

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

24 APRIL 2023

1. **SCRUTINY COMMITTEE DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT**

Report of the Chair of Scrutiny Committee

RECOMMENDED

- 1.1. THAT Members approve the Draft 2022-23 Scrutiny Committee Annual Report.

2. **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 2.1. To provide the Draft 2022-23 Scrutiny Committee Annual Report for member comment and approval.

3. **BACKGROUND**

- 3.1. The Scrutiny Committee is required by its terms of reference to provide an Annual Report covering the key achievements and work of the Committee throughout the year. This report is submitted to the Fire Authority for approval.

4. **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 4.1. No initial Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken as this report does not involve a change in policy.

5. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1. There are no legal implications associated with this report.

6. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1. There are no financial implications associated with this report.

7. **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

7.1. There are no environmental implications associated with this report.

8. **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- [Scrutiny Committee Terms of Reference – WMFRA Constitution Article 9](#)
- [Scrutiny Review of Safe and Well](#)
- [Scrutiny Review of Business Continuity Arrangements](#)

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Councillor Sybil Spence
CHAIR, SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE SERVICE

**Annual Report of the
Scrutiny Committee
2022/23**

1. Background

In line with expectations set out in the Fire and Rescue National Framework the Authority has established a Scrutiny Committee to support it in achieving its strategic objectives. The committee ensures that its policy and budgetary framework is followed and developed to reflect the changing needs and demands in meeting its statutory obligations.

Effective scrutiny frameworks will be in place for both the scrutiny of strategic policy, as well as performance. Aligned to the role of the Fire Authority and Chief Fire Officer (CFO) as set out within the Constitution of the Authority, the scrutiny function should scrutinise decisions made or to be made, on the basis of 'public safety' aligned to the following definitions:

- "Pre scrutiny" enables changes proposed to strategic policy decisions to be scrutinised. These are decisions which if implemented, would change the strategic priorities and outcomes agreed by the Fire Authority (for example, matters contained in Authority 'forward plan' for approval). Pre scrutiny can:
 - i) Inform policy development and/or
 - ii) Hold the Authority to account
- "Post scrutiny" enables the Fire Authority to seek assurance around operational decisions already made by the CFO and other officers in the delivery of strategic priorities and outcomes (for example: training, partnership working). Post scrutiny can:
 - i) Scrutinise performance of specific issues and/or
 - ii) Hold officers to account

The key benefits of the Committee can be seen as:

- Complementing the strategic and policy formulation and development work of the Authority and Service.
- Developing the skills of Members to enable them to investigate below the surface of policies, strategies and processes.
- Providing a useful oversight and an element of 'challenge' to performance improvement processes and continuous improvement.
- Encouraging public involvement in the policy process.

- Supporting the development of an environment that stimulates a more reflective, evaluative, and evidence-based culture within the Authority and Service.

The Terms of Reference for the Committee can be found within Article 9 of the Authority Constitution, published on the [Authority website](#).

2. Meetings

During 2022/23, the Committee met on the following dates:

- 7 November 2022
- 23 January 2023
- 24 April 2023

3. Members & Attendance Record

	07/11/22	23/01/23	24/04/23
Councillor Atwal	✓	✓	
Councillor Barrie	✓	✓	
Councillor Dehar	✓	✓	
Councillor Hussain	✓	✓	
Councillor Spence	✓	✓	
Councillor Waters	✓	✓	
Councillor Young	✓	X	
S Middleton (co-optee)	✓	✓	

Officers from the Authority are also present at meetings as appropriate.

Working Groups are also appointed to consider scrutiny reviews. As of February 2023, the limit on the number of Scrutiny Reviews per year has been removed, giving the Committee flexibility to undertake as many reviews as is necessary but also feasible.

4. Business

During 2022/23 the Committee conducted the following business:

- Diversity, Inclusion Cohesion and Equality Updates.
- Dispute Resolution Monitoring.
- Fire Control Performance Reports.
- Scrutiny Review of Safe and Well and including receipt of recommendations.
- Scrutiny review of proposed changes to Business Continuity Arrangements resulting in recommend full Authority to maintain current approach.
- Commissioning of Scrutiny Review into Training and Development starting April 2023 for completion in the 2023/24 municipal year.
- Work programme selection.

5. The Committee's main achievements

The Committee's key achievements during the year include:

- The consideration of performance related information throughout the year, enabling the continued robust monitoring of the Service's performance in the areas of:
 - Diversity, Inclusion, Cohesion and Equality,
 - Workforce profile indicators,
 - Dispute Resolution, Discipline and Grievance,
 - Operational performance of Fire Control.
- The Committee undertook a comprehensive review of the Service's Safe and Well provision, featuring a service wide survey and a number of focused interactive workshops with staff. The review reported to the Committee in November 2022 and identified opportunities for learning across a number of areas including:

- Risk Stratification
- Record Keeping
- Training and Development
- Performance Management
- Culture and Equity

The report also made ten recommendations for improvement and change, and the committee received an update on progress against those recommendations at its April 2023 meeting.

- In November 2022, the Committee considered two proposals for changes to the Service's approach to Business Continuity. This review was commissioned by the Full Authority. The review heard oral evidence from officers, representative bodies and the NFCC National Resilience Assurance Team. The committee concluded that the Authority should maintain its current approach to Business Continuity.
- In January 2023 the Committee commissioned the next scrutiny review, to consider the topic of training and development within the service, and in particular the experience of under-represented groups. A Terms of Reference for this review was agreed by the committee in April 2023. This will feature staff consultation, member-led focus groups with key staff groups and data analysis from both within the service and from other services. It is intended that the review will report in October 2023.