

# **WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**

**5 OCTOBER 2020**

## **1. PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS 2020/21**

Report of the Clerk and Monitoring Officer.

RECOMMENDED

THAT the revised frequency of Fire Authority and committee meetings be approved.

THAT the programme of meetings for 2020/21 as set out in Appendix 1 be approved.

## **2. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

This report is submitted to the Authority to support its governance arrangements for 2020/21.

## **3. BACKGROUND**

3.1 The Service implemented its Business Continuity Plans on 18 March 2020 in response to the then emerging Covid 19 Pandemic. A Major Emergency was announced for the region on the 20 March 2020 and following the announcement of 'lockdown' measures commencing the 21 March 2020, the Chief Fire Officer, the Chair of the Fire Authority, and the Clerk to the Authority reviewed the approach to the operation of Authority business to enable a focus on preparing and implementing business continuity arrangements. This resulted in the:

- postponement of all Fire Authority meetings and the Service's 3PT programme
- the instigation of 'Matters of Urgency' delegations for the CFO to enact as per section 17.1 of Authority standing orders
- implementation of a weekly Chief Fire Officer briefing to

Authority members, enabling effective awareness of progress and impact during the business continuity period, providing an engagement forum for Members.

3.2 The briefings were enabled digitally and held remotely, in line with the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) Regulations 2020. In the absence of formal Fire Authority meetings being held, urgent decisions were made in line with delegated executive powers as set out in section 3, paragraph 17 of the Fire Authority Constitution 'Arrangements to Act in Matters of Emergency'.

3.3 There were four meetings of the Fire Authority during 2019/20. Additionally, five meetings of the Audit and Risk Committee were held, and seven meetings of the Scrutiny Committee (three of which consisted of the meeting of a working group of the Committee to undertake a scrutiny review). Three meetings of the Collaboration and Transformation Committee and three meetings of the Joint Consultative Panel were held. The Appointments, Standards and Appeals Committee met once (it should be noted that this Committee convenes as and when required as business dictates).

#### 3.4 **Programme of Meetings**

3.4.1 A proposed programme of meetings for 2020/21 is provided within Appendix 1 for approval. It should be noted that the programme of meetings has been revised and the frequency of meetings has been refined to further enable the continued level of governance in an efficient and effective manner. Therefore, the proposed schedule of meetings includes:

- The introduction of monthly Policy Planning Forums aligned to the successful approach of the regular COVID briefings. This increased frequency will enable more regular two-way engagement and discussion focused on the delivery of the Authority's strategy, supporting effective planning and preparation for Fire Authority meetings.
- Quarterly Fire Authority, enabling focused management of business through the forward plan and effective

alignment of committee business.

- Audit and Risk Committee meetings reducing from six to five, with the meetings continuing to be held within a timely manner to suit financial timelines, for example the approval of the Statement of Accounts in July.
- Quarterly Scrutiny Committee meetings, which continue to align to quarterly performance reporting and Authority reporting and provide a planned approach to the review of the work programme, enabling time in between scheduled meetings to undertake reviews and feed outcomes to the Fire Authority.
- Three meetings of the Collaboration and Transformation Committee have been scheduled and the Joint Consultative Panel has been scheduled to meet quarterly, aligned to the associated reporting periods and to enable the potential to feed into the Fire Authority where needed.

\* Please note that the changes highlighted above are based on previous schedules not affected by the Covid 19 Pandemic.

3.4.2 The digital approach to the holding of meetings will continue in line with existing arrangements and as per the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) Regulations 2020. This approach will continue to be reviewed and developed as the municipal year progresses.

#### 4. **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

4.1 In preparing this report an initial Equality Impact Assessment is not required and has not been carried out as the matters contained within this report will not lead to, and do not relate to a policy change.

## 5. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 This report supports the Authority in determining its decision making and governance arrangements for the coming year taking into account the relevant provisions of the Local Government Act 1972, Local Government Act 1985 and the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.
- 5.2 The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) Regulations 2020 enable the Fire Authority has temporarily removed the legal requirements for Local Authorities, including West Midlands Fire Authority, to hold public meetings in person. Thus, the Authority has the power to hold public meetings virtually by using digital, video and telephone conferencing technology.

## 6. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 Provision is made in the Authority's budget to meet costs associated with the operation of the Authority's decision-making structures and the payment of Members' allowances.

## 7. **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 There are no environmental implications.

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Nil

The contact name for this report is Karen Gowreesunker, telephone number 0121 380 6678.

Karen Gowreesunker  
CLERK to the Authority

**APPENDIX 1**

**WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**

**CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2020/21**

<b><u>Date</u></b>	<b><u>Time</u></b>	<b><u>Meeting</u></b>
<b><u>2020</u></b>		
<b>Friday 11 September</b>	15.00 pm	Pension Board
<b>Monday 21 September</b>	10.30 am	Chair's Agenda Meeting
	12.00 pm	Policy Planning Forum
<b>Monday 5 October</b>	11.00 am	Authority [political groups at 10 am]
<b>Monday 19 October</b>	11.00 am	Policy Planning Forum
<b>Monday 26 October</b>	10.30 am	Audit and Risk Committee
<b>Monday 2 November</b>	10.30 am	Scrutiny Committee
<b>Monday 9 November</b>	11:00 am	Policy Planning Forum
<b>Monday 30 November</b>	10.30 am	Chair's Agenda Meeting
	12.00 pm	Policy Planning Forum
	14.00 pm	Joint Consultative Panel [pre meeting tbc]
<b>Monday 7 December</b>	10.30 am	Collaboration & Transformation Committee
	12.00 pm	Audit and Risk Committee
<b>Friday 11 December</b>	15.00 pm	Pension Board
<b>Monday 14 December</b>	11.00 am	<u>Authority</u> [political groups at 10 am]
<b><u>2021</u></b>		
<b><u>Date</u></b>	<b><u>Time</u></b>	<b><u>Meeting</u></b>
<b>Monday 11 January</b>	11.00 am	Policy Planning Forum
<b>Monday 25 January</b>	10.30 am	Joint Consultative Panel (pre meeting tbc)
<b>Monday 1 February</b>	10.30 am	Chair's Agenda Meeting
	12.00 pm	Policy Planning Forum
<b>Monday 15 February</b>	11.00 am	<u>Authority</u> [budget and precept setting] [political groups at 10 am]
	13.00 pm	Scrutiny Committee
<b>March</b>	TBC	Pension Board
<b>Monday 1 March</b>	11.00 am	Policy Planning Forum

<b>Monday 22 March</b>	10.30 am	Audit and Risk Committee
<b>Monday 29 March</b>	11.00 am	Policy Planning Forum
<b>Monday 12 April</b>	10.30 am	Joint Consultative Panel [pre meeting tbc]
<b>Monday 26 April</b>	11.00 am 13.00 pm	Policy Planning Forum Collaboration & Transformation Committee
<b>Monday 17 May</b>	11.00 am	Policy Planning Forum
<b>Monday 24 May</b>	10.30 am	Scrutiny Committee
<b>June</b>	TBC	Pension Board
<b>Monday 7 June</b>	10.30 am 12.00 pm 14.00 pm	Chair's agenda meeting Policy Planning Forum Audit and Risk Committee
<b>NEW MUNICIPAL YEAR Monday 21 June</b>	11.00 am	<u>Authority</u> [Annual Meeting] [political groups at 10 am]

The Appointments, Standards and Appeals Committee will meet as and when required.