

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

21 MARCH 2016

1. **NON CONSTITUENT MEMBERSHIP OF WEST MIDLANDS
COMBINED AUTHORITY**

Report of the Clerk to the Authority.

RECOMMENDED

THAT Members note the proposal submitted to the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) seeking non-constituent membership of the combined authority.

2. **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

This report is submitted to set out the basis on which West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority (WMFRA) seeks non-constituent membership of the WMCA.

3. **BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 On 17 November 2015 the Chancellor and Secretary of State confirmed the WMCA devolution agreement. The proposed agreement with government will see it make an annual contribution worth £40 million for 30 years, to support an overall investment package worth £8 billion, alongside the creation of up to half a million jobs.
- 3.2 The proposed deal will give the emerging WMCA, working across the geography of the three LEPs, the funding and the powers to further grow the regional economy and focus on the issues that really matter to the people and businesses of the region; transport, jobs, skills and homes.
- 3.3 During December 2015 each of the 7 Metropolitan Councils of Birmingham, Coventry, Walsall, Wolverhampton, Sandwell, Dudley and Solihull, voted on the devolution agreement at full council and became Constituent members of the WMCA.

- 3.4 It is anticipated that the proposed deal will receive parliamentary approval during Spring/Summer 2016.
- 3.5 WMFRA has demonstrated its ambition to align more closely with the devolved WMCA, through previous consultation responses and ongoing developing collaborative relationships, across the 7 Metropolitan Councils. WMFRA believes that alignment to the WMCA will ensure the communities of the West Midlands receive the best possible delivery of integrated services currently provided through the delivery of The Plan. It also provides West Midlands Fire Service with the ability to widen the level of services we provide to achieve better outcomes for our communities and reduce the burden to the public sector.
- 3.6 To reinforce this ambition, on the 23 February 2016 WMFRA wrote to Mr. K. Ireland, the Secretary to the Combined Authority, proposing membership of the WMCA as a non-constituent member. This would enable a formal approach to engagement for future integration and governance issues in the route towards the devolution deal for the West Midlands.
- 3.7 The letter to the WMCA is detailed in Appendix 1.
- 3.8 A response to this letter was received on the 10th March 2016, offering WMFRA 'Observer' status at the Board without membership. This provides the Authority with the ability to fully participate in the debate and work of the WMCA, but does not provide voting rights. Further detail is set out in the letter in Appendix 2.
- 3.9 Constituent and non-constituent members have to sign up to, and be named within, the West Midlands Combined Authority Scheme.
- 3.10 In the Scheme sent to Government only constituent members have voting rights. However, once the WMCA is established, constituent members can give voting rights to non-constituent members, for example, allowing them to vote on matters to do with economic development.
- 3.11 Constituent members may only be signed up to one combined authority, whilst non-constituent members can be signed up to one or more combined authorities.

4. **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 will not lead to a policy change.

5. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

The outcomes of this report if in favour of the proposal submitted, will enable WMFS to strengthen and widen its approaches to the provision of its services required through the National Framework, as set out in the Community Safety Strategy (IRMP) and The Plan.

6. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The commitment to becoming an Observer would incur an annual cost of £25,000. Funding for this in the first year could be met from overall Authority savings identified in the current financial year. Any ongoing commitments would need to be considered as part of the Authority's annual budget setting process.

7. **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no environmental implications.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

WMCA Devolution agreement

The contact name for this report is Karen Gowreesunker, telephone number 0121 380 6678.

KAREN GOWREESUNKER
CLERK TO THE AUTHORITY

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@WestMidsFire #RTB

Mr K Ireland
Managing Director
City of Wolverhampton Council
Civic Centre, St Peters Square
Wolverhampton
WV1 1RL

Our Ref: StrategicHub/Gov/A230216
Please ask for: Asif Afsar
Tel: 0121 380 6906
Date: 23 February 2016

Also e-mail to: keith.ireland@wolverhampton.gov.uk

Dear Mr Ireland,

Proposal to become a Non-Constituent Member of the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA)

I write further to West Midlands Fire Service's participation in the West Midlands Combined Authority. We have welcomed discussions through the Public Services Leadership Board. This letter builds on the presentation delivered by Phil Loach (Chief Fire Officer) to the PSLB.

I recognise that there is no blueprint for developing connections with the WMCA and the fire and rescue service, however we would like to formalise an approach to take forward discussions on the value we can add with respect to future integration and governance issues. I therefore wish to confirm our interest in becoming a non-constituent member of the WMCA. I believe this route will provide us with the appropriate opportunity to be engaged in the progress towards the devolution deal for the West Midlands, at the appropriate officer and political lead level.

WMFS continues to deliver effective transformation in order to meet a 46% reduction in central government funding. A key part of our reform has been the integration of prevention, protection and response activities and the move to identifying the causes of risk and vulnerability. This directly impacts on the wider needs of our communities and makes a significant contribution in creating economically sustainable communities across the West Midlands.

Becoming a non-constituent member of the WMCA will provide the opportunity to build on existing collaborative partnerships with the Local Authorities as part of public service reform. It will also provide the best opportunity for input from a FRS perspective, to the legislative road map which will enable the devolution deal in the most economic, efficient and effective way that is in the public interest.

I welcome the opportunity to discuss this letter further and look forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully,



Karen Gowreesunker
Clerk to the West Midlands Fire & Rescue Authority





Karen Gowreesunker
Fire Service Headquarters
99 Vauxhall Road
Birmingham
B7 7HW

10 March 2016

Dear Karen

Non-Constituent Membership of West Midlands Combined Authority

Thank you for your letter on the proposal for West Midlands Fire & Rescue Authority to become a Non-Constituent member of the WMCA.

Constituent members have considered your request and have agreed to offer West Midlands Fire & Rescue Authority Observer status at the Board without membership status but with a financial contribution of £25,000 and the ability to fully participate in the debate and work of the Combined Authority. In the unlikely event that a vote is needed, Observers (your status) will not be able to participate in voting, as voting is reserved for Constituent and Non-Constituent members only.

Whilst I understand this is not the full outcome you were looking for I trust the above is a pragmatic solution. The WMCA look forward to working with the West Midlands Fire & Rescue Authority which will allow even better joint working and joint visioning of public sector services.

Turning now to the practical realities of Observer status I can confirm the following:

Officer Programme Team – The Chief Fire Officer or substitute has a seat. These meetings are currently Friday mornings 9.00 – 11.00 a.m.

Shadow Board (and then Board after Vesting Day) – The Chair of the West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority or substitute has a seat. The Chief Fire Officer is also allowed to attend. These meetings are normally held on a Friday at 11.00 a.m. – 1.00 p.m. I attach a meeting schedule for information.

Continued.....

Following our discussion, I have prepared a paper for Shadow Board to fully approve this position at its meeting on the 11 March 2016.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Keith Ireland". The script is cursive and fluid.

Keith Ireland
Clerk to West Midlands Combined Authority
keith.ireland@wolverhampton.gov.uk

cc Councillor Bob Sleigh – Chair WMCA
cc Councillor Darren Cooper – Vice Chair WMCA