

## **Minutes of the Scrutiny Committee**

**23 May 2022**

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

**Present:** Councillor Spence (Chair), Councillor Iqbal, Councillor Ferguson.

**Virtual:** Sarah Middleton and Shirley Haines.

**Officers:** Andrea Simmonds, Kate Alliss, Kirsty Tuffin, Pete Wilson, Simon Barry, Joanne Simmonds, Kelly Whitmore, Kamla Devi-Ahir.

07/22 **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Councillor Dehar, Councillor Locke (substituted by Cllr Iqbal) and Cllr Barrie (substituted by Cllr Ferguson).

08/22 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest received.

09/22 **Minutes of the Scrutiny Committee held on 23 May 2022**

Please note: Both Councillor Iqbal and Councillor Ferguson had not been present at the last Committee meeting to agree the minutes as a correct record of proceedings.

Resolved:

1. That the minutes of the Scrutiny Committee held on 23 May 2022 were moved due to Cllr Iqbal and Cllr Ferguson not being present at the last Committee meeting.

10/22 **Scrutiny Review of Safe & Well**

Andrea Simmonds, Head of Community Safety, presented the Scrutiny Review of Safe and Well 2022 report that outlined the final scoping proposal for Scrutiny Committee to review safe and wells (SAW).

The Committee were advised that as agreed by the Committee on 14 February 2022, a Sub-Committee met in April 2022 to develop the scoping document, as per appendix 1 of the report. As agreed previously, the following areas of work had been concluded, with the exception of the Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) inspection (expected conclusion and feedback end of May 2022), and reflected the current situation within the scoping document:

- Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) inspection March and May 2022.
- Creation and commencement of project delivery for Reducing Health Inequalities Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) objective.
- Internal customer satisfaction survey.
- External customer satisfaction and impact evaluation survey number 3.
- Introduction of SAW delivery PowerBi dashboard – SAW and Remote SAW (RSAW).
- Introduction of SAW evaluation and a PowerBi dashboard.
- Evidence from station prevention evaluation
- Evidence from service peer assessments.
- Fire standard for prevention self-assessment.

It was agreed that the review would take place over a 6-month period, with the sub-committee kept up to date throughout and would meet after 3 months. The Sub-Committee would also be invited to the following workshops:

1. Risk stratification including referrals and relationships with partners
2. Record keeping
3. Delivery including training and development
4. Performance management, quality assurance and evaluation.

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that the Committee considered and approved the recommendations to proceed with the review of Safe & Well (SAW), as outlined in the report.

11/22

**Fire Control Performance Report Update – Quarters 1-4 2021-22**

Kelly Whitmore, Group Commander – Fire Control, presented the Fire Control Performance Report – Quarters 1-4 2021-22, that outlined the operational performance of Fire Control over a 12-month period.

The Committee were advised that, as per the report, of the 48,956 emergency calls received for West Midlands Fire Service (WMFS), Fire Control mobilised resources on 54% of occasions. Mobilisation to calls had been dependent upon the following:

- Call challenged automated fire alarms (AFAs)
- Call challenged special service calls that were deemed non-emergency
- Repeat 999 calls
- Use of 999eye footage/imagery

The Committee were advised that Fire Control amended the initial level of response 2,474 times throughout 2021-2022 for incidents in the West Midlands area and the totals included within the report has either been increased/decreased attendance from the standard pre-determined levels of response. 5% (1364) had been increased attendance and 4% (1110) had been decreased attendance.

Work had been conducted with the Command-and-Control Supplier, Capita, to upgrade the Vision Command and Control system used for integrated calls, incident and resource management across WMFS, and to upgrade the current 'Vision 3' to 'Vision 4'. The go live for Vision 4 had been delayed until 6 June 2022 due to issues that occurred during testing.

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that the Fire Control performance update for quarters 1-4 2021-22, be noted.

12/22

**Diversity, Inclusion, Cohesion, Equality (DICE) Update**

Joanne Simmonds, People Support Manager, presented the bi-annual Diversity, Inclusion, Cohesion, Equality (DICE) Update that outlined the progress made by West Midlands Fire Service in advancing DICE.

The Committee were advised that, as per the report, the Neurodiversity Group had now been launched and had been interacting with employees via their own internal MESH site. The stakeholder group 'Inspire' were preparing for both local and national events such as Simmer Down, Notting Hill Carnival and preparations were underway for Black History Month. The Asian Fire Service Association (AFSA) had assisted with the organising of the AFSA Empowering Women event, hosted by West Midlands Fire Service alongside supporting to raise awareness around Ramadan. The Committee were advised that a member of staff had been recognised at the first British Sikh awards held in Birmingham in February 2022, an event that recognised achievements from inspiring individuals who had positively impacted in a variety of different areas.

The key figures on the workforce profile, as at 1<sup>st</sup> February 2022, highlighted to the Committee were:

- WMFS employed a total of 1894 employees of which:
  1. 1392 (73%) were uniform, 440 (23%) non-uniformed and 62 (3%) were Fire Control.
  2. 12% of uniformed staff were female compared to more than half of non-uniformed staff.
  3. 14% of all employees were from Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic (BAME) background.
  4. Declarations had been high, with 91% of employees had made a declaration regarding disability.
  5. Average age of employees had been 43 years.

The Committee were advised that between April 2021 and March 2022, WMFS had employed 85 new entrant firefighters. Of these, 10 (12%) had been female and 20 (24%) had been BAME. Recruitment had been under review and the Fire Fighter recruitment programme for females/ BAME had been re-introduced. The gender pay gap had also decreased to 8.9% compared to 9.8% in 2020. Following queries around 2019 gender pay gap figures, Joanne Simmonds, advised the Committee that the higher figure had resulted from the impact of an additional working opportunity scheme that had a high uptake from women in the lower paid administrative jobs within the service.

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that the ongoing progress made by the service in relation to Diversity, Inclusion, Cohesion, Equality (DICE) be noted.

13/22

### **Dispute Resolution Report**

Kamla Devi-Ahir, Business Partner, presented the Dispute Resolution Report that outlined the number, type and outcomes of discipline, grievance hearings and other dispute resolution including Employment Tribunal activity that has occurred during the period 01 October 2021 to 31 December 2021.

The Committee were advised that the report covered a 3-month period that would bring the Committee back in-line with pre-Covid agreed reporting and the next report to Committee would cover from January 2022 to June 2022. The key figures highlighted for the above period, as per the report were:

- Four grievances were received (3 grey book – Male, 1 Control – Female). The reasons for the grievances received were as follows:
  1. Working relationships, behaviours and leadership styles displayed by management.
  2. Employee believed to be substantiated in line with the current Managing Vacancies Policy.

3. Employee did not wish to declare their covid vaccination status.
4. Retired employee raised a grievance based on age discrimination around his retirement dates.
- Five disciplinary cases were received (all grey book – male):
  1. Four cases were investigated under Gross Misconduct
  2. One case investigated under Misconduct.
- One Employment Tribunal was received for claims of racial discrimination.

The equality data for both the grievances and disciplinaries had shown support that no impact had occurred on any specific group.

The Committee were advised that the following training had taken place:

- Disciplinary investigations (78 Managers/BPs attended)
- Disciplinary Commissioning and Appeals (29 Managers/BPs attended)
- Crucial Conversations (68 Managers/BPs and Trade Unions attended)
- Manager and mediator courses (562 attendees)

A review of the processes outlined in the Disciplinary Policy and Grievance Policy had been underway.

The Chair of the Committee praised the team and the modernisation of the presentation of the Dispute Resolution Report.

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that the Dispute Resolution Report be noted.

13/22

### **Annual Report of the Scrutiny Committee 2021-2022**

Tom Embury, Deputy Clerk to the Authority, presented the Annual Report of the Scrutiny Committee 2021-2022.

The Committee were advised that the report had reflected the impact of Covid and the need to put the Committee

meetings on hold until November 2021 for the business continuity arrangements to be put in place. As per the report, the following business conducted by the Committee throughout 2021-22 highlighted was:

- Diversity, Inclusion, Cohesion and Equality Updates
- Dispute Resolution Monitoring
- Progress Update on the Review of Safeguarding in West Midlands Fire Service
- Consideration of Scrutiny Reviews leading to a Scrutiny Review of Safe and Well
- Fire Control Performance Reports
- Work Programme selection

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that the Annual Report of the Scrutiny Committee 2021-2022 be noted and submitted to the Annual General Meeting of the Authority on Monday 27 June 2022.

14/22

### **Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2021-2022**

Tom Embury, Deputy Clerk to the Authority, presented the Scrutiny Committee Work Plan for 2021-2022.

The Committee were advised that following the approval of the Municipal Calendar of Meetings for 2022-2023, a revised work programme for 2022-2023 would be brought to the next Committee meeting for approval. Following queries, the Committee were encouraged to request items to be added onto the work programme.

Resolved:

1. That the Scrutiny Committee Work Plan for 2021-2022, be approved.

The meeting finished at 11:00 hours.

Kirsty Tuffin Strategic Hub 0121 380 6906
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