

## **West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority**

14 February 2022 at 1100 hours

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

Present: Councillor Brackenridge (Chair),  
Councillor Iqbal (Vice Chair),  
Councillor Barlow, Councillor Barrie, Councillor Dehar,  
Councillor Locke, Councillor Padda and Councillor Spence.

Virtual: Councillor Hogarth, Councillor Ferguson, Councillor Miks,  
Councillor Miller, Councillor Singh and Councillor Young  
Professor S Brake, co-opted member – health  
Steve Price Hunt (Fire Brigade's Union), Richard Merker  
(Fire Officers Association)

### **63/22 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Mike Ager – Independent Member  
(Audit and Risk), Maurice Carter – Unison and Shirley Haines.

Please note: Councillor Barlow left the room at 11:20am and  
returned 11:25am.

### **64/22 Declarations of Interest**

The Chair declared a personal non-pecuniary interest due to being  
a member of the Firefighters Pension Scheme(s).

### **65/22 Chairs Announcements**

The Chair welcomed all attendees to the meeting of the full Fire  
Authority.

The Chair wished to thank employees for all their hard work and dedication over the Christmas and New Year period, given the additional challenges faced with the omicron variant. This made a positive difference to our communities, minimised disruption, to be able to deliver critical services. Although the period had been difficult, cases within the WMFS continued to fall significantly and had been positive however, the service would have some challenges ahead.

The Chair advised that there had been a continued lobbying to Government to change the legislation surrounding decision making meetings and the ability to hold these virtually however, no changes have been made as of yet. Any changes would be communicated to Members once received. As a result of this, the FRA would continue to use a hybrid approach to meetings and committee's where this was a decision-making forum. PPF and JCP could continue take place digitally as these are not decision-making forums. This would be reviewed every 30 days. Members were advised that the Local Government Association had conducted a survey on the 'impact of in-person council meetings to contact the Democratic Services Officer for a digital copy.

As part of the Authorities budget there would be a Band D precept increase of £4.99 to households' council tax within the West Midlands. This aligned with the referendum limit that applied to the Authority and has been widely supported by the District Leaders in prior years.

The Local Government Association Conference would take place in-person in Gateshead between 14-16 March 2022. If a member wanted to attend than to advise the Chair. These types of events had been key in making connections and an update on the conference would be provided at a later date.

## **66/22 Chief Fire Officer's Announcements**

The Chief Fire Officer (CFO) welcomed all attendees to the meeting.

The CFO advised the Authority that after 32-years' service, Steve Vincent, Strategic Enabler - Prevention, Preparedness and Response, would be retiring and thanked him on behalf of the service/Strategic Enabling Team, for his hard work, dedication and contribution to the safety of the community he served. The Chair of the Authority/Members echoed the CFOs thanks to Steve Vincent.

The service had undergone a tough period with covid, but the CFO hoped that 2022 would bring some new normality. The service would be supporting staff with this to ensure that they would be physically and mentally fit to return to work. as part of this work new collaboration work would be on-going with the Fire Service Charity and other organisations.

With 6-months till the Commonwealth Games, the thorough assurance processes the service had undergone had passed. The Fire Service's Lead (Silver Commander) for the Commonwealth Games would be Sam Burton, Strategic Enabler - Operations North and Preparedness.

67/22 **Minutes of the Fire and Rescue Authority held on 13 December 2021**

Resolved:

1. That the minutes of the Fire Authority meeting held on 13 December 2022 be confirmed as a correct record subject to the following amendment, as per item 51/21 of the previous minutes:
  - Councillor Barlow declared a personal non-pecuniary interest as he would be a future beneficiary from the West Midlands Pensions Fund.

68/22 **3 Year Rolling Strategy 2022-25 and Annual Plan**

The CFO provided an overview of the 3 year rolling Strategy 2022-25 and the Annual Plan report that outlined the progression of the Community Risk Management Plan objectives (CRMP) and how they would be enabled through the 3 year rolling strategy 2022-25. The report also outlined a review of the Authorities vision, strategic

objectives and annual priorities that provided context for the 3 year rolling strategy.

The Authority were advised that as per delegations outlined in the report to the CFO are in place in the constitution that ensures West Midlands Fire Service (WMFS) optimises its use of resources. This will increase resilience, manage risk and efficiency of the budget. There had been no change to the WMFS Vision Statement, 'Making the West Midlands Safer, Stronger and Heathier, as its continued relevance had been recognised.

The CFO and the Chair thanked Karen Gowreesunker, in her role as Strategic Enabler Strategy (Clerk of the Authority), and the team for their hard work and dedication.

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that the ongoing progress of the evidence-based Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) objectives, as set out in 3.3-3.8.5, be noted.
2. That it be agreed that the maintenance of Chief Fire Officer (CFO) delegations in the implementation of CRMP objectives that enabled delivery of the three-year rolling Strategy, as set out in 3.2.4 and 3.5.1, be noted.
3. That it be agreed that the Authority's Vision statement for the Authority's Three-Year rolling Strategy, as set out in 3.13.2 be re-affirmed.
4. That it be agreed that the three-year strategic objectives 2022-25 and refresh of the annual plan priorities for delivery in 2022-23, as set out in 3.14.5, be approved subject to the following amendment:
  - The paragraph numbering referenced as per recommendation 1.4 be changed from 3.14.5 to 3.13.5.

## **69/22 Monitoring of Finances**

Mike Griffiths provided an overview of the Monitoring of Finances report that outlined the monitoring of the Authorities finances for the current financial year up to December 2021, for the revenue budget and the capital programme.

The Authority were advised that the revenue budgeted to the end of December 2021 and the actual figure had been compared, as per appendix A of the report. The actual spend of the Authority up to December 2021, had been £73.658m compared to the projected budget of £73.718m therefore, had created a favourable variance of £60,000. The table included in appendix B that included the full year of pension projections, was also highlighted.

Mike Griffiths advised that the Authority had approved its capital programme for 2021-22 and its expenditure to the end of December 2021 had been £2.835m. The main variance within the capital programme had been the result of delays with the Vehicle replacement programme, Windows/Door replacement and the roof replacement at Transport Engineering Workshops, as per report.

Praise was given to the finance team for all their hard work and dedication.

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that the Monitoring of Finances report be noted.

#### **70/22 Budget and Precept 2022-2023 and Budget Forecast 2023-2024 to 2024-2025**

Mike Griffiths provided an overview of the Budget and Precept 2022-2023 and Budget Forecast 2023-2024 to 2024-2025 report that outlined the Authorities Net Revenue budget, associated precept levels, the Capital Programme for 2022-23 to 2024-25 and the Authorities Treasury Management Strategy.

The Authority were advised that in line with the general Council tax reference threshold of 2% for Fire and Rescue Authorities, Band D Council tax would be increased to £68.03, an increase of £4.99 per annum, for 2022-23. A one of service grant would be available for the Authority through the existing settlement funding assessment formula however, the amount to be received had not been confirmed.

No changes had been made to the provisional settlement from the Secretary of State for the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) for 2022-23, as per 3.2 of the report. This would result in a funding increase of 1.1%. The settlement had been for 1 year (2022-23), instead of 3 years, that had resulted in difficulty in future budget planning. No announcement had been made from DLUHC regarding capital funding, therefore, reserves would predominantly fund the capital programme for 2022-23 to 2024-25. It was highlighted that the ongoing use of reserves would result in a deficit in the capital programme for 2024-25. The Chair advised that the issue had been raised nationally and urged members of the Authority to speak with their political parties on the issue.

The Authority were advised that, as per 7.2 of the report, the proposed capital programme figures highlighted had reflected against the Vehicle Management Programme based upon the current fleet and a review would be taken on the funding once the 'Blended Fleet' workstream within the CRMP objectives had been completed. Following a query, Mike Griffiths confirmed planning of the vehicle replacement programme had been based on service need and the work from the CRMP objectives would be completed in summer 2022, with the provision of funding to be reviewed following this.

Following questions on the environmental impact of the service, Mike Griffiths and the CFO confirmed that a process had been underway to assess the services carbon usage and how the service could improve its carbon footprint. Given the logistical challenges faced by the service, it would be envisaged that a hybrid approach be taken.

Following Simon Brakes query in regard to the level of resilience in funding should the situation with covid change, the CFO praised WMFS for staff going above and beyond to provide the best service and their willingness to provide voluntary contributions of work. The services resilience had been shown through the implementation of action plans from Grenfell and covid. The CFO wished to thank all members of staff across the service. Mike

Griffiths also confirmed that the Corporate Risk Register had incorporated these risks into the budget and the balance strategy had provided the service with re-assurance should anything unexpected happen.

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that the Authorities Net Revenue Budget for 2022-2023 of £108.303million, which included a Council Tax requirement of £49.405, set out in Appendix A, together with the associated precept levels, set out in Appendix B, resulting in a Band D Precept increase of £4.99 (7.92%), be approved.
2. That it be agreed that the Authorities Capital Programme for 2022-2023 to 2024-2025, as set out in Appendix E, be approved.
3. That it be agreed that the Authorities Treasury Management Strategy which included the Minimum Revenue Provision Statement, set out in Appendix F and the Prudential Indicators in Appendix G, be approved.

#### **71/22 Exclusion of the Press and Public**

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that the press and public be excluded from the rest of the meeting to avoid possible disclosure of exempt information under paragraph 3 of the Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.

#### **72/22 Planned Procurement Exercises for 2022-23**

Mike Griffiths provided an overview of the Planned Procurement Exercises for 2022-23 report that advised on the planned tender exercises for 2022-23, subject to approval, that provided the provision of various works, goods and services to West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority (WMFRA).

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that the followings tender exercises for the provision of various works, goods and services to WMFRA for 2022-23 be approved:
  - 1.1 Cycle to work Scheme
  - 1.2 End of life vehicles
  - 1.3 National framework for wate rescue equipment
  - 1.4 National framework for gas monitors
  - 1.5 Hydraulic cutting equipment
  - 1.6 Frontline mobile devices
  - 1.7 Cleaning consumables
  - 1.8 Repair and maintenance of appliance bay doors
  - 1.9 Deregulated water utilities.

The meeting ended at 11:51 hours.

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