

**WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**

**11 DECEMBER 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 Kettle, Councillor Jalil,  
Councillor Lloyd, Councillor Mahmood, Councillor Little,  
Councillor Waters, Councillor Ward, Councillor Spence,  
Sasha Hitchins - Fire Brigade's Union.

43/23 **To receive Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Councillor Kaur and Professor S Brake.

44/23 **Declarations of Interest**

The Chair, Councillor Brackenridge, and Councillor Little declared a personal non-pecuniary interest in anything that mentions the Fire Fighters Pensions scheme as a recipient.

45/23 **Chair's Announcements**

The Chair congratulated all winners and nominees from the Rewards and Recognition event and praised all those involved in setting up the event.

Members were informed that the Chair was asked to provide feedback on behalf of the Fire Authority to the HMICFRS Chief Inspector, Andy Cooke, for his Annual State of Fire Report. This letter has also been shared with the members for their information.

It was also an opportunity to highlight the excellent work that the service has been doing in the area of culture and values, and in building on the most recent HMICFRS report. This rated the service as "outstanding" for effectiveness and emergency response.

Cllr Hogarth also provided thanks to those who organised the Rewards and Recognition event.

46/23 **Chief Fire Officer's Announcements**

Wayne Brown, Chief Fire Officer thanked Fire Authority members for attending the Rewards and Recognition event.

Wayne Brown highlighted we have won the most inclusive employee award for 2<sup>nd</sup> year in a row, and he is very proud of this achievement.

The provisions for maternity and adoption leave are now being implemented with a focus on removing the pay gap.

For the members awareness, groups within the Service will be interviewed as part of the HMIFRS inspection. This will include Councillor Lloyd.

The Chair recognised the positive changes occurring within the organisation and is pleased with the organisation for being recognised as the most inclusive employer of the year.

47/23 **Minutes of the Fire and Rescue Authority held on 13 February 2023**

Resolved

1. To amend the attendance list to include Councillor Spence and Councillor Ward and amend apologies to include Cllr Kaur.
2. Following amendments, the minutes of the Fire Authority meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> December 2023 be approved as a correct record.

48/23 **Treasury Management Mid-Year Review Report 2023-24**

Sofia Mahmood provided an update on the report and advised this is the mid-year performance of the Treasury Management function, following the presentation to Audit & Risk Committee on 27 November 2023.

Section 4.2 highlights the key changes to note. There are no changes to the Prudential Indicators from that approved in February 2023 as part of the Annual Budget.

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.

The changes are about the forecast turn of the capital program. We had an approved budget in 23/24 of £9m and we are forecasted to spend £6m of that. This is due to the deferral of some vehicles because of the trial run of the BRVs. No real impact is suggested.

Interest rates are due to reduce which will change within our budget forecasts going forward.

Resolved

1. That the recommendations are agreed.

#### 49/23 **Refreshed Member Code of Conduct**

Karen Gowreesunker, Clerk to the authority, provided an update on the report and that members approve the updated Member Code of Conduct included in Appendix A.

The Appointments, Standards and Appeals Committee (ASA), 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. The ASA committee also propose that a specific training session for all members will be developed to follow this meeting of the Fire Authority. 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.

Resolved.

1. All recommendations are agreed.

50/23 **An Analysis of Progress of Quarterly Performance Against Our Plan Qtr 2 2023-24**

Jo Bowcock, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, presented the report and recommended that the Authority note the status of the Service's key performance indicators in the second quarter of 2023/24 (Appendix 1).

As per the report in Response, PI-1, average attendance times for Category 1 incidents (the most critical of the four categories) were 4 minutes 48 seconds in quarter two 2023/24.

PI-5/6 regarding Safe and Wells, 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% less than the target and slightly higher than the 58% achieved in quarter 1.

During quarter 2, 52,508 Safe & Well points were achieved, with a total of 101,513 points recorded year to date.

Regarding PI 12, as per the report In Q2 of 2023/24 there were 61 Deliberate Derelict Building Fires, which is 27 above target and the upper tolerance level for the quarter. There have been 22 more incidents this year compared to the same period last year. This is a Service-wide issue; however, we are ensuring that all hot spots are being targeted.

Regarding PI 13, 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. Since the beginning of the financial year there have been 173 Accidental Non-Domestic Fires, 15 (-8.9%) below the target for this period.

Regarding 14a/14b 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. Overall there has been a reduction in false alarms.

PI-16 The number of female uniformed staff, we are reporting 183 against a target of 199. 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.

PI 18/19/20 is underperforming against our tolerance levels. We have found that mental health is one of the reasons we are seeing more absences. This is being addressed and are looking to be more proactive on the matter.

Following queries regarding Safe & Wells, Jo Bowcock advised we can share statistics of how many visits are done in each area. We have access to data that breaks it down on a specific street level of the risk presented and allows us to understand how we make our communities safer.

Resolved.

1. To share Statistics in a report for the next Members Engagement Forum on how many Safe & Well visits are done in each area/district.

The report that will go through to Scrutiny will remain the same, however a breakdown can be included.

Councillor Lloyd thanked all those who are making the changes within the Service and implementing it.

The Chair recognised the challenges and thanked all those who continue to work to improve the service.

All recommendations are agreed.

### 51/23 **Portfolio Management (3PT)- Q3**

Wayne Brown advised this report is 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

#### **Jo Bowcock provided an update on Community Risk Reduction Programme.**

As per the report Protection has been leading on the CRMP Automatic Fire Alarms (AFAs) mobilising project and has

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 AFAs at Care Homes.

WMFS is leading the regional building safety regulator team and is 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 buildings are safe.

Regarding Prevention, an update was provided on the arson conviction in Stoke on Trent. 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".

Jo Bowcock advised following recent incidents regarding Lithium-Ion Batteries, 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.

In Response, 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.

The Chair thanked Jo Bowcock for the update.

**Simon Barry, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, presented an update on Enabling Services Programme.**

Section 6.1, as per the report Simon Barry advised that we have moved forward with our business-led approach to Oracle, this will put the needs of our service users in helping them through the change at the forefront of any further developments. As the new element will have to go through a governance process, any further development has now been paused.

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. This will be live in Spring and will help our staff manage teams more effectively.

Section 6.2, as per the report provides an update on the Emergency Services Show. In September 2023 WMFS had 2 stands at the Emergency Services Show where we exhibited a number of services. Corporate Communications took a key role in making it a positive experience.

Section 6.3 refers to Finance and Procurement. Several training sessions have been held with managers across the organisation to share key information and actions in finance and procurement. 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.

The Chair thanked Simon Barry for his update.

**Richard Stanton, Assistant Chief Fire Officer provided an update on People Programme.**

Section 7.1, as per the report, refers to the thematic inspection. WMFS are now in the 2<sup>nd</sup> week of inspection and are due to be completed on the 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2023. HMICFRS will initially provide a hot debrief to the Service in January 2024, before publishing an overall report capturing the collective findings of all 10 sample services in June 2024.

Section 7.2.3; refers to DBS checks and has now been implemented across the Service with all employees. At the time of writing this report, 79% of employees either have DBS checks in place or are in the process of completing their checks.

Regarding Section 7.3.1.2, 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.

Cllr Dehar highlighted how well WMFS demonstrates diversity and suggested an online newsletter which is available to the community.

Regarding Lithium-Ion batteries, Cllr Miks welcomes the fact more information is provided via the website, however, there is a concern about the relevant training firefighters are receiving.

Regarding Safeside, Cllr Miks suggested extending the visits to those outside of West Midlands.

Resolved

1. To arrange a visit to Safeside for members.

Following queries, Jo Bowcock advised there is a significant amount of research being done nationally on Lithium-Ion batteries and how best to deal with them. From a preventative perspective, safety advice is being provided.

Richard Stanton advised we use social media accounts to help promote what we do as a Service to promote key events such as Black History Month.

Regarding Apprenticeships, it is an area within People Programme that is researched and discussed.

Following concerns regarding 5.4.2, AI in Fire control, Jo Bowcock advised safety and security are a top priority when it comes to AI. The relevant research is being carried out and will be shared in due course.

Councillor Hogarth suggested having some form of communication to send out to communities, advising them of the risks of keeping Lithium-Ion batteries on charge.

Resolved

1. To send communications regarding Lithium-Ion advising communities on how to best use items with these batteries. To then have a dashboard to signpost people for further information.

## 52/23 **Minutes of Previous Public Committee Meetings**

Resolved

1. That the minutes of the Previous Public Committee Meetings be approved as an accurate record.

53/23 **Date of next meeting**

To note the next Fire Authority meeting is to be amended from the 5 February to the 19 February 2024

The meeting ended at 12.20pm