority to determine and keep under review the affordable borrowing limits. During the half year ended 30th September 2023, the Authority has operated within the treasury and prudential indicators set out in the Authority's Treasury Management Strategy Statement for 2023/24. No difficulties are currently envisaged for the current or future years in complying with these indicators.

All treasury management operations have also been conducted in full compliance with the Authority's Treasury Management Practices.

9. Annual Investment Strategy

The Treasury Management Strategy Statement (TMSS) for 2023/24, which includes the Annual Investment Strategy, was approved by the Authority on 13 February 2023. In accordance with the CIPFA Treasury Management Code of Practice, it sets out the Authority's investment priorities as being:

- Security of capital
- Liquidity
- Yield

The Authority will aim to achieve the optimum return (yield) on its investments commensurate with proper levels of security and liquidity and with the Authority's risk appetite. In the current economic climate, it is considered appropriate to keep investments short term to cover cash flow needs, but also to seek out value available in periods up to 12 months with high credit quality financial institutions, using the Link suggested creditworthiness approach, including a minimum sovereign credit rating and Credit Default Swap (CDS) overlay information.

Creditworthiness.

Following the Government's fiscal event on 23rd September 2022, both S&P and Fitch placed the UK sovereign debt rating on Negative Outlook, reflecting a downside bias to the current ratings in light of expectations of weaker finances and a challenging economic outlook. Nothing further has evolved in the first half of 2023/24.

Investment Counterparty criteria

The current investment counterparty criteria selection approved in the TMSS is meeting the requirement of the treasury management function.

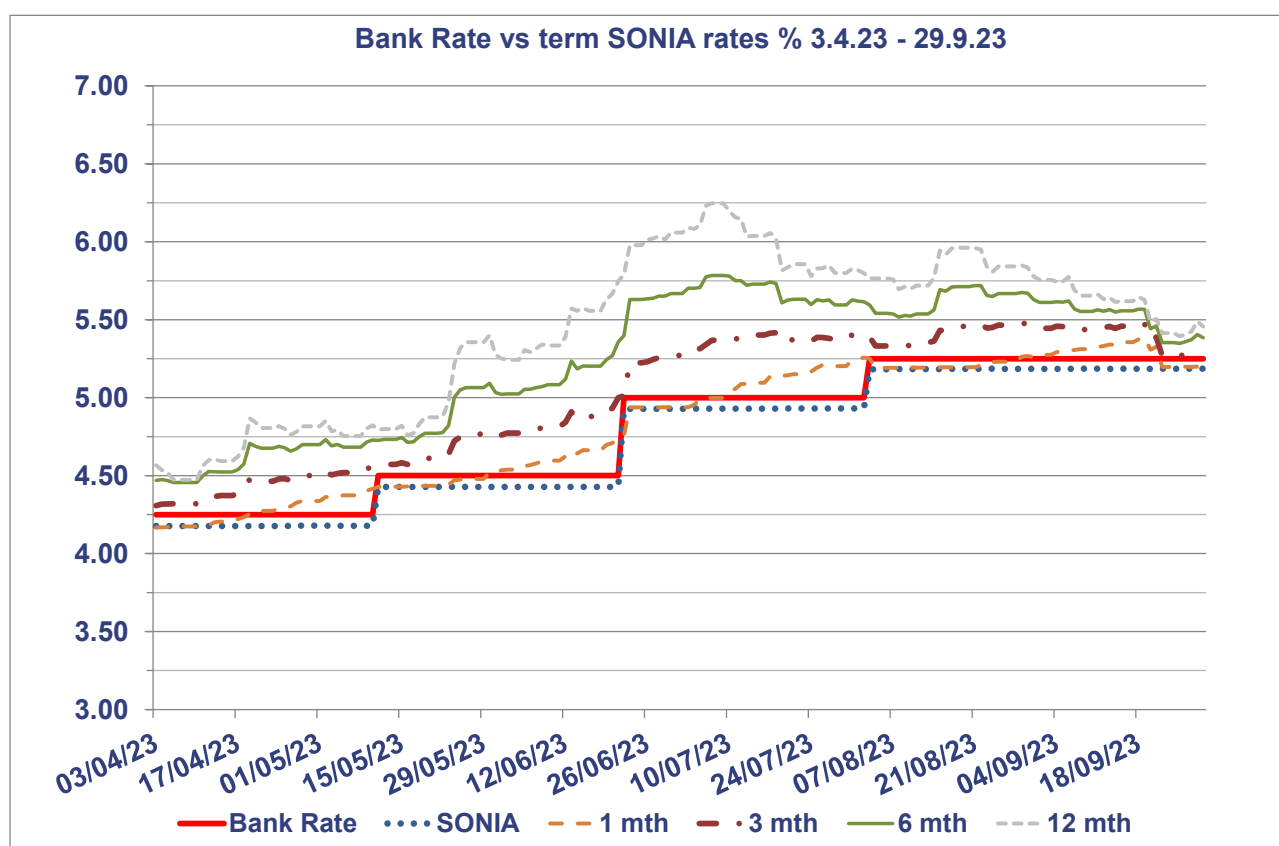
CDS prices

It is noted that sentiment in the current economic climate can easily shift, so it remains important to undertake continual monitoring of all aspects of risk and return in the current circumstances.

Investment balances

The average level of funds available for investment purposes during the first half of the financial year was £36.4m. These funds were available on a temporary basis, and the level of funds available was mainly dependent on the timing of precept payments, receipt of grants and progress on the capital programme.

Investment performance year to date as of 29th September 2023



	Bank Rate	SONIA	1 mth	3 mth	6 mth	12 mth
High	5.25	5.19	5.39	5.48	5.78	6.25
High Date	03/08/2023	29/09/2023	19/09/2023	30/08/2023	07/07/2023	07/07/2023
Low	4.25	4.18	4.17	4.31	4.46	4.47
Low Date	03/04/2023	04/04/2023	03/04/2023	03/04/2023	06/04/2023	06/04/2023
Average	4.81	4.74	4.83	5.03	5.26	5.45
Spread	1.00	1.01	1.22	1.17	1.33	1.77

The table above covers the first half of 2023/24.

Investment performance year to date as of 30th September 2023

The investment portfolio yield for the first six months of the year is 4.95% against a benchmark average SONIA (Sterling Overnight Index Average) rate of 4.74%. This is equivalent to a forecast return of £1.0m.

Officers can confirm that the approved limits within the Annual Investment Strategy were not breached during the period ended 30th September 2023.

10. Other

Changes in risk appetite

The 2021 CIPFA Codes and guidance notes place importance on risk management. Where an authority changes its risk appetite e.g., for moving surplus cash into or out of certain types of investment funds or other types of investment instruments, this change in risk appetite and policy should be brought to members' attention in treasury management update reports.

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

Item 7

11 DECEMBER 2023

1. REFRESHED MEMBER CODE OF CONDUCT

Report of the Monitoring Officer and Clerk to the Authority

RECOMMENDED

- 1.1. THAT Members approve the updated Member Code of Conduct included in **Appendix A**

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 2.1. To approve the revised Member Code of Conduct as agreed by the Fire Authority.
- 2.2. To notify members of the planned training session on the Code and related matters following today's Authority meeting.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1. The WMFRA Member Code of Conduct was last substantially reviewed by the Authority in June 2012. In 2020, the Local Government Association (LGA) have published an updated Model Code of Conduct, with some substantial changes in style and content.
- 3.2. In particular the new model code of conduct directly incorporates requirements around the disclosure and registration of interests, gifts and hospitality.
- 3.3. Only very minor changes from this template have been made in the version included in **Appendix A** to make this relevant to a fire authority context.
- 3.4. The Appointments, Standards and Appeals Committee, in its role as the Standards Committee for WMFRA, met on 16 October and approved the proposed Code to be brought forward to the full Fire Authority.

- 3.5. The ASA committee also propose that a specific training session for all members will be developed to follow this meeting of the Fire Authority.
- 3.6. Such training will also form a part of a refreshed Member Development Strategy to be implemented in the 2024/25 municipal year and will take the form of annual refresher training for all members delivered in July each year.

4. **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

As the proposed Code of Conduct is based substantially on the existing LGA Model Code of Conduct, no initial EIA is required. The revised Code makes specific references to Authority member's duties under the Equalities Act and stipulates that authority members must "promote equalities and [...] not discriminate unlawfully against any person".

5. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

All local authorities are required to have a Code of Conduct as set out within Chapter 7 of the Localism Act 2011. This Code has been adapted from the LGA Model Councillor Code of Conduct, which meets the requirements of the legislation. The Local Government Act 2000 requires that a Code of Conduct be approved by the full Authority.

6. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications from the update to the Member Code of Conduct.

7. **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no environmental implications from the update of the Member Code of Conduct.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

[Current WMFRA Member Code of Conduct](#)
[LGA – Councillor conduct and standards](#)
[The Seven Principles of Public Life](#)
[Localism Act 2011 – Chapter 7](#)

The contact for this report is Tom Embury, Portfolio Policy Advisor

Satinder Sahota
Monitoring Officer

Karen Gowreesunker
Clerk to the Authority

APPENDIX A

**WEST MIDLANDS FIRE
AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**

**CODE OF CONDUCT FOR MEMBERS
AND CO-OPTED MEMBERS
including
RULES FOR REGISTRATION OF
INTERESTS**

December 2023

Joint statement

The role of elected member across all tiers of local government is a vital part of our country's system of democracy. It is important that as elected members we can be held accountable, and all adopt the behaviours and responsibilities associated with the role. Our conduct affects the reputation of all elected members. We want the role of elected member to be one that people aspire to. We also want individuals from a range of backgrounds and circumstances to be putting themselves forward to become councillors and other elected members.

As elected members, we represent local residents and our local authorities, work to develop better services and deliver local change. The public have high expectations of us and entrust us to represent our local area, taking decisions fairly, openly, and transparently. We have both an individual and collective responsibility to meet these expectations by maintaining high standards and demonstrating good conduct, and by challenging behaviour which falls below expectations.

Importantly, we should be able to undertake our role without being intimidated, abused, bullied, or threatened by anyone, including the general public.

This Code has been designed to protect our democratic role, encourage good conduct and safeguard the public's trust in local government.

Introduction

All local authorities are required to have a Code of Conduct under Part III of the Local Government Act 2000. This Code has been adapted from the Local Government Association (LGA) Model Councillor Code of Conduct. The Appointments, Standards and Appeals Committee will undertake an annual review of this Code to ensure it continues to be fit-for-purpose, incorporating advances in technology, LGA guidance and changes in legislation.

Definitions

For the purposes of this Code of Conduct, an “elected member” means a councillor or other person appointed to the fire authority by one of the constituent local authorities or the Police and Crime Commissioner, with the power to vote on authority matters.

A “co-opted member” is not a statutory co-opted member as defined by the 2000 Act, but a non-elected person appointed to the Authority to provide external expertise. Co-opted members do not have voting rights.

The terms “member” and “fire authority member” is used to refer to both of the above collectively.

Purpose of the Code of Conduct

The purpose of this Code of Conduct is to assist members in modelling the behaviour that is expected of them, to provide a personal check and balance, and to set out the type of conduct that could lead to action being taken against them. It is also to protect authority members, the public, officers and the reputation of local government and the fire service in general. It sets out general principles of conduct expected of all members and the specific obligations in relation to standards of conduct.

The fundamental aim of the Code is to create and maintain public confidence in the role of elected members and local government.

General principles of member conduct

Everyone in public office at all levels; all who serve the public or deliver public services, including ministers, civil servants, councillors, elected members, local authority officers and fire service officers should uphold the [Seven Principles of Public Life](#), also known as the Nolan Principles (see **Appendix 1**)

Building on these principles, the following general principles have been developed for the role of fire authority member.

In accordance with the public trust placed in me, on all occasions:

- I act with integrity and honesty
- I act lawfully
- I treat all persons fairly and with respect; and
- I lead by example and act in a way that secures public confidence in the role of fire authority member.

In undertaking my role:

- I impartially exercise my responsibilities in the interests of the local community
- I do not improperly seek to confer an advantage, or disadvantage, on any person
- I avoid conflicts of interest
- I exercise reasonable care and diligence; and
- I ensure that public resources are used prudently in accordance with my fire authority's requirements and in the public interest.

Application of the Code of Conduct

This Code of Conduct applies to you as soon as you are appointed to the fire authority or attend your first meeting as a co-opted member and continues to apply to you until you cease to be a member of the fire authority.

This Code of Conduct applies to you when you are acting in your capacity as a fire authority member which may include when:

- You misuse your position as a councillor or fire authority member
- Your actions would give the impression to a reasonable member of the public with knowledge of all the facts that you are acting as a councillor or fire authority member.

The Code applies to all forms of communication and interaction, including:

- at face-to-face meetings
- at online or telephone meetings
- in written communication
- in verbal communication
- in non-verbal communication
- in electronic and social media communication, posts, statements, and comments.

You are also expected to uphold high standards of conduct and always show leadership when acting as a fire authority member.

Your Monitoring Officer has statutory responsibility for the implementation of the Code of Conduct, and you are encouraged to seek advice from your Monitoring Officer on any matters that may relate to the Code of Conduct.

Standards of member conduct

This section sets out your obligations, which are the minimum standards of conduct required of you as an authority member. Should your conduct fall short of these standards, a complaint may be made against you, which may result in action being taken.

Guidance is included to help explain the reasons for the obligations and how they should be followed.

General Conduct

1. Respect

As an authority member:

- 1.1. I treat other authority members and members of the public with respect.
- 1.2. I treat fire authority employees, employees and representatives of partner organisations and those volunteering for the fire authority with respect and respect the role they play.

Respect means politeness and courtesy in behaviour, speech, and in the written word. Debate and having different views are all part of a healthy democracy. As an authority member, you can express, challenge, criticise and disagree with views, ideas, opinions and policies in a robust but civil manner. You should not, however, subject individuals, groups of people or organisations to personal attack.

In your contact with the public, you should treat them politely and courteously. Rude and offensive behaviour lowers the public's expectations and confidence in authority members.

In return, you have a right to expect respectful behaviour from the public. If members of the public are being abusive, intimidatory or threatening you are entitled to stop any conversation or interaction in person or online and report them to the local authority, the relevant social media provider or the police. This also applies to fellow members, where action could then be taken under the Code of Conduct, and fire authority employees, where concerns should be raised in line with the authority's Member-Officer Protocol.

2. Bullying, harassment and discrimination

As an authority member

- 2.1. I do not bully any person.
- 2.2. I do not harass any person.
- 2.3. I promote equalities and do not discriminate unlawfully against any person.

The Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) characterises bullying as offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power through means that undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure

the recipient. Bullying might be a regular pattern of behaviour or a one-off incident, happen face-to-face, on social media, in emails or phone calls, happen in the workplace or at work social events and may not always be obvious or noticed by others.

The Protection from Harassment Act 1997 defines harassment as conduct that causes alarm or distress or puts people in fear of violence and must involve such conduct on at least two occasions. It can include repeated attempts to impose unwanted communications and contact upon a person in a manner that could be expected to cause distress or fear in any reasonable person.

Unlawful discrimination is where someone is treated unfairly because of a protected characteristic. Protected characteristics are specific aspects of a person's identity defined by the Equality Act 2010. They are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

The Equality Act 2010 places specific duties on local authorities. Authority members have a central role to play in ensuring that equality issues are integral to the fire authority and fire service's performance and strategic aims, and that there is a strong vision and public commitment to equality across public services.

3. Impartiality of officers of the fire authority

As an authority member:

- 3.1. I do not compromise, or attempt to compromise, the impartiality of anyone who works for, or on behalf of, the fire authority.

Officers work for the fire authority as a whole and must be politically neutral. They should not be coerced or persuaded to act in a way that would undermine their neutrality. You can question officers in order to understand, for example, their reasons for proposing to act in a particular way, or the content of a report that they have written. However, you must not try and force them to act differently, change their advice, or alter the content of that report, if doing so would prejudice their professional integrity.

4. Confidentiality and access to information

As an authority member:

- 4.1. I do not disclose information:

- 4.1.1. given to me in confidence by anyone

- 4.1.2. acquired by me which I believe, or ought reasonably to be aware, is of a confidential nature, unless

- I have received the consent of a person authorised to give it;
- I am required by law to do so;
- the disclosure is made to a third party for the purpose of obtaining professional legal advice provided that the third

party agrees not to disclose the information to any other person; or

- the disclosure is:
 - reasonable and in the public interest; and
 - made in good faith and in compliance with the reasonable requirements of the fire authority; and
 - I have consulted the Monitoring Officer prior to its release.
- 4.2. I do not improperly use knowledge gained solely as a result of my role as a authority member for the advancement of myself, my friends, my family members, my employer or my business interests.
- 4.3. I do not prevent anyone from getting information that they are entitled to by law.

Local authorities, including fire authorities, must work openly and transparently, and their proceedings and printed materials are open to the public, except in certain legally defined circumstances. You should work on this basis, but there will be times when it is required by law that discussions, documents and other information relating to or held by the fire authority must be treated in a confidential manner. Examples include personal data relating to individuals or information relating to ongoing negotiations or prosecutions.

5. Disrepute

As an authority member:

- 5.1. I do not bring my role or fire authority into disrepute.

As an elected member, you are trusted to make decisions on behalf of your community and all authority member actions and behaviour are subject to greater scrutiny than that of ordinary members of the public. You should be aware that your actions might have an adverse impact on you, other authority members and/or your fire authority and may lower the public's confidence in your or your fire authority's ability to discharge your/its functions. For example, behaviour that is considered dishonest and/or deceitful can bring your fire authority into disrepute.

You are able to hold the fire authority and fellow authority members to account and are able to constructively challenge and express concern about decisions and processes undertaken by the authority whilst continuing to adhere to other aspects of this Code of Conduct.

6. Use of position

As an elected member or co-opted member:

- 6.1. I do not use, or attempt to use, my position improperly to the advantage or disadvantage of myself or anyone else.

Your position as an elected member of the fire authority provides you with certain opportunities, responsibilities, and privileges, and you make choices all the time that will impact others. However, you should not take advantage of these opportunities to further your own or others' private interests or to disadvantage anyone unfairly.

Although co-opted members have more limited decision making ability, you also have certain opportunities and privileges as a result of your position and you should not take advantage of these to further your own or others' private interests.

7. Use of fire authority resources and facilities

As an authority member:

- 7.1. I do not misuse authority or fire service resources.
- 7.2. I will, when using the resources of the fire authority or authorising their use by others:
 - 7.2.1. act in accordance with the fire authority's requirements; and
 - 7.2.2. ensure that such resources are not used for political purposes unless that use could reasonably be regarded as likely to facilitate, or be conducive to, the discharge of the functions of the fire authority or of the office to which I have been elected, appointed or co-opted.

You may be provided with resources and facilities by the fire authority to assist you in carrying out your duties as an authority member.

Examples include:

- office support
- stationery
- equipment such as phones, and computers
- transport
- access and use of fire authority buildings and rooms.

These are given to you to help you carry out your role as an authority member more effectively and are not to be used for business or personal gain. They should be used in accordance with the purpose for which they have been provided and the fire authority's policies regarding their use.

8. Complying with the Code of Conduct

As an authority member:

- 8.1. I undertake Code of Conduct training provided by the fire authority
- 8.2. I cooperate with any Code of Conduct investigation and/or determination

- 8.3. I do not intimidate or attempt to intimidate any person who is likely to be involved with the administration of any investigation or proceedings.
- 8.4. I comply with any sanction imposed on me following a finding that I have breached the Code of Conduct.

It is extremely important for you as an authority member to demonstrate high standards, for you to have your actions open to scrutiny and for you not to undermine public trust in the fire authority or its governance. If you do not understand or are concerned about the fire authority's processes in handling a complaint you should raise this with your Monitoring Officer.

Protecting your reputation and the reputation of the fire authority

9. Interests

As an authority member:

- 9.1. I register and disclose my interests.

Section 29 of the Localism Act 2011 requires the Monitoring Officer to establish and maintain a register of interests of members of the authority.

You need to register your interests so that the public, fire authority employees and fellow authority member know which of your interests might give rise to a conflict of interest. The register is a public document that can be consulted when (or before) an issue arises.

The register also protects you by allowing you to demonstrate openness and a willingness to be held accountable. You are personally responsible for deciding whether you should disclose an interest in a meeting, but it can be helpful for you to know early on if others think that a potential conflict might arise. It is also important that the public know about any interest that might have to be disclosed by you or other authority members when making or taking part in decisions, so that decision making is seen by the public as open and honest. This helps to ensure that public confidence in the integrity of local governance is maintained.

You should note that failure to register or disclose a disclosable pecuniary interest as set out in **Table 1** within **Appendix 2**, is a criminal offence under the Localism Act 2011.

Appendix B also sets out the detailed provisions on registering and disclosing interests. If in doubt, you should always seek advice from your Monitoring Officer.

10. Gifts and hospitality

As an authority member:

- 10.1. I do not accept gifts or hospitality, irrespective of estimated value, which could give rise to real or substantive personal gain or a reasonable suspicion of influence on my part to show favour from persons seeking to acquire, develop or do business with the fire

authority or from persons who may apply to the fire authority for any permission, licence or other significant advantage.

10.2. I register with the Monitoring Officer any gift or hospitality with an estimated value of at least £50 within 28 days of its receipt.

10.3. I register with the Monitoring Officer any significant gift or hospitality that I have been offered but have refused to accept.

To protect your position and the reputation of the fire authority, you should exercise caution in accepting any gifts or hospitality which are (or which you reasonably believe to be) offered to you because you are a fire authority member. The presumption should always be not to accept significant gifts or hospitality. However, there may be times when such a refusal may be difficult if it is seen as rudeness in which case, you could accept it but must ensure it is publicly registered. However, you do not need to register gifts and hospitality which are not related to your role as a fire authority member, such as Christmas gifts from your friends and family. It is also important to note that it is appropriate to accept normal expenses and hospitality associated with your duties as an authority member. If you are unsure, contact your Monitoring Officer for guidance.

Appendix 1

Seven Principles of Public Life

The principles are:

Selflessness

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.

Integrity

Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must disclose and resolve any interests and relationships.

Objectivity

Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

Accountability

Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

Openness

Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

Honesty

Holders of public office should be truthful.

Leadership

Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

Appendix 2

Declaration of Interests

Within 28 days of becoming a member or your re-appointment to office you must register with the Monitoring Officer the interests which fall within the categories set out in **Table 1 (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests)** which are as described in “The Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012”. You should also register details of your other personal interests which fall within the categories set out in **Table 2 (Other Registerable Interests)**.

“Disclosable Pecuniary Interest” means an interest of yourself, or of your partner if you are aware of your partner's interest, within the descriptions set out in Table 1 below.

“Partner” means a spouse or civil partner, or a person with whom you are living as husband or wife, or a person with whom you are living as if you are civil partners.

1. You must ensure that your register of interests is kept up-to-date and within 28 days of becoming aware of any new interest, or of any change to a registered interest, notify the Monitoring Officer.
2. A ‘sensitive interest’ is as an interest which, if disclosed, could lead to the member, or a person connected with the member, being subject to violence or intimidation.
3. Where you have a ‘sensitive interest’ you must notify the Monitoring Officer with the reasons why you believe it is a sensitive interest. If the Monitoring Officer agrees they will withhold the interest from the public register.

Non-participation in case of disclosable pecuniary interest

4. Where a matter arises at an authority meeting which directly relates to one of your Disclosable Pecuniary Interests as set out in **Table 1**, you must disclose the interest, not participate in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation. If it is a ‘sensitive interest’, you do not have to disclose the nature of the interest, just that you have an interest. Dispensation may be granted in limited circumstances, to enable you to participate and vote on a matter in which you have a disclosable pecuniary interest.
5. Where you have a disclosable pecuniary interest on a matter to be considered or is being considered by you as chair of the authority or a committee, you must notify the Monitoring Officer of the interest and must not take any steps or further steps in the matter apart from arranging for someone else to deal with it.

Disclosure of Other Registerable Interests

6. Where a matter arises at a meeting which **directly relates** to the financial interest or wellbeing of one of your Other Registerable Interests (as set out in **Table 2**), you must disclose the interest. You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting but otherwise must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation. If it is a 'sensitive interest', you do not have to disclose the nature of the interest.

Disclosure of Non-Registerable Interests

7. Where a matter arises at a meeting which **directly relates** to your financial interest or well-being (and is not a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest set out in Table 1) or a financial interest or well-being of a relative or close associate, you must disclose the interest. You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting. Otherwise, you must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation. If it is a 'sensitive interest', you do not have to disclose the nature of the interest.
8. Where a matter arises at a meeting which **affects** –
 - 8.1. your own financial interest or well-being;
 - 8.2. a financial interest or well-being of a relative or close associate; or
 - 8.3. a financial interest or wellbeing of a body included under Other Registrable Interests as set out in **Table 2**you must disclose the interest. In order to determine whether you can remain in the meeting after disclosing your interest the following test should be applied.
9. Where a matter (referred to in paragraph 8 above) **affects** the financial interest or well-being:
 - 9.1. to a greater extent than it affects the financial interests of the majority of inhabitants of the area affected by the decision and;
 - 9.2. a reasonable member of the public knowing all the facts would believe that it would affect your view of the wider public interest

You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting. Otherwise, you must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation.

If it is a 'sensitive interest', you do not have to disclose the nature of the interest.

10. Where you have an Other Registerable Interest or Non-Registerable Interest on a matter to be considered or is being considered by you as chair of the authority or as chair of a committee, you must notify the Monitoring Officer of the interest and must not take any steps or further steps in the matter apart from arranging for someone else to deal with it.

Table 1: Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

This table sets out the explanation of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests as set out in the [Relevant Authorities \(Disclosable Pecuniary Interests\) Regulations 2012](#).

Subject	Description
Employment, office, trade, profession or vocation	Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain.
Sponsorship	<p>Any payment or provision of any other financial benefit (other than from the fire authority or your council) made to the member during the previous 12-month period for expenses incurred by him/her in carrying out his/her duties as a member, or towards his/her election expenses.</p> <p>This includes any payment or financial benefit from a trade union within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992.</p>
Contracts	Any contract made between the member or his/her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the member is living as if they were spouses/civil partners (or a firm in which such person is a partner, or an incorporated body of which such person is a director* or a body that such person has a beneficial interest in the securities of**) and the fire authority under which goods or services are to be provided or works are to be executed; and which has not been fully discharged.
Land and Property	<p>Any beneficial interest in land which is within the West Midlands area.</p> <p>'Land' excludes an easement, servitude, interest or right in or over land which does not give the member or his/her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the member is living as if they were spouses/ civil partners (alone or jointly with another) a right to occupy or to receive income.</p>
Licenses	Any licence (alone or jointly with others) to occupy land in the West Midlands area for a month or longer
Corporate tenancies	<p>Any tenancy where (to the member's knowledge)—</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the landlord is the fire authority; and the tenant is a body that the member, or his/her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the member is living as if they were spouses/ civil

	partners is a partner of or a director* of or has a beneficial interest in the securities* of.
Securities	<p>Any beneficial interest in securities** of a body where— that body (to the member's knowledge) has a place of business or land in the West Midlands area; and either—</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the total nominal value of the securities* exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body; or • if the share capital of that body is of more than one class, the total nominal value of the shares of any one class in which the member, or his/ her spouse or civil partner or the person with whom the member is living as if they were spouses/civil partners have a beneficial interest exceeds one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that class.

* 'director' includes a member of the committee of management of an industrial and provident society.

** 'securities' means shares, debentures, debenture stock, loan stock, bonds, units of a collective investment scheme within the meaning of the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000 and other securities of any description, other than money deposited with a building society.

Table 2: Other Registrable Interests

You must register as an Other Registerable Interest:

- a) any unpaid directorships
- b) any body of which you are a member or are in a position of general control or management and to which you are nominated or appointed by the fire authority
- c) any body
 - (i) exercising functions of a public nature
 - (ii) directed to charitable purposes or
 - (iii) one of whose principal purposes includes the influence of public opinion or policy (including any political party or trade union)

Of which you are a member or in a position of general control or management.

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

Item 8

11 DECEMBER 2023**1. AN ANALYSIS OF PROGRESS OF QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE AGAINST 'OUR PLAN' – QUARTER TWO 2023/24**

Report of the Chief Fire Officer.

RECOMMENDED

- 1.1 THAT the Authority notes the status of the Service's key performance indicators in the second quarter of 2023/24 (Appendix 1).
- 1.2 THAT the Committee note the progress made in delivering the strategic priorities contained in 'Our Plan' 2023-2026 (Appendix 1).

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report is submitted to provide Members with an analysis of the organisation's performance against 'Our Plan' for 2023-2026.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The setting of targets against the operational and other performance indicators enables the Service to define in key areas the improvements which contribute to making the West Midlands safer, stronger and healthier, and to manage the resources allocated to this work. The Service continues to improve and meet targets across a range of indicators.
- 3.2 The performance information contained within this report was submitted to and considered by the Strategic Enabling Team at the quarterly Strategic Performance Review Board in November 2023. It is submitted to Members to support the joined-up method of monitoring performance and providing assurance around the on-going performance against 'Our Plan'.
- 3.3 The setting of key performance indicator targets for 2023/24 was carried out earlier this year and the targets were approved at the June meeting of the Fire Authority. As part of the target setting process, several changes were approved to the existing suite of key performance indicators which are reflected in this report. These included:

- The introduction of sub-PI, PI 1(a) 'The risk-based attendance standards – call handling'.
- The introduction of sub-PI, PI 6(a) 'The number of Safe and Well points achieved by the Brigade – average Safe and Well points per visits'.
- The replacement of PI14 'The number of False Alarm Calls due to fire alarm equipment in dwellings and non-domestic premises' with two sub-PIs; PI 14(a) and PI 14(b) focussing on dwellings and non-domestic premises respectively.
- Additionally, it was agreed to develop and introduce a new measure to enable the reporting of PI 23 'To reduce the Fire Authority's carbon emissions', however time will be required to develop such a measure and it will be implemented as soon as is practicable.

3.4 As reported previously, opportunities to further develop how the Service monitors and reports how it is performing against its strategic goals continues to be progressed.

4. **PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

4.1 Appendix 1 details the performance against our:

- Performance against our programmes of Community Risk Reduction, Enabling Services, and People, covering:
 - Response, Prevention and Protection
 - People
 - Health, Safety and Wellbeing
 - Finance and Resources
- Strategic Objectives as outlined in 'Our Plan'.

Note: due to ongoing issues with data as well as outstanding workbooks, figures reported may be subject to change.

4.2 **Community Risk Reduction**

4.2.1 **Response:**

- PI 1 – the risk-based attendance standard; performance continues to be positive, with the targets having been met for all four categories of incident type. The performance is rated as over performance against the tolerance levels (blue).

- Average attendance times for Category 1 incidents (the most critical and important of the four categories) were 4 minutes 48 seconds in quarter two 2023/24.
- Average attendance times for Category 2, 3 and 4 Incident Types remain well within their respective targets:
 - Category 2 Incident Type: 5 minutes 31 seconds (target of 7 minutes)
 - Category 3 Incident Type: 5 minutes 02 seconds (target of 10 minutes)
 - Category 4 Incident Type: 6 minutes 15 seconds (target of 20 minutes)

4.2.2 **Prevention:**

- The performance indicators for the following areas demonstrate over performance against the tolerance levels (blue):
 - PI 2 The number of accidental dwelling fires.
 - PI 5 The percentage of Safe and Well visits referred by our partners.
 - PI 9 The number of deliberate fires in non-domestic premises.
- The performance indicators for the following areas demonstrate performance is within the tolerance levels (green):
 - PI 3 Injuries from accidental fires in dwellings, taken to hospital for treatment.
 - PI 8 The number of deliberate fires in dwellings.
 - PI 10 The number of deliberate vehicle fires.
 - PI 11 The number of deliberate rubbish fires.
- The performance indicators for the following areas demonstrate under performance against the tolerance levels (red):
 - PI 6 The number of Safe and Well points achieved by the Brigade.

- PI 12 The number of deliberate fires in derelict buildings.
- The number of deliberate fires in derelict buildings continues to be a cause for concern and Members are encouraged to highlight this issue within their respective Local Authorities and to promote the importance of multi-agency collaboration in helping to reduce the number of incidents of this type.
- The following two performance indicators do not have a performance rating assigned:
 - PI 4 The number of deaths from accidental fires in dwellings.
 - PI 6a The number of Safe and Well points achieved by the Service – average Safe and Well visits per visit (the Service aims to achieve an average of 8.5 points per Safe and Well)
 - PI 7 The number of people killed or seriously injured in Road Traffic Collisions.

4.2.3 **Protection:**

- The performance indicator for the following area demonstrates performance is within the tolerance levels (green):
 - PI 13 The number of accidental fires in non-domestic premises.
- The performance indicators for the following areas demonstrate under performance against the tolerance levels (red):
 - PI 14a The number of false alarm calls due to fire alarm equipment in dwellings.
 - PI 14b The number of false alarm calls due to fire alarm equipment in non-domestic premises.

4.3 **People**

4.3.1 The performance indicators for the following areas demonstrate performance is within the tolerance levels (green):

- PI 17 – The percentage of all staff from black and minority ethnic (BAME) communities.
- PI 17a – The percentage of uniformed staff from BAME communities.

4.3.2 The performance indicators for the following areas demonstrate under performance against the tolerance levels (red):

- PI 15 – The percentage of employees that have disclosed their disabled status.
- PI 16 – The number of female uniformed staff.
- PI 18 – The average number of working days/shifts lost due to sickness – All staff
- PI 19 – The average number of working days/shifts lost due to sickness – Uniformed and Fire Control
- PI 20 – The average number of working days/shifts lost due to sickness – Non-Uniformed.

4.4 **People - Health, Safety and Wellbeing**

No targets or tolerances are set for the performance indicators for the total number of injuries or the total number of RIDDOR injuries. This is because any injury report is unwanted and the Service encourages an open reporting culture that facilitates learning and improvement.

4.5 **Enabling Services - Finance and Resources**

Delays on billing receipt / updating usage figures means that figures are not complete for year to date. Estimated projected usage indicates performance within the tolerance levels for PI 24 To reduce the gas use of Fire Authority Premises, and PI 25 To reduce the electricity use of Fire Authority premises.

4.6 PI 23 To reduce the Fire Authority's carbon emissions is not included as no information is currently available for this performance indicator. A comprehensive sustainability strategy has been developed and is currently being reviewed by the Strategic Enabling Team. This strategy incorporates nine objectives with accompanying performance indicators across a wide range of sustainability themes. The first objective is reducing carbon from our operations, estate and support activities, and work is ongoing to establish a dashboard of performance across energy use, utilities spend, carbon impact and transport impact, amongst others.

5. **CORPORATE RISK**

- 5.1 Corporate Risks are those risks that, if realised, would seriously affect the Service's ability to carry out its core functions or deliver key objectives.
- 5.2 In accordance with the Corporate Risk Management Strategy, all risks maintained within the Corporate Risk Register have been reviewed by Senior Risk Owners in order to update the relevant triggers, impacts and control measures and determine a relevant risk score, if appropriate, based on assessment of likelihood and impact.
- 5.3 A report of progress against our Corporate Risks is submitted separately to the Audit and Risk Committee.

6. **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

In preparing this report, an initial Equality Impact Assessment is not required and has not been carried out. The matters contained within this report will not lead to a policy change.

7. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

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

8. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 Although there are no direct financial implications arising from this report, the financial resources required to achieve the targets were approved by Authority as part of 2023/24 budget setting.
- 8.2 The total net budget requirement was £119.109m.

9. **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no environmental implications arising from this report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

'Our Plan 2023-26' Strategic Objectives.

Corporate Risk Update Quarter 1 and 2 2023/24 (exception report).

The contact name for this report is Area Commander Marc Hudson, Head of

OFFICIAL

Portfolio, telephone number 07973 810139.

WAYNE BROWN
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

APPENDIX 1**KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS STATUS – QUARTER TWO 2023/24**



Item 8

Key:	
Blue	Over performance against the tolerance levels
Green	Performance is within the tolerance levels
Red	Under performance against the tolerance levels

Community Risk Reduction**Response**

Our response priorities focus on dealing excellently with emergency incidents. We will:

- respond with the resources you need when you need them to protect what matters to you, to save life, reduce harm and protect homes and businesses.
- be ready to respond in an assertive, effective, and safe way to meet our vision.
- lead rescue operations, working with others to help make you safer.
- be ready to respond locally, nationally, and internationally.

PI 1		The Risk Based Attendance Standard Target: under 5 minutes Actual: 4 minutes 48 seconds Over performance against the tolerance levels
<p>The median high-risk (Cat 1) attendance time was 4 minutes 48 seconds for quarter 2 (Q2). 54.3% of Cat 1 incidents were in target and in high-risk areas this rose to 67.0%.</p> <p>Attendance times for Category 2, 3 & 4 incidents remain significantly below the respective targets:</p> <p>Category 2 – 5 minutes 31 seconds (target of 7 minutes) Category 3 – 5 minutes 02 seconds (target of 10 minutes) Category 4 – 6 minutes 15 seconds (target of 20 minutes)</p>		
PI 1a		The Risk Based Attendance Standard – call handling Target: Not Applicable Actual: 92 seconds
<p>The Service aims to mobilise to all incidents within 80 seconds.</p>		


The median call handling remains above target at 92 seconds in Q2. This is a 3 second reduction compared to the 95 seconds recorded in Q1. This is broken down as:




- July – 90 seconds
- August – 89 seconds
- September – 98 seconds

Prevention

Our prevention priorities focus on delivering services that reduce risk and support safer and healthier communities. We will:


- prevent fires, road traffic collisions and other emergencies
- focus on reducing health inequalities for our most vulnerable as a means of reducing risk and vulnerability to fires and other emergencies
- educate the community to reduce their risk and vulnerability to fires and other emergencies
- collaborate, and work in partnership with other organisations to reduce the risk and vulnerability to fires and other emergencies.

PI 2		The number of accidental dwelling fires Target YTD: 800 Actual to date: 701 Over performance against the tolerance levels
<p>There were 333 Accidental Dwelling Fires recorded in Q2 2023/23, which is 63 less than the same time last year and 66 below the Q2 target. Since the beginning of the financial year there have been 701 Accidental Dwelling Fires, 99 (-12.4%) below the target.</p> <p>Coventry is the only borough above tolerance level, with 6 incidents above the Q2 target for this period. Birmingham North and South, and Wolverhampton are well below target with just 67,66, and 27 incidents, compared to the Q2 target of 83, 100, and 41 respectively.</p> <p>In Q2 the top three ignition source for Accidental Dwelling Fires were cooking appliances, electricity supply and other domestic style appliances.</p> <p>Please note there are still outstanding workbooks for Q2 and some may be Accidental Dwelling Fires.</p>		

PI 3		Injuries from accidental fires in dwellings (taken to hospital for treatment) Target YTD: 25 Actual to date: 30 Performance is within the tolerance levels
<p>In Q2 of 2023/24 there have been 16 PI injuries at Accidental Dwelling Fires this is three above the target and exceeding the tolerance for the quarter. Since the beginning of the financial year there have been 30 injuries in accidental dwelling fires, 5 (+20%) above the target for this period although it remains within the tolerance levels.</p> <p>The 16 PI injuries were split between 8 in July, 3 in August, and 5 in September. Black Country South, Black Country North, and Birmingham North are the only commands equalling their target for the quarter, the other commands are above the tolerance.</p> <p>The 16 PI injuries occurred in Coventry and Solihull (5), Black country South (4), Birmingham South (3), Birmingham North (2), and Black Country North (2). Six of the 16 injuries were caused by cooking appliances and 4 were caused by heating equipment. The remaining 6 injuries were caused by one of the following: Electricity supply, matches, candles, incense burners etc, or was not known. The age ranges were varied with the eldest being 81 and youngest being 13. 10 of the 16 were male.</p> <p>Please note there are still outstanding workbooks for Q2.</p>		
PI 4		The number of deaths from accidental dwelling fires Target YTD: N/A Actual to date: 5
<p>In Q2 of 2023/24 there was one fatality recorded at an accidental dwelling fire attended by WMFS. This occurred in Birmingham North command and was caused by a careless disposal of a match. The fatally injured person was an 86-year-old male.</p> <p>Please note there are still outstanding workbooks for Q2.</p>		
PI 5		The percentage of Safe and Well visits referred by our partners Target YTD: 50% Actual to date: 58.3% Over performance against the tolerance levels
<p>The percentage of Safe and Well visits completed in quarter 2 because of a referral from a partner was 58.3%. This is 8.3% than the target and slightly higher than the 58% achieved in quarter 1.</p> <p>The percentage achieved as at quarter 2 of this financial year is significantly higher than the 39.1% that was achieved at the same period last financial year. However, the number of face-to-face Safe and Well visits completed year to date is 12,470 which is 6,396 visits less than recorded for the same period in 2022-23. In addition, 484 remote Safe and Well (RSAW) assessments have been completed for those whose risk at referral is rated as low. These are completed in Tymly and are in addition to the 12,470</p>		

face-to-face visits. Their risk is scored differently and is not included in the total points figures.

It should be noted that although fewer face-to-face visits are being completed, those who are receiving a Safe and Well visit are at higher risk than those that were receiving visits during the same period of 2022-23.

PI 6		The number of Safe & Well points achieved by the Service Target YTD: 130,000 Actual to date: 101,514 Under performance against the tolerance levels
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During quarter 2, 52,508 Safe & Well points were achieved, with a total of 101,513 points recorded year to date.

Year to date, the total points figure is 28,487 less than the target of 130,000 the Service would have expected to have achieved at the half-way point of the financial year.

The number of face-to-face Safe and Well visits completed year to date is 12,470 which is 6,396 visits less than for the same period in 2022-23. In addition, 484 remote Safe and Well assessments have been completed for those whose risk at referral is rated low. These are completed in Tymly and are in addition to the 12,470 face-to-face visits. Their risk is scored differently to face-to-face visits and is not included in the total points figures.

It should be noted that although less face-to-face visits are being completed, those who are receiving such a Safe and Well visit are at higher risk than those who received a visit during the same period in 2022-23.

As highlighted in PI5, 308 of the Safe and Well assessments either completed face to face or remotely were received as high or medium risk through the Safelincs online home fire safety check (OLHFSC) process. All individuals whose risk is deemed low though Safelincs receive an action plan and are not offered the opportunity for a referral to WMFS for a Safe and Well. Therefore, both RSAW and low risk OLHFSC will be having both a positive impact on improving the average risk score also but will also be reducing the total points achieved this year. However, this should not necessarily be viewed as under performance as it means that those who are at risk of fire are receiving services proportionate to their risk and face-to-face visits are being prioritised for those who the Community Risk Management Plan identifies as being most at risk and vulnerable to fire.

PI 6a		The number of Safe & Well points achieved by the Service – average Safe & Well points per visits Target YTD: Not applicable Actual to date: 8.47
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The average risk score for the first two quarters of 2023/24 is 8.47. This is slightly below the aim of achieving an average risk score of 8.50, however it is higher than the 6.89 points for the same period last year.

308 of the Safe and Well assessments either completed face to face or remotely were received as high or medium risk through the Safelincs online home fire safety check (OLHFSC) process. Of these 59 were from partners and are included in the 58.3% of Safe and Well visits referred by our partners (PI5).

As highlighted in PI6, of those referrals received through the Safelincs OLHFSC process, individuals whose risk is deemed low receive an action plan and are not offered the opportunity for a referral to WMFS for a Safe and Well. This will result in improvements the average risk score being realised.

PI 7



The number of people killed or seriously injured (KSI) in road traffic collisions

Target YTD: Not applicable

Actual to date: 210

Road casualty data is collected by the Police in the STATS19 form and supplied by transport for West Midlands, and at time of writing is up to date for incidents up to January 2023, though minor changes are likely to occur. Months since January are still subject to change. The following analysis is for the period January to March of 2023.

The total number of people killed or seriously injured on West Midlands roads for the period analysed was 164. This includes 4 fatalities and 160 people seriously injured.

This is lower than the total recorded for the same period during 2022 (209 killed or seriously injured in Road Traffic Collisions). The highest number of fatalities and serious injuries occurred during January.

Of the fatalities, one occurred in each of Birmingham and Coventry, and two occurred in Dudley. Three of the four fatally injured persons were pedestrians.

PI 8



The number of deliberate fires in dwellings

Target YTD: 91

Actual to date: 100

Performance is within the tolerance levels

In Q2 of 2023/24 there were 45 deliberate dwelling fires recorded, which is in line with the target for the quarter. Since the beginning of the financial year there have been 100 Deliberate Dwelling Fires, 9 (11.0%) above the target for this period.

There have been 14 incidents in both July and September, and 17 in August. Birmingham North and Black Country North are the only commands below target and within the tolerance levels, with both recording 3 below the respective targets.

Black Country South, Birmingham South, and Coventry and Solihull commands were all above the respective targets and upper tolerance levels.

33.33% of deliberate dwelling fires in Q2 occurred within Purpose built flat(s) / maisonette(s).

Please note there are still outstanding workbooks for Q2.

PI 9



The number of deliberate fires in non-domestic premises

Target YTD: 64

Actual to date: 43

Over performance against the tolerance levels

In Q2 of 2023/24 Deliberate Non-Domestic Fires were below their target by 7 incidents. Since the beginning of the financial year there have been 43 Deliberate Non-Domestic Fires, 21 (-32.8%) below the target for this period.

All commands are below target and the lower tolerance level for Q2 except for Coventry and Solihull which is above target and the upper tolerance level. However, it should be noted that the number of incidents is low at just 9 compared to a target of 7.

The two highest property types experiencing Deliberate Non-Domestic Fires in Q2 were Public Houses and Prisons (6 incidents each).

Please note there are still outstanding workbooks for Q2.

PI 10



The number of deliberate vehicle fires

Target YTD: 281

Actual to date: 272

Performance is within the tolerance levels

In Q2 of 2023/24 there were 141 Deliberate Vehicle Fires, 13 below (-8.4%) the target for the quarter. This was also below the quantity experienced in the same period last year by 12. Since the beginning of the financial year there have been 272 Deliberate Vehicle Fires. 9 below the target for this period.

All command areas are within tolerance level for the quarter. Wolverhampton was the only borough to exceed the tolerance and target for Q2. An initial examination of repeat

areas for Deliberate Vehicle Fires revealed the Sheldon ward to have the highest quantity.

Just over half of the deliberate vehicle fires were cars (58.16%), followed by motorcycles or mopeds with 21.28%.

Please note there are still outstanding workbooks for Q2.

PI 11



The number of deliberate rubbish fires

Target YTD: 787

Actual to date: 742

Performance is within the tolerance levels

In Q2 of 2023/24 there were 341 Deliberate Rubbish Fires, which is 28 incidents below target and below lower tolerance level for the quarter. There have been 71 fewer incidents in this quarter compared to the same period last year.

Since the beginning of the financial year there have been 744 Deliberate Rubbish Fires, 43 below the target for this period. From July (108) incidents have increased into August (132), then reduced in September (101) month for the quarter.

Birmingham South, and Coventry and Solihull commands exceeded their respective targets for Q2. All other commands were below the target by between -34 (Black Country North), and -11 (Black Country South).

43.98% of Deliberate Rubbish Fires attended in Q2 were due to 'Loose refuse / rubbish'.

Please note there are still outstanding workbooks for Q2.

PI 12



The number of deliberate fires in derelict buildings

Target YTD: 78

Actual to date: 130

Under performance against the tolerance levels

In Q2 of 2023/24 there were 61 Deliberate Derelict Building Fires, which is 27 above target and above the upper tolerance level for the quarter. There have been 22 more incidents this year compared to the same period last year.

Since the beginning of the financial year there have been 132 Deliberate Derelict Building Fires, 53 (66.7%) above the target for this period. 135 incidents were recorded during the whole of 2022/23 and 121 in the previous year.


In Q2 a significant increase in incidents occurred, specifically in July, when 34 incidents were reported. Other than Birmingham South who are below their target, all other command areas are above the tolerance and target levels. Black Country North is 10 above the target, Black Country South is 14 above the target, Birmingham North is 2 above, and Coventry and Solihull is 3 above. All command areas are above target and upper tolerance level year to date.



22 of the 34 incidents in July occurred in either Walsall or Dudley Boroughs. An initial examination of repeat properties revealed Mason Street in Bilston to have the most Deliberate Derelict Building Fires within Q2 of 2023/24.

Protection

Our protection priorities focus on protecting life and property to make businesses stronger and communities safer. We will:

- protect our communities by targeting high-risk buildings through intelligence and data
- promote economic growth through education and engagement with businesses
- carry out our responsibilities under relevant legislation to consult and enforce to make people safer
- reduce disruption to businesses and communities of the West Midlands
- implement learning from national, local and sector-led reviews

PI 13		The number of accidental fires in non-domestic premises Target YTD: 190 Actual to date: 173 Performance is within the tolerance levels
<p>In Q2 of 2023/24 there were 97 Accidental Fires in Non-Domestic premises, which is lower than the target by 66 for the quarter. Compared to the same period last year, incidents have reduced by 63.</p> <p>Since the beginning of the financial year there have been 173 Accidental Non-Domestic Fires, 15 (-8.9%) below the target for this period.</p> <p>All commands are within tolerance level for the quarter, except Birmingham North command which was below both the tolerance and target for Q2. Incidents are spread between 33 in July, 24 in August, and 40 in September.</p> <p>Accidental Fires in Non-Domestic premises occur largely at retail premises and were caused mainly by 'Electricity supply'.</p> <p>Please note there are still outstanding workbooks for Q2.</p>		


PI 14a		<p>The number of false alarm calls due to fire alarm equipment in dwellings Target YTD: 2464 Actual to date: 2942 Under performance against the tolerance levels</p>
<p>In Q2 of 2023/24 there were 1,560 False alarms due to equipment (FAE) in dwellings, this is 228 (19.6%) above target for the quarter and exceeds the tolerance. Compared to the same period last year, there have been 181 more alarms this year. Each month has exceeded the target for Q2, with 513 alarms in July, 486 in August, and 595 in September.</p> <p>Since the beginning of the financial year there have been 2,942 FAEs in dwellings, 478 over the target. FAEs exceeded targets and tolerance at all command areas. At a borough level all are above target and tolerance with the exception of Walsall which is within tolerance. An initial examination of repeat properties revealed Meridian Point on Friars Road in Coventry had the most FAEs at dwellings.</p> <p>Dwellings account for 79.48% of FAEs. Cooking/burnt toast remains the most likely reason for false alarms at dwellings (35.38%) and is still followed by faulty equipment.</p> <p>Please note there are still outstanding workbooks for Q2.</p>		
PI 14b		<p>The number of false alarm calls due to fire alarm equipment in non-domestic premises Target YTD: 596 Actual to date: 729 Under performance against the tolerance levels</p>
<p>In Q2 of 2023/24 there were 392 false alarm calls due to fire alarm equipment (FAE) in non-domestic premises, which is above the tolerance level and 79 (21.7%) above the target for the quarter. There have been 70 more incidents this year compared to the same period last year.</p> <p>Since the beginning of the financial year there have been 729 incidents, 133 (22.3%) above the target for this period. The number of incidents was above the monthly target in each month within Q2.</p> <p>All command areas are above the respective targets and upper tolerance levels, except for Black Country South which is within tolerance levels. At borough level, all above target and tolerance level except for Walsall which is within tolerance, and Dudley which is below target and below the lower tolerance level.</p> <p>Non-domestic premises account for 20.52% of all FAEs. The highest percentage of incidents occurred within the Heath Town (11%), Heartlands (7%) and Henley (6%) wards. An initial examination of repeat properties revealed that Wolverhampton New Cross Hospital had the highest number of FAEs at non-domestic premises. Faulty equipment was the most likely reason for such incidents, followed by cooking/burnt toast.</p> <p>Please note there are still outstanding workbooks for Q2.</p>		





It should be noted that although this KPI is in exception, what it doesn't necessarily reflect is that there has been a marked change in mobilising to these incident types. A year ago, approximately 30% of such incidents were attended by traditional fire appliances, Pump Recue Ladders (PRLs), whereas now only approximately 8% of incidents are attended by a PRL, with an increase in the number attended by our smaller Brigade Response Vehicles and dedicated Business Support Vehicles. This represents the continuing effective use of resources whilst also maintaining our Service Delivery Model, protecting PRLs for attendance at the highest risk incident types.

People


We are committed to working together to make WMFS a great place to work for our people and for the benefit of our community. This is achieved through:

- Recruiting, developing and championing talented people enabling diversity and embracing difference, enabling them to reach their potential.
- Enabling a positive working environment for all our staff and holding all to account for maintaining our core values
- Enabling and developing leaders at all levels
- Valuing the contribution of all of our people allowing everybody's voice to be heard
- Ensuring our people know that their health, safety and wellbeing is important and will be prioritised by themselves and the service
- Being uncompromising in our commitment to Diversity, Inclusion, Cohesion and Equality, ensuring the Service is representative of our community and we have access to the widest talent pool
- Creating an environment of personal growth and development which will ensure the service can continually adapt and improve.

PI 15		<p>The percentage of employees that have disclosed their disabled status</p> <p>Target: 100%</p> <p>Actual to date: 89.9%</p> <p>Under performance against the tolerance levels</p>
<p>Declaration rates remain high with 89.9% of all employees having made a declaration regarding disability, a slight increase from the 89.1% reported in Q4 22/23.</p> <p>People Support Services have published a news item to all staff explaining the importance of providing diversity data, including guidance.</p>		


PI 16		The number of female uniformed staff Target: 199 Actual to date: 183 Under performance against the tolerance levels
Since April 2023, WMFS has recruited 39 new entrant firefighters of which 4 (11%) are female. Positive action continues with increased emphasis and focus on initial attraction. Working alongside our external partners, Thinkology, we are refreshing our advertising with new messaging. Meet and greet sessions are up and running, as well as new candidate nurturing activity. Text messaging facility is now active to enable the recruitment team to send update notifications more easily to candidates.		
PI 17		The percentage of all staff from BAME communities Target: 14.6% Actual to date: 14.3% Performance is within the tolerance levels
Since April 2023, WMFS has recruited 39 new entrant firefighters of which 8 (21%) are black, Asian and minority ethnic communities. Positive action continues (see comments for female uniformed staff).		
PI 17a		The percentage of uniformed staff from BAME communities Target: 14.4% Actual to date: 14.0% Performance is within the tolerance levels
14.0% of uniformed staff are from black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) communities, which is below target and within the tolerance levels. See PI 17 for further information.		
PI 18		The average number of working days/shifts lost due to sickness – all staff Target: 1.9 Actual: 2.4 Under performance against the tolerance levels
<p>An average of 2.4 working days/shifts per person were lost due to sickness during quarter four, above the quarterly target and upper tolerance level.</p> <p>Unfortunately, we continue to see an increasing trend with absence levels. However, there have been a number of activities to support the management of absence going forward. We have now consulted and launched an updated absence management policy. We have delivered a number of training sessions to supervisory and middle managers. Going forward, we will be placing a focus on mental health related absence and seeking to move our Occupational Health / support provision to being proactive (prevention based) as well as reactive.</p> <p>It should be noted that performance across all sickness related key performance indicators has changed from below target and below the lower tolerance levels for most of 22/23, to above target and above the upper tolerance levels. However, actual performance is broadly in line with the previous year, albeit with a slight increase in</p>		

absence rates. The change in performance rating is partly a result of the setting of the 29% reduction in target for sickness for 23/24.

PI 19		The average number of working days/shifts lost due to sickness – uniformed and Fire Control staff Target: 1.9 Actual: 2.5 Under performance against the tolerance levels
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An average of 2.5 working days/shifts per person were lost due to sickness during quarter four, above the quarterly target and upper tolerance level.

See PI18 for further detail.

PI 20		The average number of working days/shifts lost due to sickness – non-uniformed staff Target: 2.0 Actual: 2.3 Under performance against the tolerance levels
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An average of 2.3 working days/shifts per person were lost due to sickness during quarter four, above the quarterly target and upper tolerance level.

See PI18 for further detail.

PI 21		The total number of injuries Target YTD: n/a Actual to date: 66
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There were no significant trends for quarter 2. There were 6 manual handling injuries, 6 struck by injuries, 3 struck against injuries and 3 slips, trips and falls. By activity, 12 occurred at incidents, 7 during operational training and 7 involved non-operational employees.



Quarterly performance continues to be fully discussed at the meetings of the Brigade Health, Safety, and Wellbeing Committee.

PI 22		The total number of RIDDOR injuries Target YTD: n/a Actual to date: 3
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There have been no RIDDOR reports made during quarter 2.

3 reports were made in quarter 1. One was a manual handling injury at an incident (roof felt, boards and debris), one was a manual handling injury involving road traffic collision training (whilst bracing a vehicle), and one was a slip/trip at an incident (running out hose over a speed bump).

Enabling Services

PI 24		To reduce gas use of Fire Authority premises Forecast YTD: 5,641,114.3 Actual to date: 2,411,792.0 Forecasts indicate performance within the tolerance levels
Still behind on billing receipt/ updating usage figures but estimated projected usage indicates performance within the tolerance levels. Usage continues to be on track, and this is being supported by investment in more efficient plant and equipment such as boiler plant replacements. The heating has now been switched to winter mode, so consumption will increase.		
PI 25		To reduce electricity use of Fire Authority premises Forecast YTD: 1,556,852.7 Actual to date: 2,533,965.0 Forecasts indicate performance within the tolerance levels
There remains delays with billing receipt/ updating usage figures but estimated projected usage indicates performance within the tolerance levels. Usage continues to be on track, and this is being supported by investment in more efficient plant and equipment such as LED lighting.		

Note: PI 23 To reduce the Fire Authority's carbon emissions is not included as no information is currently available.

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**11 DECEMBER 2023**

Item 9

1. PORTFOLIO MANAGEMENT (3PT)

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

RECOMMENDED

- 1.1 THAT the contents of the report be noted.

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

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 Fire Officer (CFO)) through their programme objectives to deliver the Strategy of the WMFS. The Portfolio is led by the CFO 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. **COMMUNITY REDUCTION RISK PROGRAMME (CRR)- HIGHLIGHTS**

5.1 **Protection**

- 5.1.1 Protection have been leading on the CRMP Automatic fire alarms (AFA's) mobilising project and have already made changes to ensure we mobilise a proportionate level of response to Hospitals. This has now been extended to ensure Fire Control send a proportionate level of response to AFA's at Care Homes.
- 5.1.2 WMFS are leading the regional building safety regulator team and are working in collaboration with the Health and Safety executive as the new regulator under the building safety act to ensure all our new and existing building are safe. The new Fire Safety England regulations came into force earlier in 2023. WMFS continue to receive building plans from the responsible person. Those who are yet to provide the required information have received a letter from the head of protection reminding them of their responsibilities under the legislation.
- 5.1.3 Our Protection teams are now digitally enabled and one of the first FRS's to be completing their fire Safety Audits digitally. This builds capacity for our inspectors to spend more time working in the community targeting high risk properties

5.2 **Operations**

- 5.2.1 In July 2023 we received the sad news regarding Crew Manager Iain Hughes from Wednesbury Fire Station who lost his life swimming the English Channel whilst raising money for three charities: The Firefighters' Charity, Midlands Air Ambulance and The British Heart Foundation. We have been notified that as a result of Iain's actions he has been nominated for a number of national awards for the over £80k he raised for charity. These awards include being shortlisted for the Excellence in Fire Awards due to be held in London on 1st December 2023 and a special award at the AFSA Awards to be held in Leeds.

- 5.2.2 In September, the unblur trial was rolled out to Birmingham Fire Stations. Unblur supports front-line first responders to make safer and faster decisions on the incident ground through providing greater situation awareness supporting decision making, team coordination, and easy & transparent post-incident reporting. The trial will run for six months before a decision is made as to whether to adopt the software across all our stations and on our incident command unit.

5.3 **Prevention**

5.3.1 **Arson conviction**

WMFS Fire investigation and Prevention Section (FIPS) provide fire investigation services to Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service. On 9th February 2023, Staffordshire Fire Service mobilised to a house fire in Stoke on Trent. Fire crews extinguished a severe fire within the kitchen of the property before locating the body of a woman.

FIPS conducted a full excavation of the scene, and it was determined the fire had been set deliberately. A man was arrested and charged with murder and making threats to kill. FIPS supplied a total of four reports to police and in October 2023 gave evidence at Stafford Crown Court.

The man was found guilty of both murder and making threats to kill and was subsequently sentenced to life imprisonment with a minimum term of 28 years. Staffordshire Police have thanked us for our assistance in this case and the CFO of Staffordshire FRS has passed on his thanks for the "great work from everyone involved in this tragic incident"

5.3.2 **Lithium-Ion Batteries**

Following recent incidents both in the West Midlands and across the country, updated guidance has been published on the risks linked to the use of Lithium-Ion batteries. These rechargeable batteries are used to power numerous devices, including phones, laptops, cameras, e-scooters, e-bikes, mobility scooters, wheelchairs, and vaping devices.

The website provides advice and guidance on the recognising warning signs, safety tips and charging advice and disposal of lithium-ion batteries. The link to the website is:
<https://www.wmfs.net/safety/rechargeable-lithium-ion-batteries/>

5.3.3 Safeside

The Safeside facility at HQ comprises a full-size street including, a house, shop, police station, road, canal, bus, and train. It is used for school groups to visit to learn about safety in a realistic environment.

When Safeside is not booked for school visits it also provides a valued training venue for several partner agencies. Most recently Birmingham Community Health Care NHS Foundation Trust has utilised the conference room, meeting rooms and Safety Village to support staff training, and have booked several sessions into 2024. This kind of collaboration helps to promote our facilities and fosters an increased mutual understanding of the work of both organisations, with the potential for future partnership working, as well as income for Safeside.

5.4 Fire Control

5.4.1 Recruits Course

A new group of 7 Trainee Firefighters (Control) have completed their initial training course and are now continuing their development on their respective watches. This was an extended course which incorporated additional elements around values, behaviours, culture, and inclusion. This is now being evaluated to support learning and further improvement.

5.4.2 Artificial Intelligence (AI) Training Tool Trial

Fire Control are now trialling a new Artificial Intelligence Call Handling Training Tool. The adoption of this cutting-edge training tool has the potential to elevate the efficiency and effectiveness of our fire control operators, leading to improved emergency response times and ultimately ensuring the safety of our communities. The tool is an AI-based communication simulator that can be used to develop communication skills, enhance confidence levels, reduce stress, free up mental capacity for active listening, call resolution and dynamic

mobilising. The simulator enables control personnel to handle a high volume and range of call types to support rapid skill development and confidence in role. The technology provides a platform that control staff can log in to, both in a training environment and whilst in Fire Control, to practice handling the wide variety of call types that they may encounter in the real world.

5.5 **Response**

5.5.1 **United Kingdom International Search and Rescue (UKISAR) Deployment to Morocco**

Following the devastating 6.8 magnitude earthquake, impact, and subsequent loss of life in Morocco on the 8 September 2023, 7 members of West Midlands Fire Service (WMFS) deployed to Morocco as part of the UKISAR team response. During the deployment, they conducted several missions. These included searches across multiple areas in the Atlas Mountains, reporting back humanitarian needs assessments after gaining access to remote villages and conducting aerial searches of remote regions. Volunteers also administered first aid to those in need.

5.5.2 **United Kingdom Rescue Organisation (UKRO) Festival of Rescue 2023**

This year 5 of our teams took part at UKRO Festival of Rescue 2023. Hosted this year by Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue, this national rescue and trauma competition saw many UK fire services competing in a range of challenges which included vehicle extrication, rope rescue, trauma care and water rescue.

We are so proud of the superb effort from Northfield Blue Watch, Hay Mills Blue Watch, West Bromwich mixed team, the Technical Rescue team, and our West Bromwich Fire Cadets. An incredible mix of experience & skills were displayed during this great learning experience, representing WMFS excellently & professionally in challenging situations & complex scenarios.

6. **ENABLING SERVICES PROGRAMME (ES) – HIGHLIGHTS**

6.1 **Digital & Data**

We have moved forward with our business led approach to Oracle, this will put the needs of our service users and helping them through the change at the forefront of any further developments. Several areas still remain to be developed which we wish to progress with to increase our efficiency and effectiveness, through acknowledging our journey so far this will be set at a pace that's more suitable for our teams.

Our time attendance replacement system has progressed successfully into the testing phase. We now need to confirm details of the levels of automation the new system will bring and continue the testing journey into the creation and delivery of a robust training plan.

We continue to invest in our digital infrastructure and ongoing projects to deliver mobile devices to our frontline crews are being rolled out across our Birmingham Command area. Enhancements to connectivity and our server infrastructure continue to enable our service delivery.

6.2 **Corporate Communications**

In September 2023 WMFS had 2 stands at the Emergency Services Show where we exhibited a number of services which we provide that makes the West Midlands safer, stronger and healthier. This included future technology, Health & Wellbeing and Road Casualty Reduction. In addition, Luna, our Urban Search & Rescue dog also made a guest appearance. Alongside our stand we also carried out a number of challenges that were filmed live across the show. These included:

- Large Goods Vehicle Extrication – Techniques and Safety Systems
- Animal Rescue
- Rope Rescue
- Cadet Patient Care Challenges Teams
- Trauma and Extrication new techniques and/or procedures – 10 second triage or vehicle relocation
- Fire Dog demonstration

In October 2023 we celebrated Black History Month which aims to address unfairness and celebrate the history, achievements, and contributions of black communities. The theme this year was 'Saluting our sisters' and paid homage to black women who had their contributions ignored.

In one of our pieces of communication on this subject Crew Manager Sonia Stoney and Firefighter Natalie Gilead shared their experiences of growing up, their family's histories, what it was like joining WMFS and much more. This can be seen by clicking on the link below

<https://wmfs.sharepoint.com/sites/People/SitePages/Black-History-Month---Our-Latest-Video.aspx?web=1>

16th November 2023, saw the Service's annual flagship reward and recognition event held at The International Convention Centre (ICC) in Birmingham where many teams and individuals were thanked and recognised for their efforts in making the West Midlands safer, stronger and healthier, and also for (ISAR's) multiple deployments this year.

It was also a moment not only for our staff to be thanked, but also to their families and loved ones for their commitment and support.

6.3 **Finance and Procurement**

Several training sessions have been held with managers across the organisation to share key information and actions in finance and procurement. These have been well received and will aid the journey towards improved business partnering, forecasting and consistency.

Preparations are underway for budget setting 2024/25 following meetings with budget holders and senior managers. Future budget requirements have been reviewed, identifying pressures and efficiencies.

7. **PEOPLE PROGRAMME – HIGHLIGHTS**

7.1 **Thematic Inspection**

The Home Secretary has 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. This commission builds on the findings in the spotlight report on culture and values in the fire and rescue sector published in March 2023.

The terms of reference for this inspection, include:

- The extent to which services are identifying and investigating misconduct.
- The effectiveness of misconduct processes and how consistently they are applied.
- How confident fire and rescue service staff are in raising concerns and in misconduct processes.
- The role of fire and rescue authorities and other organisations in handling misconduct.

To support the inspection, HMICFRS will survey and request data from all 44 Fire and Rescue Services, as well as inspecting a sample of ten Fire and Rescue Services to understand the handling of misconduct more thoroughly.

WMFS has been selected as one of the 10 sample services and will be welcoming HMICFRS into the service between Monday, 4th December 2023 to Friday, 22nd December 2023. The 3-week inspection will include document, data and case file reviews, focus group discussions and Director and Heads of interviews.

HMICFRS will initially provide a hot debrief to the service in January 2024, prior to publishing an overall report capturing the collective findings of all 10 sample services in June 2024.

In preparation for our inspection, HMICFRS have issued an all-staff survey which is currently open for all staff to complete.

7.2 **People Support**

7.2.1 **Policy Development**

We have made excellent progress with our people policy development, launching our updated attendance management and disciplinary policies. Feedback on both policies has been positive. We are currently in consultation to update our dignity at work and grievance policies, with these being launched in early December 23.

7.2.2 **Family leave**

We have launched our improved family leave provision with our service being the first service within the UK to offer 52 weeks paid leave for those taking maternity or adoption leave. In addition, we have extended our paternity provision to 2 weeks' paid leave. We are currently in consultation with our trade unions.

7.2.3 **Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Checks**

We have started to implement DBS checks across the service with all employees now invited to complete their check. At the time of writing this report, 79% of employees either have DBS checks in place or are in the process of completing their check. We are ahead of plan to have all DBS's in place by the end of November 2023.

7.2.4 **Pay & Grading Review**

We have commenced our pay and grading review of Green Book pay and grading principles and processes. We are working with an external partner to complete an initial review and evaluation of our current practices with an anticipated completion date of this phase being the end of January 2024. Phase 2 will explore and model options. Further information will be provided as the programme of work commences.

7.3 **Organisational Learning and People Development**

7.3.1 **People Development**

7.3.1.1 **Trainee Firefighter Development Programme**

The newly improved 12-week Trainee Firefighter Development Programme (TFDP) has just completed its first course with trainee fire fighters (including trainee Fire Control Operators) passing out at the beginning of November 2023. The TFDP is monitored and evaluated as the course progresses to support learning and further improvement. Initial outcomes from the evaluation are showing positive overall and are highlighting areas for improvement to support future courses.

7.3.1.2 **Career Development Pathways**

Career Development Pathways is an inclusive approach to enabling the development of staff. This will provide all staff with a standardised approach to accessing information, development material and recording mechanisms to support their progression into supervisory and middle management roles across the Service.

In response to staff feedback this approach can be personalised to an individual's development path and supports the achievement of our people priorities. Career Development Pathways is due to be launched in early 2024 and will be further developed during 2024/25, to ensure an inclusive employee lifecycle.

Career Development Pathways also supports the achievement and progression of several of the HMICFRS Spotlight Report recommendations.

7.3.1.3 **Breathing Apparatus (BA) training**

Training for the issue of the new BA sets in 2024, is currently underway to support the upskilling of all operational staff in the wearing and use of this began at an early stage during October 2023 and will be completed by the 16th of December 2023. To date we have trained 600 operational staff (approx. 46% of all users) and are on track for completion.

We have ensured a dedicated approach to this training with a global training plan and guidance provided to support the face-to-face training. Early planning around this has meant that we are unlikely to be affected by the shortages in training equipment which is now anticipated as other fire services plan their training.

7.3.2 **Diversity Inclusion Cohesion and Equality (DICE)**

7.3.2.1 Stakeholder Groups

A planning day took place with Stakeholder Groups on 29th November 2023 to support a wide discussion regarding the key outcomes for the organisation and staff over the coming 2 months. With a specific focus being on how the organisation and groups can work together to achieve these.

7.3.2.2 DICE events

The organisation celebrated and engaged in several DICE events over the quarter including (not exclusively) Black History Month – ‘Saluting our sisters’, Islamophobia - enabling an awareness of religion and, Men’s Mental Health awareness for International Men’s Day on 19th November.

A variety of approaches will be used to both inform and engage staff in these events. More recently Men’s Mental Health Day has been supported by a video where our own staff have talked about their mental health experiences. We have at the same time sought to provide mental health information and signposting to support our staff, including those services offered internally through Occupational Health.

8. **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 8.1 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.
- 8.2 Areas of policy changes that are identified in Project(s) are subject to an Equality Impact Assessment.

9. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

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

10. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

11. **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no environmental implications arising from this report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

[12301233 FRA Portfolio Management \(3PT\) - Feb 23.docx](#)
[1076238 Report 1 - FRA Portfolio Management \(3PT\). docx](#)
[22209231 Report 2 - FRA Portfolio Management \(3PT\).docx](#)

The contact name for this report is Marc Hudson, Head of Portfolio, contact number 07973 810139

Wayne Brown
Chief Fire Officer

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

Item 10

11 DECEMBER 2023**1. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS PUBLIC COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

RECOMMENDED

- 1.1 THAT the minutes of the following minutes of previous public Committee meetings, attached as appendices to this report, be noted:

- Scrutiny Committee – Monday, 17 July 2023
- Appointments, Standards and Appeals Committee – Tuesday, 18 July 2023
- Collaboration and Transformation Committee – Monday, 4 September 2023
- Audit and Risk Committee – Monday, 24 July 2023

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is for the Authority to note the minutes of previous public Committee meetings.

3. BACKGROUND

The minutes of the previous Committee meetings have been approved by the relevant meeting as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

4. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

An Equality Impact Assessment is not required.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

7. **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no environmental implications arising from this report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

[West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority Constitution](#)

The contact name for this report is Karen Gowreesunker, Clerk to the Authority – telephone number 07973810338.

Wayne Brown
Chief Fire Officer

Karen Gowreesunker
Clerk to the Authority

Minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee
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Item 10

24 July 2023 at 10:30 hours

Conducted as a public meeting at Headquarters and digitally via
Microsoft Teams

Present: Councillor Barrie, Councillor Jalil, Councillor Mahmood
(Chair), Councillor Spence

Virtually: Councillor Little, Avtar Sohal (Grant Thornton)

Officers: Karen Gowreesunker, Mike Griffiths, Sofia Mahmood,
Chandni Patel, Kal Shoker, Stephen Timmington, Kirsty
Tuffin

38/23 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Mike Agar.

39/23 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest registered.

40/23 **Minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee held on 19 June 2023**

Resolved:

That the minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee held on
19 June 2023 were approved as a correct record.

41/23 **Matters Arising**

No matters were raised.

42/23 **Introductions**

Councillor Mahmood welcomed the new Members of the
Committee and welcomed Sofia Mahmood, who had been
appointed as the new Head of Finance and Procurement, and
Section 151 Officer. Councillor Mahmood thanked Mike
Griffiths for his service and wished him all the best in his
retirement.

43/23 **Statement of Accounts 2022-2023**

Mike Griffiths, Section 151 Officer, presented the Statement of
Accounts 2022-2023.

The report contained a number of key statements, namely:

- The comprehensive income and expenditure statement
- The movement in reserves statement
- The balance sheet
- The cash flow statement

It was noted that general reserves remained a key issue and consideration for the Authority. With regard to unearmarked general fund reserve, there had been a modest movement of £4k, which resulted in a closing balance of £3.862M as at 31 March 2023 (£3.858M as at 31 March 2022). These reserves equalled approximately 3.25% of the Authority's revenue budget. The level of reserve was considered reasonable and provided a degree of headroom as a result.

The balance of earmarked general fund reserves as at 31 March 2023 was £21.413M, a reduction of £8.403M compared to the 31 March 2022 balance of £29.816M and represented a more significant move.

As shown in the Balance Sheet, total usable reserves stood at £28.067M as at 31 March 2023.

It was noted that the Other Long-Term Liabilities (£1,289M) related to how the Service accounted for pensions related matters.

Long-term borrowing had reduced to £29.839M due to no new borrowing being undertaken in 2022/23 and an amount of debt being repaid. The Authority has Property, Vehicles, Plant & Equipment valued at nearly £162M, which these loans have, in previous years, been used to finance.

It was noted that the amount of borrowing was proportionate to the budget and remained in a comfortable position.

It was noted that the Statement of Accounts were un-audited. The external auditor, Grant Thornton, would commence the audit of the Statement of Accounts in September 2023. It is planned for the audited Statement of Accounts along with the Auditor's Findings Report to be submitted to the Committee later in the year.

In answer to Members' questions, the following points were raised:

- No new borrowing had been incurred during 2022/2023. However, it was anticipated that a need to borrow would be likely during 2024/2025 due to reduced capital earmarked reserves. When the Authority borrowed it acquired assets that had a value. Officers would assess the business benefits of the assets and their value to ensure the effectiveness of any borrowing.
- The Authority utilised the Public Works Loan Board for borrowing and always strived to consider any appropriate alternative options to acquire the most competitive rates.

Resolved:

That it be agreed that the draft Statement of Accounts 2022/2023 (unaudited) be approved.

That it be agreed that the draft Statement of Accounts summary for 2022/2023 be noted.

44/23

Treasury Management Annual Report 2022/2023

Kal Shoker, Finance Manager, presented the Treasury Management Report 2022/23.

It was noted that the report was historical and that changes had occurred to the economy and interest rates since the end of the financial year.

The Authority had approved the Treasury Management Strategy in February 2022 and the Committee had received the mid-year update at its meeting in November 2022.

The Committee's attention was drawn to three key treasury management activities:

- The Authority's Capital Expenditure and Financing: total capital expenditure had been £2.419M for 2022/2023, with the majority financed through the use of earmarked reserves (£2.388M). This comprised of the Service's Vehicle Replacement Programme (1.963M), drill tower/training facilities (£0.191M) and roof replacements

(£0.128M). No borrowing was undertaken to finance any capital expenditure in 2022/23.

- The Authority's total debt stood at £30.7M, of which £29.2M was in respect of borrowing with the Public Works Loan Board and the balance £1.5M in respect of the Authority's share of the Ex WMCC. It was noted that the average rate of interest payable on this debt was 5.21%.
- The Authority's investments totalled £26.413M as at 31 March 2023, which are invested with Sandwell MBC as part of the treasury management arrangement with them. Interest is received on the Authority's daily cash balance and is based on the average return achieved by Sandwell MBC plus 10 basis points which for 2022/23 was 2.34%. This compares favourably to the benchmark, the average Sterling Overnight Index Average un compounded rate of 2.24%. The interest received in 2022/23 was greater than the £0.540M revised budget, due to the continuing increase in interest rates. £0.890M was received, which was £0.350 above the revised budget.

Resolved:

That it be agreed that the Treasury Management Annual Report 2022/2023 be noted, and the prudential and treasury indicators approved.

45/23 **Audit Progress and Sector Update**

Avtar Sohal, Grant Thornton (external auditor), presented the Audit Progress and Sector Update.

The report was provided to ensure the Committee remained informed of the progress of the external auditor in delivering their responsibilities.

The Committee were advised that Grant Thornton would be issuing the Audit Plan in September 2023 which will set out the proposed approach to the audit of the Authority's 2022/2023 financial statements. The work will be reported in the Audit Findings Report and Grant Thornton aim to provide their opinion on the Statement of Accounts by December 2023. With regard to the Value for Money arrangements, Grant Thornton intended to issue a joint Auditor's Annual Report for 2021/2022 and 2022/2023 by December 2023.

Resolved:

That it be agreed that the Audit Progress and Sector Update be noted.

46/23 **Update on Topical, Legal and Regulatory Issues (Verbal Update)**

No topical, legal or regulatory issues were raised.

47/23 **Draft Audit and Risk Committee Work Programme 2023/2024**

Kirsty Tuffin, Democratic Services Officer, presented the draft Audit and Risk Committee Work Programme for 2023/2024.

It was noted that all standard reports and items for business, plus Member training, had been included within the draft work programme.

Resolved:

That the draft Audit and Risk Committee Work Plan 2023/2024 be approved.

The meeting closed at 10:58 hours.

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Minutes of the Scrutiny Committee
17 July 2023

Item 10

Conducted as a public meeting at Headquarters and digitally via
Microsoft Teams

Present: Councillor Lloyd (Chair), Councillor Atwal, and Councillor Miki

Virtual: Councillor Dehar and Councillor Waters.

Officers: Richard Stanton, Sam Burton, Tom Embury, Kirsty Tuffin, Kelly Whitmore, Kelly Harding and Kamla Devi-Ahir

18/23 **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Councillor Barrie.

19/23 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest received.

20/23 **Minutes of the Scrutiny Committee held on 24 April 2023**

Resolved:

1. That the minutes of the Scrutiny Committee held on 24 April 2023 were approved as an accurate record of proceedings.

21/23 **Matters Arising**

There were no matters raised.

22/23 **Scrutiny Review of Training and Development Progress Report**

Sam Burton, Head of Development and Inclusion, presented the Scrutiny Review of Training and Development Progress Report that outlined progress made on the Scrutiny Review of Training Development commissioned in April 2023.

The Committee were advised that In January 2023, Scrutiny Committee chose Training and Development as the topic for their next formal review. Following this decision, officers developed the terms of reference and methodology for the review in line with the agreed areas of focus approved by the Committee at their last meeting. It was planned that a report would be brought to the Committee in September 2023, with a further update report a year later.

The Committee were also advised that following the recent publication of the HMICFRS spotlight report on culture and values in the service, the review had been adapted to reflect this. The review would also reflect the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) Leadership Behavioural Framework.

The National Fire Chiefs' Council (NFCC) Leadership Behavioural Framework had also helped shape a pilot for talent pool approach to recruitment and selection processes. The first pilot had begun in March 2023, for group managers and feedback would help shape further development. A further pilot in September would be conducted with Station Commanders. A programme would be developed to prepare individuals for the talent pool process.

The Committee were advised that the Competency Risk Assessment Committee were reviewing the content of e-learning materials available to staff. The trainee firefighter development programme that provided new starters with skills and knowledge to develop into confident firefighters, had been extended from 8 weeks to 12 weeks, following feedback/review conducted by Real World HR.

Following queries, it was agreed that a breakdown of talent pool characteristics (BAME, Gender etc.) be provided to members. Richard Stanton advised members that these figures were being looked into to assess where barriers could be. The use of social media and social events in the community was emphasised.

It was emphasised that this would need to be led by Scrutiny Committee members and evidence-based with members to lead on face-to-face focus groups with stakeholders throughout September. Dates would be confirmed with Members in due course. The Chair of the Committee praised the planned review and confirmed involvement in the focus groups.

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that the progress in relation to the Scrutiny Review of Training and Development be noted.
2. That it be it was agreed that a breakdown of talent pool characteristics (BAME, gender etc.) be provided to members.

23/23 **Fire Control Performance Report Update – Quarter 1 2023/24**

Kelly Whitmore, Group Commander, Fire Control, presented the Fire Control Performance Report – Quarter 1 2023-24, that outlined the operational performance of Fire Control over a three-month period.

The Committee were advised that as per the report, during Qtr. 1 the median call handling time by Fire Control had been 96 seconds. The increase in time handling had been a result of the number of different factors including: the introduction of Risk Based Crewing (increased average time by seven seconds) and the introduction of Vision 4 (increased average times by 14 seconds). Work was underway with Fire Control System Management, Digital and Data and SSS (Vision 4 provider) to review ways to improve the efficiency of the system.

The Committee were advised that the use of dynamic mobilising had reduced the number of resources/ attendances 275 during the reporting period. No requests were made for additional resources so this showed the decision-making process had been effective and resulted in at least 275 resources remaining available for category 1 incidents. During the reporting period, 180 resources had been stood down and Fire Control would be looking into the data to get a better understanding. A dynamic mobilising case study during the Pride parade, as outlined within the report, was highlighted to the Committee.

999Eye, which assists Fire Control with intelligence led mobilisation and resource management, had increased to an all-time high of 67.2% for responses to requests.

Over 4,100 calls relating to automated fire alarm calls had been recovered, which equated to over 20% of all emergency calls received during the reporting period, which had a significant impact. Following concerns raised, Richard Stanton, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, reassured Members that teams worked hard to work with businesses and did monitor repeat offenders to provide assistance and further means where necessary. Members were also reassured that unless a trained member of staff advises a call had been a false alarm, the service would always respond to hospital alarms to provide assistance.

Following queries around resources, Kelly Whitmore advised the Committee that plans had been in place to increase capacity of fire control during busy periods. Initiatives used in previous years was highlighted.

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that the Fire Control performance update for Quarter 1 2023-24, be noted.

24/23 **Diversity, Inclusion, Cohesion and Equality (DICE) Update**

Sam Burton, Head of Development and Inclusion, presented the Diversity, Inclusion, Cohesion Equality (DICE) Update report that outlined the progress made by the service in advancing DICE.

The Committee were advised that the service had achieved the top position of most Inclusive Employer for 2022. This was following achieving a top ten position for several years previously. Work had already been underway to gather evidence for the 2023 submission.

An Inclusion Steering Group had been established in April 2023 to develop an action plan for the wider service. The action plan would be formed from evidence, data and feedback from across the service. The membership of the steering group included stakeholders from all parts of the service.

As outlined therein the report, an update on the ongoing work conducted by the following stakeholder groups was provided to members:

1. Affinity
2. Inspire
3. ASFA
4. Fire Out
5. Neurodiversity

One of the key events held by FireOut was the first Tri-Service Pride Breakfast. The event included representation from the West Midlands Police and West Midlands Ambulance Service. The overall attendance had been 250 individuals, which made it the largest Pride Breakfast outside of London. It had been anticipated that West Midlands Police and West Midlands

Ambulance Service would take the lead in running the tri-service breakfasts for the next two years with the potential to continue to hold it at WMFS Headquarters. A debrief was planned to capture the learning from the event.

The Committee were advised that as part of the services commitment to support serving personnel /veterans, stations flew the 'Armed Services Show Your Support' flag to celebrate the Armed Forces Day. It was also highlighted that the service had obtained a gold award for their support to the armed forces.

The Vanguard Project pilot had now been launched to help re-establish community engagement that declined during the COVID pandemic. The pilot involved the following stations:

- Wolverhampton
- Ladywood
- Ward end
- Highgate
- Foleshill

It was agreed that an update on the Vanguard Project be provided in the next report.

Brave Space Talks had been established for any member of staff to attend and covered off challenging topics such as women's experiences in the service, alcohol and drugs. Talks were underway with the groups to establish the next set of topics that would be covered. An update would be provided in the next report.

Following queries around dyslexia, different languages and application forms, Sam Burton reassured members that there had been an online assessment process in place and if advised, support would be given to these individuals. All outgoing correspondence was available in different languages.

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that the ongoing progress made by the service in relation to DICE be noted.
2. That it be agreed that an update on the Vanguard Project be provided in the next report.

25/23 **Dispute Resolution Report**

Kamla Devi-Ahir, Senior Business Partner, People Support Services, presented the Dispute Resolution Report that outlined the number, type and outcomes of discipline and grievance hearings and other dispute resolution including Employment Tribunal activity that have occurred during the period 1 January 2023 to 30 June 2023.

The Committee were advised that during the period, 14 grievances had been received, two of which were collective grievances. Following analysis of the equality data, no impact had been made upon a specific group. Twenty-one disciplinary cases were received during the same reporting period, 16 of which were gross-misconduct, five misconduct. Following analysis of the equality data, no impact had been made upon a specific group.

During the same reporting period, five new employment tribunals had been received, with five previous tribunals continuing into the above period. It was emphasised that three cases had been submitted from one individual.

The Committee were advised that debriefs were held following all grievance cases including both paper feedback and face-to-face. The service had successfully employed a new Business Partner for Policy and Engagement who would be starting in July 2023. An anonymous hotline had gone live for any complaints with 36 received since its go live date. The service would be changing providers for the service so employees would be made aware via posters and other means to ensure they are aware.

Following concerns around the number of disciplines and their time frames received, members were re-assured that the anonymous reporting line had added to the number of cases and the focus upon the HMICFRS Spotlight report. Police involvement was also highlighted as one of the key reasons for a longer process. The need to reduce the number of cases but not prevent report was acknowledged. 3-day training around culture/behaviours would also be provided to new recruitments.

Following queries.

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that the contents of the Dispute Resolution Report for 1 January 2023 to 30 June 2023 be noted.

26/23 **Draft Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2023-2024**
Tom Embury, Deputy Clerk to the Authority, presented the Draft Scrutiny Committee Work Programme for 2023-2024.

The Committee were advised that following approval at the Fire Authority Annual General Meeting on 26 June 2023, all dates had been confirmed for the municipal year, as per the work programme. Regular reports such as the DICE and Dispute Resolution had been included alongside other reports deemed relevant for the Committee such as the HMICFRS Spotlight report. Members were reassured that any additional items they wished to add would be incorporated into the programme as the year progresses.

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that the Draft Scrutiny Committee Work Programme for 2023-2024, be approved.

27/23 **Any other business**
There was no other business discussed.

Kirsty Tuffin
Portfolio
0121 380 6906

The meeting finished at 11:47 hours.

Item 10

Minutes of the Appointments, Standards and Appeals Committee

18 July 2023 at 10:00 hours
held at Fire Service Headquarters

Present: Councillor(s) Jalil (Chair), Brackenridge (Vice-Chair), Hogarth, Waters, Mahmood

Officers: CFO Wayne Brown, Joanne Simmonds, Tom Embury, Penny Watkins, and Kirsty Tuffin

6/23 To receive apologies for absence (if any)

Apologies were received from Councillor Miks, Councillor Bott and Councillor Kettle, substituted by Councillor Waters.

7/23 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest received.

8/23 Minutes of the Appointments, Standards and Appeals Committee held on 19 April 2023

Resolved:

1. That the minutes of the Appointments, Standards and Appeals Committee held on 19 April 2023 be approved as a correct record.

9/23 Exclusion of the Public and Press

Resolved:

1. That the public and press be excluded from the rest of the meeting to avoid the possible disclosure of exempt information under Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006, relating to an individual.

10/23 **Interview Pack**

Joanne Simmonds, Workforce Planning and Resources Manager, provided an overview of the interview pack, as per the agenda pack. She advised the Committee that the findings from the selection process were included within the agenda pack. It was agreed that the interviews be brought forward subject to applicant approval.

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that the interviews be brought forward subject to applicant approval.

11/23 **To interview for the post of Deputy and Assistant Chief Fire Officers(s) posts**

The first interview was conducted at 10:03am, with Applicant 1. Introductions were provided following by prepared questions from the panel. The interview concluded at 10:57am.

Members deliberated following the interview and evaluated the applicant's performance. It was agreed that the Committee take a short adjournment until 11:35am, proposed by the Chair and seconded by Councillor Brackenridge. The meeting re-convened at 11:35am following approval.

The second interview was conducted at 11:37am, with Applicant 2. Introductions were provided following by prepared questions from the panel. The interview concluded at 12:08pm.

Members deliberated following the interview and evaluated the Applicant's performance.

12/23 **Chair's Announcements**

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that the Appointment, Standards and Appeals Committee adjourn until 13:15 pm. Proposed by the Chair, seconded by Councillor Brackenridge.

13/23 **To interview for the post of Deputy and Assistant Chief Fire Officers(s) posts**

The third interview was conducted at 13:18pm, with Applicant 3. Introductions were provided following by prepared questions from the panel. The interview concluded at 13:52pm.

Members deliberated following the interview and evaluated the Applicant's performance.

It was agreed that the Committee take a short adjournment prior to Applicant 4. Proposed by the Chair and seconded by Councillor Brackenridge. The meeting re-convened at 14:30pm following approval.

It was agreed that agenda item 10 be brought forward and deliberated on prior to agenda item 9. Proposed by the Chair and seconded by Councillor Brackenridge.

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that the Committee take a short adjournment prior to applicant 4.
2. That it be agreed that agenda item 10 be brought forward and deliberated on prior to agenda item 9.

15/23 **To interview for the post of Deputy and Assistant Chief Fire Officers(s) posts**

The fourth interview was conducted at 14:32pm, with Applicant 4. Introductions were provided following by prepared questions from the panel. The interview concluded at 15:16pm.

Members deliberated following the interview and evaluated the Applicant's performance.

16/23 **Chair's Announcements**

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that the provisional second date would no longer be required.

17/23 **Final Deliberations**

Final deliberations of all four applicants took place. Following scorings being submitted, it was agreed that a 10-minute comfort break be agreed. Proposed by the Chair and seconded by Councillor Mahmood. The meeting reconvened at 3:43pm, following approval.

Further deliberations took place on all four applicants. The Chief Fire Officer (CFO) thanked all officers involved in the process. It was agreed that Applicant 1 and Applicant 3 be appointed as the Assistant Chief Fire Officer posts. It was agreed that no appointment be made to the Deputy Chief Fire Officer position at this stage. The CFO would review his options on the post.

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that Applicant 1 and Applicant 3 be appointed as the Assistant Chief Fire Officer posts.
2. That it be agreed that no appointment be made to the Deputy Chief Fire Officer position at this stage. The CFO would review his options on the post.

(Proceedings ended at 15:55pm hours)

Contact Officer: Kirsty Tuffin Portfolio 0121 380 6906

Minutes of the Collaboration and Transformation Committee

04th September 2023

Item 10

Conducted as a public meeting at Headquarters and digitally via Microsoft Teams

Present: Councillor Dehar (Chair), Councillor Kaur, Councillor Lloyd, Councillor Miks, Councillor Hogarth and Councillor Spence

Virtual: Prof Simon Brake.

Officers: Tom Embury, Sofia Mahmood, Jo Bowcock, Karen Gowreesunker and Chandni Patel

Please note: Councillor Miks attended as an observer.
Councillor Spence left at 10:47am. (Agenda Item 3)

10/23 **To receive apologies for absence (if any)**
Cllr Kettle

11/23 **Declarations of Interest**
There were no declarations of interest received.

12/23 **Minutes of the Collaboration and Transformation Committee held on 27 February 2023**
Resolved:
1. That the Minutes of the Collaboration and Transformation Committee held on 15th May 2023 were approved as a correct record of proceedings.

13/23 **Collaboration and Transformation Committee Areas of Focus 2023-24**

Cllr Dehar provided a brief introduction on what was to be discussed in this meeting.

Tom Embury presented the report relation to 3.1 Collaboration and Transformation Committee Terms of Reference. The additional items added are the quoracy of 3 members who eligible to vote and highlighting areas of focus around the committee.

Fig.1- Areas of Consideration for Collaboration and Transformation Committee Work Plan were discussed.

The Committee was advised that as CRMP projects are developed and involve more Collaboration and Transformation, it will be brought into this committee for discussion and moving forward will be a standard agenda item.

The Fire Reform item is subject to a government response and will focus on evaluation of the transformational and collaboration aspects of the Fire Reform Agenda from central government. Once the outcome has been received from the consultation process it will be brought into the committee for discussion.

It was anticipated that we may receive some form of update before summer recess, however this was not obtained.

Regarding Collaboration with Police Services and regional fire and rescue services there was a discussion last year regarding collaboration with ambulance and this matter was referred to the Scrutiny Committee.

This is assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the current collaboration.

Following queries emphasis was made on how effective the blue light services are when working together in the face of government. There are certain risks when services respond individually rather than collectively to certain matters and to include JESIP as part of the response.

A suggestion was made to rephrase one of the objectives of this year to reflect how we currently perform, looking at strategy and transformation and how we can continue to develop. This may deliver this committees business more effectively.

Resolved:

1. To include JESIP in the wider tri-service collaboration as an element for discussion in a future meeting.

It may also help to look at some of the individual elements of it on a service-by-service basis. This similarly applies to local authority collaboration and WMCA collaboration. There are some individual opportunities to look at specific pieces of collaboration.

In terms of Digital transformation, there are plans to provide updates to the committee which are already in the Workplan. Updates within Oracle and the training alongside be provided in future meetings.

Regarding the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) Trailblazer Devolution Deal item, this was a topic that was discussed last year within this committee and has developed quite significantly since then. The devolution deal, published earlier in 2023, will see new powers and funding devolved to the West Midlands Combined Authority. The implication for a service will have grown so this may warrant revisiting.

Similarly, Local Authority collaboration will be assessing the strengths, weaknesses and further opportunities of WMFS collaboration with the seven constituent authorities of the West Midlands.

Regarding, Third/Community Sector collaboration we will continue to get updates in relation to our efforts around reducing health inequalities. This includes our Safe and Well home trials which should be moving forward this year.

Following concerns, Tom Embury advised that all Blue Light services are under same legal duties to collaborate as we are, however as they all have different priorities their actions are based on what is more effective for them.

Professor Simon Brake advised the Fire Service and the Police both sit under Home Office oversight which helps us to speak more freely with our Policing colleagues. There are many opportunities here to collaborate as we did during COVID-19.

Cllr Lloyd informed the committee that he attended the Coventry Scrutiny Board meeting. Doug Jones from West Midlands Fire Service and two operatives from the Ambulance Service and the NHS were also in attendance.

Cllr Lloyd suggested we could do look at joining the Scrutiny and Collaborations and Transformation together for a meeting focused on blue like collaboration. This is to include the Police and Ambulance Service.

Cllr Dehar advised this was discussed before and would be worth moving forward with this idea.

Simon Brake suggested it may be a good idea for Chief officers in advance of the meeting have a meeting of their own to ensure the session is most productive.

Resolved:

1. It was agreed to organise a combined meeting with Scrutiny and Collaboration and Transformation members. This is to include members from the Ambulance, Police and Fire Service.
2. It was agreed to arrange a meeting for the Chief officers ahead of the meeting scheduled with all the Blue light services.

Cllr Lloyd advised one of the concerns raised during a station visit was that there were a lot of different areas/boards.

Karen Gowreesunker advised that we can in terms of a formal route have different ways of communicating critical or risk critical information which is what they will need on a day-to-day basis if things change. Social Media platforms as well as Microsoft Teams are more for informal communication.

Tom Embury advised that this will be reviewed through the digital transformation element, however a breakdown of the operational and business as usual elements may be helpful.

Corporate Communications to provide an update on their communications plan moving forward.

14/23 **Collaboration and Transformation – Work Programme 2023-24**

Tom Embury presented the Work Plan and items to be discussed to in the coming committee meetings.

The Fire Authority white paper will also be presented when available.

No comments were provided on the work programme.

15/23 **Any other business**

Following queries, Tom advised that there will be a report being presented in the Members Engagement Forum later this month

which will highlight some of the results from the CRMP consultation.

Cllr Dehar thanked all the officers for their hard work and continuous support.

Date of the next meeting is on the 6th November 2023.

The meeting closed at 11.08am.

Chandni Patel
Portfolio- Democratic Services
Officer
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