

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY
COLLABORATION AND TRANSFORMATION COMMITTEE

27 FEBRUARY 2023

1. **ENVIRONMENTAL, SOCIAL AND GOVERNANCE
FRAMEWORK**

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

RECOMMENDED

- 1.1. THAT Members note the content of the update report on the service's Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) Framework and related collaboration.

2. **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 2.1. To inform Members of the development of the Service's ESG framework, recent partnership working which has contributed to our work in this area and our plans for further engagement.

3. **BACKGROUND**

- 3.1. The sustainability and innovation team have been working on a variety of activities, concepts and initiatives, from across our growing Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) Framework (*see fig. 1*)

Fig 1. WMFS ESG Framework

Sustainability: ESG Themes



The ESG approach is a good fit for West Midlands Fire Service (WMFS) and the three pillars are easy to understand and identify with. One reason the fire and rescue sector has been slow to adopt more sustainable methods of operation is it has always had the precedent of saving life above all else. Other industries are considered more detrimental to the environment or more impactful and therefore have had greater regulation and reporting models to consider. There is the Global Reporting Index (GRI), which is primarily aimed at oil, gas and energy industries, with many areas not relevant to the Fire and Rescue sector. Another widely accepted model is the UN sustainable Development Goals (SDG'S), however, again, not all of these are relevant to our organisation. The ESG framework is tailored specifically to the Service, promoting engagement, as people can see how it directly relates to everything we do and stand for.

- 3.2. Firm moral commitments and ethical practices have always been at the heart of what WMFS do and how we deliver our services. Building on this, we have worked extensively with environmental specialists, sustainability professionals and focus groups to develop the range of defined themes we will take forward to meet the needs of our communities now and into the future.

4. **COLLABORATION**

4.1. **WMCA**

We have also worked collaboratively with the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) and their Inclusive Growth Team, to see how we can support inclusive economic growth and resilience across the region through our ESG framework.

- 4.2. We have also committed to assisting the WMCA with their consultative "Citizen panels". This initiative links sustainable issues to the impacts on health and areas such as the cost of living and energy crisis. One such example is use of alternative fuels to heat homes, which reduces air quality inside and outside of homes. This obviously has a detrimental impact on their health, with some reports suggesting that regular use of a log burner is 3 x worse than smoking. At our Next Safe and Well literature review, we will be including these elements from both a fire safety aspect and health related aspect.

- 4.3. The WMCA will be rolling out a number of air monitoring sensors and we will be working with them to identify and target areas of low air quality, as well as evaluating data from fire related incidents, to refine tactics to improve air quality at incidents.

4.4. **Warm Spaces**

One of our strategic objectives is how we support communities when in crisis, whether that is cost of living, energy, COVID, drought or disruption to utilities and water. This has led to the creation of the “Warm Spaces” trial at Ward End and Foleshill Fire Stations, designed to help those forced to choose between “heating or eating”. This has now led to further opportunities with community leaders, where the organisation “Unity Hub” will be utilising the community room at Ward End for two days a week. This helps relieve some of the pressure the charity has for space and connects the community to the WMFS even more.

4.5. **Wider Stakeholder Groups**

We are an active member, with frequent representation at a number of working and stakeholder groups related to sustainability at a local, regional and national level. Our work with the National Fire Chief’s Council (NFCC) is directly influencing national sustainability strategy and HMI reporting metrics. Some of the Groups we are involved in include:

- Emergency services Sustainability Working Group
- Coventry City resilience pathway
- Coventry climate change board
- Sustainability West Midlands
- Emergency Services Environment and Sustainability Group
- NFCC Sustainability Working Group

- 4.6. This has extended our regional and national networks and partnerships significantly, leading to more joined up working, information sharing and collaboration. As an outcome of these, we have developed referral pathways for the most vulnerable people in our communities, to get direct fire safety help and advice from us, as well as further support through signposting.

4.7. **UN Compact**

As an organisation we are also working towards our commitment to be the first Fire and Rescue Service in the country to be a member of the UN Compact (see *fig.2*) and continue our hard work

in reinforcing the 10 principles within the service and community. Not all of these are relevant to our organisation. The ESG framework is tailored specifically to the Service, promoting engagement, as people can see how it directly relates to everything we do and stand for.

- 4.8. Firm moral commitments and ethical practices have always been at the heart of what WMFS do and how we deliver our services. Building on this, we have worked extensively with environmental specialists, sustainability professionals and focus groups to develop the range of defined themes we will take forward to meet the needs of our communities now and into the future.

UN Compact Fig 2.



5. **ACADEMIC COLLABORATION**

- 5.1. Our commitment to the UN Compact and to ESG more widely has enabled us to collaborate with academic institutions such as Birmingham City University (BCU). Most of our work to date has been with the faculty of Arts, Design and Media in the Birmingham School of Architecture and Design (BSoAD). Our work is with masters and PhD students in the following areas:
- 5.2. **Architecture:** Working with students to develop designs and concepts for the “fire station of the future”, with a view to NetZero by 2041. This would need to meet our service delivery as it is currently, as well as our service delivery in the future, taking into account our communities needs and expectations of a future fire service. The students must consider the effects of climate change and the additional social responsibility the WMFS will assume in helping with “new emergencies”, some of which are already defined in the civil contingencies act. Areas considered include improving flood resilience for stations based in flood-prone areas, the concept of a regenerative station and how existing sites can be enhanced.
- 5.3. **Design Management:** Working with 26 Masters students from a very diverse cohort, with over 15 nationalities represented. This has presented a fantastic opportunity to ensure our strategic objectives and community aims will be understood and engaged with by our diverse communities. This will also help with gauging how our public consultation questions around sustainability will be received. The students will be helping to develop a strategic roadmap for WMFS as a more sustainable approach to the service and our operations.
- 5.4. **Education and Influence:** The team are expanding their sustainability knowledge by partaking in a sustainability course at Aston Business School, which has led to significant networking opportunities including access to E-bike training to support employee commuting options and targeting our “Scope 3” emissions. This can also be signposted to communities in the Black Country.

6. **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 6.1. As this is a report to note, no initial equalities impact assessment has been undertaken.

7. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1. The UK Government has a legal Net Zero target of 2050, enshrined within the Climate Change Act. The WMCA has set a more ambitious but not legally binding target of 2041 for the region to achieve Net Zero. 7

8. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1. There are no DIRECT financial implications associated with this update report.

9. **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1. The environmental implications of this workstream are significant and are covered within the main body of the report.

10. **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- [WMCA Inclusive Growth Decision-marking Tool](#)
- [UN Global Compact](#)

The contact for this report is Mark Price, Strategic Lead for Innovation.

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