

**WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**

**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 1<sup>st</sup> 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 26<sup>th</sup> 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 31<sup>st</sup> 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 1<sup>st</sup> 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 1<sup>st</sup> 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.