

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

13 FEBRUARY 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 Value release 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.
- 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 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.

5. **CFO UPDATES**

5.1 **Outcomes of the 2021/22 HMICFRS Inspection report**

5.2 ***West Midlands Fire Service graded 'Outstanding' in Effectiveness, Response and Understanding Risk.***

- 5.3 Back in 2019, WMFS were graded as outstanding in our response to fire and other emergencies. We are delighted to have again received an Outstanding rating score for our response to fire and other emergencies in our overall Effectiveness. We are also one of only two FRSs in the country to be classed as 'outstanding' in 'Understanding fires and other risks. In addition, we have seen our assessment of both 'Promoting the right values and culture' and 'Managing performance and developing leaders' move from a 'Requires improvement' to a 'Good' score. This means we have been rated at least a good rating in all areas of the inspection.
- 5.4 It is worth noting that only three other FRS in the country received an Outstanding rating for any overall measure, and WMFS is the only one to have received an Outstanding for Effectiveness. The Inspectorate commented on our excellent progress in many areas, stating that we use our resources well and provide value for money. They also mentioned that we have improved how we look after our people through our Communications, Health, Safety Well-being, and our Culture.
- 5.5 The service was commended by the CFO on the significant amount of work put into both improving how we operate across the service and for the assessment itself last year. The assessment results show we have made great progress in every aspect of our work, not only in those areas in which we have seen an increased rating, to maintain and build upon these

scores means the need to continue to improve, innovate and implement across all our work moving forward.

- 5.6 A summary of grades can be seen below, followed by a link to our full report.

Summary of Grades

Question	This Inspection	2018/19
OC Effectiveness	Outstanding	Good
Understanding fires and other risks	Outstanding	Good
Preventing fires and other risks	Good	Good
Protecting the public through fire regulation	Good	Good
Responding to fires and other emergencies	Outstanding	Outstanding
Responding to major and multi-agency incidents	Good	Good

Click to Expand

Question	This Inspection	2018/19
E Efficiency	Good	Good
Making best use of resources	Good	Good
Future affordability	Good	Good

Click to Expand

Question	This Inspection	2018/19
MP People	Good	Good
Promoting the right values and culture	Good	Requires Improvement
Getting the right people with the right skills	Good	Good
Ensuring fairness and promoting diversity	Good	Good
Managing performance and developing leaders	Good	Requires Improvement

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

- 6.1 There has been significant work conducted by the CRR Programme over the last reporting period.

6.2 Emergency Planning

- A power outage working group has been established with Terms of Reference and work is progressing well.
- Learning from Ops London Bridge (death of a member of the Royal Family) has been collated, and a formal debrief has taken place. The learning has been shared across all agencies.
- Industrial Action (IA) planning is well underway, and coordination of various activities is being managed through the Business Continuity Planning Team (BCPT).
- The Emergency Planning team continues to work closely with Fire Control to develop action plans for COMAH (Control of Major Accident Hazards) incidents.

6.3 Operations

- Operations have attended several high-profile incidents including Babs Mill Lake and a significant building fire in Wolverhampton which was declared a major incident.
- CRMP (Community Risk Management Plan) Risk-based crewing continues to prove a success, allowing Fire Control and crews to send the correct level of response balanced against risk.
- Operations managers have worked closely with our Digital and Data (D&D) teams to develop a system that ensures a 100% accurate account of Competency Risk Assessment (CRA) completion.
- Site Specific Risk Information remains a key focus with extensive work conducted to ensure our risk information is up-to-date and regularly reviewed.
- FC has now successfully completed the Multi-agency Fire Survival Guidance testing.
- Progress is being made to the deliver a review of Fire Control (project reference is 'Fire Control Fit for the Future). Fire Control managers continue to engage with other FRS (Fire and Rescue Services) to understand retained/flexible contracts, staffing models, apprenticeships, and development pathways.

6.4 Prevention

- Prevention and Operations have worked closely on our approach to Safe and Well (SAW). This has seen a renewed focus on targeting those most at risk and vulnerability, which is already seeing positive results with an improvement on SAW point score average across the organisation.
- Our Fire Investigation dog, Kai, 10, has unfortunately recently gone blind overnight. Kai was rescued as a puppy

ten years ago by Fire Investigation Officer Mat Dixon who trained him for the Service. He has worked as an Investigation Search Dog ever since, his key role was to go into the site post-fire, to sniff out whether an accelerant had been used and arson had been committed. Currently, the cause of his condition is unknown, and Kai continues to go for regular check-ups and tests to try to ascertain the cause.

- Following continued requests for our Fire Investigation team to support other FRSs, the team has drafted a Fire Dog mutual aid protocol. Once agreed this will allow (West Midlands Fire Service) WMFS to provide support to other FRSs should there be a requirement for investigation purposes.
- We have a dedicated Cost of Living section on MESH. The page has two main sections - support for our staff and support for our communities; both sections have comprehensive overviews of support available.
- Watch Commander Brinley Mills made the finalist shortlist at Excellence in Fire and Emergency Awards 2022. Brinley was nominated for the unsung hero award, recognising his continued work and dedication to prevention, namely the dangers of carbon monoxide. His work continues to make community members of the West Midlands safer, stronger, and healthier.

6.5 Protection

With effect from 23 January 2023, new regulations came into force in England affecting landlords, responsible persons, and property owners of residential buildings. The regulations vary according to the type of residential building:

- has 2 or more domestic premises with common areas
- is between 11 metres and 17.9 metres in height
- is above 18 metres in height.

Where buildings are above 18 metres (or 7 storeys), the responsible person/s must:

- share plans (building and floor) suitable to aid firefighting
- share details of any external wall systems
- inform FRS of faults in lifts and key firefighting equipment
- provide a Secure Information Box (SIB) for firefighter use

Protection has developed a portal to allow 'responsible persons' to share this information with us. When a fault is recorded, Fire Control will implement the Tall Buildings Fault Action Plan.

- Following months of development, the new safe and strong process has gone live; feedback continues to be positive.
- 14 Fire Safety personnel have recently passed out from a Protection Learning Programme Development
- As of 12th September 2022, the level of response to AFAs (Automated Fire Alarms) at hospitals was adapted to a risk-based approach to ensure a proportionate level of mobilisation. This has supported Fire Control to use our existing dynamic mobilisation and where possible protect our front-line PRL (Pump Rescue Ladder) capacity for Category 1 incident response unless there are additional known risk factors.

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

7.1 Digital Transformation

This project works to improve our service, people, and communities through investment in digital infrastructure. This makes the service more secure, more efficient, and effective.

Over recent months:

- further enhancements to our cyber security posture have prevented attacks and disruption, we continue to invest to keep our data safe and reduce our corporate risks and move to recognised security accreditation, Cyber Essentials Plus.

- As part of our natural contract end dates, we are refreshing our key connectivity for stations and HQ, this will further support our mobile devices as well as improve our business continuity posture.
- The Digital and Data restructure is progressing well, and we have collaborated with the team to find solutions to longstanding issues. This will improve efficiency and effectiveness whilst improving retention and attraction in a challenging job market.

7.2 Emergency Service Mobile Communications Programme (ESMCP)

This is a government led national project that seeks to deliver the updated communications devices that will enable our Fire Service and our blue light colleagues to communicate more effectively, at a reduced cost into the future, by providing enhanced data capabilities.

Over recent months:

- There has been a significant shift in the direction leading to the National programme being paused for a period estimated to be around 2 years. This will provide the necessary time for the programme to retender for the software elements. The likely full transition to the new network is going to be in 2029.
- We have completed all required tasks to this point and await the next steps from the national programme.
- The Airwave network will be invested in to ensure it remains operational. Critical devices will be refreshed to ensure we remain in a sustainable position till the transition.

7.3 Operations Digital Mobile Devices

This project will deliver mobile devices to our frontline teams. This will give them improved technology and support them with

the time they spend in the community, as well as increase their efficiency, effectiveness, and safety.

Over recent months:

- Our incident command trial is underway in the Coventry and Solihull Operations Command area using tablets and we are working to include handheld devices. There continues to be interest by other Fire Services nationally and internationally.

7.4 Vision 4

This technology has upgraded our command-and-control system, responsible for mobilising our resources across the West Midlands and Staffordshire.

Over recent months:

- We have resolved the initial snagging issues and are planning to close this project down and undertake a lessons learned exercise.

7.5 Legacy Systems Project

This project seeks to replace our Time and Attendance, Fleet and Asset Management systems. This will digitally transform our working in these areas and deliver mobile and secure systems as well as enhanced reporting.

Over recent months:

- The support for the existing system has been extended.
- Negotiations are taking place with a supplier with a view to implementing within the next month.

7.6 Sustainability

We are proactively taking steps to meet the needs of the community to tackle the symptoms of climate change and to meet

our net zero responsibilities. This will also align us to new legislation we will need to comply with as a service.

Over recent months:

- A commitment to sign the Emergency Services Environment and Sustainability Group Charter, as the principles behind it directly aligns with our developing Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) framework which is shaping our sustainability strategy.
- As part of our ESG framework, operational adaption and resilience to climate change is our first defined theme. We understand that our role is not just in responding to the effects of climate change but also engaging and influencing our communities through our protection and prevention work.
- It is with this view that we have made strides towards aligning ourselves more with the West Midlands Combined Authority aspirations for the community to be part of making the West Midlands carbon neutral by 2041.
- We are creating a 10, 3 and 1 year plan to demonstrate how we will be contributing to this aspiration and how we will enable the behavioural changes within our community and how we can most effectively utilise our resources, ranging from our emissions, energy efficiency, and how we use more effectively use our spaces for the community to improve mental wellbeing both for our staff and our communities.
- Success will be measured through a set of bespoke performance indicators which have been created in working with academic masters' students from Birmingham University and the West Midlands Combined Authority team.

7.7 Finance and Resources

7.7.1 Funding, Budget Preparation and Monitoring

Ongoing budget monitoring continues to take place and is reported monthly. Any in-year budget pressures or opportunities

are identified by budget holders and are actively managed through adjustments and in collaboration with other budget holders supported by the Finance Team. The six-month budget revision process took place during October/November which resulted in the overall 2022/23 budget being in a balanced position.

Budget pressures have been experienced in the current year for a range of reasons which include price increases linked to supply chain difficulties. In addition, there are budget pressures relating to pay award levels, linked particularly to the 'Cost of Living' crisis, given the budgeted pay award assumption of 2%. This matter was considered as a Matter of Urgency and subsequently reported to the Authority on 10th October 2022 where it was determined the costs of any pay awards in excess of the 2% budget assumption would be funded from reserves. Work is ongoing to achieve this requirement.

7.7.2 Planned Procurement

Supply chain issues continue to present challenges across many products. The Corporate Procurement Team continue to secure supplies for the Service although there are extended delivery timescales and/or price increases for a range of goods (e.g., vehicles and digital devices)

7.7.3 Vehicle Replacement Programme (VRP)

During December/January/February five new Pump Rescue Ladders (PRLs) were commissioned at the following Fire Stations:

- West Bromwich
- Ladywood
- Erdington
- Dudley
- Ward End

In addition, a new Technical Rescue Pump (TRP) was commissioned at the new Technical Rescue Station at Sutton.

7.8 Communications

7.8.1 Fire and Rescue Service Long Service and Good Conduct Medal

Following the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II a new Royal Warrant is now taking place which will represent King Charles III. We are currently awaiting the arrival of the new King's Medals. In addition, operational members of staff will now be receiving a 30 and 40-year clasp that can be adorned on this medal.

7.8.2 Reward and Recognition (R&R) Celebration Event

In December 2022, a R&R celebration event took place at the International Conference Centre to recognise members of staff who have played such an important role over the duration of the Pandemic and beyond. There was an impressive attendance of 450 people. We will be looking to hold another event, but probably on a smaller scale, later this year.

7.9 Response, Organisational Policy and Assurance

7.9.1 National Operational Guidance (N.O.G.)

National Operational Guidance is the foundation for developing operational policies, procedures, and training to support firefighters to deal with incidents effectively and safely. It is 'industry good practice' for all Fire and Rescue Services to draw on. As of April 2022, WMFS have implemented all 44 pieces of national guidance and associated training packages in relation to operational procedures.

The next phase of this project is to apply the same principles to the NOG guidance for Fire Control. In total there will be circa 20 pieces of National Fire Control guidance for FC that will require developing into product packs for the service to deliver. Alongside the implementation and adoption of National Guidance, this will likely see the N.O.G team review and create approximately 50 Fire Control product packs utilising existing Fire

control policies/procedures to ensure alignment to the national guidance.

7.10 Organisational Assurance - Fire Standards

The Fire Standards Board was created to deliver industry standards to the UKFRS which ranges across all areas of FRS functions, WMFS have been involved in the development of a number of these standards.

To date 12 standards have been released and an extensive gap analysis has been completed on 11 of these, with no areas of concerns raised around WMFS compliance. Sector consultation has commenced on two new fire standards; Communication and Engagement and Fire Control, consultation closes on the 6 February 2023. The Strategic Leadership fire standard and People Development Fire Standard have recently been published by FSB and a service gap analysis will now be completed.

7.11 Grenfell Outcomes

The Service continues to monitor the outcomes of the Grenfell Inquiry and conducting the necessary assurance work against any findings.

Linked to the Grenfell outcomes the Service has recently identified and approved a supplier for BA (Breathing Apparatus) Radio replacement, this will ensure that firefighters wearing helmets and BA can effectively communicate, including when operating in high rise buildings. It is anticipated delivery of radios will be in Q1 of 2023.

7.12 BA Procurement

We are currently in the process of tendering 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

pre-tender consultation with the suppliers with the formal tendering process due to begin on 31st January 2023.

To further enhance and support our desire for inclusivity, the WMFS is challenging the BA suppliers with regards to developing the capability for the potential for facial hair to be worn with BA.

The current barrier we face as a Service to driving change in this area is centred around Health and Safety: Manufacturer and HSE guidance/regulations which provide little scope to change and focus predominantly on health and safety considerations. As such, the health and safety considerations override legislative requirements under E&D law to preserve the rights of protected characteristic groups.

Our desire for this to influence and drive sector change has now been included within the tendering specification.

7.13 Drone Capability

The early use of Drones at incidents improves the situational awareness of incident Commanders and other roles, supports effective decision making and improves the overall safety of Firefighters, partner agencies and members of the public. WMFS are committed to digital transformation. Utilising digital technology will enable our workforce to continually improve delivery of services to our communities. The WMFS has recently trialled and purchased 6 new drones to further enhance our drone capability and are continually evolving how we maximise their use.

The WMFS Response Team have been working closely with Transport for West Midlands (TfWM), West Midlands Police and West Midlands Ambulance Service drone teams to review how we can work closer together to strengthen our capabilities and resilience

7.14 Manchester Arena Enquiry

The Manchester Arena Inquiry Volume 2 authored by Chairman, The Hon Sir John Saunders, was released in November 2022. The Report is an investigation on how, and in what

circumstances, 22 people came to lose their lives in the attack at the Manchester Arena on 22 May 2017 and make 149 specific recommendations.

The publication of the report provides the opportunity for the Service to consider in a structured, planned and the evidence-based way its relative position against the report's findings and in particular the recommendations made. To enable this, the Organisational Assurance Team (OA) will provide the overall facilitation and coordination of this project. They will put in place the systems, processes, and structures and build organisational capability to enable the Service to evidence its current compliance position against the Inquiry recommendations and, where required, identify, track and report progress made on the journey towards compliance.

This work will be made up of two distinct phases:

- **Phase 1** will be to undertake a gap analysis to evidence and confirm the Service's position of compliance or the requirement to be compliant against the 149 recommendations contained in the volume 2 inquiry report.
- **Phase 2** will identify and track progress in implementing the agreed actions plans to enable for compliance, where required, against the inquiry recommendations

8. **PEOPLE PROGRAMME – HIGHLIGHTS**

8.1 Managing Vacancies

As part of the review of the Managing Vacancies policy, behavioural assessments are now in place to positively inform the overall recruitment and selection process. The approach in place has been informed through feedback from staff. The new policy provides consistency from a sector perspective and is aligned to our behavioural framework and associated toolkit.

A key change to the policy is the introduction of 'talent pools' for all levels of the Service and we will be piloting a new approach to managing vacancies for opportunities which exist at Group Manager, or Middle Manager equivalent, level.

This approach will enable the Service to understand and develop individuals who demonstrate potential for future role progression, as opposed to any individual posts. This pilot is seen as an opportunity to explore new ways of working and we will be requesting feedback from those involved, at all stages of the process. This will help us to shape and define the approach for future processes for all levels.

8.2 Health and Wellbeing

The Health and Wellbeing of staff is a key priority of the people programme which spans across 3PT, enabling the delivery of Our Plan. At the beginning of January 2023, the 'Happier and Kinder Together' campaign was launched, which aims to promote the support and services available to all staff, as well as encourage health and wellbeing to be part of our conversation.

This campaign will continue over the coming months and introduce new areas as they become available.

8.3 Business Continuity Training - Organisational Learning and People Development (OLPD)

The OLPD department has prioritised some development and refresher training to provide input in 7 key areas of operational delivery. This is to assist in the competence of operational employees who are not working on front-line appliances. The purpose of the sessions is to provide the organisation assurance when utilising employees throughout any Business Continuity arrangements.

The 7 key areas that training is being delivered are:

- Breathing Apparatus
- RTC – Extrication
- Hazardous Materials
- Resuscitation and AED
- Water
- Working at Height
- Blue Light Driving

The total number of sessions facilitated at present across the 7 key areas is 55, of which this includes 190 attendees and a further 30 sessions are scheduled.

8.4 Real Living Wage

On 22nd September 2022, the Living Wage Foundation announced that the Real Living Wage had increased to £10.90 per hour for employees outside of London.

As a Real Living Wage employer, the Authority has implemented the new rate from the date of its announcement.

This means that the Service's lowest-paid staff will see their pay rise to the equivalent of £21,029 per year for a full-time employee. Part-time staff will receive the appropriate proportion of this salary.

8.5 Most Inclusive Employer

WMFS was proud to have been awarded the UK's Most Inclusive Employer.

The accolade was announced on 1st December 2022 and the Inclusive Top 50 UK Employers List focuses on best practices across all strands of diversity including age, disability, gender, LGBTQ+, race, faith, and religion.

WMFS achieved the number one spot after being placed ninth in the 2021 index. A panel of judges considers the rankings, based on 'brave and innovative' performance within diversity, equality, and inclusion.

As a Service we continue to make significant progress towards being a representative workforce. Female firefighters now account for nearly 13% of our workforce which is double the national average for fire and rescue services in England. Firefighters from under-represented ethnicities currently account for almost 14%, which is around three times the national average.

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. 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](#)

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