

## **WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**

**26 JUNE 2023**

### **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**

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

### **3. BACKGROUND**

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

### **4. DELIVERABLES**

- 4.1 The Programme Executives (Brigade Managers) are accountable to the Portfolio Executive (Chief 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 deliverables (aims and objectives) of the three Programmes are shown below, supported by recent Programme achievements.

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

- 6.1 There was successful engagement in national campaigns such as National Volunteers Week, National Sprinkler Week and Road Safety Week.

To help highlight the importance of sprinklers and their ability to save lives, a press release was issued with a dramatic video where a West Midlands parent detailed that she, her partner and young son owe their lives to sprinklers after they doused a fire in their high-rise home.

The dramatic audio of the 999 call she made to Staffordshire and West Midlands Fire Control has been released within the video, painting a picture of how the control room operator relayed fire survival guidance as fire crews made their way to the scene. The drama unfolded in the early hours of 12 April 2023 at Salisbury Tower in Ladywood, Birmingham. Link to full article below:

<https://www.wmfs.net/news/ladywood-mum-praises-life-saving-sprinkler-system-after-fire-in-tenth-floor-flat/>

6.1.2 Emergency Planning

The Emergency Planning team (as the lead authority) are working closely with the Local Resilience Forum (LRF) to plan and deliver Control of Major Accident Hazards (COMAH) exercises in line with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) schedule with one scheduled for November. Additionally, to this they continue to work with Fire Control to develop action plans for COMAH incidents.

On 28-30 March 2023, the WMFS took part in a National Power Outage Exercise (Ex. Mighty Oak) which was commissioned by the Home

Office to test LRFs. This was a 3-day exercise which tested Business continuity plans, following this the service will continue to develop its National Power Outage actions plans. This exercise is being debriefed by both the LRF and by the Service to ensure that we are prepared for business continuity events such as these.

UNISON, the UK's largest Trade Union and the WMFS's 2nd largest Trade Union (TU) by way of membership (non-operational staff), have informed the Service that they intended to ballot for national strike action. Ballot papers were despatched on 23 May 2023 with the earliest potential strike date being 16<sup>th</sup> July 2023. WMFS are currently undertaking an impact assessment to determine any likely/foreseeable impacts that may arise from UNISON members entering strike action.

### 6.1.3 Response

#### ISAR deployments

In February/March 2023, members of our UK United Kingdom International Search and (ISAR) capability have deployed to both Türkiye and Malawi as a part of the (UK ISAR) team response.

#### Türkiye - February 2023

Eight WMFS personnel travelled to Türkiye as part of the UK's response to devastating earthquakes that have struck the south of the country and northern Syria.

Thousands of people have been killed or injured, and hundreds of buildings destroyed. WMFS were among 14 UK fire and rescue services (FRSs) to have answered the call for international help.

Those deployed were volunteer members of UK International Search and Rescue (UKISAR). They include search dogs and handlers and have been joined by dedicated medical teams who volunteer from UK organisations outside of the fire and rescue service. This deployment, sanctioned by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO, is the latest example of UKISAR volunteers selflessly answering an international appeal for help.

## Malawi – March 2023

Members of the West Midlands Fire Service (WMFS) deployed to Malawi as part of the United Kingdom International Search and Rescue (UK ISAR) team response to devastating storms that have swept the country.

The request for UK assistance from the Malawian government came after it declared a state of disaster in 10 southern districts, as Storm Freddy hit for a second time in the same month. WMFS is among other UK fire and rescue services to have answered the call for international help, by sending a 27-person flood response.

This deployment, sanctioned by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) comes just a month after 77 members arrived back in the UK from earthquake-hit Türkiye.

### 6.1.4 Incident Command Review

The Service has recently undertaken a review of our Incident Command capability. Complementing our aspiration to be operationally excellent, the review looked at all four levels within the UKFRS Incident Command structure:

- Level 1 (Initial)
- Level 2 (Intermediate)
- Level 3 (Advanced)
- Level 4 (Strategic)

Alongside the policies, structures, systems, and processes in place, we also looked at how they are applied, to provide assurance that this critical aspect of all response operations enables the assertive, effective and safe resolution of incidents.

This has culminated in a schedule of work for the next 12 months to ensure that we can deal with incidents excellently. WMFS is absolutely committed to setting all current and aspiring Incident Commanders up to succeed and this future programme of both organisational and individual development, will enable all incident commanders to be confident, assertive, effective and safe in the operational environment

### 6.1.5 24 /7 System Approach Review

Flexi Duty Officers are our level two commanders who respond to more complex and specialist incidents. Our current model includes 48 officers spread over six command teams. They work a six-week model which includes weekdays and one weekend.

A review of the Flexible Duty Shift (FDS) model commenced in January 2022.

Formal consultation began through the JCC process in August 2022 based on the premise of increasing the number of Flexi Duty Officers (FDOs) on duty from a minimum of 8 to 10 at any one time to manage community risk. It also proposed a number of other recommendations to provide fairer distribution of incidents that will be attended by the cohort.

Consultation has now recommenced following its postponement in December due to Industrial Action planning. An interim solution was achieved in December 2022 whereby 10 FDOs are on continuous duty on each weekday. This continuation of the consultation is now underway, and we are encouraging the cohort to offer feedback and solutions. Weekly briefing sessions have been arranged for FDO to drop into and discuss any ideas, issues, and thoughts. The Representative Bodies are also being engaged on a weekly basis to discuss and engage.

### 6.1.6 BA Procurement

We are currently in the final phase of the tendering process for the procurement of new Breathing Apparatus (BA) sets as part of our BA Set Replacement Process. Our specification will challenge the sector to ensure that we have access to the most innovative, technologically advanced BA Sets which will future proof ourselves in the years to come. We have recently undertaken a rigorous testing programme at the Fire Service College of the equipment from the suppliers involved in the tendering process. This, along other considerations will determine which supplier will be awarded the contract. We are working towards an implementation of new BA at the beginning of 2024.

### 6.1.7 Vehicle Replacement Programme (VRP)

During the last 5 months, five new Pump Rescue Ladders (PRLs) were commissioned at the following Fire Stations:

- Sutton Coldfield - a new Technical Rescue Pump (TRP) has been commissioned and delivered to the new Technical Rescue Station at Sutton.
- Dudley
- West Bromwich
- Erdington
- Ward End

### 6.1.8 Operations

The sudden passing of Station Commander Simon Wheatley has undoubtedly sent shockwaves through the Service, particularly those who worked closest to him. We continue to liaise with Simon's family on funeral arrangements as well as working closely with colleagues supporting them through this difficult time.

6.1.9 Risk Based Crewing consultation closed on 6 June with an agreement to implement this approach at our 3 multi-pump stations (Coventry; Walsall and Highgate). Risk Based Crewing continues to allow us more flexibility to resource incidents to risk, both in terms of vehicles and number of crew.

We have attended several large-scale incidents in recent months which has included a 15-pump fire in Coventry and a 10-pump fire in Aston. Our average attendance time of 04:49 for category 1 incidents has supported our assertive, safe, and effective approach to dealing with incidents effectively.

We have taken an evidence-based decision to issue personal respirators to all operational staff, including resilience officers and flexi duty officers. Roll out began in May 2023 and are now in use across the Service. Initial feedback has been positive from crews using them and the issuing of respirators will improve the health and wellbeing of employees.

## 6.2 Prevention

Safe and Wells being completed from partner referrals now equates to nearly 60% as our commitment to partnership relationships continues to grow, such as the pilot with Orbit Housing and Birmingham City Council to use the SafeLink's online Safe and Well tool to refer tenants.

With a focus since August 2022 on quality of Safe and Well visits, rather than a requirement of quantity per appliance per day, the Safe and Well average assessment points have risen consistently showing these visits are being targeted at the most vulnerable communities.

New WMFS fire investigation dog 11-month-old working cocker spaniel, Giddy, completed her training in April 2023 alongside her handler Fire Investigator Alex Daw and they have both been attending incidents since.

WMFS Fire Investigator, Luke Beckett, was featured in an episode of the BBC series "Forensics: The Real CSI" where he investigated the cause of a severe recycling incident.

Speed Indication Devices have been used within the Birmingham Command since 2017. In April this was rolled out to Sandwell Command area to make the community aware of their road speed in order that it is reduced, and to support crews to target road safety interventions.

## 6.3 Protection

Safe and Strong digital workbooks and linked data analysis dashboard are now fully operational allowing our staff to collate; analyse and interpret safe and strong data in real time. This allows our crews to make more targeted Safe and Strong visits as well as share learning with other businesses and crews quickly and efficiently.

We continue to be instrumental in the momentum of the roll out of the Building Safety Regulations (BSR) for high rise buildings working alongside other regional BSR Manager and National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) leads.

## 7. **ENABLING SERVICES PROGRAMME (ES) – HIGHLIGHTS**

### 7.1 HQ Inclusion and Collaboration

This project has been initiated, to continue the work begun by the HQ Transformation project of providing agile workspace. The first phase of the project has seen all staff being relocated on the same floor of the building, this is to enable more effective collaborative working and underpin our commitment to 'Everything Connected'.

### 7.2 Corporate Communications

#### 7.2.1 The CRMP Consultation planning is progressing well ahead of July's planned launch.

Planning has begun to consider refreshed branding, coupled with a new campaign to reflect the Service's approach to 'People, Professionalism and Pride'.

#### 7.2.2 Social media campaigns in support of The King's Coronation and Birmingham Pride were well-supported across the Service and our communities.

#### 7.2.3 Digital and Data

#### 7.2.4 Service Level Agreements (SLAs) for business-as-usual first-line ICT support remain on-track and have been improved upon from the previous quarter.

#### 7.2.5 Upgrades to connectivity at our stations continue and updated WIFI has been installed to support digitally enabled working practices.

#### 7.2.6 Legacy-system transformation will deliver an autumn launch of a new Time and Attendance software system to improve current functionality, in collaboration with the People Programme. This project will also deliver updated Fleet and Asset Tracking systems.

### 7.2.7 Oracle

- In response to user-experience feedback from our stations, a refreshed approach to training and communication of updates and releases and progress has been well-received across the board.
- Staff are now getting used to these important changes for us as a Service. Over 100 'champions' have been recruited across the Service to support this and provide ongoing local training and provide key feedback.
- Oracle Guided Learning (which allows people to learn by doing) is receiving over 300 unique uses per day and all software is being reviewed through neuro-diversity assurance.
- Competency Risk and Standardised Assessment (CRSA) dashboards for managers and users have been going live sequentially across all required business areas and will be in place by the end of June. This will provide greater assurance of our staff competency.
- An Oracle Development Session for all Fire Authority Members is scheduled to take place on the 10 July 2023.

### 7.2.8 Sustainability

- WMFS was represented (and presented) at the West Midlands Combined Authority's (WMCA's) Green Network, whilst the scope of collaborative-working with Staffordshire FRS in support of this remit has been broadened.
- 12-month and whole-of-life (2041) Roadmaps towards carbon neutrality have been completed and reports on UN Compact and transfer of Environmental Responsibility have been prepared.
- Sustainability will form part of our CRMP public consultation so we can understand which areas are most important to our communities.
- The Strategic Enabling Team (SET) have committed to developing a greater understanding to allow an embedded Sustainability strategy, ensuring our work stays current and future generations are safer, stronger and healthier.

- A dashboard has been created to monitor and assess against 147 areas of legal compliance required of the Service.

#### 7.2.9 Finance and Procurement

- The 2021/22 Statement of Accounts were signed-off in March 2023 with an unqualified external audit opinion.
- Global supply chain issues have been slowly improving, based on feedback from ongoing Contract Management discussions; price increases are being monitored.
- Internal assurance work is being undertaken with departmental stakeholders around procurement policy compliance, to ensure best practice is maintained.
- Preparation for Public Sector procurement reforms, due in 2024, is also underway. The Procurement Bill, looking to improve regulation and efficiency, is currently going through Parliament.

### 8. **PEOPLE PROGRAMME – HIGHLIGHTS**

#### 8.1 New Strategic Goals (in line with People, Professionalism & Pride)

Agreed by Richard Stanton (ACFO and Director People), Kelly Harding (new to Service as Head of People Support) and Samantha Burton (Head of People Development and Inclusion).

- *Ensuring our workforce reflects the diverse communities it serves, at all levels in the Service.*
- *Creating an environment which enables everyone to thrive at work.*
- *Ensuring everyone knows how they contribute to the delivery of excellent services.*
  - *A safe and healthy place to work for all.*

#### 8.2 People, Culture, Development and Inclusion: Recommendations Mapping

##### 8.2.1 March's release of HMICFRS's 'Values & Culture in Fire & Rescue Services' saw the Service accept all 35 recommendations; cross-

department work is underway to ensure we meet key-milestone deadlines.

8.2.2 The People Programme has further agreed to collate recommendations from an additional 7 contemporary reports and has undertaken a cross-mapping exercise to inform priority workstreams/dependencies.

8.2.3 Work is continuing to develop a metric of progress measurement against these recommendations, aligned to tasks as part of a smart-project environment within 3PT.

### 8.3 Inclusion Action Plan

8.3.1 Following a review of the Joint Cultural Implementation Plan (JCIP), an Inclusion Steering Group has been established to develop and deliver this Action Plan. It will be evidence-based and underpinned by data to ensure we meet our Strategic Goals.

### 8.4 Departmental/Functional Reviews

8.4.1 People Support Services has undergone phase-one of a review with phase two now underway to look at potential delivery models of those service improvements identified.

8.4.2 A review of Trainee Firefighter Development Programme (TFDP) is also underway with the target of revised course delivery for new-entrant recruits by August 2023.

8.4.3 The scope, stakeholder agreement and roadmap has been agreed for the Competency Risk Assessment (CRA) review.

8.4.4 A review of Pensions is being scoped to ensure compliance against recent report recommendations.

### 8.5 Health and Wellbeing

8.5.1 A Mental Health Productivity Programme (MHPP) pilot saw 50% of our staff complete a wellbeing survey across April/May. A thematic evaluation is due imminently to shape our delivery of support services.

## 8.6 Attendance Management Governance Group

8.6.1 This group has been set up, with a core Action Plan in-development, aiming to improve attendance, support employee wellbeing and address other key contributors to the current ridership factor deficit.

## 8.7 Managing Vacancies and Development Pathways

8.7.1 Alongside an expansion of Talent Pools to ranks/grades below Group Commander, work is underway to explore all elements of career progression with supporting toolkits now being developed.

8.7.2 This includes ensuring our approach to both Positive Action and Future Leader Development provides, the best platform for all to succeed, across all levels of the Service.

## 9. **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

9.1 In preparing this report an initial Equality Impact Assessment is not required and has not been carried out because the matters contained in this report will not lead to a policy change.

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

## 10. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

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

## 11. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

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

## 12. **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

12.1 There are no environmental implications arising from this report.

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Portfolio Management - Fire Authority Report June 2022

10706222 FRA Portfolio Management (3PT).docx

Portfolio Management – Fire Authority Report Oct 2022

[12009221 FRA Portfolio Management \(3PT\) - Oct 22.docx](#)

[12301233 FRA Portfolio Management \(3PT\) - Feb 23.docx](#)

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