



WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

Monday, 18 September 2017 at 11:00

**FIRE SERVICE HEADQUARTERS,
99 VAUXHALL ROAD,
BIRMINGHAM, B7 4HW**

Car Parking will be available for Members at Fire Service Headquarters.

Accommodation has been arranged from 10.00 am for meetings of the various Political Groups.

Distribution of Councillors	
<u>Birmingham</u>	D Barrie K Booth A Cartwright L Clinton N Eustace M Idrees R Sealey G Singh Atwal S Spence F Williams
<u>Coventry</u>	P Male C Miks S Walsh
<u>Dudley</u>	A Aston N Barlow M Mottram
<u>Sandwell</u>	K Allcock J Edwards C Tranter
<u>Solihull</u>	S Davis P Hogarth
<u>Walsall</u>	B Douglas Maul S Craddock A Young
<u>Wolverhampton</u>	G Brackenridge P Singh T Singh

Fire Authority

You are summoned to attend the meeting of Fire Authority to be held on
Monday, 18 September 2017 at 11:00

at Fire Service HQ, 99 Vauxhall Road, Nechells, Birmingham B7 4HW

for the purpose of transacting the following business:

Agenda – Public Session

- 1 To receive apologies for absence (if any)
- 2 Declarations of interests in contracts or other matters
- 3 Chair's announcements
- 4 Minutes of the Fire Authority AGM held on 26 June 2017 5 - 26
- 5 Audit Findings Report 2016-17 27 - 64
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- 8 Contract Awards Summary for Period to 30 September 2017 175 -
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- 9 Result of Recent Fire Safety Prosecutions 181 -
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- 10 Minutes of the Audit Committee Minutes held on 24 July 2017 183 -
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- 11 Minutes of Executive Committee held on 7 August 2017 189 -
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- 12 Exclusion of the public and press
Chair to move:- "That the public and press be excluded from the rest of the meeting to avoid the possible disclosure of exempt information under Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006 for the reasons stated below."

Agenda (not open to public and press)

13 Planned Procurement Exercise for 2017-18

- Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information);

Agenda prepared by Julie Connor

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This agenda and supporting documents are also available electronically on the West Midlands Fire Service website at:- www.wmfs.net

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Clerk Telephone: 0121 380 6678

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Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority

**26 June 2017 at 1100 hours at
Fire Service Headquarters, Vauxhall Road, Birmingham**

Present: Councillor John Edwards (Chair)
Councillor Mohammed Idrees (Vice Chair);
Councillors Allcock, Aston, Atwal, Barlow, Barrie,
Booth, Brackenridge, Cartwright, Clinton, Craddock,
Davis, Douglas-Maul, Eustace, Hogarth, Male, Miks,
Mottram, Sealey, T Singh, P Singh, Spence, Tranter,
Walsh, Williams and Young

Observer: Mr Ager

40/17 Elect the Chair of the Authority for the ensuing year

Resolved that Councillor Edwards be elected Chair of the Authority for the period ending with the annual meeting in 2018.

41/17 Elect the Vice Chair of the Authority for the ensuing year

Resolved that Councillor Idrees be elected Vice Chair of the Authority for the period ending with the annual meeting in 2018.

42/17 Declarations of Interest

Councillors Edwards and Brackenridge declared a non-pecuniary interest in Minute No. 54/17 below (Monitoring of Finances).

Councillors Edwards, Davis, Idrees and Eustace declared a non-pecuniary interest in Minute No. 51/17 below (Appointment of Representatives to Serve on Other Bodies).

43/17 Chair's Announcements

The Chair stated that there would be a one minute silence at 1200 noon, for victims of the Finsbury Park attack. The Authority meeting would adjourn and Members were requested to gather at the front of the Headquarters building.

The Chair welcomed the new Members:

Councillor Fiona Williams – Birmingham
Councillor Peter Male – Coventry
Councillor Catherine Miks – Coventry
Councillor Brian Douglas-Maul – Walsall

The Chair confirmed he would write to those Members who were no longer on the Authority.

Section 41 Members were reminded that the new date for the Reward and Recognition Event was Tuesday 11 July at St Martins, Birmingham.

All Members were invited to attend the Annual Schools Quiz final on Saturday 15 July at 1030 hours at Safeside.

All Members were asked to complete their CMIS forms prior to leaving the meeting and return them to Julie Connor

The Chair thanked the Members for returning him to the position of Chair and returning Councillor Idrees to the position of Vice Chair and they looked forward to leading the organisation in one of its most complex years moving towards the Combined Authority and Elected Mayor.

Regular updates and meetings of Executive Committee and Policy Planning Forum would be required in this most interesting and exciting period. The Chair thanked all the Members of the Authority, the Chief Fire Officer, the members of Strategic Enabling Team, all the staff working at Headquarters and on all 38 stations including the cooks and cleaners.

The Chair also wished to record his thanks to the staff at the Command Development Centre and would ensure that a visit was arranged for Members during the year. The staff at the Technical Engineering Workshops were thanked for their work and in helping to raise funds in providing technical expertise to other organisations. The volunteers at Safeside and across the wider organisation were also thanked for their contribution.

The Chair wished to thank everyone for their contribution to excellent service to the community. It was noted that West Midlands Fire Service had the best response times in the country and had achieved this despite meeting savings of £38m through Prevention, Protection and Response. The Chair would update his Blog to record his thanks and looked forward to the forthcoming year working together with Unity and Strength.

44/17 **Chief Fire Officer's Announcements**

Members were invited to join the Long Service and Good Conduct celebration scheduled to take place on Wednesday 28 June 2017 at 1900 hours.

The Chief Fire Officer (CFO) gave an update on the Grenfell Tower Incident. There had been a huge amount of concern for the communities and Fire and Rescue Service involvement. The Service had met with the strategic housing managers across the seven Councils and the arrangements in the West Midlands were considered robust and fit for purpose and were in a strong position with no significant issues at the moment. There are approximately 400 high rise accommodation blocks (6 floors and above) within the West Midlands. Fire Safety Officers were originally notified of a possible 18 blocks fitted with ACM cladding and joint inspections were carried out at these blocks with the responsible person. Further work had also taken place within student accommodation, hospitals and educational establishments.

The West Midlands Fire Service, (WMFS) on behalf of the National Fire Chiefs Council, (NFCC), had been managing the flow of information regarding the testing which reflects the high esteem in which the Service is held.

The CFO expressed the importance of maintaining consistent messages across the local authorities and fire safety guidance. This information had been placed on the website www.wmfs.net

The information included the Stay Put guidance and advice on escape plans, night time routines and safe and well checks from West Midlands Fire Service. Officers would be working with local authorities in carrying out a review of high rise building in order that the local authorities and other agencies are in the best position to manage the current situation.

The CFO confirmed that officers had met with council housing managers and a further meeting was being arranged with representatives from housing associations to look at any specific issues on 30 June 2017.

Results were unknown in regard to the specific ACM cladding and as there were 400 blocks this would be a long process.

In respect of buildings in private ownership and Wolverhampton, it was confirmed that Fire Safety officers would be carrying out risk assessment under the Regulatory Reform Order and would inform Managers

The speed of the testing was a matter for the Department of Communities and Local Government, but they were working with Local Authorities and the information was being feed through the NFCC.

A Member stated that a national hotel chain also had concerns about cladding and, whilst it was their responsibility to work with the Service, he wondered if the Authority should have a more proactive approach towards private sector properties.

It was noted that some Authorities are sending away samples, whilst others are not taking this approach.

One Member noted that in considering planning applications in the seven Local Authorities, it was rare to see comments from the Fire Service or the Police or appropriate bodies and asked whether sufficient investigations were carried out in large buildings when applications are received.

The CFO confirmed that WMFS fire engineers were well integrated into the planning process and commented on plans under the Regulatory Reform Order (RRO) and provided a body of evidence to Planning Committees, but the Chief agreed to look into why this is not visible at Planning Committee meetings.

A robust risk based fire safety inspection programme was in place and business support vehicles are used to ensure that premises are managed through the Regulatory Reform Order. The Service was always looking to improve on safety and using lessons learnt and initiatives to improve communication.

Another Member thanked the Chief for his constructive answers to Members questions, but found it difficult to accept the situation. Previous governments had ignored pleas for the fitting of sprinklers and the construction industry had won the argument. It was felt that behaviours must change and the Fire and Rescue Service throughout the whole country should come together to influence the government and their professional opinions should be taken into account over the construction companies.

The CFO stated that WMFS consider the fitting and retro fitting of sprinklers is relevant as an act of fire safety. This is part of an Integrated risk management plan and there is a clear link to prevention and provides an assertive and effective safe response. There was a link in the report following the Operational Assessment and Peer Review where the assessors state that WMFS actions are grounded in the safety of the community.

“As an Authority, they are supportive of the service in delivering the Regulatory Reform Order in the best way possible”. Lobbying to improve the fitting of sprinklers will ensure that communities are safer.

It was stated that the Stay Put advice had been in place for many years. This advice remains but a Member enquired as to what extent has this been undermined by Grenfell Tower incident and what implications this would have for the future.

The CFO confirmed that the Stay Put advice is still currently the advice given in high rise building and good reasons for this advice was published in the guidance. A review of the advice would take place, but this was dependent on a number of circumstances, for example, where the fire starts and existing fire safety measures in the building.

The Chair stated that the Local Government Association (LGA) Fire Services Management Committee had met on Friday 23 June 2017 and the Grenfell Tower incident had been discussed at the meeting.

A LGA working group had made an enthusiastic case to fit sprinklers in buildings at risk including high rise, schools, care homes and had held several meetings with the government, the Lords MPS.

Brandon Lewis, the Minister at the time, had conceded that sprinklers work and there had been no loss of life in any building throughout the world where sprinklers had been fitted and there was an onerous disadvantage on building industry and it was up to the fire sprinkler world to make the case.

The LGA had universal approval for fitting of sprinklers and retro fitting of sprinklers. It had been proved possible from an engineering point of view to retro fit sprinklers in Sheffield at a cost of £2,000 per flat. It was noted that action had not been taken following the coroner’s report of the Lakenhall House incident. A high rise building where lives had been lost following a fire.

Birmingham, Stoke on Trent and Leicester Authorities had all agreed to unilaterally fit sprinklers and the LGA would be keeping the sprinkler argument live with a view to securing government funding for the fitting of sprinklers. The LGA wishes to meet with the NFCC to discuss how they can raise the profile of the Fire Service, as their ability to influence had been diluted since the 2005 Public Safety Act and this would be an opportunity to change things positively and to honour those who have died as a result of the incident.

45/17 **Minutes of the Fire Authority held on the 10 April 2017**

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 10 April 2017, be confirmed as a correct record.

46/17 **Membership of the Authority 2017/18**

The Clerk reported on the membership of the Authority for 2017/18.

47/17 **Questions on the Discharge of Functions**

Resolved that the following Councillors be nominated under Section 41 of the Local Government Act, 1985, to answer questions raised in the course of proceedings of constituent councils on the discharge of the Authority’s functions:

	<u>Lead Councillor</u>	<u>Substitute Councillor</u>
Birmingham	Idrees	Clinton
Coventry	Walsh	Miks
Dudley	Aston	Mottram JP
Sandwell	Edwards	Tranter
Solihull	Davis	Hogarth
Walsall	Young	Douglas-Maul
Wolverhampton	T Singh	Brackenridge

48/17 Governance of the Authority 2017/18

The Authority considered a report on governance of the Authority. The report set out the terms of reference for committees and panels; member role description and a calendar of meetings.

As part of the Authority's 'route to future governance' approved on 20 February 2017, the Authority would open its membership to three co-opted members and the Police and Crime Commissioner as a full member of the Authority. The co-opted members will be invited from the Ambulance Service, Public Health and a Mayoral representative

A request was still awaited from the Police and Crime Commissioner. The change forms the beginning of implementing proposals for a Reformed Fire Authority as agreed by the Authority on the 10 April 2017.

Amendments were made to:

Article 2 – Members of the Authority

The Terms of Reference for the Joint Consultative Panel would be inserted into the Constitution as a recognition of the role members contribute in providing guidance to the Employee Relations Framework.

There had been minimal increases in local government pay, it was proposed to reaffirm the stance taken previously to defer any review of the members' allowances scheme for a further 12 months, and to refrain from increasing the level of members' allowances.

Resolved:

- (1) that amendments to the Constitution regarding co-opted and full members of the Fire Authority as set out in section 3.3 and the inclusion of the terms of reference for the Joint Consultative Panel be approved;

- (2) that the calendar of meetings for 2017/18, as set out at Appendix 2, be approved;
- (3) That no percentage increase be made in Members' Allowances in 2017/18 by way of indexing or otherwise;
- (4) That the Members' Allowances scheme for 2017/18, as set out at Appendix 3, be approved;
- (5) That in the light the current financial situation, no action be taken for the time being with regard to convening an independent remuneration panel to review the Members' Allowances Scheme and that the situation be review in 12 months' time;
- (6) That the Clerk be authorised to make any necessary consequential amendments to other constitution documents in light of decisions made with regard to governance arrangements for 2017/18.

49/17 **Review of Statutory Monitoring Officer Provision**

The Authority received a report from the Clerk to the Authority outlining the options for the delivery of the Monitoring Officer role and to determine the most appropriate option for provision to be implemented prior to September 2017.

Since the formation of the Authority in 1985, the role of Statutory Officers and Democratic Services for the Authority had been provided through Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council. Following a change in April 2014, the role of Section 151, Officer, Clerk and Democratic Services were brought in-house saving at the time £60,000 per annum. The role of Monitoring Officer for the Authority continued to be provided by the Sandwell MBC through the then Assistant Chief Officer. During 2016/17 the then Monitoring Officer for the Authority left the employment of Sandwell and the role of Monitoring Officer was temporarily assumed by the Deputy Monitoring Officer and the role continued to be maintained through Sandwell MBC.

The temporary arrangement was put in place mid Authority year with the intention for a review at the June 2017 AGM.

The Authority's Constitution Article 13 and part 3, Scheme of Delegations sets out the roles and delegations of the Monitoring Officer.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) developed following the change in provision in 2014.

A key consideration when evaluating each of the options is the direction of governance for the Authority in the future.

The Authority, as its meeting on the 20 February 2017, agreed its future governance route toward Mayoral WMCA governance and this was further supported by the WMCA at its Board meeting on the 3 March 2017.

The reform of the Fire Authority was a key element in the route to Mayoral WMCA governance and was unanimously agreed at the meeting of the Fire Authority on 11 April 2017.

The process has begun through engagement with the seven local authority leaders, invites to proposed co-opted members and the Police and Crime Commissioner. A formal request has also been sent to the Secretary of State to enable an amendment to the Local Government Act 1985 which currently dictates the size of the Authority.

Engagement has already begun with the West Midlands Mayor to enable early understanding of the direction of the Authority in its route to future Mayoral governance.

There were three options for the future provision:

Option 1: Maintaining current Monitoring Officer provision through Sandwell MBC

Option 2: Monitoring Officer provided through a constituent member of the West Midlands Combined Authority – Wolverhampton City Council

Option 3: Independently sourced Monitoring Officer role

The preferred Option 2, Monitoring Officer provided through a constituent member of the West Midlands Combined Authority, Wolverhampton City Council, meets all the key requirements and would be implemented in sufficient time to enable the new provider to come into post for the September Authority meeting and would allow the Clerk to close off the current arrangement and establish a MoU for new arrangements in agreement with the new provider.

The Managing Director of Wolverhampton City Council, is the current Monitoring Officer of the West Midlands Combined Authority and the Authority would be able to harness this experience, intelligence and knowledge in the move towards Mayoral governance. A further report on the new arrangements would be provided to the Authority at its meeting in September 2017.

Resolved:

- (1) that the preferred option, of a Monitoring Officer provided through a constituent member of the West Midlands Combined Authority – Wolverhampton City Council for the year June 2017 and June 2018 and the provision to be reviewed prior to the June 2018 AGM be approved.
- (2) that the Clerk to the Authority to make the changes required to the constitution and Monitoring Officer Memorandum of Understanding, following approval of the Authority's preferred option be approved.

50/17 Political Balance and Membership of Committees and Panels

The Authority considered the Constitution and political balance of committees and assignment of members to committees and panels for 2017/18.

It was noted that the current independent member, Mr Ager, had agreed to continue in the role for a further year and had been appointed as an independent member of the Audit Committee for a term of office expiring with the Annual Meeting of the Authority in 2018.

The Authority had approved an arrangement whereby the independent persons approved by Sandwell Council would also be used by the Authority. This role had been undertaken by Mr Frederick Bell until his recent resignation. Mr Ray Tomkinson had been successful in applying for this role with Sandwell Council and he had also agreed to undertake this role on behalf of the Authority. In view of the low level of complaints activity at the Authority, it was felt sufficient to appoint one independent person.

Resolved:

- (a) that the political balance and membership of committees and panels for 2017/18, as set out at Appendix 1, be approved;
- (b) that the appointment of Mr M Ager as an independent non-voting member of the Audit Committee be affirmed;
- (c) that the appointment to the roles of Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Committees and panels, as set out at Appendix 1 be approved;
- (d) that the appointment of Mr R Tomkinson to the role of independent person, appointed in pursuance of Section 28 of the Localism Act 2011, for the term of office expiring 20 June 2018, be approved.

51/17 Appointment of Representatives to Serve on Other Bodies

The Authority considered the appointment of representatives to serve on other bodies during 2017/18. The Authority noted the principles of proportionality apply where the Authority makes more than three appointments to bodies specified in the Act. An indication was given in the appendix where proportionality applies.

Resolved that the appointment of representatives to serve on other bodies, as set out in the Appendix, be approved.

52/17 **Member Attendance at Conferences, Seminars and Visits**

The Authority considered a report setting out the arrangements for authorising attendance at conferences, seminars and visits.

It was noted that the Leader of the Opposition Group had been added to the list of attendees for the Asian Fire Services Association Conference.

In response to a question about the visit to Houses of Parliament to meet West Midlands MPs and an opportunity to lobby Members of Parliament, the Chair confirmed that this item appeared on the list of events every year, but felt it would be more relevant this year to arrange a visit.

It was felt to be appropriate to arrange a visit with West Midlands MPs to lobby on the latest issues including finance and capital funding.

Resolved that the events for 2017/18, as set out in the Appendix to the report, be approved for the purposes of the payment of travel and subsistence allowances and conference fees (where appropriate) subject to the necessary budgetary provision being available.

53/17 **Governance Statement 2016/17**

The Authority considered a report seeking comments and consideration of the Annual Governance Statement for 2016/17 attached as Appendix 1 to the report. The Audit Committee had received the draft Governance Statement for 2016/17 at their meeting held on 12 June 2017.

Under the Local Government Act 1999 the Authority has responsibility for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded.

The Authority also has responsibility for proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs including arrangements for the management of risk.

The Authority's Governance Statement required the signatures of the Chair of the Authority and Chief Fire Officer and would be available to view at the end of June 2017.

The Internal Auditor had given the Authority its highest rating available of reasonable assurance.

The 2016/17 statement of accounts were currently being audited.

Resolved: that the Authority's Governance Statement 2016/17 be received.

54/17 **Monitoring of Finances**

The Authority noted the report to the end of May 2017.

Appendix A indicated a modest favourable variance of £0.008 million in the revenue budget. Appendix B provided statistical data relating to the Firefighters Pension Scheme.

The scheme analysis shown at Appendix C for the capital programme indicated expenditure at the end of May 2017 as £0.681 million. The main forecast variances within the capital programme related to delays with the demolition at Coventry Fire Station predominantly due to asbestos related issues and Aston Fire Station where the listed status required extensive consultation.

The Chair thanked the Treasurer and his team for managing the budgets so tightly and efficiently during difficult and austere times.

55/17 The meeting adjourned for a one minute silence in respect of the Finsbury Park Incident.

56/17 **Operational Assessment and Peer Challenge Report**

The Authority noted the Operational Assessment and Peer Challenge Report. It was the last of the Peer Challenges to be undertaken by the LGA prior to the introduction of the Inspectorate.

The Authority noted the approach to implementing and monitoring the areas for consideration details within the Peer Challenge Report.

The Authority noted the Service's approach to the publication of the Peer Challenge Report in accordance with the recommendations of the National Fire Chiefs Council and the Local Government Association.

The report would be published on the WMFS website and on the Fire Peer Challenge section of the LGA website.

The report included some positive areas and some opportunities to further improve and enhanced the service to the community. A thorough and wide ranging review had been undertaken, the results were covered in the main body of the report.

A summary of the key statements were:

- WMFS is a Service that places its communities at the heart of everything and every decision it takes
- The CFO provides clear leadership for the Service and the Chair is clearly respected by the Authority and wider constituent partners.
- The Service has a strong focus on its long term financial sustainability and future funding streams.
- Response times to incidents are impressive. And that the integrated service delivery model has enabled WMFS to be more responsive to the needs of its community

- The Service's strong brand earns it immediate respect and often entry into the community and people's homes.
- Equality is embedded at all levels and staff understand the links to serving a diverse community, their prevention work and delivering within a health agenda.

It was noted that without the review of frontline services, the Brigade would not be able to provide the services that it now provides. It was felt that this had been achieved at a time when further investment was required in the Fire Service. The Authority would develop an improvement register to meet the recommendations and building upon effectiveness using a programme and project management approach. The Authority would continue with the move towards the West Midlands Combined Authority and work in the delivery of services to reduce vulnerability. The Service would continue to have a risk based 5 minute attendance standard that was evidence based and had clear links to survivability and would continue to build upon the emergency response brand as a platform for prevention, protection and be proactive in upstream firefighting.

Section 41 Members were asked to bring the contents of the report to the attention of their individual Authorities.

The CFO and his team were thanked for their leadership and that the Review Team's comments around the approach taken to its 5 minute response time for high risk (life and property) incidents was impressive and unique in fire service in the UK

One Member did not accept that Authority Members didn't ask enough questions. It was felt that the Service was well run and the Scrutiny Committee had not been required to investigate any issues. Another Member stated that questions were asked if necessary.

The CFO thanked the Members for their comments on leadership and it was good to recognise that through the Authority, the Service delivered the 5 minute attendance time. WMFS have different appliances that were not constrained by type of incident and strong Scrutiny was visible.

The CFO stated that WMFS was at the forefront of transformation in the way it delivered its service and would continue to transform. However, risks change but the risk from fire remained and there were new risks, unforeseen risks and the threat of terrorist attacks.

The CFO thanked the Authority for the strong scrutiny function and supporting transformation.

In the spirit of being more challenging another Member asked if there were standard operating procedures across the two services in Fire Control and if there were sufficient resilience in fall back arrangements.

The DCFO explained that there were standard operating procedures, albeit there was one metropolitan brigade and a combined authority. Harmonisation had been achieved and the National Operations Group were also looking at other areas. The procedures had been aligned where possible. The response to life risk had been amended.

A Secondary Fire Control in Smethwick provided fall back arrangements. The Fire Controls in the North West and London would provide fall back arrangements until West Midlands Fire Control the move to the secondary control had taken place.

The Peer Review Team had questioned the resilience of the fall-back arrangements in the event of a catastrophic system failure and a more technical solution was being sought.

Further work was being undertaken to ensure that the upgrade of Vision 4 mobilising system was implemented and innovative and technological opportunities were being considered.

The DCFO confirmed that the fall-back arrangements are resilient and West Midlands was one of the 3 biggest controls in the country who provided resilience for other Brigades.

The Chair stated that the Authority was grateful for an outside perspective and the Peer Review Team had presented a good report that provided some challenges and criticisms.

It was noted that the Service had volunteered for the Peer Review for a third time and welcomed the report. The prestigious Peer Review Team had been led by the CFO of Scotland. The Service accepted the challenge and plaudits to the delivery model and service to communities. The Chair thanked the CFO, Strategic Enabling Team and firefighters for meeting the 5 minute response times and helping the community. The Chair thanked the FBU and firefighters for entering into the voluntary local agreement to ensure the delivery of the Service Delivery Model. The Chair thanked all staff on behalf of the Authority and would place this on record in his Internal Blog on the Intranet.

The Chair thanked the CFO for the transparent management of the Authority and for arranging regular events that provided the necessary scrutiny of the Authority and Service. The Chair noted that although the Service was run in a slightly different way, every member of staff was committed to being the best they can be from firefighters to cleaners and making the community safer, stronger and healthier.

The CFO thanked the Authority for their direction.

58/17 **Annual Report of the Scrutiny Committee**

The Chair stated that the Scrutiny Committee had a successful year and Annual Report from the Scrutiny Committee was received.

59/17 **Annual Report of the Audit Committee**

The Chair of the Audit Committee thanked the Officers, Internal and External Auditors for their hard work over the previous year. The Committee wished to record its thanks to the Independent Member, Mr Ager, for the valued contributions, attendance and loyalty to the Audit Committee.

It was noted that Councillor Paul Singh was unable to attend the Audit Committee on 12 June 2017 as he was required to substitute at the Scrutiny Committee.

The Annual Report of the Audit Committee was received.

60/17 **Result of Recent Fire Safety Prosecutions**

The Authority noted a report of prosecutions under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

Two companies were prosecuted as a result of the vigilance of Fire Safety Officers who felt it was appropriate to take the action which was a successful.

In response to a Member's enquiry it was confirmed that one of the businesses was a professional service to which the public had access.

The Deputy Chief Fire Officer agreed to provide details of the other company to the Councillor.

It was noted that the Service only undertook prosecutions as a last resort and endeavoured to keep "Businesses in Business", but companies needed to observe the law.

61/17 **Minutes of the Executive Committee**

The minutes of the Executive Committee held on 27 March 2017 were received.

62/17 **Notes of the Policy Planning Forum**

The notes of the Policy Planning Forum held on 27 March 2017 were received.

63/17 **Minutes of the Audit Committee**

The minutes of the Audit Committee held on the 27 March 2017 were received.

64/17 **Minutes of the Scrutiny Committee**

The minutes of the Scrutiny Committee held on the 27 March 2017 were received.

65/17 **Notes of the Joint Consultative Panel**

The Chair of the Joint Consultative Panel thanked all the Members of the Panel and officers for their work during a challenging year.

The notes of the Joint Consultative Panel held on the 10 April 2017 were received.

66/17 **Minutes of the Appeals Committee**

The minutes of the Appeals Committee held on the 15 May 2017 were received.

67/17 **Notes of the Policy Planning Forum**

The notes of the Policy Planning Forum held on the 12 June 2017 were received.

68/17 **Minutes of the Audit Committee**

The minutes of the Audit Committee held on 12 June 2017 were received.

69/17 **Minutes of the Executive Committee**

The minutes of the Executive Committee held on 12 June 2017 were received.

70/17 **Minutes of the Scrutiny Committee**

The minutes of the Scrutiny Committee held on 12 June 2017 were received.

71/17 **Exclusion of Public and Press**

Resolved that the public and press be excluded from the rest of the meeting to avoid the possible disclosure of exempt information under Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006 relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

72/17 **Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme**

The Authority noted the national Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme (ESMCP) project to replace the Airwave radio system. The ESMCP would provide the next generation communication system for three Emergency Services (Police, Fire and Rescue, and Ambulance Services) and other public safety users.

The costs will be met by way of a Section 31 grant from the government and will not cost any more than the existing system. Nationally, transition to the Emergency Service Network will commence in the Summer of 2018, with the West Midlands region scheduled for early 2019.

The Section 31 grant can only be used for work on this programme. The Chair stated this was a large and expensive piece of work, but would result in a more cost effective system.

Resolved that officers proceed with the procurement to spend the Section 31 grant funding received in support of the replacement of the Airwave system.

The meeting closed at 1234 hours.

Contact Officer:
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WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

18 SEPTEMBER 2017

1. **AUDIT FINDINGS 2016/17**

Report of the Chief Fire Officer and the Treasurer.

RECOMMENDED

THAT the content of the Audit Findings Report (AFR) be noted.

2. **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

This report is submitted to advise the Authority that Grant Thornton has produced the AFR. The AFR is submitted to inform Members of the audit work undertaken by the external auditors and the findings as a consequence of this work.

3. **BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The AFR sets out and reports the key messages arising from the external audit work undertaken during the year. The AFR is designed to support the Auditor's opinions and conclusions and is a requirement of the Code of Audit Practice.
- 3.2 The AFR was presented to the Audit Committee on 24 July 2017 and outlined the findings of the audit work undertaken. The Auditor indicated that the AFR was a very good report.
- 3.3 Following the Audit Committee meeting the auditor issues an unqualified opinion on the Authority's 2016/17 financial statements included in the Authority's Statement of Accounts.
- 3.4 As part of the external audit work programme, the auditor was also required to provide a value for money conclusion. In carrying out this work, the auditor is required to follow the National Audit Office's Auditor Guidance Note 3 (AGN 03).

The AGN 03 identifies the following criterion for auditors to evaluate:

“In all significant respects, the audited body had proper arrangements to ensure it took properly informed decisions and deployed resources to achieve planned and sustainable outcomes for taxpayers and local people.”

- 3.5 As a consequence of this work, the auditor concluded that for 2016/17 the Authority had proper arrangements in all significant respects to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness and to ensure it delivered value for money in its use of resources.
- 3.6 Representatives from Grant Thornton will present and explain the findings detailed in the AFR to the Authority.
- 3.7 The AFR is attached as Appendix A.

4. **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

In preparing this report an initial Equality Impact Assessment is required and has not been carried out. The matters contained in this report will not lead to a policy change.

5. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

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.

6. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The agreed scale fee for the provision of external audit services for the audit year 2016/17 was £38,636.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Statement of Accounts 2016/17 located in the Financial Management Section.

The Audit Findings 2016/17 – Agenda item 4 – Audit Committee 4 July 2017.

The contact officer for this report is Deputy Chief Fire Officer Philip Hales, telephone number 0121 380 6907.

PHIL LOACH
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

MIKE GRIFFITHS
TREASURER

The Audit Findings for West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority

Year ended 31 March 2017

July 2017

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July 2017

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Dear Members of the Audit Committee

Audit Findings for West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority for the year ending 31 March 2017

This Audit Findings report highlights the key findings arising from the audit that are significant to the responsibility of those charged with governance (in the case of West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority, the Audit Committee), to oversee the financial reporting process, as required by International Standard on Auditing (UK & Ireland) 260, the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and the National Audit Office Code of Audit Practice. Its contents have been discussed with management.

As your auditor, we are responsible for performing the audit, in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK & Ireland) (ISA (UK&I)), which is directed towards forming and expressing an opinion on the financial statements that have been prepared by management with the oversight of those charged with governance. The audit of the financial statements does not relieve management or those charged with governance of their responsibilities for the preparation of the financial statements.

The contents of this report relate only to those matters which came to our attention during the conduct of our normal audit procedures which are designed primarily for the purpose of expressing our opinion on the financial statements and giving a value for money conclusion. Our audit is not designed to test all internal controls or identify all areas of control weakness. However, where, as part of our testing, we identify any control weaknesses, we will report these to you. In consequence, our work cannot be relied upon to disclose defalcations or other irregularities, or to include all possible improvements in internal control that a more extensive special examination might identify. We do not accept any responsibility for any loss occasioned to any third party acting, or refraining from acting on the basis of the content of this report, as this report was not prepared for, nor intended for, any other purpose.

We would like to take this opportunity to record our appreciation for the kind assistance provided by the finance team and other staff during our audit.

Yours sincerely

Richard Percival

Engagement lead

Chartered Accountants

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Section 1: Executive summary

01. Executive summary

02. Audit findings

03. Value for Money

04. Other statutory powers and duties

05. Fees, non audit services and independence

06. Communication of audit matters

Purpose of this report

This report highlights the key issues affecting the results of West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority ('the Authority') and the preparation of the Authority's financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2017. It is also used to report our audit findings to management and those charged with governance in accordance with the requirements of ISA (UK&I) 260, and the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 ('the Act').

Under the National Audit Office (NAO) Code of Audit Practice ('the Code'), we are required to report whether, in our opinion, the Authority's financial statements give a true and fair view of the financial position of the Council and its income and expenditure for the year and whether they have been properly prepared in accordance with the CIPFA Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting.

We are also required to consider other information published together with the audited financial statements (including the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) and Narrative Report, whether it is consistent with the financial statements, apparently materially incorrect based on, or materially inconsistent with, our knowledge of the Authority acquired in the course of performing our audit; or otherwise misleading.

We are required to carry out sufficient work to satisfy ourselves on whether the Authority has made proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources ('the value for money (VFM) conclusion'). Auditor Guidance Note 7 (AGN07) clarifies our reporting requirements in the Code and the Act. We are required to provide a conclusion whether in all significant respects, the Authority has put in place proper arrangements to secure value for money through economic, efficient and effective use of its resources for the year.

The Act also details the following additional powers and duties for local government auditors, which we are required to report to you if applied:

- a public interest report if we identify any matter that comes to our attention in the course of the audit that in our opinion should be considered by the Authority or brought to the public's attention (section 24 of the Act);
- written recommendations which should be considered by the Authority and responded to publicly (section 24 of the Act);
- application to the court for a declaration that an item of account is contrary to law (section 28 of the Act);
- issue of an advisory notice (section 29 of the Act); and
- application for judicial review (section 31 of the Act).

We are also required to give electors the opportunity to raise questions about the accounts and consider and decide upon objections received in relation to the accounts under sections 26 and 27 of the Act.

Introduction

In the conduct of our audit we have not had to alter or change our audit approach, which we communicated to you in our Audit Plan dated March 2017.

Our audit is now complete and our findings have been reported to the Audit Committee on 24th July 2017.

Key audit and financial reporting issues

Financial statements opinion

We have not identified any adjustments affecting the Authority's reported financial position. The draft financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2017 recorded total comprehensive expenditure of £306,874,000. This overall deficit was mainly due to changes in the valuation of the pension liability in 2016/17.

We also identified a relatively small number of disclosure errors, and requested some adjustments to improve the presentation of the financial statements. These changes were agreed and have been made in the final version of the accounts. Those of note are detailed in section two of this report.

The key messages arising from our audit of the Authority's financial statements are:

- Good quality draft accounts were presented for audit by 31 May 2017, a month earlier than the current submission deadline
- Working papers supporting the accounts were of an excellent quality
- Finance staff responded promptly to all audit queries
- The audit was delivered in the agreed timescale enabling sign off by the 31 July 2017, which places the Authority in strong position for the timescales being introduced in 2017/18.

Further details are set out in section two of this report.

We anticipate providing a unqualified audit opinion in respect of the financial statements (see Appendix A).

Other financial statement responsibilities

As well as an opinion on the financial statements, we are required to give an opinion on whether other information published together with the audited financial statements is consistent with the financial statements. This includes if the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) and Narrative Report is misleading or inconsistent with the information of which we are aware from our audit.

Based on our review of the Authority's Narrative Report and AGS we are satisfied that they are consistent with the audited financial statements. We are also satisfied that the AGS meets the requirements set out in the CIPFA/SOLACE guidance and that the disclosures included in the Narrative Report are in line with the requirements of the CIPFA Code of Practice.

Controls

Roles and responsibilities

The Authority's management is responsible for the identification, assessment, management and monitoring of risk, and for developing, operating and monitoring the system of internal control.

Our audit is not designed to test all internal controls or identify all areas of control weakness. However, where, as part of our testing, we identify any control weaknesses, we report these to the Authority.

Value for Money

Based on our review, we are satisfied that, in all significant respects, the Authority had proper arrangements in place to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

Further detail of our work on Value for Money are set out in section three of this report.

Other statutory powers and duties

We have not identified any issues that have required us to apply our statutory powers and duties under the Act.

Next steps

Matters arising from the financial statements audit and our review of the Council's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources have been discussed with the Strategic Enabler of Finance and Resources.

We have not made any recommendations in this report. Where we have identified opportunities for Management to strengthen processes we have reported and agreed these directly with the Strategic Enabler of Finance and Resources.

Acknowledgement

We would like to take this opportunity to record our appreciation for the assistance provided by the finance team and other staff during our audit.

Grant Thornton UK LLP
July 2017

Section 2: Audit findings

01. Executive summary

02. Audit findings

03. Value for Money

04. Other statutory powers and duties

05. Fees, non audit services and independence

06. Communication of audit matters

Materiality

In performing our audit, we apply the concept of materiality, following the requirements of ISA (UK&I) 320: Materiality in planning and performing an audit. The standard states that 'misstatements, including omissions, are considered to be material if they, individually or in the aggregate, could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of the financial statements'.

As we reported in our audit plan, we determined overall materiality to be £2,260,000 (being 2% of gross revenue expenditure). We considered whether this level remained appropriate during the course of the audit and made no changes to our overall materiality. We also set an amount below which misstatements would be clearly trivial and would not need to be accumulated or reported to those charged with governance because we would not expect that the accumulated effect of such amounts would have a material impact on the financial statements. We have defined the amount below which misstatements would be clearly trivial to be £113,000. This remains the same as reported in our audit plan.

As we reported in our audit plan, we identified the following items where we decided that separate materiality levels were appropriate. These remain the same as reported in our audit plan.

Balance/transaction/disclosure	Explanation	Materiality level
Disclosures of officers' remuneration, salary bandings and exit packages in notes to the statements	Due to public interest in these disclosures and the statutory requirement for them to be made.	Any errors identified by testing in excess of £20,000 would be deemed to have implications on the users understanding of the financial statements.
Related party transactions	Related party transactions have to be disclosed if they are material to the fire authority or to the related party.	Any errors identified by testing will be assessed individually, with due regard given to the nature of the error and its potential impact on users of the financial statements. We are unable to quantify a materiality level as the concept of related party transactions takes in to account what is material to both the Authority and the related party.

Misstatements, including omissions, are considered to be material if they, individually or in the aggregate, could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of the financial statements; Judgments about materiality are made in light of surrounding circumstances, and are affected by the size or nature of a misstatement, or a combination of both; and Judgments about matters that are material to users of the financial statements are based on a consideration of the common financial information needs of users as a group. The possible effect of misstatements on specific individual users, whose needs may vary widely, is not considered. (ISA (UK&I) 320)

Audit findings against significant risks

In this section we detail our response to the significant risks of material misstatement which we identified in the Audit Plan. As we noted in our plan, there are two presumed significant risks which are applicable to all audits under auditing standards.

Risks identified in our audit plan	Work completed	Assurance gained and issues arising
<p>The revenue cycle includes fraudulent transactions</p> <p>Under ISA (UK&I) 240 there is a presumed risk that revenue may be misstated due to the improper recognition of revenue.</p>	<p>Having considered the risk factors set out in ISA240 and the nature of the revenue streams at West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority, we have determined that the risk of fraud arising from revenue recognition can be rebutted, because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • there is little incentive to manipulate revenue recognition; • opportunities to manipulate revenue recognition are very limited; and • the culture and ethical frameworks of local authorities, including West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority, mean that all forms of fraud are seen as unacceptable. 	<p>Our audit work has not identified any issues in respect of revenue recognition.</p>
<p>Management over-ride of controls</p> <p>Under ISA (UK&I) 240 it is presumed that the risk of management over-ride of controls is present in all entities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have reviewed the journal control environment and not identified any significant control weaknesses. • We have tested key journal entries and not found any items which impacted on our opinion. • We have reviewed the accounting estimates, judgements and decisions made by management. • We have reviewed any unusual, significant transactions and not identified anything which would impact on our opinion. 	<p>Our audit work has not identified any evidence of management over-ride of controls. In particular the findings of our review of journal controls and testing of journal controls and testing of journal entries has not identified any significant issues.</p> <p>We set out later in this section of the report our work and findings on key accounting estimates and judgements.</p>

"Significant risks often relate to significant non-routine transactions and judgmental matters. Non-routine transactions are transactions that are unusual, due to either size or nature, and that therefore occur infrequently. Judgmental matters may include the development of accounting estimates for which there is significant measurement uncertainty." (ISA (UK&I) 315) . In making the review of unusual significant transactions "the auditor shall treat identified significant related party transactions outside the entity's normal course of business as giving rise to significant risks." (ISA (UK&I) 550)

Audit findings against significant risks (continued)

Risks identified in our audit plan	Work completed	Assurance gained and issues arising
<p>Valuation of pension fund net liability</p> <p>The Authority's pension fund net liability, as reflected in its balance sheet, represents a significant estimate in the financial statements.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying the controls put in place by management to ensure that the pension fund net liability is not materially misstated and assessing whether those controls were implemented as expected and whether they were sufficient to mitigate the risk of material misstatement. Review of the competence, expertise and objectivity of the actuary who carried out the Council's pension fund valuation. Gaining an understanding of the basis on which the IAS 19 valuation was carried out, undertaking procedures to confirm the reasonableness of the actuarial assumptions made. Review of the consistency of the pension fund net liability disclosures in notes to the financial statements with the actuarial report from your actuary. 	<p>Our audit work has not identified any issues in respect of the valuation of the pension fund net liability.</p>

Audit findings against other risks

In this section we detail our response to the other risks of material misstatement which we identified in the Audit Plan.

Transaction cycle	Description of risk	Work completed	Assurance gained & issues arising
<p>Operating expenses</p>	<p>We identified the completeness of non-pay expenditure in the financial statements as a risk requiring particular audit attention, that being:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creditors understated or not recorded in the correct period (Operating expenses understated) 	<p>We have undertaken the following work in relation to this risk:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have documented our understanding of processes and controls in place around the accounting for operating expenses. • We have carried out a walkthrough test to confirm the operation of controls were in line with our documented understanding • We have tested the completeness of the subsidiary system (purchase ledger) and how it interfaces with the ledger. • We have documented the processes in place for month and year end accruals. • We have performed cut off testing of purchase orders and goods received notes. • We have reviewed a schedule of goods received that have not yet been invoiced and concluded that they are below materiality and as such do not present a risk to the financial statements. • We have performed testing of a sample of operating expenses to ensure they have been accurately accounted for and in the correct period. 	<p>Our audit work has not identified any significant issues in relation to the risk identified.</p>

"In respect of some risks, the auditor may judge that it is not possible or practicable to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence only from substantive procedures. Such risks may relate to the inaccurate or incomplete recording of routine and significant classes of transactions or account balances, the characteristics of which often permit highly automated processing with little or no manual intervention. In such cases, the entity's controls over such risks are relevant to the audit and the auditor shall obtain an understanding of them." (ISA (UK&I) 315)

Audit findings against other risks (continued)

Transaction cycle	Description of risk	Work completed	Assurance gained & issues arising
Fire Pensions Benefits Payable	<p>Benefits improperly computed / Claims liability understated</p> <p>Payments to retiring officers are low in volume but high in value and the Authority is reliant on effective controls to ensure the payments made are valid and accurate.</p>	<p>We have undertaken the following work in relation to this risk:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have documented our understanding of processes and key controls in place around the accounting for Fire Fighters Pensions. We have carried out a walkthrough test to confirm the operation of controls is in line with our documented understanding. We have agreed pension disclosures in the financial statements to supporting evidence. We have tested a sample of Fire Fighters pension payments covering the period 1st April 2016 – 31st March 2017 to ensure they have been accurately accounted for and in the correct period. 	<p>Our audit work has not identified any significant issues in relation to the risk identified.</p>
Employee remuneration	<p>We identified the completeness of payroll expenditure in the financial statements as a risk requiring particular audit attention, that being:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employee remuneration accruals understated (Remuneration expenses not correct) 	<p>We have undertaken the following work in relation to this risk:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documented our understanding of processes and key controls in place around the accounting for Employee Remuneration. Undertaken walkthrough of the key controls to assess whether those controls were in line with our documented understanding We have performed a review of monthly trend analysis of payments to identify and investigate any unusual or irregular movements. We have reviewed the payroll reconciliation to ensure that information from the payroll system can be agreed to the ledger and to the financial statements. We have performed substantive testing of employees for accuracy of payment. 	<p>Our audit work has not identified any further significant issues in relation to the risk identified.</p>

Audit findings against other risks (continued)

Transaction cycle	Description of risk	Work completed	Assurance gained & issues arising
<p>Changes to the presentation of local authority financial statements</p>	<p>CIPFA has been working on the 'Telling the Story' project, for which the aim was to streamline the financial statements and improve accessibility to the user and this has resulted in changes to the 2016/17 CIPFA Code of Practice.</p> <p>The changes affect the presentation of income and expenditure in the financial statements and associated disclosure notes. A prior period adjustment (PPA) to restate the 2015/16 comparative figures is also required.</p>	<p>We have undertaken the following work in relation to this risk:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> documented and evaluated the process for the recording the required financial reporting changes to the 2016/17 financial statements reviewed the re-classification of the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (CIES) comparatives to ensure that they are in line with the Council's internal reporting structure reviewed the appropriateness of the revised grouping of entries within the Movement In Reserves Statement (MIRS) tested the classification of income and expenditure reported within the new Expenditure and Funding Analysis (EFA) note to the financial statements reviewed the new segmental reporting disclosures within the 2016/17 financial statements to ensure compliance with the CIPFA Code of Practice. 	<p>Our audit work has not identified any significant issues in relation to the risk identified.</p>





Going concern

As auditors, we are required to “obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence about the appropriateness of management's use of the going concern assumption in the preparation and presentation of the financial statements and to conclude whether there is a material uncertainty about the entity's ability to continue as a going concern” (ISA (UK&I) 570).

We reviewed the management's assessment of the going concern assumption and the disclosures in the financial statements and concluded that the going concern basis is appropriate for the 2016/17 financial statements.

Accounting policies, estimates and judgements

In this section we report on our consideration of accounting policies, in particular revenue recognition policies, and key estimates and judgements made and included with the Council's financial statements.

Accounting area	Summary of policy	Comments	Assessment
Revenue recognition	<p>The Authority's policy is set out in its accounting policies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accounting policy 1.2 – Accruals of income and expenditure Accounting policy 1.10 – Government grants and contributions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Authority's policy is appropriate and consistent with the relevant accounting framework- the Local Government Code of Accounting Practice. Minimal judgement is involved. The accounting policy is appropriately disclosed. 	 GREEN
Judgements and estimates	<p>As per accounting policy 4, the key estimates and judgements include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pensions liability Provisions Property plant and equipment- including valuation and useful lives. 	<p>We have not identified any issues in relation to accounting estimates and judgements which we wish to bring to your attention.</p>	 GREEN
Going concern	<p>The Strategic Enabling Team has a reasonable expectation that the services provided by the Authority will continue for the foreseeable future. Members concur with this view. For this reason, the Authority continue to adopt the going concern basis in preparing the financial statements.</p>	<p>We have reviewed the Strategic Enabling Team's assessment and are satisfied with management's assessment that the going concern basis is appropriate for the 2016/17 financial statements.</p>	 GREEN
Other accounting policies	<p>We have reviewed the Authority's policies against the requirements of the CIPFA Code of Practice. The Authority's accounting policies are appropriate and consistent with previous years.</p>	<p>Our review of accounting policies has not identified any issues which we wish to bring to your attention.</p>	 GREEN

Assessment

 Marginal accounting policy which could potentially attract attention from regulators

 Accounting policy appropriate but scope for improved disclosure

 Accounting policy appropriate and disclosures sufficient

Other communication requirements

We set out below details of other matters which we, as auditors, are required by auditing standards and the Code to communicate to those charged with governance.

	Issue	Commentary
1.	Matters in relation to fraud	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have previously discussed the risk of fraud with the Audit Committee. We have not been made aware of any incidents in the period that we need to bring to your attention. No other issues have been identified during the course of our audit.
2.	Matters in relation to related parties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> From the work we carried out, we have not identified any related party transactions which have not been disclosed.
3.	Matters in relation to laws and regulations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You have not made us aware of any significant incidences of non-compliance with relevant laws and regulations and we have not identified any incidences from our audit work.
4.	Written representations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A standard letter of representation has been requested from the Authority.
5.	Confirmation requests from third parties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We obtained direct confirmations from the Authority's bank and from PWLB for loans.
6.	Disclosures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our review found no material omissions in the financial statements.
7.	Matters on which we report by exception	<p>We are required to report on a number of matters by exception in a number of areas.</p> <p>We have not identified any issues we would be required to report by exception in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If the Annual Governance Statement does not meet the disclosure requirements set out in the CIPFA/SOLACE guidance or is misleading or inconsistent with the information of which we are aware from our audit The information in the Narrative Report is materially inconsistent with the information in the audited financial statements or our knowledge of the Authority acquired in the course of performing our audit, or otherwise misleading.
8.	Specified procedures for Whole of Government Accounts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We are required to carry out specified procedures (on behalf of the NAO) on the Whole of Government Accounts (WGA) consolidation pack under WGA group audit instructions. This work only requires the minimum tests as the Authority does not exceed the threshold.

Adjusted misstatements

We are required to report all misstatements to those charged with governance, whether or not the accounts have been adjusted by management.

There were no adjustments identified during the audit.

Misclassifications and disclosure changes

The table below provides details of misclassification and disclosure changes identified during the audit which have been made in the final set of financial statements.

Adjustment type	Value £'000	Account balance	Impact on the financial statements
1 Disclosure	N/A	Expenditure and Funding Analysis	<p>The following changes were made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comment added to clarify that this is not a primary statement but rather a note to the financial statements. • Comment added to clarify that the 'net expenditure chargeable to the General Fund is what was reported to the Strategic Enabling Team.
2 Disclosure	N/A	Note 14 – Prior period of restatement of Service Expenditure and Income	This was updated to include a paragraph clarifying why this note was included following the 2016/17 changes in the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting.
3 Disclosure	Various	Note 16.1 & Note 16.4 – Financial instruments	<p>The following amendments were made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial assets (Debtors) – this was amended from £14,156k to £9,047k to reflect the exclusion of the collection fund debtor. • Financial liabilities (Creditors) – this was amended from £8,779k to £4,053k to reflect the exclusion of the collection fund creditor.
4 Disclosure	Various	Various	A small number of other presentational and disclosure amendments have been made.

Section 3: Value for Money

01. Executive summary

02. Audit findings

03. Value for Money

04. Other statutory powers and duties

05. Fees, non-audit services and independence

06. Communication of audit matters

Background

We are required by section 21 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 (the Act) and the NAO Code of Audit Practice (the Code) to satisfy ourselves that the Authority has put in place proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. This is known as the Value for Money (VFM) conclusion.

We are required to carry out sufficient work to satisfy ourselves that proper arrangements are in place at the Authority. The Act and NAO guidance state that for local government bodies, including fire authorities, auditors are required to give a conclusion on whether the Authority has put proper arrangements in place.

In carrying out this work, we are required to follow the NAO's Auditor Guidance Note 3 (AGN 03) issued in November 2016. AGN 03 identifies one single criterion for auditors to evaluate:

In all significant respects, the audited body takes properly informed decisions and deploys resources to achieve planned and sustainable outcomes for taxpayers and local people.

AGN03 provides examples of proper arrangements against three sub-criteria but specifically states that these are not separate criteria for assessment purposes and that auditors are not required to reach a distinct judgement against each of these.

Risk assessment

We carried out an initial risk assessment in March 2017 and identified two significant risks in respect of specific areas of proper arrangements using the guidance contained in AGN03. We communicated these risks to you in our Audit Plan dated March 2017.

We have continued our review of relevant documents up to the date of giving our report, and have not identified any further significant risks where we need to perform further work.

We carried out further work only in respect of the significant risks we identified from our initial and ongoing risk assessment. Where our consideration of the significant risks determined that arrangements were not operating effectively, we have used the examples of proper arrangements from AGN 03 to explain the gaps in proper arrangements that we have reported in our VFM conclusion.

Whilst we have not identified any further significant risks for 2016/17 where we need to perform further work we have identified that that the Authority is operating within a dynamic environment as part of the West Midlands. We have therefore considered the future risks facing the Authority to bring our insight to Members.

Significant qualitative aspects

AGN 03 requires us to disclose our views on significant qualitative aspects of the Authority's arrangements for delivering economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

We have focused our work on the significant risks that we identified in the Authority's arrangements. In arriving at our conclusion, our main considerations were:

- **Financial resilience** – The Authority has historically managed its finances well and has consistently achieved savings targets. It is on course to deliver the 2017/18 budget. However delivering savings year on year becomes increasingly harder. Further savings of £9.415 million are required in the 4 years 2016/17 – 2019/20. This links to the Authority's arrangements for planning finances effectively to support the sustainable delivery of strategic priorities and using appropriate cost and performance information to support informed decision making.
- **Partnership working with other emergency services** – There is evidence that the Authority is working in partnership with West Midlands Police and other emergency services where the opportunity arises. There is some uncertainty over what form further collaboration will take and how this will lead to wider integration. Development of the West Midlands Combined Authority Mayoral arrangements and the recent legislative changes is now forcing a faster paced change. This links to the Authority's arrangements for working effectively with third parties to deliver strategic priorities.

We have set out more detail on the risks we identified, the results of the work we performed and the conclusions we drew from this work on pages 22 to 23.

Overall conclusion

Based on the work we performed to address the significant risks, we concluded that:

- the Authority had proper arrangements in all significant respects to ensure it delivered value for money in its use of resources.

The text of our report, which confirms this can be found at Appendix A.

Recommendations for improvement

We discussed findings arising from our work with management and have not made any recommendations as the Authority is aware of the financial challenges and partnership working risks and is actively managing these.

On page 24 we have highlighted our views on the progress and challenges the Authority is making and facing looking forward. We have discussed these and our findings arising from our work this year with management.

Key findings

We set out below our key findings against the significant risks we identified through our initial risk assessment and further risks identified through our ongoing review of documents.

Significant risk	Work to address	Findings and conclusions
<p>Financial resilience</p> <p>The Authority has historically managed its finances well and has consistently achieved savings targets. It is on course to deliver the 2016/17 budget. However delivering savings year on year becomes increasingly harder. Further savings of £9.415 million are required in the 4 years 2016/17 – 2019/20.</p> <p>This links to the Authority's arrangements for planning finances effectively to support the sustainable delivery of strategic priorities and using appropriate cost and performance information to support informed decision making.</p>	<p>We have reviewed the Authority's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and financial monitoring reports, assessing the assumptions used.</p>	<p>We are satisfied that information on the Authority's financial position is reported to those charged with governance on a periodic basis and in sufficient detail to allow key decision makers to direct the organisation in the achievement of the three E's. We did not identify any significant weakness in the medium term strategy. The strategy incorporates both financial and non-financial data and acknowledges the funding restraints the authority faces both now and in the future.</p> <p>In December 2016 the Authority received its provisional finance settlement for the three years to 2019/20. Broadly this indicated that central funding will be reduced by £10 million between 2016/17 and 2019/20. The Authority's proposed budget of £94.8 million for 2017/18 has been developed to deliver the vision, priorities, and outcomes set out in The Plan. The main assumption is the annual increase in the rate of Council Tax income by 1.99%. The long term forecast also takes in to account general inflation and price increases (c1% per annum), pay awards and pensions (c1% per annum) and rental increases (c2% per annum). These appear reasonable based on our understanding of the wider economy.</p> <p>To enhance the robustness of the MTFS projections, sensitivity analysis considers the change in key components of the budget. The Authority has also considered the impact of the 100% Business Rate Retention pilot in the West Midlands and fed into the consultation. The Authority is taking a wider view on economic growth impact for the whole area, rather than their own local impact demonstrating an externally facing focus.</p> <p>The Fire Authority set extensive and challenging key performance indicators. Whilst there is over-performance against the KPI for response (relating to the 5 minute attendance target for category 2, 3 & 4 incidents, around a third of the prevention targets have not been met. However, we are satisfied that these are not as a result of deficiencies in the deployment of resources or poor decision making.</p> <p>Sickness levels for both uniformed and non-uniformed / fire control staff is higher than projected performance. The narrative confirms that this is mainly due to a few long term sickness episodes. Short-term sickness is controlled and proactively managed through the line management processes in place.</p> <p>The Authority is actively monitoring performance in a range of areas and providing narrative commentary against adverse variances. This shows that the procedures in place are adequate for ensuring informed decision making is present for improving the delivery of the service.</p> <p>Finally, we note from our review of financial performance that the Authority surpassed budgeted expectations from both a revenue and capital perspective by coming in below budget for 2016/17. This is a positive indication of the planned delivery the medium term financial strategy supported by realistic budgets based on reasonable assumptions. Transformation is a key element of the commitment to the strategy of the Service as set out in The Plan and approved by the Fire Authority. However, it should be noted that the assumptions made around growth and additional income in future years are more ambitious than in previous Plans and the Authority is taking time to establish itself in new markets. There are positive signs, but the plans to close the financial gap going forward are challenging and will require close scrutiny where significant variances arise.</p> <p>On that basis we concluded that the risk was sufficiently mitigated and the Authority has proper arrangements</p>

Key findings

We set out below our key findings against the significant risks we identified through our initial risk assessment and further risks identified through our ongoing review of documents.

Significant risk	Work to address	Findings and conclusions
<p>Partnership working with other emergency services</p> <p>There is evidence that the Service is working in partnership with West Midlands Police, ambulance Service, NHS, Local Authorities and other Fire & Rescue Authorities where the opportunity arises. There is some uncertainty over what form further collaboration will take and how this will lead to wider integration. Development of the West Midlands Combined Authority Mayoral arrangements and the recent legislative changes is now forcing a faster paced change.</p> <p>This links to the Authority's arrangements for working effectively with third parties to deliver strategic priorities.</p>	<p>We have reviewed the project management and risk assurance frameworks established by the Authority in respect of the more significant projects, to establish how the Authority is identifying, managing and monitoring these risks.</p>	<p>Overall we have gained assurance that there are no significant VFM risks relating to partnership working which adversely impact on our VFM conclusion for 2016/17.</p> <p>The Mayoral West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) is a significant new governance structure and will be a key driver of public service reform in the region. West Midlands Fire Authority has signalled its intent to become integrated with the Mayoral WMCA as part of its overall governance structure. There is evidence of the consideration of decisions by the Fire Authority to enable informed decision making on this key structural issue.</p> <p>The legislation is clear that the Government is committed to closer collaboration between the police and fire and rescue services. This Government is clear that greater joint working between the emergency services can deliver better local accountability, an improved service for communities and significant savings for taxpayers. Similarly the Government believes that central policy making, as well as local delivery, can benefit from a more joined up approach and that this can be best achieved by transferring responsibility for fire and rescue policy from the Department for Communities and Local Government to the Home Office.</p> <p>In response to this changing agenda (both politically and structurally), the Fire Authority has refreshed its vision and rolling three year Plan following stakeholder consultation. The Authority has also reviewed its Corporate Risks and is leading on Public Service Reform for Mayoral WMCA. West Midlands Fire Service has made significant progress in reforming itself to meet the wider challenges of driven by changes in Government policy and the complex and diversifying needs of the public. Cross sector working is at the heart of meeting these needs going forward and there is a recognition that the role of the Fire Service goes beyond that of a traditional firefighting service.</p> <p>This is reflected in the recent change in the vision to 'Making the West Midlands Safer, Stronger and Healthier' and picks up the increasing role in delivering outcomes in conjunction with other public sector services, including Police, Health bodies and Local Government bodies. Key to this approach is evidence which shows the incidence of individuals with multiple public service needs, providing an opportunity for a joined up approach to service delivery which is both more efficient and effective.</p> <p>The recent Peer Challenge identified that "West Midlands Fire & Rescue Service is keen to be at the forefront of working on the wider health agenda.....tackling health inequalities through its prevention and community safety work. The Service makes use of data and intelligence to target its Safe and Well visits. The Vision to deliver this across the whole community will assist with future Fire Reform developments." West Midlands Fire Authority has consulted and adapted to ensure that its structure and processes support collaborative working. The public service reform agenda is challenging, and meeting the Mayoral WMCA timetable for this will be demanding.</p> <p>There is a risk that the development of combined governance arrangements with Mayoral WMCA are not in place as rapidly as planned. In response to this the Authority set up a Governance Working Group with an independent Chair and following a review it reported its findings and recommendations for the service with a focus on the scrutiny, accountability and transparency this provides to communities. The Authority wants to ensure that it has the best governance it can, to be able to respond to strategic governance arrangements both within the region and within emergency services.</p> <p>On that basis we concluded that the risk was sufficiently mitigated and the Authority has proper arrangements</p>

Looking forward

Following the announcement in January 2016 to transfer responsibility for fire and rescue to the Home Office, the West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority has responded well by engaging with partners and ensuring that key Senior Fire Leads are present at the table for any negotiations on how the service will be delivered in future as part of the wider service to local tax payers.

Whilst nationally fatalities have declined the ability of the service to deliver more proactive work, some of which drives income, has increased. The Authority remains mindful that it needs to retain sufficient capacity and capability to respond to emergency calls within the target times, but also have the capacity to respond to a major incident should it occur.

The Fire Authority is clear that it needs to drive forward the efficiency agenda. Reductions in funding, changes to prime legislation and the establishment of regional arrangements through the combined authority, provide a catalyst to challenge current delivery. Discussions with West Midlands Police and the seven Local Authorities within the West Midlands have been driven by the Chief Fire Officer who also holds the role of Chief Executive for Public Sector Reform on behalf of the Mayoral WMCA. These continuing discussions provide confidence that the Authority is taking a planned approach to optimising their joint use of resources and aligning overall oversight of services.

Funding for fire and rescue authorities has fallen significantly between 2010/11 and 2015/16. However, the Fire Authority is currently in a relatively strong financial position with minimal debt and healthy reserves. It is well positioned financially to support the transformations required to deliver further savings. An Efficiency Plan has been developed, setting out £10 million of savings and increased income to meet the future financial gap. This includes £4 million from more flexibility in staff deployment, and a further £2 million from business development. Delivering this level of additional income will be challenging.

The service is thinking creatively around how it optimises its resources. Using the skills and the capacity of Fire Officers in a planned way has allowed the Service to win contracts to deliver first response for elderly people following a fall. This supports the overall preventative agenda of the Authority by gaining access to vulnerable groups whilst also providing an income stream. The scale of the overall challenge to deliver efficient, effective services that meet the needs of the community in an environment of core funding reductions is significant but the management of the Service and the Fire Authority has demonstrated a commitment to meet this challenge.

Section 4: Other statutory powers and duties

01. Executive summary

02. Audit findings

03. Value for Money

04. Other statutory powers and duties

05. Fees, non audit services and independence

06. Communication of audit matters

We set out below details of other matters which we, as auditors, are required by the Act and the Code to communicate to those charged with governance.

	Issue	Commentary
1.	Public interest report	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We have not identified any matters that would require a public interest report to be issued.
2.	Written recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We have not made any written recommendations that the Authority is required to respond to publicly.

Section 5: Fees, non-audit services and independence

01. Executive summary

02. Audit findings

03. Value for Money

04. Other statutory powers and duties

05. Fees, non audit services and independence

06. Communication of audit matters

We confirm below our final fees charged for the audit and provision of non-audit services.

Fees

	Proposed fee £	Final fee £
Authority audit	38,636	38,636
Total audit fees (excluding VAT)	38,636	38,636

Fees for other services

Service	Fees £
Audit related services:	0
Non-audit services	0

The proposed fees for the year were in line with the scale fee set by Public Sector Audit Appointments Ltd (PSAA)

Independence and ethics

- We confirm that there are no significant facts or matters that impact on our independence as auditors that we are required or wish to draw to your attention. We have complied with the Auditing Practices Board's Ethical Standards and confirm that we are independent and are able to express an objective opinion on the financial statements.
- We confirm that we have implemented policies and procedures to meet the requirements of the Auditing Practices Board's Ethical Standards.

Section 6: Communication of audit matters

01. Executive summary

02. Audit findings

03. Value for Money

04. Other statutory powers and duties

05. Fees, non audit services and independence

06. Communication of audit matters

Communication to those charged with governance

ISA (UK&I) 260, as well as other ISAs, prescribe matters which we are required to communicate with those charged with governance, and which we set out in the table opposite.

This document, The Audit Findings, outlines those key issues and other matters arising from the audit, which we consider should be communicated in writing rather than orally, together with an explanation as to how these have been resolved.

Respective responsibilities

The Audit Findings Report has been prepared in the context of the Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and Audited Bodies issued by Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited (<http://www.psa.co.uk/appointing-auditors/terms-of-appointment>).

We have been appointed as the Council's independent external auditors by the Audit Commission, the body responsible for appointing external auditors to local public bodies in England at the time of our appointment. As external auditors, we have a broad remit covering finance and governance matters.

Our annual work programme is set in accordance with the Code of Audit Practice ('the Code') issued by the NAO (<https://www.nao.org.uk/code-audit-practice/about-code/>). Our work considers the Council's key risks when reaching our conclusions under the Code.

It is the responsibility of the Council to ensure that proper arrangements are in place for the conduct of its business, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for. We have considered how the Council is fulfilling these responsibilities.

Our communication plan	Audit Plan	Audit Findings
Respective responsibilities of auditor and management/those charged with governance	✓	
Overview of the planned scope and timing of the audit. Form, timing and expected general content of communications	✓	
Views about the qualitative aspects of the entity's accounting and financial reporting practices, significant matters and issues arising during the audit and written representations that have been sought		✓
Confirmation of independence and objectivity	✓	✓
A statement that we have complied with relevant ethical requirements regarding independence, relationships and other matters which might be thought to bear on independence. Details of non-audit work performed by Grant Thornton UK LLP and network firms, together with fees charged Details of safeguards applied to threats to independence	✓	✓
Material weaknesses in internal control identified during the audit		✓
Identification or suspicion of fraud involving management and/or others which results in material misstatement of the financial statements		✓
Non compliance with laws and regulations		✓
Expected modifications to auditor's report, or emphasis of matter		✓
Unadjusted misstatements and material disclosure omissions		✓
Significant matters arising in connection with related parties		✓
Significant matters in relation to going concern	✓	✓

Appendices

A. Audit Opinion

A: Audit opinion

We anticipate we will provide the Authority with an unmodified audit report.

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT TO THE MEMBERS OF WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

We have audited the financial statements of West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority (the "Authority") for the year ended 31 March 2017 under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 (the "Act"). The financial statements comprise the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, the Movement in Reserves Statement, the Balance Sheet, the Cash Flow Statement and the related notes and include the firefighters' pension fund financial statements comprising the Pension Fund Account, the Net Assets Statement and the related notes. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2016/17.

This report is made solely to the members of the Authority, as a body, in accordance with Part 5 of the Act and as set out in paragraph 43 of the Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and Audited Bodies published by Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the Authority's members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the Authority and the Authority's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

Respective responsibilities of the Treasurer and auditor

As explained more fully in the Statement of Responsibilities, the Treasurer is responsible for the preparation of the Statement of Accounts, which includes the financial statements, in accordance with proper practices as set out in the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2016/17, which give a true and fair view. Our responsibility is to audit and express an opinion on the financial statements in accordance with applicable law, the Code of Audit Practice published by the National Audit Office on behalf of the Comptroller and Auditor General (the "Code of Audit Practice") and International Standards on Auditing (UK and Ireland). Those standards require us to comply with the Auditing Practices Board's Ethical Standards for Auditors.

Scope of the audit of the financial statements

An audit involves obtaining evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements sufficient to give reasonable assurance that the financial statements are free from material misstatement, whether caused by fraud or error. This includes an assessment of whether the

accounting policies are appropriate to the Authority's circumstances and have been consistently applied and adequately disclosed; the reasonableness of significant accounting estimates made by the Treasurer; and the overall presentation of the financial statements. In addition, we read all the financial and non-financial information in the Narrative Report and the Annual Governance Statement to identify material inconsistencies with the audited financial statements and to identify any information that is apparently materially incorrect based on, or materially inconsistent with, the knowledge acquired by us in the course of performing the audit. If we become aware of any apparent material misstatements or inconsistencies we consider the implications for our report.

Opinion on financial statements

In our opinion: the financial statements present a true and fair view of the financial position of the Authority as at 31 March 2017 and of its expenditure and income for the year then ended; and the financial statements have been prepared properly in accordance with the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2016/17 and applicable law.

Opinion on other matters

In our opinion, the other information published together with the audited financial statements in the Narrative Report and the Annual Governance Statement for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the audited financial statements.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

We are required to report to you if: in our opinion the Annual Governance Statement does not comply with the guidance included in 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework (2016)' published by CIPFA and SOLACE; or we have reported a matter in the public interest under section 24 of the Act in the course of, or at the conclusion of the audit; or we have made a written recommendation to the Authority under section 24 of the Act in the course of, or at the conclusion of the audit; or we have exercised any other special powers of the auditor under the Act.

We have nothing to report in respect of the above matters.

Conclusion on the Authority's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources

Respective responsibilities of the Authority and auditor

The Authority is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources, to ensure proper stewardship and governance, and to review regularly the adequacy and effectiveness of these arrangements.

We are required under Section 20(1)(c) of the Act to be satisfied that the Authority has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. We are not required to consider, nor have we considered, whether all aspects of the Authority's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources are operating effectively.

Scope of the review of the Authority's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources

We have undertaken our review in accordance with the Code of Audit Practice, having regard to the guidance on the specified criteria issued by the Comptroller and Auditor General in November 2016, as to whether the Authority had proper arrangements to ensure it took properly informed decisions and deployed resources to achieve planned and sustainable outcomes for taxpayers and local people. The Comptroller and Auditor General determined this criteria as that necessary for us to consider under the Code of Audit Practice in satisfying ourselves whether the Authority put in place proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources for the year ended 31 March 2017.

We planned our work in accordance with the Code of Audit Practice. Based on our risk assessment, we undertook such work as we considered necessary to form a view on whether in all significant respects the Authority has put in place proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

Conclusion

On the basis of our work, having regard to the guidance on the specified criteria issued by the Comptroller and Auditor General in November 2016, we are satisfied that in all significant respects *the Authority* put in place proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of its resources for the year ended 31 March 2017.

Certificate

We certify that we have completed the audit of the financial statements of the Authority in accordance with the requirements of the Act and the Code of Audit Practice.

[Signature]

Richard Percival

for and on behalf of Grant Thornton UK LLP, Appointed Auditor

The Colmore Building
20 Colmore Circus
Birmingham
B4 6AT

Date



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WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

18 SEPTEMBER 2017

Item 6

1. STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2016/17

Report of the Chief Fire Officer and the Treasurer.

RECOMMENDED

- 1.1 THAT the Statement of Accounts for 2016/17 set out in Appendix A be note.
- 1.2 THAT the Statement of Accounts summary for 2016/17 set out in Appendix B be noted.

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report is submitted for Members to note the Authority's Statement of Accounts for the financial year ended 31 March 2017.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 require that the accounts be submitted to Members for approval by the end of September. The Audit Committee at its meeting on 24th July 2017 approved the Statement of Accounts for 2016/17.
- 3.2 It is a further requirement of the Regulations that Members are informed of any material changes required by the external auditors. The Audit Findings Report was presented to the Audit Committee on 24th July 2017 outlining the findings of the audit work undertaken. Following the Audit Committee meeting, the auditor issued an unqualified opinion on the Authority's 2016/17 financial statements included in the Authority's Statement of Accounts.
- 3.3 The Accounts show net cost of services in 2016/17 of £107.2 million including an appropriation to earmarked reserves of £3.569 million. General balances have increased by £0.003 million to £9.236 million.

- 3.4 The total Provision of Services in 2016/17 shows a deficit of £58.881 million, after allowing for the required accounting treatment of pensions governed by International Accounting Standard – Nineteen (IAS19). Capital expenditure totalled £3.677.
- 3.5 A Statement of Accounts is attached as Appendix A and a summary of accounts is attached as Appendix B, both are available on the Fire Service Internet and can be viewed at <https://www.net/your-fire-service/openness/documents>.
- 3.6 A hard copy of the full Statement of Accounts can be supplied to individual Members on request and will be available to view at the Authority meeting.

4. **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

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 do not relate to a policy change.

5. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

The course of action recommended in this report will enable the Authority to meet its statutory obligations under the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.

6. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

These are contained in the report and the Statement of Accounts.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015
Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting 2016/17
Final Accounts Files – Finance Office.

The contact officer for this report is Deputy Chief Fire Officer Philip Hales, telephone number 0121 380 6907.

PHIL LOACH
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

MIKE GRIFFITHS
TREASURER

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE SERVICE

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY



Financial Statements & Notes to the Accounts

2016/2017

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Independent Auditor's Report to the Members of the West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority

We have audited the financial statements of West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority (the "Authority") for the year ended 31 March 2017 under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 (the "Act"). The financial statements comprise the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, the Movement in Reserves Statement, the Balance Sheet, the Cash Flow Statement and the related notes and include the firefighters' pension fund financial statements comprising the Pension Fund Account, the Net Assets Statement and the related notes. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2016/17.

This report is made solely to the members of the Authority, as a body, in accordance with Part 5 of the Act and as set out in paragraph 43 of the Statement of Responsibilities of Auditors and Audited Bodies published by Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the Authority's members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the Authority and the Authority's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

Respective responsibilities of the Treasurer and auditor

As explained more fully in the Statement of Responsibilities, the Treasurer is responsible for the preparation of the Statement of Accounts, which includes the financial statements, in accordance with proper practices as set out in the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2016/17, which give a true and fair view. Our responsibility is to audit and express an opinion on the financial statements in accordance with applicable law, the Code of Audit Practice published by the National Audit Office on behalf of the Comptroller and Auditor General (the "Code of Audit Practice") and International Standards on Auditing (UK and Ireland). Those standards require us to comply with the Auditing Practices Board's Ethical Standards for Auditors.

Scope of the audit of the financial statements

An audit involves obtaining evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements sufficient to give reasonable assurance that the financial statements are free from material misstatement, whether caused by fraud or error. This includes an assessment of whether the accounting policies are appropriate to the Authority's circumstances and have been consistently applied and adequately disclosed; the reasonableness of significant accounting estimates made by the Treasurer; and the overall presentation of the financial statements. In addition, we read all the financial and non-financial information in the Narrative Report and the Annual Governance Statement to identify material inconsistencies with the audited financial statements and to identify any information that is apparently materially incorrect based on, or materially inconsistent with, the knowledge acquired by us in the course of performing the audit. If we become aware of any apparent material misstatements or inconsistencies we consider the implications for our report.

Opinion on financial statements

In our opinion:

- the financial statements present a true and fair view of the financial position of the Authority as at 31 March 2017 and of its expenditure and income for the year then ended; and
- the financial statements have been prepared properly in accordance with the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2016/17 and applicable law.

Opinion on other matters

In our opinion, the other information published together with the audited financial statements in the Narrative Report and the Annual Governance Statement for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the audited financial statements.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

We are required to report to you if:

- in our opinion the Annual Governance Statement does not comply with the guidance included in 'Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework (2016)' published by CIPFA and SOLACE; or
- we have reported a matter in the public interest under section 24 of the Act in the course of, or at the conclusion of the audit; or
- we have made a written recommendation to the Authority under section 24 of the Act in the course of, or at the conclusion of the audit; or
- we have exercised any other special powers of the auditor under the Act.

We have nothing to report in respect of the above matters.

Conclusion on the Authority's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources

Respective responsibilities of the Authority and auditor

The Authority is responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources, to ensure proper stewardship and governance, and to review regularly the adequacy and effectiveness of these arrangements.

We are required under Section 20(1)(c) of the Act to be satisfied that the Authority has made proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. We are not required to consider, nor have we considered, whether all aspects of the Authority's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources are operating effectively.

Scope of the review of the Authority's arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources

We have undertaken our review in accordance with the Code of Audit Practice, having regard to the guidance on the specified criteria issued by the Comptroller and Auditor General in November 2016, as to whether the Authority had proper

arrangements to ensure it took properly informed decisions and deployed resources to achieve planned and sustainable outcomes for taxpayers and local people. The Comptroller and Auditor General determined this criteria as that necessary for us to consider under the Code of Audit Practice in satisfying ourselves whether the Authority put in place proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources for the year ended 31 March 2017.

We planned our work in accordance with the Code of Audit Practice. Based on our risk assessment, we undertook such work as we considered necessary to form a view on whether in all significant respects the Authority has put in place proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources.

Conclusion

On the basis of our work, having regard to the guidance on the specified criteria issued by the Comptroller and Auditor General in November 2016, we are satisfied that in all significant respects the Authority put in place proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of its resources for the year ended 31 March 2017.

Delay in certification of completion of the audit

We cannot formally conclude the audit and issue an audit certification in accordance with the requirements of the Act and the Code until we have completed the work necessary to issue our Whole of Government Accounts (WGA) Component Assurance statement for the Authority for the year ended 31 March 2017.

We are satisfied that this work does not have a material effect on the financial statements or on our conclusion on the Authority's arrangements for securing value for money through economic, efficient and effective use of its resources.

Richard Percival

Richard Percival

for and on behalf of Grant Thornton UK LLP, Appointed Auditor

The Colmore Building
20 Colmore Circus
Birmingham
B4 6AT

24 July 2017

NARRATIVE REPORT BY THE TREASURER

The West Midlands Fire Service (WMFS) covers an area approaching 92,000 hectares (350 sq. miles) and provides a fire and rescue service to a population of approximately 3 million people living in a million dwellings. It covers the cities of Birmingham, Coventry and Wolverhampton and the Metropolitan Boroughs of Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull and Walsall.

WMFS is accountable to the public via the West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority, made up of 27 Elected Members of the seven Councils in the West Midlands. Headed by the Chair of the Fire Authority they set the direction for the Service in the best interests of the community. The Service is managed directly by three Brigade Managers – the Chief Fire Officer (CFO), Deputy Chief Fire Officer and Assistant Chief Fire Officer.

The Service's activities are governed by the Home Office and legislative responsibilities are set out in the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 and the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England.

WMFS works towards 'Making the West Midlands Safer, Stronger and Healthier'. The Chief Fire Officer together with the Strategic Enabling Team (SET) and Authority work towards achieving three priorities:

- Prevention - Safer and healthier communities. We try to fight fires and stop road accidents before they even happen. Prevention work focuses on the most vulnerable residents. By encouraging safe and healthy lifestyles, we know that we can reduce the risks that people face.
- Protection - Stronger business communities. We are passionate about helping West Midlands businesses to stay in business, and helping the economy to thrive. The Fire Safety team work with employers to protect their people and premises.
- Response - Dealing effectively with emergencies. Firefighters aim to get to life or death emergencies in 5 minutes, and when they arrive, they call on their training and professionalism to deliver an assertive, safe and effective response.

We deliver our priorities with fewer and effective resources by these outcomes:

- Value for Money - Government funding reductions are met and the Service Delivery Model is maintained. Flexible and sustainable funding opportunities are identified and secured. Assets are used as effectively and efficiently as possible.
- People - Leadership and personal accountability at all levels will be empowered to effectively deliver change. Developing an environment of wellbeing through supporting the personal resilience of the workforce so that they are responsive to opportunities of change. The service will achieve diversity, inclusion, cohesion and equality outcomes for its diverse community and workforce.
- Information Communication Technology - Emergency 999 systems to mobilise and enable rapid response when and where it is needed. The right level of information is provided to the communities and mobile workforce at the right time. Secure and reliable data sharing with partner agencies enables cost effective joined up services to the most vulnerable within our communities.

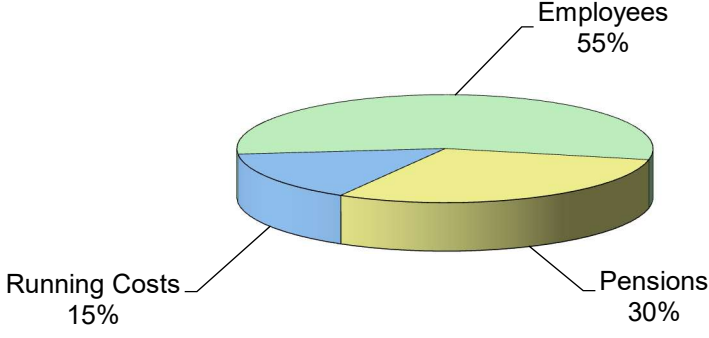
Further information can be found on our website www.wmfs.net

- 1 The Authority's accounts for the financial year 2016/2017 are set out on the following pages and consist of:
 - The Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (CIES), the Authority's main revenue account, covering income and expenditure on all services.
 - Expenditure and Funding Analysis (EFA), which shows how annual expenditure is used and funded from resources and how this expenditure is allocated between the Authority's services.
 - The Movement in Reserves Statement (MIRS), which shows the movement in the year on the different reserves held by the Authority.
 - The Balance Sheet, which sets out the financial position of the Authority at 31st March 2017.
 - The Cash Flow Statement, showing movements in cash and cash equivalents during the year and the cash position at the year-end.
 - The Pension Fund Account, which summarises the movements relating to the firefighters' pension schemes.

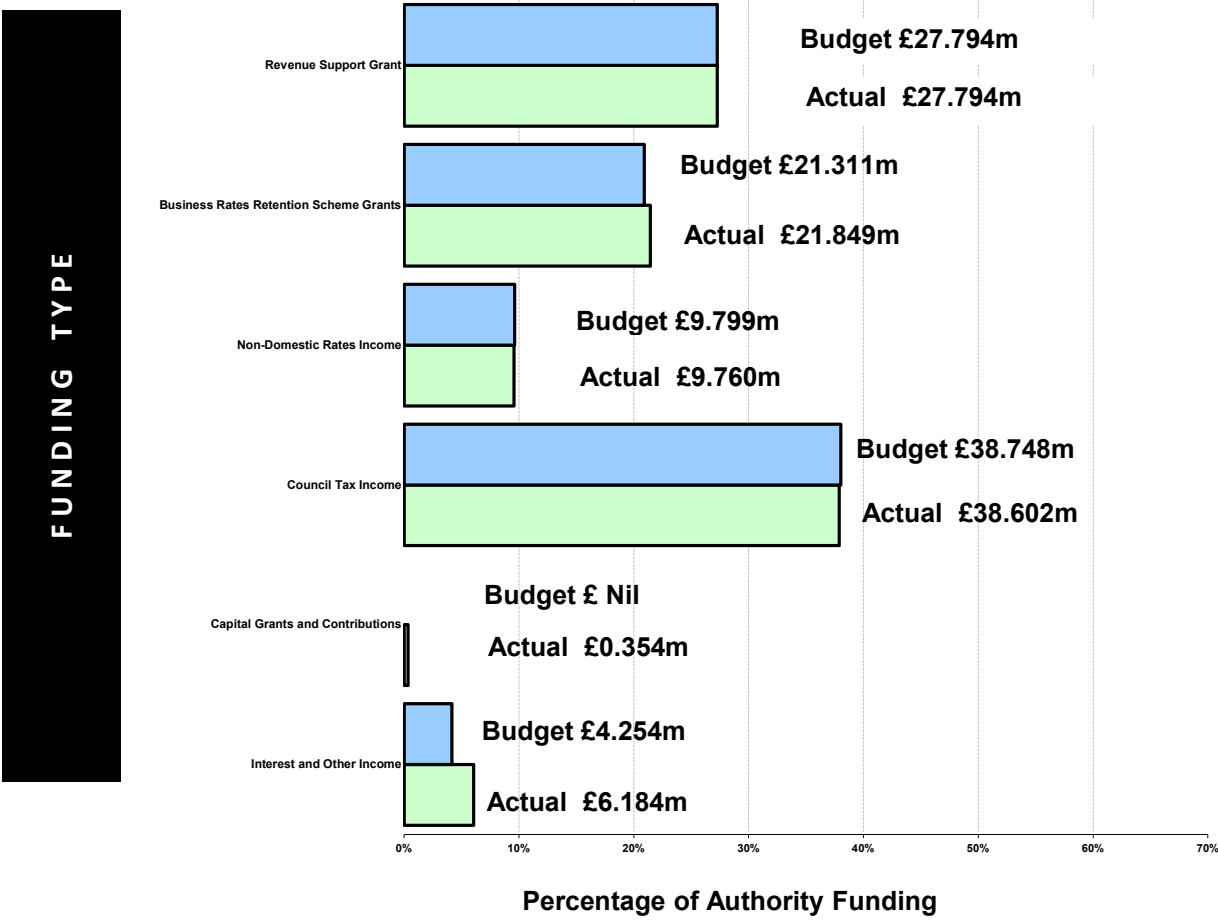
The accounts are supported by notes to the core financial statements.

2. This narrative report provides a brief explanation of the financial aspects of the Authority's activities and draws attention to the main characteristics of the Authority's financial position.
3. The accounting policies adopted by the Authority comply with the relevant accounting standards except where indicated in notes to the accounts.
4. Significant change in Accounting Policies, following the Telling the Story review of the presentation of local authority financial statements, the 2016/17 Code no longer requires statements or notes to be prepared in accordance with the Service Reporting Code of Practice 2016/17 (SeRCOP). The 2016/17 Code changed the segmental reporting arrangements for the CIES and introduced the EFA. The EFA brings together local authority performance reported on the basis of expenditure measured under proper accounting practices with statutorily defined charges to the General Fund. These reports both include a segmental analysis which show how the Authority operate, monitor and manage financial performance. The 2016/17 Code also introduced a streamlined MIRS which presents the total CIES as one line.
5. The CIES shows a deficit on provision of services of £58.881m. After statutory adjustments, such as the removal of depreciation and impairments and applying International Accounting Standard Nineteen (IAS19) entries in relation to pension costs, the Authority shows an overall deficit of £306.874m.

6. The total expenditure of the Authority in 2016/17 was £163.424m. The types of costs incurred were:



7. The total income of the Authority to fund expenditure in 2016/17 was £104.543m, which came from:



8. In 2016/17 the Authority spent £3.677m on capital projects, the largest of these being £1.734m on Vehicle Replacements, £0.728m on the redevelopment of Coventry Fire Station and £0.340m on Secondary Control Room Relocation. The total expenditure on capital schemes was financed by a combination of Capital Grants, Capital Receipts and Direct Revenue Financing. Note 30 provides details of capital expenditure and capital financing.

9. In 2016/17 appropriations of £3.569m were made to earmarked general fund reserves and £0.003m to un-earmarked general fund reserves.

10. The Authority, at its February 2016 meeting authorised the limit for external debt at £43m and the statutory limit for external debt at £47m. As at 31st March 2017, the Authority's actual long-term principal borrowing was £37.363m and short-term principal borrowing was £1.264m as per Note 16.3.
11. The 2016/17 accounts include the impact of IAS19. The effects of IAS19 are shown within the CIES and Balance Sheet. There is no effect on Council Tax from the implementation of this standard. The figures disclosed represent a snapshot in time. The accounts show that there is a significant shortfall between the forecast cost of pensions and the current level of assets built up in the pension fund. The Government Actuaries Department (GAD) review the defined benefit arrangements and appropriate levels of employer & employee contributions.

12. **Financial Outlook**

As part of the settlement for 2016/17, an offer was made for a multi-year funding settlement. Any Authority wishing to take up the four year funding settlement to 2019/20 was required to set out their proposals in an Efficiency Plan to qualify for the four year settlement from April 2016. The settlement offer (provisional for 2018/19 and 2019/20) would result in a cumulative budget deficit of circa £10m if the Service did not make any efficiency savings. The Authority at its meeting on 19 September 2016 considered and approved the Efficiency Plan which was submitted to the Home Office.

The areas where savings are anticipated and reflected within the medium term financial strategy are:

- £4m – Staffing
- £2m – Flexible funding through business development
- £1m – Internal restructures
- £1m – General budget reductions
- £2m – Council tax

Further details of the Efficiency Plan can be found at <http://94.236.33.181/cmis5/>.

On 15 December 2016, the Secretary of State for the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) announced the provisional Finance Settlement for 2017/18 at £54.703m, resulting in a core funding reduction of £3.962m. The Government also proposed a referendum threshold of 2% for any Fire and Rescue Authority increasing its Council Tax. In February 2017, the Secretary of State for DCLG confirmed the Finance Settlement.

The Authority set its 2017/18 budget on 20th February 2017, setting a Council Tax requirement of £39.377m which resulted in a Council Tax increase of (1.99%), £1.11 at Band D.

13. **Performance Indicators (PI)**

The Authority has an established Scrutiny Committee whose role is to scrutinise performance information including progress made against the 'The Plan'.

The setting of targets against operational and other performance indicators enables the Service to identify key areas for improvement which contribute to making the West Midlands safer, stronger and healthier. During 2016/17 the Scrutiny


Committee received quarterly updates of the organisation's performance.

The five-minute attendance standard lies at the heart of the Service Delivery Model which shows how staff based mainly at fire stations deliver the three strategic objectives of prevention, protection and response.



A summary of the performance indicators for prevention, protection and response is provided below and further details of Authority's performance monitoring through the Scrutiny Committee can be found at <http://94.236.33.181/cmis5/>.


Key:	
Blue	Over performance against the tolerance levels
Green	Performance is within the tolerance levels
Red	Under performance against the tolerance levels

RESPONSE


PI 1		The Risk Based Attendance Standard Target: under 5 minutes Actual: 4 minutes 44 seconds
Attendance times for Category 2, 3 & 4 incidents also remain well within target: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Category 2: 5 minutes 34 seconds (target is under 7 minutes) Category 3: 4 minutes 59 seconds (target is under 10 minutes) Category 4: 6 minutes 46 seconds (target is under 20 minutes) 		


PREVENTION


PI 2		The number of accidental dwelling fires Annual Forecast : 1665 (1581 – 1698 tolerance) Actual for year: 1591
PI 3		Injuries from accidental fires in dwelling (taken to hospital for treatment) Annual Forecast: 61(48 – 66 tolerance) Actual for year: 65


PI 4		<p>The number of deaths from accidental dwelling fires Annual Forecast: Not applicable Actual for year: 13</p>
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PI 5		<p>The percentage of Home Safety Checks referred by our partners Annual Forecast: 40% Actual for year: 42.2%</p>
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PI 6		<p>The number of Home Safety Check / Safe & Well Visit points achieved by the Brigade Annual Forecast: 180,000 Actual for year: 215,423</p>
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PI 7		<p>The number of people killed or seriously injured in road traffic collisions Annual Forecast: Not applicable Actual for year: 978</p>
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PI 8		<p>The number of arson fires in dwellings Annual Forecast: 185 (165 – 192 tolerance) Actual for year: 206</p>
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PI 9		<p>The number of arson fires in non-domestic premises Annual Forecast: 125 (112 – 131 tolerance) Actual for year: 193</p>
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PI 10		<p>The number of arson vehicle fires Annual Forecast: 670 (603 – 704 tolerance) Actual for year: 914</p>
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PI 11		<p>The number of arson rubbish fires Annual Forecast: 2053 (1951 – 2094 tolerance) Actual for year: 1922</p>
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PI 12		<p>The number of arson fires in derelict buildings Annual Forecast: 137 (123 – 144 tolerance) Actual for year: 197</p>
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PROTECTION

PI 13		<p>The number of accidental fires in non-domestic premises Annual Forecast: 445 (400 – 467 tolerance) Actual for year: 449</p>
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PI 14	 Fire alarm	<p>The number of false alarm calls due to fire alarm equipment Annual Forecast: 5662 (5379 – 5775 tolerance) Actual for year: 5660</p>
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14. Further information about the accounts is available from:

Finance Manager,
West Midlands Fire Service Headquarters,
99 Vauxhall Road,
Birmingham. B7 4HW.

Telephone : 0121-380-6920
or E-Mail : kal.shoker@wmfs.net

15. Interested members of the public also have the right to inspect the accounts before the Audit is completed. The availability of the accounts for inspection is advertised on the Authority's website.

STATEMENT OF RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THE STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS

The Authority's Responsibilities

The Authority is required to:

- (i) make arrangements for the proper administration of its financial affairs and to secure that one of its officers has the responsibility for the administration of those affairs. In this Authority, that officer is the Treasurer.
- (ii) manage its affairs to secure economic, efficient and effective use of resources and safeguard its assets.
- (iii) approve the statement of accounts.

The Treasurer's Responsibilities

The Treasurer is responsible for the preparation of the Authority's statement of accounts in accordance with proper practices as set out in the C.I.P.F.A. / L.A.S.A.A.C. Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom (the Code).

In preparing this statement of accounts, the Treasurer has:

- (i) selected suitable accounting policies and then applied them consistently
- (ii) made judgements and estimates that were reasonable and prudent
- (iii) complied with the local authority Code.

The Treasurer has also:

- (iv) kept proper accounting records which were up to date.
- (v) taken reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

I certify that this statement of accounts gives a true and fair view of the financial position and expenditure and income of the West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority for the year ending 31st March 2017.

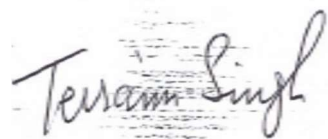


Mike Griffiths, C.P.F.A
Treasurer

Date: 24th July 2017

STATEMENT OF APPROVAL FOR THE STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS

The statement of accounts for the year 1st April 2016 to 31st March 2017 was approved by the West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority's Audit Committee on 24th July 2017.



Tersaim Singh
Chairman of the Audit Committee

Date: 24th July 2017

COMPREHENSIVE INCOME AND EXPENDITURE STATEMENT

This shows the accounting cost in the year of providing services in accordance with generally accepted accounting practices, rather than the amount to be funded from taxation. Authorities raise taxation to cover expenditure in accordance with statutory requirements; this may be different from the accounting cost. The taxation position is shown in both the EFA and the MIRS.

2015/2016 (Restated)				2016/2017		
Gross Exp. £000	Gross Income £000	Net Exp. £000		Gross Exp. £000	Gross Income £000	Net Exp. £000
84,645	(3,324)	81,321	Service Delivery	77,077	(2,885)	74,192
21,958	(1,772)	20,186	Service Support	21,677	(2,888)	18,789
2,322	(3)	2,319	Corporate Management	2,618	(15)	2,603
3,972	(4)	3,968	Corporate Charges	11,638	(27)	11,611
112,897	(5,103)	107,794	Cost of Services	113,010	(5,815)	107,195
201	(274)	(73)	Other Operating Expenditure - (Gains)/losses on the disposal of non-current assets	60	(86)	(26)
52,711	(303)	52,408	Financing and investment income & expenditure (Note 12)	50,354	(282)	50,072
		(99,512)	Taxation and non-specific grant income (Note 13)			(98,360)
		60,617	(Surplus)/Deficit on Provision of Services			58,881
496	(15,593)	(15,097)	Surplus or deficit on revaluation of Property, Vehicles, Plant and Equipment assets (Note 11.1)	16,448	(15,388)	1,060
		(232,032)	Re-measurements of the net defined benefit liability/(asset)			246,933
		(247,129)	Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure			247,993
		(186,512)	Total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure			306,874

EXPENDITURE AND FUNDING ANALYSIS

This shows how annual expenditure is used and funded from resources (government grants, council tax and business rates) by the Authority in comparison with those resources consumed or earned by the Authority in accordance with generally accepted accounting practices. It also shows how this expenditure is allocated for decision making purposes between the Authority's services. Income and expenditure accounted for under generally accepted accounting practices is presented more fully in the CIES.

The Expenditure and Funding Analysis is not a primary statement and is part of the notes to the accounts.

2015/2016				2016/2017		
Net Expenditure Chargeable to the General Fund * £000	Adjustments between Funding and Accounting Basis (Note 7) £000	Net Expenditure in the CIES £000		Net Expenditure Chargeable to the General Fund * £000	Adjustments between Funding and Accounting Basis (Note 7) £000	Net Expenditure in the CIES £000
67,737	13,584	81,321	Service Delivery	67,368	6,824	74,192
18,528	1,658	20,186	Service Support	17,598	1,191	18,789
2,051	268	2,319	Corporate Management	2,274	329	2,603
4,438	(470)	3,968	Corporate Charges	4,161	7,450	11,611
92,754	15,040	107,794	Cost of Services	91,401	15,794	107,195
(96,655)	49,478	(47,177)	Other Income and Expenditure	(94,973)	46,659	(48,314)
(3,901)	64,518	60,617	(Surplus)/Deficit on Provision of Services	(3,572)	62,453	58,881
(45,497)			Opening General Fund Balance	(49,398)		
(49,398)			Closing General Fund Balance @ 31 March	(52,970)		

* As reported to the Strategic Enabling Team

MOVEMENT IN RESERVES STATEMENT

This shows the movement in the year on the different reserves held by the Authority, analysed into 'usable reserves' (i.e. those that can be applied to fund expenditure or reduce local taxation) and other 'unusable reserves'. The Statement shows how the movements in year of the Authority's reserves are broken down between gains and losses incurred in accordance with generally accepted accounting practices and the statutory amounts required to return to the amounts chargeable to council tax for the year. The Net Increase/Decrease line shows the statutory General Fund Balance movements in the year following those adjustments.

	Un-earmarked General Fund Reserves £000	Earmarked General Fund Reserves £000	General Fund Balance (Restated) £000	Capital Receipts Reserve £000	Capital Grants Unapplied Account £000	Total Usable Reserves £000	Unusable Reserves £000	Total Authority Reserves £000
Balance at 31 March 2015	(9,231)	(36,266)	(45,497)	(902)	(5,650)	(52,049)	1,433,484	1,381,435
Movement in Reserves During 2015/16								
Total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure *	60,617	-	60,617	-	-	60,617	(247,129)	(186,512)
Adjustments between accounting basis and funding basis under regulations (Note 9)	(64,518)	-	(64,518)	(220)	3,057	(61,681)	61,681	-
Net (Increase)/Decrease before Transfers to Earmarked Reserves	(3,901)	-	(3,901)	(220)	3,057	(1,064)	(185,448)	(186,512)
Transfers to/from Earmarked Reserves (Note 10)	3,899	(3,899)	-	-	-	-	-	-
(Increase)/Decrease in 2015/16	(2)	(3,899)	(3,901)	(220)	3,057	(1,064)	(185,448)	(186,512)
Balance at 31 March 2016	(9,233)	(40,165)	(49,398)	(1,122)	(2,593)	(53,113)	1,248,036	1,194,923
Movement in Reserves During 2016/17								
Total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure *	58,881	-	58,881	-	-	58,881	247,993	306,874
Adjustments between accounting basis and funding basis under regulations (Note 9)	(62,453)	-	(62,453)	1,061	2,034	(59,358)	59,358	-
Net (Increase)/Decrease before Transfers to Earmarked Reserves	(3,572)	-	(3,572)	1,061	2,034	(477)	307,351	306,874
Transfers to/from Earmarked Reserves (Note 10)	3,569	(3,569)	-	-	-	-	-	-
(Increase)/Decrease in 2016/17	(3)	(3,569)	(3,572)	1,061	2,034	(477)	307,351	306,874
Balance at 31 March 2017	(9,236)	(43,734)	(52,970)	(61)	(559)	(53,590)	1,555,387	1,501,797

- * The total comprehensive income and expenditure is now shown as one line on the basis that the columnar analysis of the usable and unusable reserves automatically separates the movements between the surplus and deficit on the provision of services and other comprehensive income and expenditure.

BALANCE SHEET

The Balance Sheet shows the value as at the Balance Sheet date of the assets and liabilities recognised by the Authority. The net assets of the Authority (assets less liabilities) are matched by the reserves held by the Authority. Reserves are reported in two categories. The first category of reserves are usable reserves, i.e. those reserves that the Authority may use to provide services, subject to the need to maintain a prudent level of reserves and any statutory limitations on their use. The second category of reserves is those that the Authority is not able to use to provide services. This category of reserves includes reserves that hold unrealised gains and losses, where amounts would only become available to provide services if the assets are sold and reserves that hold timing differences shown in the MIRS line 'Adjustments between accounting basis and funding basis under regulations'.

31 March 2016 £000		Note	31 March 2017 £000
154,227	Property, Vehicles, Plant & Equipment	15	146,158
66	Heritage Assets		66
27	Intangible Assets		20
154,320	Long Term Assets		146,244
-	Assets Held For Sale	15	1,200
582	Inventories	17	629
15,065	Short Term Debtors	18	15,098
56,069	Cash and Cash Equivalents	19	57,428
71,716	Current Assets		74,355
(1,302)	Short Term Borrowing	16	(1,461)
(10,865)	Short Term Creditors	20	(10,926)
(756)	Grant Receipts in Advance – Revenue	29	(405)
(12,923)	Current Liabilities		(12,792)
(677)	Provisions	21	(426)
(38,627)	Long Term Borrowing	16	(37,363)
(1,368,732)	Other Long Term Liabilities	31	(1,671,815)
(1,408,036)	Long Term Liabilities		(1,709,604)
(1,194,923)	Net Assets		(1,501,797)
(53,113)	Usable Reserves		(53,590)
1,248,036	Unusable Reserves	11	1,555,387
1,194,923	Total Reserves		1,501,797



Mike Griffiths C.P.F.A (Treasurer)

24th July 2017

CASH FLOW STATEMENT

The Cash Flow Statement shows the changes in cash and cash equivalents of the Authority during the reporting period. The statement shows how the Authority generates and uses cash and cash equivalents by classifying cash flows as operating, investing and financing activities. The amount of net cash flows arising from operating activities is a key indicator of the extent to which the operations of the Authority are funded by way of taxation and grant income or from the recipients of services provided by the Authority. Investing activities represent the extent to which cash outflows have been made for resources which are intended to contribute to the Authority's future service delivery. Cash flows arising from financing activities are useful in predicting claims on future cash flows by providers of capital (i.e. borrowing) to the Authority.

2015/2016 £000		2016/2017 £000
60,617	Net (surplus) or deficit on the provision of services	58,881
(62,426)	Adjustments to net surplus or deficit on the provision of services for non-cash movements (Note 22.2)	(64,706)
239	Adjustments for items included in the net surplus or deficit on the provision of services that are investing and financing activities (Note 22.3)	75
(1,570)	Net cash flows from Operating Activities	(5,750)
3,121	Investing Activities (Note 23)	3,318
1,052	Financing Activities (Note 24)	1,073
2,603	Net (increase)/decrease in cash and cash equivalents	(1,359)
58,672	Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the reporting period	56,069
56,069	Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the reporting period (Note 19)	57,428

NOTES TO THE CORE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

1. ACCOUNTING POLICIES

1.1. General Principles

The Statement of Accounts summarises the Authority's transactions for the 2016/17 financial year and its position as at the year-end, 31st March 2017. The Authority is required to prepare an annual Statement of Accounts by the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, which require the Accounts to be prepared in accordance with proper accounting practices.

It has been prepared in accordance with the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2016/17, supported by International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) and statutory guidance issued under the Local Government Act 2003.

The accounting convention adopted in the Statement of Accounts is principally historical cost, modified by the revaluation of certain categories of non-current assets and financial instruments.

1.2. Accruals of Income and Expenditure

Activity is accounted for in the year that it takes place, not simply when cash payments are made or received. In particular:

- Revenue from the sale of goods is recognised when the Authority transfers the significant risks and rewards of ownership to the purchaser and it is probable that economic benefits or service potential associated with the transaction will flow to the Authority.
- Revenue from the provision of services is recognised when the Authority can measure reliably the percentage of completion of the transaction and it is probable that economic benefits or service potential associated with the transaction will flow to the Authority.
- Supplies are recorded as expenditure when they are consumed — where there is a gap between the date supplies are received and their consumption, they are carried as inventories on the Balance Sheet.
- Expenses in relation to services received are recorded as expenditure when the services are received rather than when payments are made.
- Interest receivable on investments and payable on borrowings is accounted for respectively as Income and Expenditure.
- Where income and expenditure have been recognised but cash has not been received or paid, a debtor or creditor for the relevant amount is recorded in the Balance Sheet. Where debts may not be settled, the balance of debtors is written down and a charge made to revenue for the income that might not be collected.
- Accruals of Income and expenditure are subject to a de minimis level of £1,000.

1.3. Cash and Cash Equivalents

Cash is represented by cash in hand and deposits with financial institutions repayable without penalty on notice of not more than 24 hours. Cash equivalents are highly liquid investments that mature in a specified period; no more than three months or less from the date of acquisition and that are readily convertible to known amounts of cash with insignificant risk of change in value.

In the Cash Flow Statement, cash and cash equivalents are shown net of bank overdrafts that are repayable on demand and form an integral part of the Authority's cash management.

1.4. Prior Period Adjustments, Changes in Accounting Policies and Estimates and Errors

Prior period adjustments may arise as a result of a change in accounting policies or to correct a material error. Changes in accounting estimates are accounted for prospectively, i.e. in the current and future years affected by the change and do not give rise to a prior period adjustment.

Changes in accounting policies are only made when required by proper accounting practices or the change provides more reliable or relevant information about the effect of transactions, other events and conditions on the Authority's financial position or financial performance. Where a change is made, it is applied retrospectively (unless stated otherwise) by adjusting opening balances and comparative amounts for the prior period as if the new policy had always been applied.

Material errors discovered in prior period figures are corrected retrospectively by amending opening balances and comparative amounts for the prior period.

Details of restated figures for 2015/16 are provided in Note 1.18 of the Accounting Policies.

1.5. Charges to Revenue for Non-Current Assets

Services and support services are debited with the following amounts to record the cost of holding non-current assets during the year:

- Depreciation attributable to the assets used by the relevant service.
- Revaluation and impairment losses on assets used by the service where there are no accumulated gains in the Revaluation Reserve against which the losses can be written off.
- Amortisation of intangible assets attributable to the service.

The Authority is not required to raise council tax to fund depreciation, revaluation and impairment losses or amortisation. However, it is required to make an annual contribution from revenue towards the reduction in its overall borrowing requirement equal to an amount calculated on a prudent basis determined by the Authority in accordance with statutory guidance within England.

Depreciation, revaluation and impairment losses and amortisation are therefore replaced by the contribution in the General Fund Balance, by way of an adjusting Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) transaction with the Capital Adjustment Account in the MIRS for the difference between the two.

1.6. Council Tax and Non-domestic Rates (NDR)

Billing authorities act as agents, collecting council tax and NDR on behalf of the major preceptors. Under the legislative framework for the Collection Fund, billing authorities, major preceptors and central government share proportionately the risks and rewards that the amount of council tax and NDR collected could be less or more than predicted.

The council tax and NDR included in the CIES is the Authority's share of accrued income for the year. Regulations determine the amount of council tax and NDR that must be included in the Authority's General Fund. The difference between the income included in the CIES and the amount required by regulation to be credited to the General Fund is taken to the Collection Fund Adjustment Account and included as a reconciling item in the MIRS. The effect on the surplus on provision of services for the year 2016/17 in the CIES is a surplus of £0.247m which is also reflected in the MIRS.

The Balance Sheet includes the Authority's share of the year end balances in respect of council tax and NDR relating to arrears, impairment allowances for doubtful debts, overpayments and prepayments and appeals.

1.7. Employee Benefits

1.7.1 Benefits Payable during Employment

Short-term employee benefits are those due to be settled within 12 months of the year-end. They include such benefits as wages and salaries, paid annual leave and paid sick leave, bonuses and non-monetary benefits (e.g. cars) for current employees and are recognised as an expense for services in the year in which employees render service to the Authority. An accrual is made for the cost of holiday entitlements (or any form of leave, e.g. time off in lieu) earned by employees but not taken before the year-end which employees can carry forward into the next financial year. The accrual is made at the wage and salary rates applicable in the following accounting year, being the period in which the employee takes the benefit. The accrual is charged to Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services but then reversed out through the MIRS so that holiday entitlements are charged to revenue in the financial year in which the holiday absence occurs.

1.7.2 Termination Benefits

Termination benefits are amounts payable as a result of a decision by the Authority to terminate an officer's employment before the normal retirement date or an officer's decision to accept voluntary redundancy in exchange for those benefits and are charged on an accruals basis to the appropriate service segment or, where applicable, to a corporate service segment at the earlier of when the Authority can no longer withdraw the offer of those benefits or when the Authority recognises costs for a restructuring.

Where termination benefits involve the enhancement of pensions, statutory provisions require the General Fund balance to be charged with the amount payable by the Authority to the pension fund or pensioner in the year, not the amount calculated according to the relevant accounting standards. In the MIRS, appropriations are required to and from the

Pensions Reserve to remove the notional debits and credits for pension enhancement termination benefits and replace them with debits for the cash paid to the pension fund and pensioners and any such amounts payable but unpaid at the year-end.

1.7.3 Post Employment Benefits

Employees of the Authority are members of four separate pension schemes:

- Uniformed Firefighters – Original (1992) Scheme

This is an unfunded scheme, which is administered by the Authority in accordance with the DCLG regulations. For such schemes, as there are no investment assets, IAS19 requires recognition of the liability and pension reserve in the Balance Sheet and transactions in the CIES for movements in the liability and reserve. The pension costs that are charged to the Authority's accounts in respect of these employees are equal to the contributions paid to the pension fund for these employees. The scheme was only open to those firefighters in the scheme as at 31st March 2006 and the employer's contribution is higher than for the new firefighters' pension scheme. All contributions are made into a pension fund and equally the payments to pensioners are paid out of the same fund. This is then balanced by a contribution to or from the fund by the Government each year.

- Uniformed Firefighters – (2006) Scheme

On 1st April 2006 a new firefighters' pension scheme was established for new firefighters, retained firefighters and for uniformed employees carrying out operational duties in the old pension scheme who wished to transfer to the new scheme. This scheme is an unfunded scheme and operates in exactly the same way as the old scheme except for the reduced level of contribution from employees and employers which reflects the different conditions and benefits of the new scheme. All contributions are made into a pension fund and equally the payments to pensioners are paid out of the same fund. This is then balanced by a contribution to or from the fund by the Government each year.

On 1st April 2015 a new modified section was established for employees who were employed as retained firefighters between 1st April 2000 and 5th April 2006.

- Uniformed Firefighters – (2015) Scheme

On 1st April 2015 a new firefighters' pension scheme was established. This scheme is a career average revalued earnings scheme for members starting after the 1st April 2015. Members of the 1992 and 2006 final salary schemes moved into this scheme, unless protection applied. This scheme is an unfunded scheme. All contributions are made into a pension fund and equally the payments to pensioners are paid out of the same fund. This is then balanced by a contribution to or from the fund by the Government each year.

The combined pension fund for uniformed firefighters as at 31st March 2017 had a net deficit value of £1,625,600m.

- The Local Government Pensions Scheme

Other employees, subject to certain qualifying criteria, are eligible to join the Local Government Pension Scheme, administered by Wolverhampton City Council. The pension costs that are charged to the Authority's accounts, £2.733m in 2016/17 in respect of these employees, are equal to the contributions paid to the funded pension scheme for these employees. Further costs arise in respect of certain pensions paid to retired employees on an unfunded basis. The scheme is, however, funded.

These schemes provide defined benefits to members (retirement lump sums and pensions), which are earned as employees work for the Authority.

These schemes are accounted for as defined benefits schemes:

- The liabilities of the West Midlands Metropolitan Authorities Pension Fund and the liabilities of the Firefighters Pension Schemes attributable to the Authority are included in the Balance Sheet on an actuarial basis using the projected unit method — i.e. an assessment of the future payments that will be made in relation to retirement benefits earned to date by employees, based on assumptions about mortality rates, employee turnover rates, etc. and estimates of projected earnings for current employees.
- Liabilities are discounted to their value at current prices, using a discount rate of 2.65% for the Firefighters' Pension Schemes and a discount rate of 2.8% for the Local Government Pension Scheme.
- The assets of West Midlands Metropolitan Authorities Pension Fund attributable to the Authority are included in the Balance Sheet at their fair value:
 - quoted securities — current bid price
 - unquoted securities — professional estimate
 - unitised securities — current bid price
 - property — market value.
- The change in the net pensions liability is analysed into the following components:
 - Service cost comprising:
 - Current service cost - the increase in liabilities as a result of years of service earned this year — allocated in the CIES to the services for which the employees worked.
 - Past service cost — the increase in liabilities as a result of a scheme amendment or curtailment whose effect relates to years of service earned in earlier years — debited to the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services in the CIES within the corporate charges Service line.

- Net interest on the net defined benefit liability (asset), i.e. net interest expense for the Authority — the change during the period in the net defined benefit liability (asset) that arises from the passage of time charged to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line of the CIES – this is calculated by applying the discount rate used to measure the defined benefit obligation at the beginning of the period to the net defined benefit liability (asset) at the beginning of the period – taking into account any changes in the net defined benefit liability (asset) during the period as a result of contribution and benefit payments.
- Remeasurements comprising:
 - The return on plan assets — excluding amounts included in net interest on the net defined benefit liability (asset) – charged to the Pensions Reserve as Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure.
 - Changes in demographic and financial assumptions — changes in the net pensions liability that arise because events have not coincided with assumptions made at the last actuarial valuation or because the actuaries have updated their assumptions — charged to the Pensions Reserve as Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure.
- Contributions paid to the Pension Fund — cash paid as employer's contributions to the pension fund in settlement of liabilities; not accounted for as an expense.

In relation to retirement benefits, statutory provisions require the General Fund balance to be charged with the amount payable by the Authority to the pension fund or directly to pensioners in the year, not the amount calculated according to the relevant accounting standards. In the MIRS, this means that there are transfers to and from the Pensions Reserve to remove the notional debits and credits for retirement benefits and replace them with debits for the cash paid to the pension fund and pensioners and any such amounts payable but unpaid at the year-end. The negative balance that arises on the Pensions Reserve thereby measures the beneficial impact to the General Fund of being required to account for retirement benefits on the basis of cash flows rather than as benefits are earned by employees.

The top up grant is accounted for as an actuarial gain.

1.7.4 Discretionary Benefits

The Authority also has restricted powers to make discretionary awards of retirement benefits in the event of early retirements. Any liabilities estimated to arise as a result of an award to any member of staff are accrued in the year of the decision to make the award and accounted for using the same policies as are applied to the Local Government Pension Scheme.

1.8. Events after the Reporting Period

Events after the Balance Sheet date are those events, both favourable and unfavourable, that occur between the end of the reporting period and the date when the Statement of Accounts is authorised for issue. Two types of events can be identified:

- Those that provide evidence of conditions that existed at the end of the reporting period — the Statement of Accounts is adjusted to reflect such events.
- Those that are indicative of conditions that arose after the reporting period — the Statement of Accounts is not adjusted to reflect such events but where a category of events would have a material effect, disclosure is made in the notes of the nature of the events and their estimated financial effect.

Events taking place after the date of authorisation for issue are not reflected in the Statement of Accounts.

1.9. Financial Instruments

1.9.1 Financial Liabilities

The Authority has its own portfolio of loans payable directly to the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB); these are initially measured at fair value and carried at their amortised cost with the exception of Other Local Authority debt inherited from the former West Midlands County Council (WMCC) which is held at historic cost. Annual charges are made to the CIES based on the carrying value of the liability multiplied by the effective rate of interest for the instrument.

Debt inherited from the former WMCC is managed by Dudley MBC and redeemed over a period of 40 years from 1st April 1986. Annual charges to the CIES for interest payable were charged on this debt in 2016/17 at a rate of 6.202%.

Gains and losses on the repurchase or early settlement of borrowing are credited or debited to the CIES as they occur. Any premium or discount arising on restructured borrowing is respectively deducted from, or added to, the amortised cost of the new or modified loan and charged to the CIES over the life of the loan by an adjustment to the effective interest rate.

Creditors are carried on the balance sheet at contract amount.

1.9.2 Financial Assets

Debtors are carried on the balance sheet at contract amount.

1.9.3 Fair Value Measurement

IFRS 13 requires that local authorities measure some of their non-financial and some of their financial instruments at fair value.

The objective of the fair value approach is to estimate the price at which an orderly transaction to sell an asset or transfer a liability would take place between market participants at the measurement date. The measurement assumes that the transaction takes place either:

- In the principal market for the asset or liability, or
- In the absence of a principal market, the most advantageous market.

The Authority measures fair value using the same assumptions that market participants would use when pricing an asset or liability assuming that they will act in their own economic best interest.

For non-financial assets the Authority takes into account the participant's ability to generate economic benefits by using the asset in its highest and best use.

When determining fair value the Authority's valuers use techniques that are appropriate in the circumstances and for which sufficient data is available maximising the use of relevant observable inputs and minimising the use of unobservable inputs.

These inputs are categorised within the fair value hierarchy as follows:

- Level 1 – quoted prices (unadjusted) in active markets for identical assets or liabilities that the authority can assess at the measurement date.
- Level 2 – inputs other than quoted prices included in level 1 that are observable for the asset or liability, either directly or indirectly.
- Level 3 – unobservable inputs for the asset or liability.

1.10. Government Grants and Contributions

Whether paid on account, by instalments or in arrears, government grants and third party contributions and donations are recognised as due to the Authority when there is reasonable assurance that:

- the Authority will comply with the conditions attached to the payments, and
- the grants or contributions will be received.

Amounts recognised as due to the Authority are not credited to the CIES until conditions attached to the grant or contribution has been satisfied. Conditions are stipulations that specify that the future economic benefits or service potential embodied in the asset in the form of the grant or contribution are required to be consumed by the recipient as specified, or future economic benefits or service potential must be returned to the transferor.

Monies advanced as grants and contributions for which conditions have not been satisfied are carried in the Balance Sheet as Receipts in Advance. When conditions are satisfied, the grant or contribution is credited to the relevant service line (attributable revenue grants and contributions) or Taxation and Non-Specific Grant Income (non-ringfenced revenue grants and all capital grants) in the CIES.

Where capital grants are credited to the CIES, they are reversed out of the General Fund Balance in the MIRS. Where the grant has yet to be used to finance capital expenditure, it is posted to the Capital Grants Unapplied reserve. Where it has been applied, it is posted to the Capital Adjustment Account. Amounts in the Capital Grants Unapplied reserve are transferred to the Capital Adjustment Account once they have been applied to fund capital Expenditure.

1.11. Inventories

Inventories are included in the Balance Sheet at the latest price. This does not comply with the standard which requires the lower of cost and net realisable value. The total value of stocks held is approximately £629k (2015/16 £582k) and therefore any difference in accounting treatment will not materially affect the reasonableness of the figures disclosed within the accounts.

1.12. Overheads and Support Services

The costs of overheads and support services are charged to service segments in accordance with the Authority's arrangements for accountability and financial performance.

The costs of support services provided to the Authority by Sandwell MBC have been recharged in accordance with Service Level Agreements. These specify the level of service to be provided and the charge.

1.13. Property, Vehicles, Plant and Equipment

Assets that have physical substance and are held for use in the production or supply of goods or services, for rental to others, or for administrative purposes and that are expected to be used during more than one financial year are classified as property, vehicles, plant and equipment.

1.13.1 Recognition

Expenditure on the acquisition, creation or enhancement of property, vehicles, plant and equipment is capitalised on an accruals basis, provided that it is probable that the future economic benefits or service potential associated with the item will flow to the Authority and the cost of the item can be measured reliably. Expenditure that maintains but does not add to an asset's potential to deliver future economic benefits or service potential (i.e. repairs and maintenance) is charged as an expense when it is incurred.

Expenditure along with associated grant income on non-current assets are capitalised subject to a de minimis level of £10,000.

1.13.2 Measurement

Assets are initially measured at cost, comprising:

- The purchase price.
- Any costs attributable to bringing the asset to the location and condition necessary for it to be capable of operating in the manner intended by management.
- The initial estimate of the costs of dismantling and removing the item and restoring the site on which it is located.

The Authority does not capitalise borrowing costs incurred whilst assets are under construction.

The cost of assets acquired other than by purchase is deemed to be its fair value, unless the acquisition does not have commercial substance (i.e. it will not lead to a variation in the cash flows of the Authority). In the latter case, where an asset is acquired via an exchange, the cost of the acquisition is the carrying amount of the asset given up by the Authority.

Donated assets are measured initially at fair value. The difference between fair value and any consideration paid is credited to the Taxation and Non-Specific Grant Income line of the CIES, unless the donation has been made conditionally. Until conditions are satisfied, the gain is held in the Donated Assets Account. Where gains are credited to the CIES, they are reversed out of the General Fund Balance to the Capital Adjustment Account in the MIRS.

Assets are then carried in the Balance Sheet using the following measurement bases:

- Infrastructure, community assets and assets under construction — held at historical cost.
- Residential Homes — the current value measurement base is fair value, estimated at highest and best use from a market participant's perspective. The Authority no longer provides residential homes to new tenants and any properties which become or are vacant, are held as surplus assets.
- All other assets — current value, determined on the basis of market value.

Where there is no market-based evidence of current value because of the specialist nature of an asset, depreciated replacement cost is used as an estimate of current value.

Where non-property assets that have short useful lives or low values (or both), depreciated historical cost basis is used as a proxy for current value.

Assets included in the Balance Sheet at current value are revalued sufficiently regularly to ensure that their carrying amount is not materially different from their current value at the year-end, but as a minimum every five years. If an event occurs, such as a dramatic fall in land and property prices, which mean the current values are no longer appropriate, the assets will be revalued again. Increases in valuations are matched by credits to the Revaluation Reserve to recognise unrealised gains.

Where decreases in value are identified, they are accounted for by:

- Where there is a balance of revaluation gains for the asset in the Revaluation Reserve, the carrying amount of the asset is written down against that balance (up to the amount of the accumulated gains).
- Where there is no balance in the Revaluation Reserve or an insufficient balance, the carrying amount of the asset is written down against the corporate charges service line in the CIES.

The Revaluation Reserve contains revaluation gains recognised since 1 April 2007 only, the date of its formal implementation. Gains arising before that date have been consolidated into the Capital Adjustment Account.

1.13.3 Impairment

Assets are assessed at each year-end as to whether there is any indication that an asset may be impaired. Where indications exist and any possible differences are estimated to be material, the recoverable amount of the asset is estimated and, where this is less than the carrying amount of the asset, an impairment loss is recognised for the shortfall.

Where impairment losses are identified, they are accounted for by:

- Where there is a balance of revaluation gains for the asset in the Revaluation Reserve, the carrying amount of the asset is written down against that balance (up to the amount of the accumulated gains).
- Where there is no balance in the Revaluation Reserve or an insufficient balance, the carrying amount of the asset is written down against the corporate charges service line in the CIES.

Where an impairment loss is reversed subsequently, the reversal is credited to the corporate charges service line in the CIES, up to the amount of the original loss, adjusted for depreciation that would have been charged if the loss had not been recognised.

1.13.4 Depreciation

Depreciation is provided for on all property, vehicles, plant and equipment assets by the systematic allocation of their depreciable amounts over their useful lives. An exception is made for assets without a determinable finite useful life (i.e. freehold land) and assets that are not yet available for use (i.e. assets under construction).

The following depreciation policies have been adopted:

- Operational Vehicles - straight line over 10 years.
- Ancillary Vehicles - straight line over 5 years.
- Equipment - straight line over 5 years.
- All property assets have been depreciated in line with their life expectancies.
- Freehold land is not depreciated.
- No depreciation is accounted for in the year of acquisition but is accounted for in the year of disposal.

Wilkes Head & Eve (WHE), of 78 New Oxford Street, London, WC1A 1HB is a RICS (Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors) Regulated Firm, are the Authority's valuers and were instructed to provide valuations for all land and property assets and recommend the appropriate life expectancies. A full valuation of all land and property assets was completed as at 31st March 2017. The Code requires that land and property assets must be revalued every five years as a minimum but must be revalued more regularly where a five year valuation is insufficient to keep pace with material changes in fair value.

WHE also provide valuations for splitting land and building assets into individual components. Where an asset has major components whose cost is significant in relation to the total cost of the item and which have differing estimated useful lives, these components are depreciated separately. The Authority has adopted this as the basis for depreciation from 1st April 2011.

Where an asset it is deemed to be material for component accounting purposes, i.e. valued in excess of £1m, the following individual components have been identified:

- Main structure
- Roof
- Heating and associated systems
- Tower and associated functions
- Electrical
- Lift
- External

Revaluation gains are also depreciated, with an amount equal to the difference between current value depreciation charged on assets and the depreciation that would have been chargeable based on their historical cost being transferred each year from the Revaluation Reserve to the Capital Adjustment Account.

1.13.5 Non-Current Assets Held for Sale

A non-current asset is classified as held for sale if its carrying amount will be recovered principally through a sale transaction rather than through continued use. The following criteria have to be met before an asset can be classified as held for sale under this section of the Code:

- The asset must be available for immediate sale in its present condition.
- The sale must be highly probable; with an active programme to dispose of the asset.
- The asset must be actively marketed for sale at a price that is reasonable in relation to its current fair value
- The sale should be expected to complete within one year of the date of classification.

Assets Held for Sale are valued at the lower of their carrying amount and fair value (market value) less costs to sell at initial reclassification and at the end of each reporting date, and are not subject to depreciation. Investment Properties that are to be disposed of are not reclassified as an Asset Held for Sale and remain as Investment Properties until disposed of, reclassified to short term investment properties where they are expected to be disposed of within a year of the balance sheet date.

1.14. Minimum Revenue Provision

Under the Local Government Act 2003, the Authority is required to set aside an amount from revenue as a provision for debt repayment. This amount is known as the MRP.

The calculation is based on Asset Life Method, which is to make a provision over the estimated life of the asset for which borrowing was undertaken.

From 2015/16 onwards the proposed MRP policy was amended to an Annuity base.

The Treasurer has the discretion to make an additional provision.

1.15. Provisions and Contingent Liabilities

1.15.1 Provisions

Provisions are made where an event has taken place that gives the Authority a legal or constructive obligation that probably requires settlement by a transfer of economic benefits or service potential and a reliable estimate can be made of the amount of the obligation.

Provisions are charged as an expense to the appropriate service line in the CIES in the year that the Authority becomes aware of the obligation and are measured at the best estimate at the Balance Sheet date of the expenditure required to settle the obligation, taking into account relevant risks and uncertainties.

When payments are eventually made, they are charged to the provision carried in the Balance Sheet. Estimated settlements are reviewed at the end of each financial year — where it becomes less than probable that a transfer of economic benefits will now be required (or a lower settlement than anticipated is made), the provision is reversed and credited back to the relevant service.

Where some or all of the payment required to settle a provision is expected to be recovered from another party (e.g. from an insurance claim), this is only recognised as income for the relevant service if it is virtually certain that reimbursement will be received if the Authority settles the obligation.

1.15.2 Contingent Liabilities

A contingent liability arises where an event has taken place that gives the Authority a possible obligation whose existence will only be confirmed by the occurrence or otherwise of uncertain future events not wholly within the control of the Authority. Contingent liabilities also arise in circumstances where a provision would otherwise be made but either it is not probable that an outflow of resources will be required or the amount of the obligation cannot be measured reliably.

Contingent liabilities are not recognised in the Balance Sheet but disclosed in a note to the accounts.

1.16. Reserves

The Authority sets aside specific amounts as reserves for future policy purposes or to cover contingencies. Reserves are created by transferring amounts out of the Un-earmarked General Fund Balance in the MIRS. When expenditure to be financed from a reserve is incurred, it is charged to the appropriate service in that year to score against the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services in the CIES. The reserve is then transferred back into the Un-earmarked General Fund Balance in the MIRS so that there is no net charge against council tax for the expenditure.

Certain reserves are kept to manage the accounting processes for non-current assets, local taxation, retirement and employee benefits and do not represent usable resources for the Authority — these reserves are explained in the relevant policies.

1.17. Value Added Tax (VAT)

VAT payable is included as an expense only to the extent that it is not recoverable from Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs. VAT receivable is excluded from income.

1.18. Restated Figures 2015/2016

For comparative purposes, 2015/2016 figures are provided.

Note 10 shows 2015/16 restated figures for 'transfers out' following a change in the format of the movement in earmarked reserves table.

Note 14 shows 2015/16 restated figures for service expenditure and income and the general fund balance.

Notes 16.1 and 16.4.4 the Debtors and Creditors figures have been restated and now exclude the Collection Fund.

Note 25 shows 2015/16 restated figures as the Clerk to the Authority is now the Strategic Enabler Strategic Hub. This role was previously provided by Sandwell MBC.

1.19. Roundings

Unless otherwise stated, the figures that follow have been rounded to the nearest £'000.

2. ACCOUNTING STANDARDS THAT HAVE BEEN ISSUED BUT HAVE NOT YET BEEN ADOPTED

The Code requires the disclosure of information relating to the impact of an accounting change that will be required by a new standard that has been issued but not yet adopted by the Authority.

The standards introduced in the 2017/18 Code that are relevant to the above are:-

- Amendments to the reporting of pension fund scheme transaction costs
- Amendment to the reporting of investment concentration

The Code requires implementation from 1 April 2017 and there is therefore no impact on the 2016/17 Statement of Accounts.

The Authority has concluded that there will be no material impact upon the 2017/18 Statement of Accounts.

3. CRITICAL JUDGEMENTS IN APPLYING ACCOUNTING POLICIES

In applying the accounting policies set out in the Accounts, the Authority has had to make certain judgments about complex transactions or those involving uncertainty about future events. The critical judgments made in the Statement of Accounts are:-

- Insurance – The Authority continues to operate a self-insure scheme for all of its property and vehicle assets.
- No Residual Value of Assets – The Authority assumes that the residual value of plant and equipment will be nil when they are de-commissioned, as the assets are held to provide a service rather than for resale at the end of their useful life. The Authority has determined that the amounts received when assets are decommissioned are negligible and depend on the market demand for the assets at time of disposal.
- Property valued at Current Value – The Authority has had all its land and property assets valued on the basis of current value as at 31st March 2017. The Code requires that land and property assets must be revalued every five years as a minimum but must be revalued more regularly where a five year valuation is insufficient to keep pace with material changes in fair value. In 2011 the Authority introduced component accounting to its land and property assets as part of its valuations.
- Government Funding - There remains a degree of uncertainty about future levels of core funding for local government although the offer of a provisional four year settlement by DCLG is considered to be a reasonable basis to formulate medium term financial planning. The Authority has however determined that the level of uncertainty is not yet sufficient to indicate that the assets of the Authority may be significantly impaired as a result of a need to close facilities and reduce levels of service provision.

4. ASSUMPTIONS MADE ABOUT THE FUTURE AND OTHER MAJOR SOURCES OF ESTIMATION UNCERTAINTY

The Statement of Accounts contains estimated figures that are based on assumptions made by the Authority about the future or that are otherwise uncertain. Estimates are made taking into account historical experience, current trends and other relevant factors. However, because balances cannot be determined with certainty, actual results could be materially different from the assumptions and estimates.

The items in the Authority's Balance Sheet at 31st March 2017 for which there is a risk of a material adjustment in the following financial year are:

- Pensions Liability – Estimation of the net liability to pay pensions depends on a number of complex judgements relating to the discount rate used, the rate at which salaries are projected to increase, changes to retirement age, mortality rates and expected return on pension fund assets. The Government Actuary's Department (GAD) and Barnett Waddingham provide the Authority with expert advice about the assumptions to be applied (Note 31).
- Provisions – The Authority has made an insurance provision for employee and public liability claims. The provision is based on the advice of the Authority's Risk Management advisor. However, the figure could increase or decrease based on the final settlement.
- Property, Plant and Equipment – The Authority's assets are depreciated over the useful life assigned by the external valuer. Assumptions are made about the level of repairs and maintenance which could affect the useful lives assigned to assets.

5. MATERIAL ITEMS OF INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

All material items of Income and expenditure have been disclosed within the CIES.

6. EVENTS AFTER THE REPORTING PERIOD

On 28 April 2017 the Authority made a payment of £7.9m to the West Midlands Pension Fund. This payment was based on Barnett Waddingham's Rates and Adjustments Certificate for the amounts due for Employer Pension Contributions 1st April 2017 to 31st March 2020. By paying early a saving of £0.6m was achieved.

7. EFA – ADJUSTMENTS BETWEEN FUNDING AND ACCOUNTING

2015/2016	Adjustments for capital purposes (Note 7.1)	Net change for the pension adjustments (Note 7.2)	Other differences (Note 7.3)	Total Adjustments
	£000	£000	£000	£000
Service Delivery	-	13,662	(78)	13,584
Service Support	-	1,658	-	1,658
Corporate Management	-	268	-	268
Corporate Charges	2,855	(3,325)	-	(470)
Cost of Services	2,855	12,263	(78)	15,040
Other Income and Expenditure	(742)	50,421	(201)	49,478
Total	2,113	62,684	(279)	64,518

2016/2017	Adjustments for capital purposes (Note 7.1)	Net change for the pension adjustments (Note 7.2)	Other differences (Note 7.3)	Total Adjustments
	£000	£000	£000	£000
Service Delivery	-	8,580	(1,756)	6,824
Service Support	-	1,170	21	1,191
Corporate Management	-	211	118	329
Corporate Charges	9,432	(1,982)	-	7,450
Cost of Services	9,432	7,979	(1,617)	15,794
Other Income and Expenditure	(1,265)	48,171	(247)	46,659
Total	8,167	56,150	(1,864)	62,453

7.1 Adjustments for capital purposes

This column adds in depreciation and impairment and revaluation gains and losses in the corporate charges services line, and within other income and expenditure:

- Other operating expenditure – adjusts for capital disposals with a transfer of income on disposal of assets and the amounts written off for those assets.
- Financing and investment income and expenditure – the statutory charges for capital financing i.e. MRP and other revenue contributions are deducted from other income and expenditure as these are not chargeable under generally accepted accounting practices.
- Taxation and non-specific grant income and expenditure – capital grants are adjusted for income not chargeable under generally accepted accounting practices. The taxation and non-specific grant income line is credited with capital grants receivable in the year without conditions or for which conditions were satisfied in the year.

7.2 Net change for the pension adjustments

Net change for the removal of pension contributions and the addition of IAS19 Employee Benefits pension related expenditure and income:

- For services this represents the removal of the employer pension contributions made by the Authority as allowed by statute and the replacement with current service costs and past service costs.
- For financing and investment income and expenditure – the net interest on the defined benefit liability is charged to the CIES.

7.3 Other differences

Other differences between amounts debited/credited to the CIES and amounts payable/receivable to be recognised under statute:

- For services this represents the impact of accruals for accumulating compensated absences.
- The adjustment under other income and expenditure for taxation and non-specific grant income represents the difference between what is chargeable under statutory regulations for council tax and non-domestic rates that was projected to be received at the start of the year and the income recognised under generally accepted accounting practices in the Code. This is a timing difference as any difference will be brought forward in future Surpluses or Deficits on the Collection Fund.

8. EXPENDITURE AND INCOME ANALYSED BY NATURE

The Authority's expenditure and income is analysed as follows:

2015/2016 £000		2016/2017 £000
	Expenditure	
95,993	Employee expenses	90,469
14,050	Other services expenses	13,108
2,854	Depreciation, amortisation and impairment	9,433
50,421	Pensions interest cost and expected return on pension assets	48,171
2,290	Interest payments	2,183
201	Disposal of non-current assets	60
165,809	Total Expenditure	163,424
	Income	
(3,539)	Fees, charges and other service income	(3,034)
(303)	Interest and investment income	(282)
(36,995)	Council tax income	(38,602)
(9,441)	Non-domestic rates income from West Midlands Local Authorities	(9,760)
(54,640)	Government grants and contributions	(52,779)
(274)	Disposal of non-current assets	(86)
(105,192)	Total Income	(104,543)
60,617	(Surplus)/Deficit on the provision of services	58,881

9. ADJUSTMENTS BETWEEN ACCOUNTING BASIS AND FUNDING BASIS UNDER REGULATIONS

This note details the adjustments that are made to the total comprehensive income and expenditure recognised by the Authority in the year in accordance with proper accounting practice to the resources that are specified by statutory provisions as being available to the Authority to meet future capital and revenue expenditure.

The following sets out a description of the reserves that the adjustments are made against.

General Fund Balance

The General Fund is the statutory fund into which all the receipts of an authority are required to be paid and out of which all liabilities of the authority are to be met, except to the extent that statutory rules might provide otherwise. These rules can also specify the financial year in which liabilities and payments should impact on the General Fund Balance, which is not necessarily in accordance with proper accounting practice. The General Fund Balance therefore summarises the resources that the Authority is statutorily empowered to spend on its services or on capital investment (or the deficit of resources that the Authority is required to recover) at the end of the financial year.

Capital Receipts Reserve

The Capital Receipts Reserve holds the proceeds from the disposal of land or other assets, which are restricted by statute from being used other than to fund new capital expenditure or to be set aside to finance historical capital expenditure. The balance on the reserve shows the resources that have yet to be applied for these purposes at the year-end.

Capital Grants Unapplied

The Capital Grants Unapplied Account (Reserve) holds the grants and contributions received towards capital projects for which the Authority has met the conditions that would otherwise require repayment of the monies but which have yet to be applied to meet expenditure. The balance is restricted by grant terms as to the capital expenditure against which it can be applied and/or the financial year in which this can take place.

2015/2016	Usable Reserves		
	General Fund Balance	Capital Receipts Reserve	Capital Grants Unapplied
Adjustments to Revenue Resources	£000	£000	£000
Amounts by which income and expenditure included in the CIES are different from revenue for the year calculated in accordance with statutory requirements:			
Pension costs transferred to/(from) the Pensions Reserve	(62,684)	-	-
Council tax and NDR transfers to/(from) Collection Fund Adjustment Account	201	-	-
Holiday pay transferred to the Accumulated Absences Reserve	78	-	-
Reversal of entries included in the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services in relation to capital expenditure (these items are charged to the Capital Adjustment Account)	(3,036)	-	-
Total Adjustments to Revenue Resources	(65,441)	-	-
Adjustments between Revenue and Capital Resources			
Transfer of non-current asset sale proceeds from revenue to the Capital Receipts Reserve	220	(220)	-
Statutory provision for the repayment of debt (transfer from the Capital Adjustment Account)	703	-	-
Total Adjustments between Revenue and Capital Resources	923	(220)	-
Adjustments to Capital Resources			
Application of capital grants to finance capital expenditure	-	-	3,057
Total Adjustments to Capital Resources	-	-	3,057
Total Adjustments	(64,518)	(220)	3,057

2016/2017	Usable Reserves		
	General Fund Balance	Capital Receipts Reserve	Capital Grants Unapplied
Adjustments to Revenue Resources	£000	£000	£000
Amounts by which income and expenditure included in the CIES are different from revenue for the year calculated in accordance with statutory requirements:			
Pension costs transferred to/(from) the Pensions Reserve	(56,150)	-	-
Council tax and NDR transfers to/(from) Collection Fund Adjustment Account	247	-	-
Holiday pay transferred to the Accumulated Absences Reserve	1,617	-	-
Reversal of entries included in the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services in relation to capital expenditure (these items are charged to the Capital Adjustment Account)	(9,139)	-	-
Total Adjustments to Revenue Resources	(63,425)	-	-
Adjustments between Revenue and Capital Resources			
Transfer of non-current asset sale proceeds from revenue to the Capital Receipts Reserve	61	(61)	-
Statutory provision for the repayment of debt (transfer from the Capital Adjustment Account)	744	-	-
Capital expenditure financed from revenue balances (transfer to the Capital Adjustment Account)	167	-	-
Total Adjustments between Revenue and Capital Resources	972	(61)	-
Adjustments to Capital Resources			
Use of the Capital Receipts Reserve to finance capital expenditure	-	1,122	-
Application of capital grants to finance capital expenditure	-	-	2,034
Total Adjustments to Capital Resources	-	1,122	2,034
Total Adjustments	(62,453)	1,061	2,034

10. MOVEMENTS IN EARMARKED RESERVES

This note sets out the amounts set aside within the General Fund balances for earmarked reserves to provide financing for future expenditure plans and the amounts posted back from earmarked reserves to meet General Fund expenditure in both 2015/16 and 2016/17.

	Balance at 1 st April 2015 £000	Transfers out 2015/16 (Restated) £000	Transfers in 2015/16 £000	Balance at 31 st March 2016 £000	Transfers out 2016/17 £000	Transfers in 2016/17 £000	Balance at 31 st March 2017 £000
<i>General Fund:</i>							
Capital Projects	22,870	248	1,427	24,049	525	90	23,614
Insurance	7,159	175	459	7,443	139	0	7,304
Project Management/ Support	1,355	539	1,771	2,587	1,648	5,291	6,230
System Enhancements/ Upgrades	483	76	1,283	1,690	170	739	2,259
Station Works	1,129	35	259	1,353	304	160	1,209
New Dimensions	745	25	108	828	64	60	824
Training & Development	813	527	355	641	280	275	636
Partnership Working	772	838	810	744	402	273	615
Firefighting & Rescue Equipment	419	389	295	325	231	428	522
Office Equipment/ Furniture	128	126	386	388	284	245	349
Fire Prevention & Education	393	341	65	117	122	177	172
Total	36,266	3,319	7,218	40,165	4,169	7,738	43,734

11. UNUSABLE RESERVES

31 March 2016 £000		31 March 2017 £000
(60,751)	Revaluation Reserve	(58,009)
(62,768)	Capital Adjustment Account	(59,378)
1,368,732	Pensions Reserve	1,671,815
(136)	Collection Fund Adjustment Account	(383)
2,959	Accumulated Absences Account	1,342
1,248,036	Total Unusable Reserves	1,555,387

11.1 Revaluation Reserve

The Revaluation Reserve contains the gains made by the Authority arising from increases in the value of its property, vehicles, plant, and intangible assets. The balance is reduced when assets with accumulated gains are:

- revalued downwards or impaired and the gains are lost,
- used in the provision of services and the gains are consumed through depreciation, or
- disposed of and the gains are realised.

2015/2016 £000		2016/2017 £000
(46,814)	Balance 1 April	(60,751)
(15,593)	Upward revaluation of assets	(15,388)
496	Downward revaluation of assets and impairment losses not charged to the Surplus/Deficit on the Provision of Services	16,448
(61,911)	Surplus or deficit on revaluation of non-current assets not posted to the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services	(59,691)
1,160	Amount written off to the Capital Adjustment Account	1,682
(60,751)	Balance 31 March	(58,009)

11.2 Capital Adjustment Account

The Capital Adjustment Account absorbs the timing differences arising from the different arrangements for accounting for the consumption of non-current assets and for financing the acquisition, construction or additions to those assets under statutory provisions. The Account is debited with the cost of acquisition, construction or subsequent costs as depreciation, impairment losses and amortisations are charged to the CIES (with reconciling postings from the Revaluation Reserve to convert current and fair value figures to a historical cost basis). The Account is credited with the amounts set aside by the

Authority as finance for the costs of acquisition, construction and subsequent costs.

The Account contains accumulated gains and losses on Investment Properties and gains recognised on donated assets that have yet to be consumed by the Authority.

The note below provides details of the source of all the transactions posted to the Account, apart from those involving the Revaluation Reserve.

2015/2016 £000		2016/2017 £000
(60,884)	Balance 1 April	(62,768)
	Reversal of items relating to capital expenditure debited or credited to the CIES:	
4,752	Charges for depreciation and impairment of non-current assets	4,960
(1,900)	Revaluation losses on Property, Vehicles, Plant and current assets	4,466
2	Amortisation of intangible assets	7
200	Amounts of non-current assets written off on disposal or sale as part of the gain/loss on disposal to the CIES	60
(57,830)		(53,275)
(1,160)	Adjusting amounts written out of the Revaluation Reserve	(1,682)
(58,990)	Net written out amount of the cost of non-current assets consumed in the year	(54,957)
	Capital financing applied in the year:	
-	Use of the Capital Receipts Reserve to finance new capital expenditure	(1,122)
(18)	Capital grants and contributions credited to the CIES that have been applied to capital financing	(354)
(3,057)	Application of grants to capital financing from the Capital Grants Unapplied Account	(2,034)
(703)	Statutory provision for the financing of capital investment charged against the General Fund	(744)
-	Capital expenditure charged against the General Fund and HRA balances	(167)
(62,768)	Balance 31 March	(59,378)

11.3 Pensions Reserve

The Pensions Reserve absorbs the timing differences arising from the different arrangements for accounting for post-employment benefits and for funding benefits in accordance with statutory provisions. The Authority accounts for post-employment benefits in the CIES as the benefits are earned by employees accruing years of service, updating the liabilities recognised to reflect inflation, changing assumptions and investment returns on any resources set aside to meet the costs. However, statutory arrangements require benefits earned to be financed as the Authority makes employer's contributions to the pension fund or eventually pays any pensions for which it is directly responsible. The debit balance on the Pensions Reserve therefore shows a substantial shortfall in the benefits earned by past and current employees and the resources the Authority has set aside to meet them. The statutory arrangements will ensure that funding will have been set aside by the time the benefits come to be paid.

2015/2016 £000		2016/2017 £000
1,538,080	Balance 1 April	1,368,732
(232,032)	Re-measurements of the net defined benefit liability/(asset)	246,933
75,459	Reversal of items relating to retirement benefits debited or credited to the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services in the CIES	68,407
(12,775)	Employer's pensions contributions and direct payments to pensioners payable in the year	(12,257)
1,368,732	Balance 31 March	1,671,815

11.4 Collection Fund Adjustment Account

The Collection Fund Adjustment Account manages the differences arising from the recognition of council tax and NDR in the CIES as it falls due from council tax payers and business rates payers compared with the statutory arrangements for paying across amounts to the General Fund from the Collection Fund. The balance at the 31 March 2017 is (£0.383m) and was (£0.136m) as at 31 March 2016.

11.5 Accumulated Absences Account

The Accumulated Absences Account absorbs the differences that would otherwise arise on the General Fund Balance from accruing for compensated absences earned but not taken in the year, e.g. annual leave entitlement carried forward at 31 March. Statutory arrangements require that the impact on the General Fund Balance is neutralised by transfers to or from the Account.

2015/2016			2016/2017	
£000	£000		£000	£000
	3,037	Balance 1 April		2,959
(3,037)		Settlement or cancellation of accrual made at the end of the preceding year	(2,959)	
2,959		Amounts accrued at the end of the current year	1,342	
	(78)	Amount by which officer remuneration charged to the CIES on an accruals basis is different from remuneration chargeable in the year in accordance with statutory requirements		(1,617)
	2,959	Balance 31 March		1,342

12. FINANCING AND INVESTMENT INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

2015/2016 £000		2016/2017 £000
2,290	Interest payable and similar charges	2,183
50,421	Net interest on the net defined benefit liability/(asset)	48,171
(303)	Interest receivable and similar income	(282)
52,408	Total	50,072

13. TAXATION AND NON SPECIFIC GRANT INCOMES

2015/2016 £000		2016/2017 £000
(36,995)	Council tax income	(38,603)
(9,441)	NDR income from West Midland Local Authorities	(9,760)
(31,327)	Revenue support grant	(27,794)
(21,731)	Business rates retention scheme grants	(21,849)
(18)	Capital grants and contributions	(354)
(99,512)	Total	(98,360)

14. PRIOR PERIOD RESTATEMENTS

14.1 Prior Period Restatement of Service Expenditure and Income

The 2016/17 Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting requires that the Authority shows its expenditure and income on a Service basis. This is a change from previous years where the analysis was based on SeRCOP. This note sets out how the net expenditure and income has been restated.

SeRCOP Service	As reported CIES 2015/16 £000	Adjustments between SeRCOP and internal reporting £000	Restated £000	Service
Firefighting & Rescue Operations	91,901	(10,580)	81,321	Service Delivery
Community Safety	13,710	(13,710)	-	
Fire Service Emergency Planning & Civil Defence	95	20,091	20,186	Service Support
Corporate & Democratic Core	1,604	715	2,319	Corporate Management
Non distributed costs	484	3,484	3,968	Corporate Charges
Cost of Services	107,794	-	107,794	
Gross Expenditure				
Firefighting & Rescue Operations	95,766	(11,121)	84,645	Service Delivery
Community Safety	14,862	(14,862)	-	
Fire Service Emergency Planning & Civil Defence	121	21,837	21,958	Service Support
Corporate & Democratic Core	1,647	675	2,322	Corporate Management
Non distributed costs	501	3,471	3,972	Corporate Charges
Cost of Services	112,897	-	112,897	
Gross Income				
Firefighting & Rescue Operations	(3,865)	541	(3,324)	Service Delivery
Community Safety	(1,152)	1,152	-	
Fire Service Emergency Planning & Civil Defence	(26)	(1,746)	(1,772)	Service Support
Corporate & Democratic Core	(43)	40	(3)	Corporate Management
Non distributed costs	(17)	13	(4)	Corporate Charges
Cost of Services	(5,103)	-	(5,103)	

14.2 Prior Period Restatement of MIRS – General Fund Balance

The Code requires the total General Fund Balance be presented. In the past, it was recommended that Earmarked General Fund Reserves be separately presented. The 2015/16 MIRS has been restated for this change.

2015/16	General Fund Balance as previously stated	Earmarked General Fund Reserves as previously stated	General Fund Balance Restated
	£000	£000	£000
Balance at 31 March 2015	(9,231)	(36,266)	(45,497)
Movement in Reserves During 2015/16			
(Surplus) or deficit on the provision of services	60,617	-	60,617
Total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure	60,617	-	60,617
Adjustments between accounting basis and funding basis under	(64,518)	-	(64,518)
Net (Increase)/Decrease before Transfers to Earmarked Reserves	(3,901)	-	(3,901)
Transfers to/from Earmarked Reserves (Note 4)	3,899	(3,899)	-
(Increase)/Decrease in 2015/16	(2)	(3,899)	(3,901)
Balance at 31 March 2016	(9,233)	(40,165)	(49,398)

15. PROPERTY, VEHICLES, PLANT AND EQUIPMENT

15.1 Comparative Movements in 2015/2016

2015/16	Other Land and Buildings	Vehicles, Plant, Furniture and Equipment	Surplus Assets	Assets Under Construction	Total Property, Vehicles, Plant and Equipment
Cost or Valuation	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
At 1 April 2015	128,513	32,033	1,762	175	162,483
Additions	741	370	-	1,942	3,053
Revaluation increases/ (decreases) recognised in the Revaluation Reserve	12,163	-	33	-	12,196
Revaluation increases/ (decreases) recognised in the Surplus/Deficit on the Provision of Services	1,896	-	4	-	1,900
De-recognition – Disposals	-	(699)	(125)	-	(824)
De-recognition – Other	-	(262)	-	-	(262)
Other movements in cost or valuation	193	74	-	(267)	-
At 31 March 2016	143,506	31,516	1,674	1,850	178,546
Accumulated Depreciation and Impairment					
At 1 April 2015	-	23,299	254	-	23,553
Depreciation charge	2,876	1,852	-	24	4,752
Depreciation written out to the Revaluation Reserve	(2,876)	-	-	(24)	(2,900)
De-recognition – Disposals	-	(699)	(125)	-	(824)
De-recognition – Other	-	(262)	-	-	(262)
At 31 March 2016	-	24,190	129	-	24,319
Net Book Value					
At 31 March 2015	128,513	8,734	1,508	175	138,930
At 31 March 2016	143,506	7,326	1,545	1,850	154,227

15.2 Movements on Balances 2016/2017

2016/17	Other Land and Buildings	Vehicles, Plant, Furniture and Equipment	Surplus Assets	Assets Under Construction	Total Property, Vehicles, Plant and Equipment
Cost or Valuation	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
At 1 April 2016	143,506	31,516	1,674	1,850	178,546
Additions	1,408	795	-	1,474	3,677
Revaluation increases/ (decreases) recognised in the Revaluation Reserve	(4,343)	-	30	-	(4,313)
Revaluation increases/ (decreases) recognised in the Surplus/Deficit on the Provision of Services	(4,468)	-	2	-	(4,466)
De-recognition – Disposals	-	(996)	(129)	-	(1,125)
Assets reclassified (to) / from Held for Sale	(1,200)	-	-	-	(1,200)
Other movements in cost or valuation	-	665	1,020	(1,685)	-
At 31 March 2017	134,903	31,980	2,597	1,639	171,119
Accumulated Depreciation and Impairment					
At 1 April 2016	-	24,190	129	-	24,319
Depreciation charge	3,229	1,707	24	-	4,960
Depreciation written out to the Revaluation Reserve	(3,229)	-	(24)	-	(3,253)
De-recognition – Disposals	-	(936)	(129)	-	(1,065)
De-recognition – Other	-	(1,020)	1,020	-	-
At 31 March 2017	-	23,941	1,020	-	24,961
Net Book Value					
At 31 March 2016	143,506	7,326	1,545	1,850	154,227
At 31 March 2017	134,903	8,039	1,577	1,639	146,158

15.3 Depreciation

The depreciation rates used in the table above are consistent with those described in the accounting policies statement.

15.4 Capital Commitments

As at the 31st March 2017, the Authority approved capital expenditure in future years of £27.326m of which £1.516m has been contractually committed leaving £25.810m as the uncommitted sum which relates to expenditure on property, plant and equipment.

The largest of these contractual commitments represents:

	£000
• Vehicle Replacement Programme	722
• Training Tower Replacement	327

15.5 Revaluations

The Authority had all of its property assets valued as at 31st March 2017 on the basis of current value. The work was completed by qualified external valuers, WHE. Valuations were carried out in accordance with the methodologies and bases for estimation set out in the professional standards of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors valuation manual 2014 edition which was effective from 6th January 2014 and is International Valuation Standards compliant. The use of the manual means there is certainty with the valuation process.

Valuations of vehicles, plant, furniture and equipment are based on current prices where there is an active second-hand market or latest list prices adjusted for the condition of the asset.

16. FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS

16.1 Balance Sheet

The following categories of financial instrument are carried in the Balance Sheet:

	Long Term		Current	
	31 March 2016 £000	31 March 2017 £000	31 March 2016 £000 *	31 March 2017 £000
Debtors				
Financial assets carried at contract amounts	-	-	9,796	9,048
Total included in Debtors	-	-	9,796	9,048
Investments				
Cash and Cash Equivalents	-	-	56,069	57,428
Total included in Investments	-	-	56,069	57,428
Borrowings				
Financial liabilities at amortised cost	(35,209)	(34,196)	(1,073)	(1,264)
Financial liabilities at historical cost	(3,418)	(3,167)	(229)	(197)
Total included in Borrowings	(38,627)	(37,363)	(1,302)	(1,461)
Creditors				
Financial liabilities carried at contract amount	-	-	(4,824)	(4,054)
Total included in Creditors	-	-	(4,824)	(4,054)

Debtors excludes payments in advance, Collection Fund and Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs receipts of £6.050m (2015/2016 £5.269m).

Creditors excludes receipts in advance, Collection Fund and Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs payments of £6.872m (2015/2016 £6.041m).

* The Debtors and Creditors figures have been restated and now exclude the Collection Fund.

16.2 Income, Expense, Gains and Losses

	2015/16			2016/17		
	Financial Liabilities measured at amortised cost £000	Financial Assets: Loans and receivables £000	Total £000	Financial Liabilities measured at amortised cost £000	Financial Assets: Loans and Receivables £000	Total £000
Interest expense	2,290	-	2,290	2,183	-	2,183
Total expense in Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services	2,290	-	2,290	2,183	-	2,183
Interest income	-	(303)	(303)	-	(282)	(282)
Gains on de-recognition	(73)	-	(73)	(26)	-	(26)
Total income in surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services	(73)	(303)	(376)	(26)	(282)	(308)
Net (gain)/loss for the year	2,217	(303)	1,914	2,157	(282)	1,875

16.3 Loans Outstanding

The Authority has its own portfolio of loans payable directly to the PWLB. Loans are also outstanding to Dudley MBC, which represent the Authority's share of the outstanding loan debt of the WMCC abolished in 1986.

Under accounting requirements, the financial instruments shown in the balance sheet are shown at "amortised cost". This is the carrying amount and comprises the principal amount borrowed and adjusted for breakage costs or stepped interest loans (measured by an effective interest rate calculation) and includes accrued interest.

The amounts owing are as follows:

	2015/2016		2016/2017	
	Long-Term £000	Short-Term £000	Long-Term £000	Short-Term £000
PWLB	35,209	844	34,196	1,012
Dudley MBC	3,418	229	3,167	252
Total Principal Amount	38,627	1,073	37,363	1,264
Plus Accrued Interest	-	229	-	197
Total Amortised Cost	38,627	1,302	37,363	1,461

16.4 Fair Value Measurement

IFRS 13 requires that local authorities measure some of their financial instruments at fair value and to apply the relevant input levels of the fair value hierarchy that are detailed in 1.9.3 of the Authority's accounting policies.

16.4.1 Fair Value of Assets and Liabilities at Amortised Costs

Financial Liabilities and financial assets represented by loans and receivables and long-term creditors and debtors are carried on the balance sheet at amortised cost. Their fair value can be assessed by calculating the present value of cash flows that will take place over the remaining life of the instruments, using the following assumptions:

- Actual ranges of interest rates at 31st March 2017 of 9.75% to 3.95% for loans from the PWLB;
- No early repayment or impairment is recognised;
- Where an instrument has a maturity of less than twelve months, the fair value is taken to be the principal outstanding or the billed amount.
- The fair value of trade and other receivables is taken to be the invoiced or billed amount.

16.4.2 Financial Liabilities

The fair values are as follows:

	2015/2016		2016/2017	
	Carry Amount £000	Fair Value £000	Carry Amount £000	Fair Value £000
PWLB Short & Long Term Loans	36,053	57,976	35,208	63,372
Dudley MBC (WMCC)	3,647	3,647	3,419	3,419
Total	39,700	61,623	38,627	66,791

Overall, the fair value for 2016/2017 is greater than the carrying amount because the Authority's portfolio of loans includes a number of fixed rate loans where the interest rate payable is higher than the rates available for similar loans in the market at the balance sheet date.

The fair values for the financial liabilities have been determined by reference to the PWLB redemption rules and prevailing PWLB redemption rates as at each balance sheet date and include accrued interest. The fair value of WMCC debt is taken to be the same as the amount of principal outstanding.

16.4.3 Financial Assets

The carrying amount and the fair value of the Authority's financial assets are the same due to the short term nature of the transactions.

16.4.4 Fair Value Hierarchy for Financial Assets and Financial Liabilities

The fair value for financial liabilities and financial assets that are not measured at fair value included in Levels 2 in the table below have been arrived at using a discounted cash flow analysis with the most significant inputs being the discount rate.

	Quoted prices in active markets for identical assets (Level 1) £000	Other significant observable inputs (Level 2) £000 *	Significant unobservable inputs (Level 3) £000	TOTAL 31 March 2016 £000
<u>LIABILITIES</u>				
Financial Liabilities (Loans)	-	61,623	-	61,623
Plus Accrued Interest	-	229	-	229
Total Borrowing	-	61,852	-	61,852
Creditors	-	4,824	-	4,824
Total Liabilities	-	66,676	-	66,676
<u>ASSETS</u>				
Cash & Cash Equivalents	-	56,069	-	56,069
Total Investments	-	56,069	-	56,069
Debtors	-	9,796	-	9,796
Total Assets	-	65,865	-	65,865

* The Debtors and Creditors figures have been restated and now exclude the Collection Fund.

	Quoted prices in active markets for identical assets	Other significant observable inputs	Significant unobservable inputs	TOTAL 31 March 2017
	(Level 1) £000	(Level 2) £000	(Level 3) £000	£000
<u>LIABILITIES</u>				
Financial Liabilities (Loans)	-	66,791	-	66,791
Plus Accrued Interest	-	197	-	197
Total Borrowing	-	66,988	-	66,988
Creditors	-	4,054	-	4,054
Total Liabilities	-	71,042	-	71,042
<u>ASSETS</u>				
Cash & Cash Equivalents	-	57,428	-	57,428
Total Investments	-	57,428	-	57,428
Debtors	-	9,048	-	9,048
Total Assets	-	66,476	-	66,476

16.5 Nature and extent of risks arising from Financial Instruments

The Authority's activities expose it to a variety of financial risks:

Credit risk – the possibility that other parties might fail to pay amounts due to the Authority.

Liquidity risk – the possibility that the Authority might not have the funds available to meet its commitments to make payments.

Market risk – the possibility that financial loss might arise for the Authority as a result of changes in such measurements as interest rates.

16.5.1 Credit risk

Credit risk arises from deposits with banks and financial institutions, as well as credit exposures to the Authority's customers.

The Authority does not generally allow credit for customers, such that £0.395m of the £15.098m Debtors balance is past its due date for payment. The past due amount can be analysed by age as follows:

	31 March 2016 £000	31 March 2017 £000
Less than three months	423	312
Three to six months	13	21
Six months to one year	30	18
More than one year	86	44
Total	552	395

16.5.2 Liquidity risk

As the Authority has ready access to borrowings, there is no significant risk that it will be unable to raise finance to meet its commitments under financial instruments.

All trade and other payables are due to be paid in less than one year.

16.5.3 Market risk

The Authority is exposed to risk in terms of its exposure to interest rate movements on its borrowings and investments.

During 2016/17, if interest rates on investments had been 0.25% lower with all other variables held constant, the impact on the CIES would be a fall in interest received of £0.168m (2015/2016 £0.165m). The impact of a 0.25% increase in interest rates would be the same but reversed, interest would increase by £0.168m (2015/2016 £0.165m).

The Authority's borrowing is at fixed rates, therefore there is little flexibility for any movement and impact on the CIES.

17. INVENTORIES

	General Stores		Mechanical Stocks		Heating Oil Petrol/ Diesel		Total	
	2015/16 £000	2016/17 £000	2015/16 £000	2016/17 £000	2015/16 £000	2016/17 £000	2015/16 £000	2016/17 £000
Balance outstanding at start of year	611	339	170	170	96	73	877	582
Purchases	953	470	355	332	463	496	1,771	1,298
Recognised as an expense in the year	(1,200)	(443)	(355)	(334)	(486)	(474)	(2,041)	(1,251)
Written off balances	(25)	-	-	-	-	-	(25)	-
Balance outstanding at year-end	339	366	170	168	73	95	582	629

Inventories are valued at the year end and included in the balance sheet at latest price.

18. SHORT TERM DEBTORS

31 March 2016 £000		31 March 2017 £000
8,775	Central government bodies	7,411
5,307	Other local authorities	6,747
164	National Health Service bodies	72
9	Public corporations and trading funds	14
810	Other entities and individuals	854
15,065	Total Short Term Debtors	15,098

19. CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS

The balance of Cash and Cash Equivalents is made up of the following elements:

31 March 2016 £000		31 March 2017 £000
11	Cash held by the Authority	11
56,058	Bank current accounts	57,417
56,069	Total Cash and Cash Equivalents	57,428

20. CREDITORS

31 March 2016 £000		31 March 2017 £000
	Creditors - Revenue	
1,635	Central government bodies	2,399
4,781	Other local authorities	5,264
4,347	Other entities and individuals	2,877
10,763	Total Creditors - Revenue	10,540
	Creditors – Capital	
102	Other entities and individuals	386
102	Total Creditors – Capital	386
10,865	Total Creditors	10,926

21. PROVISIONS

21.1 An insurance provision of £0.426m has been provided for previous years' employee and public liability claims, it is held in line with recommendations of the actuarial valuation. Whilst the Actuary can give advice about the total value of claims they are not able to confirm when these will be submitted.

22. CASH FLOW STATEMENT – OPERATING ACTIVITIES

22.1 The cash flows for operating activities include the following items:

2015/2016 £000		2016/2017 £000
(248)	Interest received	(304)
2,314	Interest paid	2,217

22.2 The surplus or deficit on the provision of services has been adjusted for the following non-cash movements:

2015/2016 £000		2016/2017 £000
(4,752)	Depreciation	(4,960)
1,900	Impairment and downward valuations	(4,466)
(2)	Amortisation	(7)
(39)	(Increase)/decrease in impairment for bad debts	-
325	(Increase)/decrease in Creditors	606
(1,475)	Increase/(decrease) in Debtors	33
(296)	Increase/(decrease) in Inventories	47
(62,684)	Movement in pension liability	(56,150)
4,797	Contributions to Provisions	251
(200)	Carrying amount of non-current assets and non-current assets held for sale, sold or de-recognised	(60)
(62,426)	Net cash (inflows)/outflows from adjustments to net surplus or deficit on the provision of services for non-cash movements	(64,706)

22.3 The surplus or deficit on the provision of services has been adjusted for the following items that are investing and financing activities:

2015/2016 £000		2016/2017 £000
221	Proceeds from the sale of property, vehicles, plant and equipment, investment property and intangible assets	61
18	Capital Grants credited to Surplus or Deficit on the provision of services	14
239	Net cash (inflows)/outflows from adjustments for items included in the net surplus or deficit on the provision of services that are investing and financing activities	75

23. CASH FLOW STATEMENT - INVESTING ACTIVITIES

2015/2016 £000		2016/2017 £000
3,360	Purchase of property, vehicles, plant and equipment, investment property and intangible assets	3,393
(221)	Proceeds from the sale of property, vehicles, plant and equipment, investment property and intangible assets	(61)
(18)	Capital Grants Received	(14)
3,121	Net cash (inflows)/outflows from investing activities	3,318

24. CASH FLOW STATEMENT - FINANCING ACTIVITIES

2015/2016 £000		2016/2017 £000
1,052	Repayments of short and long term borrowing	1,073

25. OFFICERS' REMUNERATION

The remuneration paid to the Authority's senior employees is as follows:

Total (Inc. pension) 2015/2016 (Restated) £		Salary £	Expenses Allowances £	Total (excl. pension) £	Pension £	Total (inc. pension) 2016/2017 £
	Senior Officer whose salary is £150,000 or more per year:					
201,697	Chief Fire Officer – Phil Loach	166,278	1,339	167,617	36,083	203,700
	Senior Officers' whose salary is less than £150,000 but equal or more than £50,000 per year:					
161,886	Deputy Chief Fire Officer - Director Service Support	133,227	1,917	135,144	28,910	164,054
151,922	Assistant Chief Fire Officer - Director Service Delivery	124,965	1,364	126,329	27,117	153,446
108,711	Strategic Enabler of Finance and Resources	99,524	345	99,869	13,037	112,906
* 54,701	Strategic Enabler Strategic Hub	56,560		56,560	7,409	63,969
678,917		580,554	4,965	585,519	112,556	698,075

* The Strategic Enabler Strategic Hub is now the Clerk to the Authority. This role was previously provided by Sandwell MBC. The 2015/16 figure has been restated to reflect this revised arrangement.

The Authority's other employees receiving more than £50,000 remuneration for the year (excluding employer's pension contributions) were paid the following amounts:

Remuneration band	2015/16 Number of employees	2016/17 Number of employees
£ 50,000 to £ 54,999	37	41
£ 55,000 to £ 59,999	9	5
£ 60,000 to £ 64,999	10	9
£ 65,000 to £ 69,999	5	4
£ 70,000 to £ 74,999	0	1
£ 75,000 to £ 79,999	1	1
£ 80,000 to £ 84,999	0	0
£ 85,000 to £ 89,999	0	0
Total	62	61

The table above excludes the senior officers who are reported separately.

The numbers of exit packages with total cost per band and total cost of the compulsory and other redundancies are set out in the table below:

(a) Exit package cost band (including special payments)	(b) Number of compulsory redundancies		(c) Number of other departures agreed		(d) Total number of exit packages by cost band [(b) +(c)]		(e) Total cost of exit packages in each band	
	2015/16	2016/17	2015/16	2016/17	2015/16	2016/17	2015/16	2016/17
£0 - £20,000	-	2	1	1	1	3	£5,178	£37,763
£20,001 - £40,000	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	£39,100
£40,001 - £60,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
£60,001 - £80,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
£80,001 - £100,000	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	£90,102
£100,001 - £150,000	-	-	1	-	1	-	£143,272	-
£150,001 - £200,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	-	2	2	3	2	5	£148,450	£166,965

The Authority agreed to terminate the contracts of 5 employees in 2016/17, incurring costs of £167k (£148k in 2015/16).

26. MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES

The Authority paid the following amounts to Members of the Authority during the year:

2015/2016 £000		2016/2017 £000
248	Allowances	247
6	Expenses	7
254	Total	254

27. EXTERNAL AUDIT COSTS

Fees payable to external auditors:

2015/2016 £000			2016/2017 £000
39	Grant Thornton	Fees payable for the external planned audit work	39
-		Non-audit services	3
39		Total	42

28. RELATED PARTIES

The Authority is required to disclose material transactions with related parties - bodies or individuals that have the potential to control or influence the Authority or to be controlled or influenced by the Authority. Disclosure of these transactions allows readers to assess the extent to which the Authority might have been constrained in its ability to operate independently or might have secured the ability to limit another party's ability to bargain freely with the Authority.

Letters have been sent to Brigade Managers, Statutory Officers and current and former Councillors asking them to identify whether they have any relationships with related parties. No members' of the Authority or Chief Officer or parties related to them have undertaken any disclosable related party transactions during the year.

The following material transactions with related parties took place during the year:

2015/2016 £000	Related Party	Nature of Transaction	2016/2017 £000
31,327	Central Government	Revenue Support Grant	27,794
21,731		Business Rates Retention Scheme Grants	21,849
18		Capital Grant	354
36,995	West Midland Local Authorities	Council Tax Income	38,603
9,441		NDR Income	9,760

Grants received are set out in Note 29.

29. GRANT INCOME

29.1 The Authority credited the following grants, contributions and donations to the CIES in 2016/2017:

	2015/2016 £000	2016/2017 £000
<i>Credited to Taxation and Non Specific Grant Income:</i>		
Revenue Support Grant	31,327	27,794
Business Rates Retention Scheme Grants	21,731	21,849
Capital Grants and Contributions	18	354
Total	53,076	49,997
<i>Credited to Services:</i>		
Fire Control Project (Staffs collaboration)	7	11
New Dimension Training Crewing and Accommodation	980	899
Sandwell Partnerships	12	-
Migration Impact Fund	37	36
CFOA Seconded Officer National Procurement	-	55
DCLG Pre-Transitional Funding (ESMC)	46	1,126
New Risks Section 29	20	20
DCLG Oxford Power Station (NRAT)	6	7
FRS Flood Assistance North Yorkshire	20	-
FRS Flood Assistance Cumbria	10	-
Centro (Haden Cross Youth Officer)	6	-
Fire Control Project	155	430
Fire Reduction Partnership	257	190
New Burdens	8	8
Total	1,564	2,782

29.2 Grants – Receipts in Advance

The Authority has received the following grant that has yet to be recognised as income as it has conditions attached to it that could require the monies to be returned to the giver. The balance at the year-end is as follows:

Current Liabilities	31 March 2016 £000	31 March 2017 £000
<i>Grants - Receipts in Advance (Revenue Grants):</i>		
Fire Control Project	756	405

Following the termination of the Fire Control project, any surplus of grant held as at the 31st March 2017 by the Authority has been reflected as a Receipt in Advance.

30. CAPITAL EXPENDITURE AND CAPITAL FINANCING

The total amount of capital expenditure incurred in the year is shown in the table below, together with the resources that have been used to finance it. Where capital expenditure is to be financed in future years by charges to revenue as assets are used by the Authority, the expenditure results in an increase in the CFR, a measure of the capital expenditure incurred historically by the Authority that has yet to be financed. The movement in the CFR is analysed in the second part of this note.

	2015/2016 £000	2016/2017 £000
<i>Opening CFR</i>	40,211	39,508
Capital investment:		
Property, Vehicles, Plant and Equipment	3,075	3,677
Sources of finance:		
Capital Receipts	-	(1,122)
Government grants and other contributions	(3,075)	(2,388)
Sums set aside from revenue:		
Direct Revenue Contributions	-	(167)
MRP/the Statutory Repayment of Loans Fund Advances	(703)	(744)
<i>Closing CFR</i>	39,508	38,764

<i>Movements in year</i>	2015/2016 £000	2016/2017 £000
MRP/the Statutory Repayment of Loans Fund Advances	(703)	(744)
<i>Increase/(decrease) in CFR</i>	(703)	(744)

31. DEFINED BENEFIT PENSION SCHEMES

31.1 Participation in Pension Schemes

As part of the terms and conditions of employment of its officers, the Authority makes contributions towards the cost of post-employment benefits. Although these benefits will not actually be payable until employees retire, the Authority has a commitment to make the payments (for those benefits) and to disclose them at the time that employees earn their future entitlement.

At the 31st March 2017 the Authority participated in four post-employment schemes:

- The West Midlands Metropolitan Authorities Pension Fund for civilian and fire control employees, administered locally by Wolverhampton City Council — this is a funded defined benefit final salary scheme, meaning that the Authority and employees pay contributions into a fund, calculated at a level intended to balance the pension's liabilities with investment assets.
- The 1992, 2006 and 2015 Firefighters' Pension Schemes for fire officers — these are unfunded defined benefit arrangements, there are no investment assets built up to meet the pensions liabilities. Fund Accounts have been set up, into which the Authority and scheme members make contributions and pension payments are made from the fund.

31.2 Transactions Relating to Post-employment Benefits

We recognise the cost of retirement benefits in the reported cost of services when they are earned by employees, rather than when the benefits are eventually paid as pensions. However, the charge we are required to make against council tax is based on the cash payable in the year, so the real cost of post-employment/retirement benefits is reversed out of the General Fund via the MIRS. The following transactions have been made in the CIES and the General Fund Balance via the MIRS during the year:

2015/2016	Local Government Pension Scheme £000	Firefighters'				Total £000
		Pension Scheme 1992 £000	Pension Scheme 2006 £000	Pension Scheme 2015 £000	Compensation Scheme £000	
CIES						
Cost of services:						
Current service cost	2,731	10,990	190	9,840	1,180	24,931
Past service costs, including curtailments	16	-	10	40	10	76
Administration Expenses	31	-	-	-	-	31
Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure:						
Net interest expense	1,361	45,820	1,640	220	1,380	50,421
Total post-employment benefits charged to the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services	4,139	56,810	1,840	10,100	2,570	75,459
Other post-employment benefits charged to the CIES:						
Remeasurement of the net defined benefit liability comprising:						
Changes in demographic assumptions	-	(19,190)	(650)	(160)	(430)	(20,430)
Changes in financial assumptions	(6,657)	(110,180)	(10,030)	(1,100)	(2,400)	(130,367)
Changes in assumptions retained settlement	-	-	40	-	-	40
Experience gains and losses	-	(50,610)	2,780	(370)	(5,220)	(53,420)
Return on fund assets in excess of interest	2,608	-	-	-	-	2,608
Other actuarial gains/losses on assets	-	(37,794)	111	7,220	-	(30,463)
Total post-employment benefits charged to the CIES	90	(160,964)	(5,909)	15,690	(5,480)	(156,573)
MIRS						
Reversal of net charges made to the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services for post-employment benefits in accordance with the Code	(4,139)	(56,810)	(1,840)	(10,100)	(2,570)	(75,459)
Actual amount charged against the General Fund Balance for Pensions in the year:						
Employers' contributions payable to the scheme	2,596	4,456	141	3,910		11,103
Retirement benefits payable to pensioners	62				1,610	1,672

2016/2017	Local Government Pension Scheme £000	Firefighters'				Total £000
		Pension Scheme 1992 £000	Pension Scheme 2006 £000	Pension Scheme 2015 £000	Compensation Scheme £000	
CIES						
Cost of services:						
Current service cost	2,524	7,000	160	8,690	430	18,804
Past service costs, including curtailments	165	1,090	130	10	-	1,395
Administration Expenses	37	-	-	-	-	37
Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure:						
Net interest expense	1,431	43,340	1,550	630	1,220	48,171
Total post-employment benefits charged to the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services	4,157	51,430	1,840	9,330	1,650	68,407
Other post-employment benefits charged to the CIES:						
Remeasurement of the net defined benefit liability comprising:						
Changes in demographic assumptions	(2,305)	(19,480)	10	-	(1,690)	(23,465)
Changes in financial assumptions	32,102	260,810	21,710	10,880	5,620	331,122
Changes in assumptions retained settlement	-	-	-	-	-	-
Experience gains and losses	(8,744)	(2,180)	700	(1,250)	(470)	(11,944)
Return on fund assets in excess of interest	(12,861)	-	-	-	-	(12,861)
Other actuarial gains/losses on assets	(3,328)	(40,168)	(21)	7,598	-	(35,919)
Total post-employment benefits charged to the CIES	9,021	250,412	24,239	26,558	5,110	315,340
MIRS						
Reversal of net charges made to the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services for post-employment benefits in accordance with the Code	(4,157)	(51,430)	(1,840)	(9,330)	(1,650)	(68,407)
Actual amount charged against the General Fund Balance for Pensions in the year:						
Employers' contributions payable to the scheme	2,733	3,772	69	4,058		10,632
Retirement benefits payable to pensioners	55				1,570	1,625

31.3 Pensions Assets and Liabilities Recognised in the Balance Sheet

The amount included in the balance sheet arising from the Authority's obligation in respect of its defined benefit plans is as follows:

2015/2016	Funded liabilities: Local Government Pension Scheme	Unfunded liabilities: Local Government Pension Scheme	Unfunded liabilities: Firefighters' Pension Scheme 1992	Unfunded liabilities: Firefighters' Pension Scheme 2006	Unfunded liabilities: Firefighters' Pension Scheme 2015	Unfunded liabilities: Firefighters' Compensation Scheme	Total
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Present value of the defined benefit obligation	(111,379)	(736)	(1,238,480)	(43,480)	(11,780)	(35,010)	(1,440,865)
Fair value of plan assets	72,133	-	-	-	-	-	72,133
Net liability arising from defined benefit obligation	(39,246)	(736)	(1,238,480)	(43,480)	(11,780)	(35,010)	(1,368,732)

2016/2017	Funded liabilities: Local Government Pension Scheme	Unfunded liabilities: Local Government Pension Scheme	Unfunded liabilities: Firefighters' Pension Scheme 1992	Unfunded liabilities: Firefighters' Pension Scheme 2006	Unfunded liabilities: Firefighters' Pension Scheme 2015	Unfunded liabilities: Firefighters' Compensation Scheme	Total
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Present value of the defined benefit obligation	(136,485)	(743)	(1,485,120)	(67,650)	(34,280)	(38,550)	(1,762,828)
Fair value of plan assets	91,013	-	-	-	-	-	91,013
Net liability arising from defined benefit obligation	(45,472)	(743)	(1,485,120)	(67,650)	(34,280)	(38,550)	(1,671,815)

31.4 Reconciliation of the movements in the fair value of scheme (plan) assets:

2015/2016	Funded assets: Local Government Pension Scheme £000	Unfunded assets: Local Government Pension Scheme £000	Unfunded assets: Firefighters' Pension Scheme 1992 £000	Unfunded assets: Firefighters' Pension Scheme 2006 £000	Unfunded assets: Firefighters' Pension Scheme 2015 £000	Unfunded assets: Firefighters' Compensation Scheme £000	Total £000
Opening fair value of scheme assets	71,394	-	-	-	-	-	71,394
Interest income	2,372	-	-	-	-	-	2,372
Remeasurement gain/(loss):							
Return on assets less interest	(2,608)	-	-	-	-	-	(2,608)
Other actuarial gains/(losses)	-	-	37,794	(111)	(7,220)	-	30,463
Contributions from Employer	2,596	62	4,456	141	3,910	1,610	12,775
Contributions from employees into the scheme	742	-	2,720	60	3,310	-	6,832
Benefits paid	(2,332)	(62)	(44,970)	(90)	-	(1,610)	(49,064)
Administration expenses	(31)	-	-	-	-	-	(31)
Closing fair value of scheme assets	72,133	-	-	-	-	-	72,133

2016/2017	Funded assets: Local Government Pension Scheme £000	Unfunded assets: Local Government Pension Scheme £000	Unfunded assets: Firefighters' Pension Scheme 1992 £000	Unfunded assets: Firefighters' Pension Scheme 2006 £000	Unfunded assets: Firefighters' Pension Scheme 2015 £000	Unfunded assets: Firefighters' Compensation Scheme £000	Total £000
Opening fair value of scheme assets	72,133	-	-	-	-	-	72,133
Interest income	2,670	-	-	-	-	-	2,670
Remeasurement gain/(loss):							
Return on assets less interest	12,861	-	-	-	-	-	12,861
Other actuarial gains/(losses)	3,328	-	40,168	21	(7,598)	-	35,919
Contributions from Employer	2,733	55	3,772	69	4,058	1,570	12,257
Contributions from employees into the scheme	737	-	2,180	60	3,540	-	6,517
Benefits paid	(3,412)	(55)	(46,120)	(150)	-	(1,570)	(51,307)
Administration expenses	(37)	-	-	-	-	-	(37)
Closing fair value of scheme assets	91,013	-	-	-	-	-	91,013

31.5 Reconciliation of present value of the scheme liabilities (defined benefit obligation):

2015/2016	Funded liabilities: Local Government Pension Scheme	Unfunded liabilities: Local Government Pension Scheme	Unfunded liabilities: Firefighters' Pension Scheme 1992	Unfunded liabilities: Firefighters' Pension Scheme 2006	Unfunded liabilities: Firefighters' Pension Scheme 2015	Unfunded liabilities: Firefighters' Compensation Scheme	Total
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Opening balance at 1 April	(113,129)	(815)	(1,403,900)	(49,530)	-	(42,100)	(1,609,474)
Current service cost	(2,731)	-	(10,990)	(190)	(9,840)	(1,180)	(24,931)
Interest cost	(3,707)	(26)	(45,820)	(1,640)	(220)	(1,380)	(52,793)
Contributions from scheme participants	(742)	-	(2,720)	(60)	(3,310)	-	(6,832)
Remeasurement gains and (losses):							
Changes in demographic assumptions	-	-	19,190	650	160	430	20,430
Changes in financial assumptions	6,614	43	110,180	10,030	1,100	2,400	130,367
Changes in assumptions retained settlement	-	-	-	(40)	-	-	(40)
Experience gains/(losses)	-	-	50,610	(2,780)	370	5,220	53,420
Past service costs, including curtailments	(16)	-	-	(10)	(40)	(10)	(76)
Benefits paid	2,332	62	44,970	90	-	1,610	49,064
Closing balance at 31 March	(111,379)	(736)	(1,238,480)	(43,480)	(11,780)	(35,010)	(1,440,865)

2016/2017	Funded liabilities: Local Government Pension Scheme	Unfunded liabilities: Local Government Pension Scheme	Unfunded liabilities: Firefighters' Pension Scheme 1992	Unfunded liabilities: Firefighters' Pension Scheme 2006	Unfunded liabilities: Firefighters' Pension Scheme 2015	Unfunded liabilities: Firefighters' Compensation Scheme	Total
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Opening balance at 1 April	(111,379)	(736)	(1,238,480)	(43,480)	(11,780)	(35,010)	(1,440,865)
Current service cost	(2,524)	-	(7,000)	(160)	(8,690)	(430)	(18,804)
Interest cost	(4,075)	(26)	(43,340)	(1,550)	(630)	(1,220)	(50,841)
Contributions from scheme participants	(737)	-	(2,180)	(60)	(3,540)	-	(6,517)
Remeasurement gains and (losses):							
Changes in demographic assumptions	2,247	58	19,480	(10)	-	1,690	23,465
Changes in financial assumptions	(32,016)	(86)	(260,810)	(21,710)	(10,880)	(5,620)	(331,122)
Changes in assumptions retained settlement	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Experience gains/(losses)	8,752	(8)	2,180	(700)	1,250	470	11,944
Past service costs, including curtailments	(165)	-	(1,090)	(130)	(10)	-	(1,395)
Benefits paid	3,412	55	46,120	150	-	1,570	51,307
Closing balance at 31 March	(136,485)	(743)	(1,485,120)	(67,650)	(34,280)	(38,550)	(1,762,828)

31.6 Local Government Pension Scheme assets comprised:

Asset category	Quoted £000	Unquoted £000	31 March 2016 £000	%
Equity Instruments:				
UK quoted	5,596	-	5,596	7.8
UK unquoted	-	1,095	1,095	1.5
Global quoted	8,023	-	8,023	11.1
Global unquoted	-	7,113	7,113	9.9
Europe	5,307	-	5,307	7.4
Japan	2,538	-	2,538	3.5
Pacific Basin	2,753	-	2,753	3.8
North America	5,559	-	5,559	7.7
Emerging markets	5,350	-	5,350	7.4
Total Equity Instruments	35,126	8,208	43,334	60.1
Bonds:				
UK Government	-	5,467	5,467	7.6
Other	4,231	3,230	7,461	10.3
Total Bonds	4,231	8,697	12,928	17.9
Property				
UK	-	4,322	4,322	6.0
Property funds	-	1,722	1,722	2.4
Total Property	-	6,044	6,044	8.4
Alternatives:				
Infrastructure	155	2,118	2,273	3.2
Absolute return	-	3,791	3,791	5.2
Total Alternatives	155	5,909	6,064	8.4
Cash:				
Cash instruments	-	2,691	2,691	3.7
Cash accounts	-	1,072	1,072	1.5
Total Cash	-	3,763	3,763	5.2
Total Assets	39,512	32,621	72,133	100

Asset category	Quoted £000	Unquoted £000	31 March 2017 £000	%
Equity Instruments:				
UK quoted	7,571	-	7,571	8.3
UK unquoted	-	1,102	1,102	1.2
Global quoted	10,861	-	10,861	11.9
Global unquoted	-	7,512	7,512	8.3
Europe	7,789	-	7,789	8.6
Japan	4,023	-	4,023	4.4
Pacific Basin	4,396	-	4,396	4.8
North America	8,525	-	8,525	9.4
Emerging markets	7,484	-	7,484	8.2
Total Equity Instruments	50,649	8,614	59,263	65.1
Bonds:				
UK Government	-	6,614	6,614	7.3
Other	5,086	3,288	8,374	9.2
Total Bonds	5,086	9,902	14,988	16.5
Property				
UK	-	4,844	4,844	5.3
Property funds	-	2,069	2,069	2.3
Total Property	-	6,913	6,913	7.6
Alternatives:				
Infrastructure	104	2,525	2,629	2.9
Absolute return	-	4,662	4,662	5.1
Total Alternatives	104	7,187	7,291	8.0
Cash:				
Cash instruments	-	2,308	2,308	2.5
Cash accounts	-	250	250	0.3
Total Cash	-	2,558	2,558	2.8
Total Assets	55,839	35,174	91,013	100

31.7 Basis for Estimating Assets and Liabilities

Liabilities have been assessed on an actuarial basis using the projected unit credit method, an estimate of the pensions that will be payable in future years dependent on assumptions about mortality rates, salary levels, etc. The Firefighters' Pension Scheme has been assessed using an approach and model supplied by GAD and certified by them on 2 May 2017. The West Midlands Metropolitan Authorities Pension Fund has been based on triennial actuarial valuations, the last review being 31 March 2016 and assessed by Barnett Waddingham. In calculating the IAS19 figures for the West Midlands Metropolitan Authorities Pension Fund the actuary assumed an investment return of 22%. The actual return for the year to the 31 March 2017 was 21.2%.

The significant assumptions used by the actuary have been:

	Local Government Pension Scheme		Firefighters' Pension Schemes	
	2015/2016	2016/2017	2015/2016	2016/2017
Mortality assumptions:				
Longevity at 65 for current pensioners:				
• Men	23.0	21.8	22.3	22.4
• Women	25.7	24.2	22.3	22.4
Longevity at 65 for future pensioners:				
• Men	25.3	23.9	24.6	24.7
• Women	28.0	26.5	24.6	24.7
Rate of inflation CPI	2.1%	2.7%	2.2%	2.35%
Rate of increase in salaries	3.85%	4.2%*	4.2%**	4.35%**
Rate of increase in pensions	2.1%	2.7%	2.2%	2.35%
Rate for discounting scheme liabilities	3.7%	2.8%	3.55%	2.65%

* Allowed for short-term overlay from 31 March 2016 to 31 March 2020 for salaries to rise in line with CPI. This is consistent with the 2016 valuation of the Fund.

** Allowed for short-term pay restraint by limiting the nominal rate of salary growth to 1.00% each year until the end of 2019/20 accounting year in line with stated Government policy on short-term pay.

The estimation of the defined benefit obligations is sensitive to the actuarial assumptions set out in the table above. The sensitivity analyses below have been determined based on reasonably possible changes of the assumptions occurring at the end of the reporting period and assumes for each change that the assumption analysed changes while all the other assumptions remain constant. The assumptions in longevity, for example, assume that life expectancy increases or decreases for men and women. In practice, this is unlikely to occur and changes in some of the assumptions may be interrelated. The estimations in the sensitivity analysis have followed the accounting policies for the schemes i.e. on an actuarial basis using the projected unit credit method. The methods and types of assumptions used in preparing the sensitivity analysis below did not change from those used in the previous period.

A sensitivity analysis for the West Midlands Metropolitan Authorities Pension Fund as at 31 March 2017 is shown below:

Sensitivity analysis	£000	£000	£000
Adjustment to discount rate	+0.1%	0.0%	-0.1%
Present value of total obligation	(134,570)	(137,228)	(139,941)
Projected service cost	(4,070)	(4,166)	(4,265)
Adjustment to long term salary increase	+0.1%	0.0%	-0.1%
Present value of total obligation	(137,692)	(137,228)	(136,768)
Projected service cost	(4,166)	(4,166)	(4,166)
Adjustment to pension increases and deferred revaluation	+0.1%	0.0%	-0.1%
Present value of total obligation	(139,477)	(137,228)	(135,025)
Projected service cost	(4,265)	(4,166)	(4,069)
Adjustment to life expectancy assumptions	+1 year	None	-1 Year
Present value of total obligation	(142,246)	(137,228)	(132,392)
Projected service cost	(4,299)	(4,166)	(4,037)

The tables below show the sensitivity of the defined benefit obligation to changes in the significant actuarial assumptions and the impact on the total liability as at 31 March 2017 for the Firefighters' Pension Schemes:

Firefighters' Pension Scheme 1992 Change in assumption*	Approximate % increase to Employer liability	Approximate effect on total liability £m
0.5% increase in real discount rate	-9.0%	133.0
0.5% increase in long term salaries rate	0.8%	(12.4)
0.5% increase in the pensions increase rate	8.7%	(128.7)
1 year increase in member life expectancy	2.7%	(40.3)
Each member retiring one year later	0.0%	-

The weighted average duration of the defined benefit obligation for scheme members is approximately 19 years.

Firefighters' Pension Scheme 2006 Change in assumption*	Approximate % increase to Employer liability	Approximate effect on total liability £m
0.5% increase in real discount rate	-17.0%	11.5
0.5% increase in salaries rate	8.4%	(5.6)
0.5% increase in the pensions increase rate	9.9%	(6.7)
1 year increase in member life expectancy	2.3%	(1.6)
Each member retiring one year later	-0.5%	0.3

The weighted average duration of the defined benefit obligation for scheme members is approximately 38 years.

Firefighters' Pension Scheme 2015 Change in assumption*	Approximate % increase to Employer liability	Approximate effect on total liability £m
0.5% increase in real discount rate	-16.6%	5.7
0.5% increase in salaries rate	8.7%	(3.0)
0.5% increase in the pensions increase rate	10.4%	(3.6)
1 year increase in member life expectancy	2.2%	(0.8)
Each member retiring one year later	1.4%	(0.5)

The weighted average duration of the defined benefit obligation for scheme members is approximately 38 years.

* Opposite changes in the assumptions will produce approximately equal and opposite changes in the liability.

31.8 Impact on the Authority's Cash Flows

The objective of the Local Government Pension scheme is to keep employers' contributions at as constant a rate as possible. The West Midlands Metropolitan Authorities Pension Fund has agreed a strategy with the scheme's actuary to achieve a funding level of 100% over the next 20 years. Funding levels are monitored on an annual basis. The next triennial valuation is due to be completed for 31 March 2019.

The Local Government Pension scheme will need to take account of the national changes to the scheme under the Public Pensions Services Act 2013. Under the Act, the Local Government Pension Scheme in England and Wales and the other main existing public service schemes may not provide benefits in relation to service after 31 March 2014. The Act provides for scheme regulations to be made within a common framework, to establish new career average revalued earnings scheme to pay pensions and other benefits to certain public servants.

The authority anticipated to pay approximately £3m expected contributions to the Local Government Pension scheme in 2017/18.

Expected employers' contributions for the firefighters' pension schemes in the year to 31 March 2018 are approximately £8m.

32. CONTINGENT LIABILITIES

32.1 Municipal Mutual Insurance Limited (MMI)

MMI, through which the Authority had part of its insurance, ceased writing new insurance business in 1992 and is currently using its available resources to meet outstanding claims. MMI may not know the full extent of its liability claims as it may take a number of years for them to arise, however the Company has continued to settle claims in an orderly manner. To prevent the costs associated with an insolvent run off, the Company entered into a scheme of arrangement with its creditors. Following a Supreme Court judgement on 28th March 2012 which found against the Company, it is now highly likely that the scheme of arrangement will be triggered. Once the scheme is implemented, the Authority and others will be called upon to reimburse the company with a proportion (up to 100%) of its claims settled since 1st October 1993. The Contingent Liability is for approximately 50% (£2.060m). Payments of £0.402m (2013/14) & £0.268m (2016/17) have been made and an earmarked reserve is provided for £0.037m. The balance is held in the insurance earmarked reserve (£1.353m).

32.2 Firefighters' Pension Scheme (FPS) 2015 – Transitional Protection

The Fire Brigade Union (FBU) filed a Notice of Appeal on 17 March 2017, seeking to set aside the decision made by the Employment Tribunal in the age discrimination claims made by more than 6,000 firefighters regarding the introduction of the 2015 FPS.

A nearly identical claim was made by 210 judges. The judges won and the Government has filed an appeal. The Employment Appeal Tribunal has made an Order consolidating the appeals which is a mechanism to hear both appeals through the same process. The judges may raise an objection to the consolidated appeal, but at the moment it is being progressed as one.

PENSION FUND ACCOUNT

2015/2016 £000					2016/2017 £000			
1992	2006	Modified	2015		1992	2006	Modified	2015
				Contributions Receivable				
				From Fire Authority				
(4,061)	(60)	(21)	(3,910)	Contributions in relation to pensionable pay	(3,291)	(47)	(22)	(4,058)
(395)	(41)	(19)	-	Ill health retirements	(481)	-	-	-
(2,724)	(51)	(85)	(3,311)	From firefighters' contributions	(2,183)	(43)	(24)	(3,538)
				Transfers in				
-	(10)	-	(42)	Individual	-	(133)	-	(6)
				Benefits Payable				
35,849	6	7	-	Pensions	36,968	16	7	-
8,558	7	53	-	Commutations and lump sum retirement benefits	8,084	-	-	-
1,776	-	-	-	Redress Payments	-	-	-	-
-	-	-	-	Lump sum employee contributions holiday	1,095	-	-	-
-	-	-	-	Lump sum death benefits	-	99	-	-
				Payments to and on account of leavers				
582	22	-	-	Individual transfers	-	32	-	-
39,585	(127)	(65)	(7,263)	Net amount payable for the year	40,192	(76)	(39)	(7,602)
(39,585)	127	65	7,263	Top up Grant payable by the Government	(40,192)	76	39	7,602
-	-	-	-		-	-	-	-

2015/2016 £000	NET ASSETS STATEMENT	2016/2017 £000
(27)	Unpaid Benefits	-
-	Lump sum employee contributions holiday	(371)
8,711	Top-up receivable from the Government	7,347
(8,684)	Amount owing to General Fund	(6,976)
-		-

NOTES TO THE PENSION FUND ACCOUNT

The fund was established at 1st April 2006 under the Firefighters' Pension Scheme (Amendment) England Order 2006 and covered both the 1992 and 2006 Firefighters' Pension Schemes. From 1st April 2015, a new firefighters' pension scheme and a modified section in the 2006 scheme was established. The fund now includes the 1992, 2006 and 2015 schemes. Before 1st April 2006 the Authority was responsible for paying the pensions of its own former employees on a pay as you go basis. The Firefighters' Pension Schemes remain unfunded and consequently the fund has no investment assets. Benefits are funded by contributions from the Authority and employees and any difference between benefits payable and contributions receivable is met by top-up grant from the DCLG.

Government funding by top-up grant is paid in two installments, 80% of the estimated annual amount is received in August of the relevant year with the balance paid once actual figures have been determined.

Employees' and employer's contribution levels are based on percentages of pensionable pay set nationally by the DCLG and are subject to revaluation every four years' by GAD. The contribution rates for 2016/17 are shown in the tables below:

	1992 Scheme %	2006 Scheme %	Modified %
Employer's	21.7	11.9	21.7
Employees' Pensionable pay band			
Up to £15,301	11.0	8.5	11.0
> £15,301 to £21,422	12.2	9.4	12.2
> £21,422 to £30,603	14.2	10.4	14.2
> £30,603 to £40,804	14.7	10.9	14.7
> £40,804 to £51,005	15.2	11.2	15.2
> £51,005 to £61,206	15.5	11.3	15.5
> £61,206 to £102,010	16.0	11.7	16.0
> £102,010 to £122,412	16.5	12.1	16.5
> £122,412	17.0	12.5	17.0

	2015 Scheme %
Employer's	14.3
Employees' Pensionable pay band	
Up to £27,270	10.0
£27,271 to £50,500	12.5
£50,501 to £142,500	13.5
£142,501 or more	14.5

The fund is administered by the Authority and managed by the Strategic Enabler of Finance and Resources. Benefits are paid to retired officers, their survivors and others who are eligible for benefits under both the 1992, 2006 and 2015 Firefighters' Pension Schemes.

The fund is statutorily prevented from including interest on cashflows and administration expenses in the pension fund. These expenses are borne by the Authority in its main accounts.

The Net Assets Statement does not include liabilities to pay pensions and other benefits after the 31st March 2017. For further information on the liability to pay pensions see Note 31.

The account is prepared in accordance with the same code of practice and accounting policies as outlined in the Statement of Accounting Policies, with one exception that accounting for transfer values are on a cash basis rather than accruals basis.

ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

1. Scope of Responsibility

- 1.1 West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for. The Authority also has a duty under the Local Government Act 1999 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.
- 1.2 In discharging this duty, the Authority is also responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs which facilitates the effective exercise of the Authority's functions and which includes arrangements for the management of risk.
- 1.3 The Authority has complied with the code of corporate governance which is consistent with the principles of the revised CIPFA/SOLACE Framework 2016 published by CIPFA in association with the International Federation of Accountants (IFAC) – Delivering Good Governance in Local Government. The Authority has also complied with the requirements of CIPFA's statement on the role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government. This Annual Governance Statement explains how the Authority has complied with the code and also meets the requirements of Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015, regulation 6 which require the Authority to prepare an Annual Governance Statement.

2. The Purpose of the Governance Framework

- 2.1 The governance framework comprises the systems and processes, culture and values by which the Authority is directed and controlled and its activities through which it accounts to and engages with the community. It enables the Authority to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate, value for money services.
- 2.2 The system of internal control is a significant part of the framework and is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level. It cannot eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives and can, therefore, only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of the Authority's policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood and potential impact of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.
- 2.3 The governance framework has been in place for the year ended 31st March 2017 and up to the date of the approval of the annual report and statement of accounts.

3. The Governance Framework

The key elements of the systems and processes that comprise the Authority's governance arrangements include the following:-

- 3.1 The Authority has produced a Corporate Strategy setting out its objectives and there is regular performance monitoring in which achievement of the Authority's objectives is measured and monitored.
- 3.2 The Authority has established clear channels of communication with the community and stakeholders regarding the production of the Annual Report and consultation on the key priorities of the Service. This also encourages open communication.
- 3.3 The Authority facilitates policy and decision-making via regular Policy Planning Forums and Authority and Executive Committee meetings. An Audit Committee provides independent assurance to the Authority on risk management and internal control and the effectiveness of the arrangements the Authority has for these matters. The constitution of the Committees including the terms of reference is reviewed annually and available on the Internet.
- 3.4 The Authority ensures compliance with established strategies, procedures, laws and regulations – including risk management. The Authority also maintains and reviews regularly its code of conduct and whistle blowing policy. There is a comprehensive induction programme in place and information regarding strategies and procedures are held on the intranet, which continues to be developed. The Authority has a strong Internal Audit function and established protocols for working with External Audit.
- 3.5 West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority will continue to enhance and strengthen its internal control environment through the review of current policies and procedures.
- 3.6 The Authority has corporate risk management arrangements in place which are supported by an approved Risk Management Strategy enabling Managers and other senior officers to identify, assess and prioritise risks within their own work areas which impact on the ability of the Authority and its services to meet objectives. To consider the effectiveness of the Authority's risk management arrangements is a specific term of reference for the Audit Committee and risk management is a specific responsibility of both the Chairman and Vice Chairman.
- 3.7 The Authority's Corporate Risk Register identifies the principal risks to the achievement of the Authority's objectives and assesses the nature and extent of those risks (through assessment of likelihood and impact). The Register identifies risk owners whose responsibility includes the identification of controls and actions to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.
- 3.8 The Authority ensures the economical, effective and efficient use of resources, and secures continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, by having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness as required by the Best Value duty. The Authority plans its spending on an established planning cycle for policy development, budget setting and performance

management through the business planning process. This ensures that resources are aligned to priorities and secures best value from the resources that are available.

- 3.9 The Chief Financial Officer is a key member of the leadership team, helping to develop and implement the Authority's strategy. The Authority's financial system is an ORACLE based general ledger and management information system, which integrates the general ledger function with those of budgetary control and payments. Financial Regulations and Contract Procedure Rules are approved and regularly reviewed by the Authority. A rigorous system of monthly financial monitoring ensures that any significant budget variances are identified in a timely way, and corrective action initiated.
- 3.10 The Authority's performance management and reporting of performance management continues to be improved with a more focused Corporate Strategy, the setting of priorities and is supported by regular performance monitoring. Corporate performance is reported on a quarterly basis and this process provides officers and Members with the opportunity to share knowledge and understanding about key performance issues affecting services.
- 3.11 The Authority within its committee framework has a Standards Committee to promote high ethical standards amongst Members. This Committee leads on developing policies and procedures to accompany the Code of Conduct for Members and is responsible for local assessment and review of complaints about members' conduct. The Authority also has a Scrutiny Committee which undertakes performance management functions and informs policy development.
- 3.12 The Fire and Rescue National Framework for England sets out a requirement for Fire and Rescue Authorities to publish 'Statements of Assurance'. Specifically, Fire and Rescue Authorities must provide assurance on financial, governance and operational matters and show how they have had due regard to the expectations set out in their integrated risk management plan and the requirements included in this Framework. The Authority has approved the Statement of Assurance which is available on the Service's website.

4. Review of Effectiveness

- 4.1 The Authority has responsibility for conducting, at least annually, a review of the effectiveness of its governance framework including the system of internal control. The review of effectiveness is informed by the work of the statutory officers and principal managers of the Authority who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the governance environment, the internal audit annual report and comments made by the external auditors in their annual audit letter and other reports.
- 4.2 Section unit business plans contain a variety of performance indicators and targets that are regularly reviewed.
- 4.3 The Authority's political governance arrangements, which are appropriately reviewed by officers, set out the responsibilities of both Members and senior managers. In particular the Authority has identified the following statutory post holders:-

- Chief Fire Officer
- Treasurer
- Monitoring Officer

In addition to the statutory posts, the post of Clerk to the Authority has been maintained.

- 4.4 The arrangements for the provision of internal audit are contained within the Authority's Financial Regulations. The Treasurer is responsible for ensuring that there is an adequate and effective system of internal audit of the Authority's accounting and other systems of internal control as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015. The internal audit provision operates in accordance with the CIPFA Code of Practice for Internal Audit in Local Government. The Authority's Audit Plan is prioritised by a combination of the key internal controls, assessment and review on the basis of risk and the Authority's corporate governance arrangements, including risk management. The work is further supplemented by reviews around the main financial systems, scheduled visits to Authority establishments and fraud investigations. Internal Audit leads on promoting a counter-fraud culture within the Authority.
- 4.5 The resulting Audit Plan is discussed and agreed with officers of the Strategic Enabling Team and the Audit Committee and shared with the Authority's external auditor. Meetings between the internal and external auditor ensure that duplication of effort is avoided. All Authority Audit reports include an assessment of the adequacy of internal control and prioritised action plans to address any areas needing improvement.
- 4.6 The Authority's review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control is informed by:-
- The work undertaken by Internal Audit during the year;
 - The work undertaken by the external auditor reported in their annual audit;
 - Other work undertaken by independent inspection bodies.
- 4.7 From the work undertaken by Internal Audit in 2016/2017 the Internal Audit has given a 'reasonable assurance' that the Authority has adequate and effective governance, risk management and internal control processes. This represents an unqualified opinion and the highest level of assurance available to Audit Services. In giving this opinion it is recognised that assurance can never be absolute. The most that internal audit can provide is reasonable assurance that there are no major weaknesses in the Authority's governance, risk management and control processes.
- 4.8 The Authority is able to confirm that its financial management arrangements conform to the governance requirements of the CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government.
- 4.9 Audit Services have reported and advised on the implications of the result of the review of effectiveness of the governance framework by the sources noted above and that the arrangements continue to be regarded as fit for purpose in accordance with the Authority's governance framework. The areas to be specifically addressed are outlined in 5.5.

5. Significant governance arrangements within the Authority

5.1 West Midlands Fire & Rescue Authority has a legal duty to provide an efficient, safe and effective fire and rescue service. The key priorities are:-

- Prevention – Safer and healthier communities
- Protection – stronger business communities
- Response – dealing effectively with emergencies

5.2 These form the basis of the Authority's Corporate Strategy known as The Plan 2017-2020 which sets out the outcomes and priorities based on the Community Safety Strategy. The five-minute attendance standard lies at the heart of the Service Delivery Model. The model shows how staff provide the core prevention, protection and response services to make the West Midlands safer, stronger and healthier.

5.3 Grant Thornton, the Authority's External Auditors, published the Audit Findings Report for its 2015/2016 audit work which reported an unqualified opinion on the financial statements. It also issued an unqualified value for money conclusion stating that the Authority had proper arrangements in all significant respects to ensure it delivered value for money in the use of resources.

5.4 Based on audit work undertaken during the year an Annual Internal Audit Report was presented to the Audit Committee on 12 June 2017, Audit work which was completed in 2016/2017 included:-

- Accounts Receivable
- Accounts Payable
- Fixed Asset Accounting/Asset Planning
- Payroll
- Budgetary Control
- Pensions Certification
- Governance
- Risk Management
- Data Protection / IT
- Absence Management

5.5 As a result of these audits the following issues were identified:-

Governance – The review was based on the principles of the CIPFA/Solace document "Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework" focused on two of the core principles:

- Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits.
- Determining the interventions necessary to optimise the achievement of the intended outcomes.

Only one issue of significance was identified, in that although the individual elements were in place to meet the requirements of the two principles reviewed, there was not a policy which encapsulated the governance arrangements for the

Authority and which provided a centralised approach to evidencing compliance with the principles of good governance.

Data Protection / IT – A review of data protection was undertaken to provide assurance that the necessary safeguards were in place to ensure the appropriate use of personal and corporate information and where data breaches occurred, they were managed effectively. The review identified issues of significance relating to:

- There were no procedures in place for defining/reporting data breaches.
- There was not an effective training regime in place to educate employees on the importance of data protection and their responsibilities for it.
- Data breaches were not documented and recorded.
- Data breaches were not reported to management.

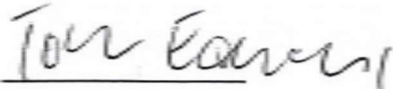
Although only three data breaches had been reported to the Data Manager, due to the lack of formal policies and processes being in place and the low take up of training by employees, therefore little assurance could be provided that all data breaches were being identified and dealt with appropriately and in a consistent manner. As such, the Authority could be exposed to the risk of continued data breaches and potential sanctions being applied by the Information Commissioner's Office.

It should be noted however, that management has recognised the importance of these issues as part of the Management of Information plan and has taken prompt action to address these matters. Protocols have been agreed and put in place, which if complied with, will strengthen the control environment. A follow up review will be undertaken as part of the 2017/18 plan and an assurance update provided to management and the Audit Committee.

- 5.6 All issues highlighted in the Annual Internal Audit Report have been raised with relevant managers and actions have been taken to achieve improvements.
- 5.7 As part of the Finance Settlement for 2016/17, an offer was made for a multiyear funding settlement. Any Authority wishing to take up the four year funding settlement to 2019/20 was required to set out their proposals in an Efficiency Plan to qualify for the four year settlement from April 2016. The Authority considered and approved the Efficiency Plan which was submitted to the Home Office. In February 2017, the Minister for Local Government confirmed the Authority's funding settlement for 2017/18. The core funding reduction of approximately £4m in 2017/2018 will be managed by reviews to services and an increase in Council Tax. At this stage the provisional four year settlement by DCLG is considered to be a reasonable basis to formulate medium term financial planning.
- 5.8 With the trend of cuts to government funding continuing into future years, the Authority faces considerable financial pressures which could result in difficulties to deliver an efficient and effective service, which in turn would increase the risk to the communities of the West Midlands. A key aim for the Authority is to therefore deliver a more efficient and effective service to the community whilst ensuring the stability of the Authority's financial position remains.

6. Certification

6.1 To the best of our knowledge, the governance arrangements, as outlined above have been effectively operating during the year with the exception of those areas identified as requiring improvement. We propose over the coming year to take steps to address the above matters to further enhance our governance arrangements. We are satisfied that these steps will address the need for improvements that were identified during the review of effectiveness and will monitor their implementation and operation as part of our annual review.



John Edwards
Chairman



Phil Loach
Chief Fire Officer

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Accruals

Income and expenditure are recognised as they are earned or incurred, not as money is received or paid (see Debtors and Creditors).

Accumulated Absences Account

The estimated cost of any untaken employee benefits.

Balance Sheet

A statement of assets, liabilities and other balances at the end of an accounting period.

Capital Adjustment Account

The fundamental principal of capital accounting is that accounting for non-current assets is separated from accounting for their financing. This is one of two reserves that help to manage this separation. It provides a balancing mechanism between the different rates at which assets are depreciated and are financed through the capital controls system.

Capital Expenditure

Expenditure on the acquisition of a fixed asset, or expenditure which adds to, and not merely maintains the value of an existing fixed asset.

Capital Receipt

Money received from the disposal of land and other assets. Capital receipts can only be used to fund capital expenditure.

Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA)

The only leading professional accountancy body in the UK specialising in the public sector. It has responsibility for setting accounting standards for local government.

Code – code of practice on local authority accounting

The rules and regulations governing the information and layout of the financial reporting statement of the Authority.

Creditor

An amount owed by an authority for work done, goods received or services rendered but for which payment has not been made at the end of the year.

Current Assets

Items from which the Authority derives a benefit but which will be consumed or realised during the next accounting period, e.g. stocks, debtors, cash.

Current Liabilities

Amounts falling due for payment in the next accounting period.

Current Service Cost (Pensions)

The increase in the present value of a defined benefit scheme's liabilities expected to arise from employee service in the current period.

Debtor

A sum due to the Authority but not received at the financial year end.

Deferred Liability

Amounts owed to outside bodies to be paid in predetermined instalments over more than one accounting period; e.g. leasing charges.

Defined Benefit Pension Scheme

A scheme in which the rules specify the benefits to be paid and the scheme is financed accordingly.

Depreciation

The measure of the wearing out, consumption, or other reduction in the useful economic life of a fixed asset, whether arising from use, passage of time or obsolescence through technological or other changes.

Emoluments

These are payments received from employment, usually in the form of wages, salaries or fees.

Employee Benefits

This is the net cost of any untaken benefit e.g. annual leave at the end of the financial year. This figure is shown in the Provision for Accumulated Absences and Accumulated Absences Accounts. The difference between the amounts held on the two balance sheet dates represents the movement in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Account.

Fixed Asset

An item from which the Authority will derive a benefit over several accounting periods.

General Fund

The total services of the Authority, the net cost of which is met by Council Tax, NDR and Government Grants.

Government Grants

Assistance by government and inter-government agencies and similar bodies, whether local, national or international, in the form of cash or transfer of assets to an authority, in return for past or future compliance with certain conditions relating to the activities of the Authority.

Heritage Assets

Assets which are primarily held and maintained for knowledge and cultural purposes.

Impairment

A diminution in value of a fixed asset resulting from, inter alia, obsolescence or physical damage.

Interest Cost (Pensions)

For a defined benefit scheme, the expected increase during the period in the present value of the scheme liabilities because the benefits are one period closer to settlement.

International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS)

The set of accounting standards that has been introduced across the private and public sector from 1st April 2010.

Inventories

The value of those items of raw materials and stores the Authority has procured to use on a continuing basis, but which are not used at the balance sheet date.

Liabilities

Amounts due to individuals or organisations which will have to be paid at some time in the future. Current liabilities are payable within one year of the balance sheet date.

Long term Borrowing

The total amounts borrowed from external lenders for capital purposes but not repaid at the balance sheet date.

Long term Debtors

Amounts due to the Authority to be paid in predetermined instalments over more than one accounting period; e.g. car loans to staff.

Materiality

An item is material if its omission, non-disclosure or mis-statement in financial statements could be expected to lead to a distortion of the view given by the financial statements.

Minimum Revenue Provision

An amount that is considered prudent which must be set aside from revenue as provision for the repayment of loan debt.

NDR

Rates which are levied on business properties.

Net Book Value

The amount at which non-current assets are included in the balance sheet, i.e. their historical cost or current value less the cumulative amounts provided for depreciation.

Net Realisable Value

The open market value of the asset in its existing use (or market value in the case of non-operational assets), less the expenses to be incurred in realising the asset.

Non Operational Assets

Non-current assets held by the Authority but not used or consumed in the delivery of services.

Operational Assets

Non-current assets held and occupied, used or consumed by the Authority in the delivery of services for which it has either a statutory or discretionary responsibility.

Past Service Cost (Pensions)

For a defined benefit scheme, the increase in the present value of the scheme liabilities related to employee service in the prior periods arising in the current period as a result of the introduction of, or improvement to, retirement benefits.

Payment in Advance

Amounts actually paid in a given accounting period prior to the period for which they were payable

Precept

The amount levied upon local authorities in the West Midlands by the Fire Authority.

Provisions

Amounts set aside to meet future liabilities arising from past events but the exact amount and date on which it will arise is uncertain.

Receipts in Advance

Amounts actually received in a given accounting period prior to the period for which they were receivable.

Related Party

The Authority is required to disclose material transactions with related parties, bodies or individuals that have the potential to control or influence the Authority or to be controlled or influenced by the Authority, related parties are deemed to include:

Central Government.

West Midlands Local Authorities.

Members of the Authority or parties related to them.

Chief Officer or parties related to them.

Reserves

Amounts set aside to meet future contingencies but whose use does not affect the Authority's net expenditure in a given year. Appropriations to and from reserves may not be made directly from the revenue account. This is a crucial distinction between provisions and reserves.

Revaluation Reserve

The fundamental principal of capital accounting is that accounting for non-current assets is separated from accounting for their financing. This is one of two reserves that help to manage this separation. It records unrealised revaluation gains arising (since 1st April 2007) from holding non-current assets.

Revenue Expenditure

Revenue Expenditure is money spent on the day-to-day running costs of providing services. It is usually of a constantly recurring nature and produces no permanent assets.

Revenue Support Grant (RSG)

A grant from central Government towards the cost of providing services.

Temporary Loans

This represents money borrowed for a period of less than one year

Useful Life

The period over which the Authority will derive benefits from the use of a fixed asset.

SUMMARY OF ACCOUNTS

2016-2017

INTRODUCTION



This document is a summary of the Authority's Statement of Accounts for 2016/17.

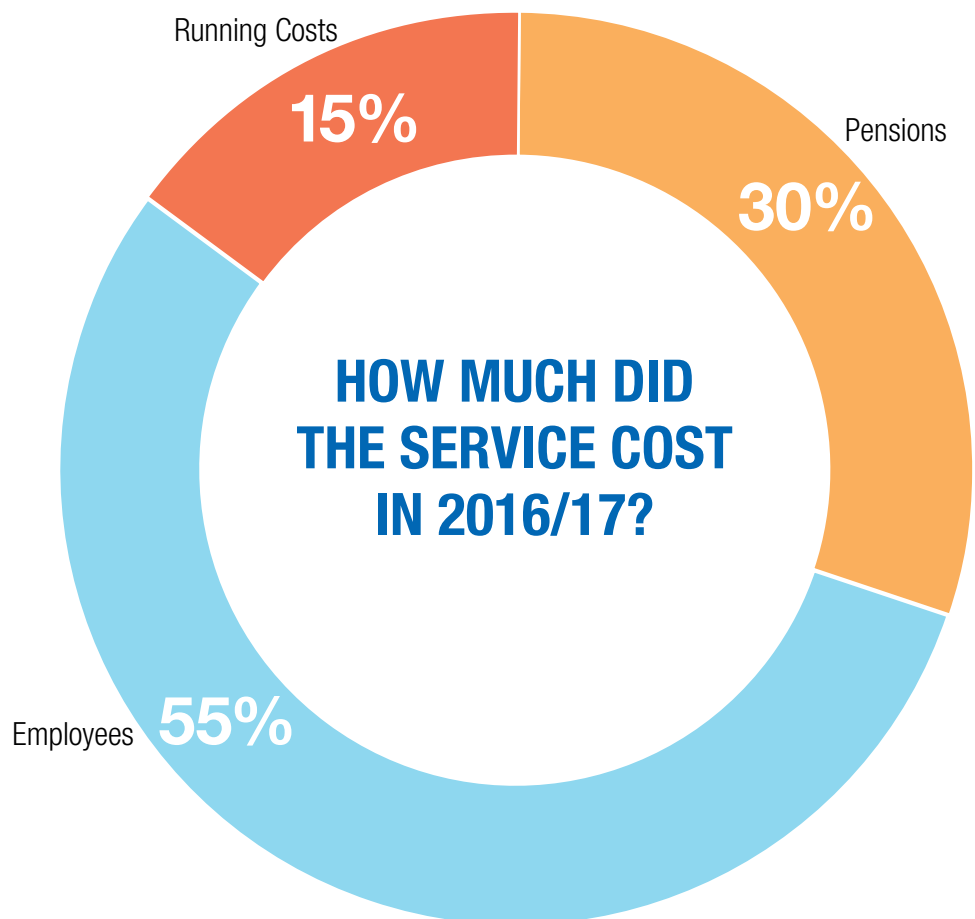
The Authority is responsible for the stewardship of public money and the production of summary accounts allows it to enhance its accountability to the residents of the West Midlands.

The Authority's 2016/17 Statement of Accounts is prepared in accordance with CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom, under International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS).

These summary accounts have no legal standing and are not subject to external audit.

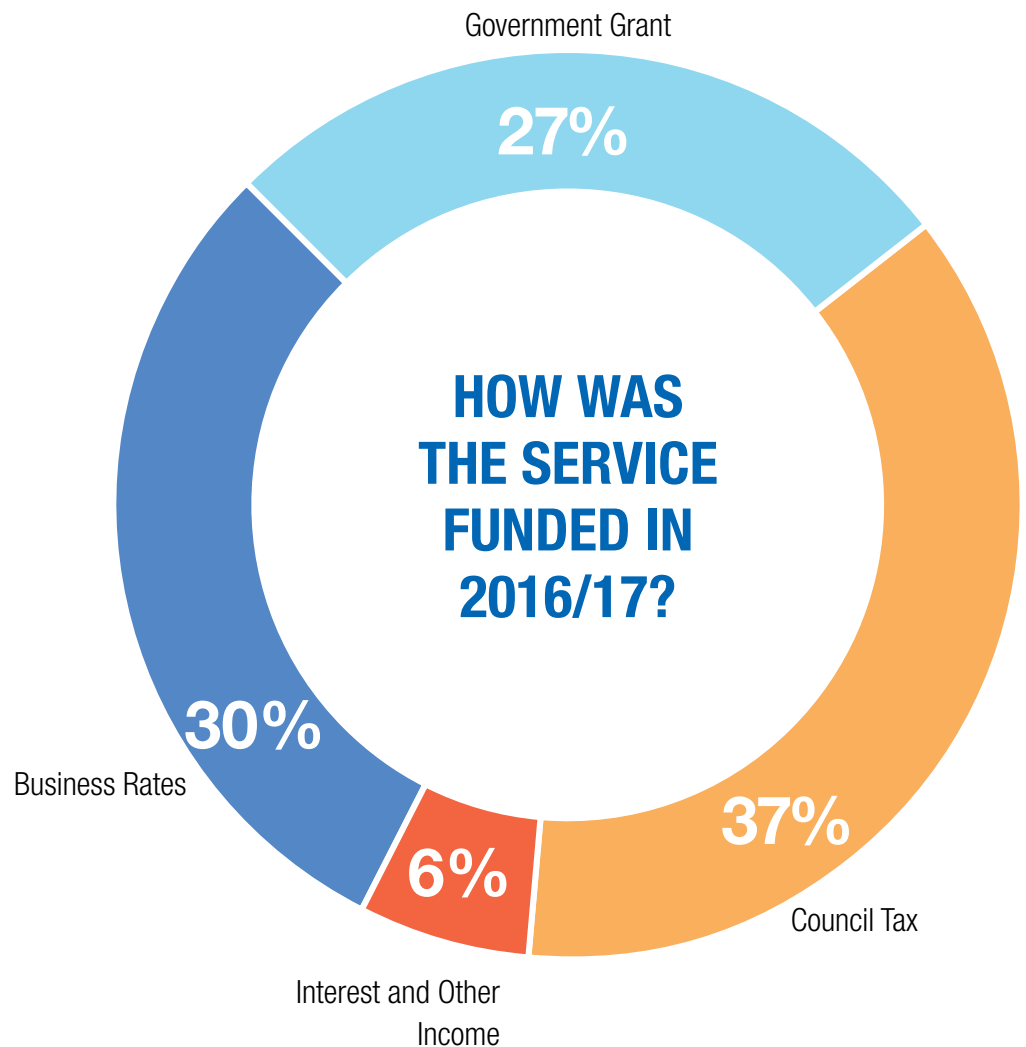
The majority of the net cost of Fire Service expenditure relates to service delivery (£74m) and service support (£19m).

The total Provision of Services in 2016/17 shows a deficit of £58.881m. Within this deficit is the expenditure of the authority which for 2016/17 was £163.424m. The type of costs can be broken down as shown opposite:



The total income of the Authority in 2016/17 was £104.5m. The majority of funding came from the government in the form of grant and a share of business rates.

The main sources of funding are shown opposite.



BALANCES AND RESERVES

The Fire Authority must consider the level of general balances it wishes to maintain before it can decide the level of Council Tax to charge in any year.

In order to set a balanced budget in 2016/17 the Authority assumed no movement in general balances. The actual level of general balances increased in the year by £0.003m, leaving £9.236m general balances at the end of the financial year. The Authority holds general balances as funding to meet any unforeseen events which it may need to respond to. Interest is earned on any unused balances.

In addition, as part of the closedown of accounts process, consideration needs to be given to the level of earmarked reserves required. These are amounts set aside to meet specific anticipated future demands. The level of earmarked reserves increased by £3.569m, this brought the total level of these reserves to £43.734m. Interest is earned on any balances until expenditure is committed against the demands identified.

CAPITAL EXPENDITURE AND FUNDING

In 2016/17, the Authority spent £3.677 million on capital projects.

The expenditure was incurred on the following:

	£m
Vehicles	1.734
Land and buildings	1.601
ICT & Equipment	0.342

The total expenditure was financed directly by the application of capital grants (£2.388m) capital receipts (£1.122m) and direct revenue contributions (£0.167m)

No borrowing was undertaken to assist with purchase of assets during 2016/17. Borrowing in earlier years meant that at the end of 2016/17 the Authority had total loans of £38.6m (the interest and principal on any loans needs to be met from future revenue budgets). The value of long-term assets held by the Authority as at 31 March 2017 which the loans had helped fund was £146.2m, of which approximately 94% related to land and buildings and 6% related to vehicles and equipment.

Further information can be found by contacting the Finance Manager at West Midlands Fire Service Headquarters, 99 Vauxhall Road, Birmingham, B7 4HW, telephone number 0121 380 6920 or e-mail kal.shoker@wmfs.net.

The Authority's full 2016/17 audited Statement of Accounts can be found on our website www.wmfs.net/

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

18 SEPTEMBER 2017

1. **MONITORING OF FINANCES**

Joint report of the Chief Fire Officer and Treasurer.

RECOMMENDED

THAT the report be noted.

2. **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

2.1 This report deals with the monitoring of the finances of the Authority in the current financial year and covers revenue expenditure and the Capital Programme.

2.2 Expenditure is compared with a profile of the Authority's budget.

3. **BACKGROUND**

3.1 **Revenue Expenditure**

Appendix A compares the revenue budgeted to the end of August 2017 with the actuals to that date. Devolved budgets are managed by the Section responsible for incurring the expenditure as opposed to corporate budgets, which are managed by the named Section on behalf of the Brigade as a whole.

The Authority's 2017/2018 Council Tax requirement is £39.377 million and the revenue budget is £94.848 million. Actual spend to August 2017, including commitments, was £41.936 million compared to a projected budget of £42.144 million, an overall favourable variance of £0.208 million.

Appendix B provides statistical data relating to the Firefighters' Pension Scheme.

3.2 **Capital Expenditure**

The Authority's approved capital programme for 2017/2018 is £14.223 million. A scheme analysis is shown on Appendix C. Expenditure to the end of August 2017 is shown as £1.163 million.

The main forecast variances within the capital programme relate to:

Coventry Fire Station – demolition time extended primarily due to asbestos related issues. Development phase due to start in October 2017.

Aston Fire Station – the listed status of the site has required extensive consultation. The planning application was made earlier this month.

Vehicle Replacement Programme – Completion of the 5 Pump Rescue Ladder appliances now anticipated in the first quarter of 2018/19

4. **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

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 do not relate to a policy change.

5. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

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.

6. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

These are contained in the body of the report and the attached Appendices.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Authority's Budget and Precept Report – February 2017
Finance Office Budget Monitoring Files

The contact officer for this report is Philip Hales, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, telephone number 0121 380 6907

Ref: AU/ Sep/2017/92408172/KS/AMH

PHIL LOACH
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

MIKE GRIFFITHS
TREASURER

REVENUE MONITORING SUMMARY TO AUGUST 2017
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	LATEST BUDGET 2017/2018 £'000	PROFILED BUDGET £'000	ACTUALS + COMMIT- MENTS £'000	VARIANCE TO PROFILED BUDGET £'000
DEVOLVED BUDGETS				
Corporate Management	2,383	1,031	958	-73
Corporate Charges	660	638	639	1
Service Support				
People Support Services	5,753	2,515	2,487	-28
Business Development	203	91	94	3
Operational Preparedness	1,178	528	525	-3
Operational Assurance	377	156	159	3
Finance & Resources	4,881	2,010	1,937	-73
ICT	4,314	1,804	1,803	-1
Service Delivery				
Operations	50,933	21,201	21,074	-127
CORPORATE BUDGETS				
Service Support				
People Support Services	2,844	1,296	1,306	10
Business Development	-1,000	-284	-115	169
Operational Preparedness	-20	61	62	1
Finance and Resources	15,183	8,246	8,199	-47
ICT	142	114	116	2
Service Delivery				
Response	5,182	2,127	2,101	-26
Prevention	-4	0	0	0
Protection	-47	0	-12	-12
Other Income & Expenditure	1,886	610	603	-7
TOTAL (NET BUDGET REQUIREMENT)	94,848	42,144	41,936	-208
Grant Funding	- 55,471	-27,510	-27,510	0
TOTAL (COUNCIL TAX REQUIREMENT)	39,377	14,634	14,426	-208

FIREFIGHTERS' PENSION SCHEMES

NON-FINANCIAL INFORMATION	2017/18 PROJECTION				ACTUAL POSITION AS AT AUGUST 2017			
	1992 FPS	2006 FPS	2015 FPS	TOTAL	1992 FPS	2006 FPS	2015 FPS	TOTAL
Members of FPS at 1 st April 2017	361	13	912	1,286	361	13	912	1,286
New Members	-	-	60	60	-	-	28	28
Opt-In	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Transitional Members during year	-34	-2	36	-	-14	-2	16	-
Transfers from Other Pension Schemes	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Transfers to Other Pension Schemes	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Retirements	-45	-	-	-45	-11	-	-	-11
Opt-Out	-	-	-	-	-	-1	-8	-9
Leavers	-	-	-12	-12	-	-	-4	-4
Ill-Health Retirements	-2	-	-1	-3	-	-	-	-
Members of the Fire Pension Schemes as at 31 st August 2017					336	10	944	1,290

CAPITAL MONITORING STATEMENT 2017/18

Scheme	Year 2017/18	Latest Budget	Actuals August 2017	Forecast	Variance
		£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
<u>LAND & BUILDINGS</u>					
Training at Height Facilities	11 of 11	317	326	326	+9
Boiler Replacement Programme	Ongoing	264	5	264	-
Roof Replacements	Ongoing	66	0	66	-
Windows/Door Replacement	Ongoing	505	85	505	-
Rewires	Ongoing	332	44	332	-
Coventry Fire Station	3 of 5	4,954	132	3,300	-1,654
Primary Control Room	1 of 2	600	0	600	-
Aston Fire Station	3 of 5	3,910	28	110	-3,800
Secondary Control Room Relocation	2 of 2	74	38	74	-
<u>VEHICLES</u>					
Vehicle Replacement Programme	Ongoing	3,130	489	2,380	-750
<u>ICT & EQUIPMENT</u>					
MDT Upgrade/Replacements	4 of 4	46	16	46	-
Oracle Licensing	9 of 9	25	0	0	-25
Grand Total		14,223	1,163	8,003	-6,220
<u>Funded By</u>					
Prudential Borrowing		0		0	0
Capital Grants / Contributions		613		613	0
Capital Receipts to be Applied		0		0	0
Revenue Financing / Earmarked Reserves		13,610		7,390	-6,220
TOTAL		14,223		8,003	-6,220
SURPLUS(-)/DEFICIT(+)					

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

18 SEPTEMBER 2017

1. **CONTRACT AWARDS SUMMARY FOR PERIOD TO
30 SEPTEMBER 2017**

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

RECOMMENDED

THAT the Authority note the attached Appendix which summarises the contracts in excess of £250,000 that have been awarded since 1 April 2017.

2. **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

This report provides a six month summary of all contracts that have been awarded since 1 April 2017.

3. **BACKGROUND**

3.1 At the Authority meeting on the 29 June 2015, Members approved a number of revisions to the Constitution. One of the revisions was that a retrospective twice yearly summary report of tender contract awards in excess of £250,000 be submitted to the Fire Authority for information purposes.

3.2 In accordance with the above requirement, a summary of those contracts awarded is attached as Appendix 1.

4. **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

In preparing this report an initial Equality Impact Assessment is not required and has not been carried out. The matters contained in this report will not lead to a policy change.

5. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

The procurement processes that were followed for the procurement exercises detailed in the Appendix to this report were conducted in accordance with the Authority's Procurement Standing Orders and the Public Contract Regulations 2015.

6. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

These are contained in the attached Appendix.

7. **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no environmental implications arising from this report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Authority Meeting 21 September 2015

Standing Order 1/8 – Procurement Procedures

The contact name for this report is Phil Hales - Telephone Number – 0121 380 6907.

PHIL LOACH
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

APPENDIX 1

Contract Title	Winning Supplier	Approval Date	Contract Period (Including Extension Options)	Annual Contract value or Total Value for one off Purchase	Total Contract Value (including extension periods)	Budget PA	Basis of award e.g. Lowest Price or MEAT*	Date and Minute Number of Planned Tender Report	Any Other Relevant Information
Reactive Repair Framework	Lot 1- Building Works: Drewmark Building Services Limited, Phoenix Building Management, Carter Synergy Ltd, Arrow Services (Midlands) Limited	27 March 2017	4 years	£175,000	£700,000	£200,000	MEAT	11 April 2016	
	Lot 2 – Mechanical & Electrical Works: Drewmark Building Services Ltd, Laker Building Management, Phoenix Building Management, Carter Synergy Ltd								
	Lot 3 – Plumbing Works: Drewmark Building Services Ltd, Phoenix Building Management, Carter Synergy Ltd, B N North & Son Ltd, Arrow Services (Midlands) Ltd.								

National Framework Agreement for Smoke Alarm and Associated Products	Lot 1 Smoke Alarms: Sprue Safety Products Limited, Fireblitz Extinguisher Ltd, Harmony Fire Limited	30 March 2017	4 years	£10,000,000 Nationally	£40,000,000 Nationally	n/a	MEAT	19 September 2016	<p>This framework agreement has been let as a national contract for all UK Fire Services to call-off.</p> <p>The Authority's expenditure is £865,000 per annum awarded to Sprue Safety Products Ltd</p>
	Lot 2 Wireless Interlinked (Hearing Impaired) alarms: Fireblitz Extinguisher Ltd, Sprue Safety Products Limited								
	Lot 3 Heat and Carbon Monoxide Alarms: Fireblitz Extinguisher Ltd, Honeywell (Life Safety Distribution GmbH), Aico Limited, Sprue Safety Products Ltd, Harmony Fire Limited								
Direct Network Service (DNS)	Vodafone	21 June 2017	1 year with options to extend for 6 periods of 12 months	Set up cost £23,700 plus £32,300 per annum	£250,000	£56,000 in first year followed by £32,300pa	Direct Award from Home Office contract	10 April 2017	
Microsoft Surface Hubs	Softbox Limited	7 August 2017	One-off purchase	£340,000	£340,000	£340,000	Direct Award from Health Trust Europe Framework	7 August 2017	

Electrical Works	Fusion Electrics Ltd for Smethwick and Woodgate Valley Fire Stations	28 March 2017	One-off purchase	£167,300	£167,300	£300,000	MEAT	10 April 2017	
	Drewmark Building Services Ltd for Highgate Fire Station			£93,500	£93,500				
Sale of the Academy	Hadley Industrial Holdings	26 April 2017	One off Sale	£2,100,000	£2,100,000	£1,500,000 (Est value)	Highest Price	16 February 2015	

* Most Economically Advantageous Tender (MEAT)

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

18 SEPTEMBER 2017

1. **RESULT OF RECENT FIRE SAFETY PROSECUTIONS**

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

RECOMMENDED

THAT the details of the fire safety prosecutions be noted.

2. **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

This report is submitted to inform the Authority of the result of prosecutions under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

3. **BACKGROUND**

3.1 This section of the report relates to Mr Salvinder Singh Sangha and the prosecution which was pursued by this Authority where he was charged with a range of offences contrary to the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. This was as a result of a serious fire on 2 July 2015 at 2A Messenger Road, Smethwick during which two people were rescued, one by ladder from the first floor. The first floor housed tenants did not have appropriate fire alarms or fire doors to their flats. Also, there was no emergency lighting.

3.2 Mr Sangha appeared at Wolverhampton Crown Court on 3 August 2017. He pleaded guilty to all the offences and was sentenced to four months' imprisonment suspended for 18 months. He was also fined £25,000 and ordered to pay all prosecution costs which totalled £10,130.

4. **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

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 do not relate to a policy change.

5. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 imposes a duty on persons to provide assistance or information to Enforcing Authority to ensure that the Order can be effectively enforced. The Order imposes a statutory duty on Fire and Rescue Authorities to enforce the provisions of the Order.

6. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The award against the defendant covers the legal costs incurred by the Authority in preparing the relevant prosecution file. The award also compensates for officers' time spent on the case; this amounted to £3,410.

7. **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no environmental implications arising from this report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Fire Safety Files

The contact name for this report is Gary Taylor - telephone number – 0121 380 6006.

PHIL LOACH
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

Minutes of the Audit Committee

24 July 2017

at Fire Service Headquarters, Vauxhall Road, Birmingham
B7 4HW

Present: Councillors T Singh (Chair), Aston, Idrees, Singh,
Williams
Mr M Ager (Independent)

25/17 Minutes of the Audit Committee held on 12 June 2017

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 12 June 2017 be approved as a correct record.

26/17 Audit Findings 2016/17

The Audit Committee considered the Audit Findings Report (AFR). The AFR set out and reported on the key messages arising from the external audit work undertaken during the year. The AFR is designed to support the Auditor's opinions and conclusions and is a requirement of the Code of Audit Practice.

Mr Richard Percival, Grant Thornton, introduced himself and introduced Emily Mayne, Grant Thornton. The Auditor explained the findings to the members of the Committee. The Auditor highlighted the key messages arising from their audit of the draft accounts. The Auditor stated this was a good audit, he was pleased with the outcome and there were very few changes to the accounts. The Auditor stated his team were well supported and thanked the Treasurer and Deputy Treasurer for their assistance.

The AFR will be presented to the Fire Authority at its meetings on the 18 September 2017. The Auditor is required to provide an Opinion by the end of September 2017.

The Auditor anticipated providing a clean and unqualified opinion on the Financial Statements. Based on a review of the Authority's arrangement to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources, the Auditor also proposed to give a clean and unqualified Value for Money conclusion.

Following an initial risk assessment in March 2017, two significant risk were identified in respect of specific areas of proper arrangements using the guidance contained in AGN03.

The significant risks that were identified by the Auditor were:

1. Financial Resilience – the Authority had historically managed its finances well and had consistently achieved saving targets. The Authority was on course to deliver the 2017/18 budget, however, delivering savings year on year would become increasingly difficult and further savings of £9.415 million would be required in the 4 years 2016/17 – 2019/20.
2. Partnership working with other emergency services – there was evidence of the Authority working in partnership with West Midlands Police and other emergency services effectively where the opportunity had arisen. However, there was some uncertainty over what form further collaboration will take and how this will lead to wider integration. Development of the West Midlands Combined Authority Mayoral arrangements and the recent legislative changes are now forcing a faster paced change. This would be a key challenge.

The Auditor anticipated providing the Authority with an Unqualified Audit Opinion.

In response to a Member's enquiry regarding the key findings in respect of key performance indicators, it was confirmed that poor decision making was not the reason for the prevention targets not being met.

The Auditor confirmed that some of the circumstances are predominantly out of the control of officers, for example the targets for arson.

The Treasurer confirmed that the Performance Indicators were incorporated into the Statement of Accounts and challenging targets had been set in respect of Arson related issues.

Resolved that the contents of the Audit Findings Report (AFR) be noted.

27/17 **Statement of Accounts**

The Audit Committee's approval was sought for the Authority's Statement of Accounts for the financial year ended 31 March 2017. The full Statement was attached as Appendix A to the report and can be viewed at www.wmfs.net

A summary of the Statement outlining the main issues was attached at Appendix B to the report. The Treasurer stated the Statement links closely with the Audit Findings Report.

It was confirmed that the Letter of Representation circulated to the Audit Committee would be circulated and signed at the end of the meeting.

Members were informed that the Statement linked to the Workshop held for Members of the Audit Committee on 12 June 2017.

The Treasurer stated that the Financial Statement sets out the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement, Expenditure and Funding Analysis, movement of reserves, the balance sheet, cash flow statement and pension arrangements.

The Treasurer highlighted the overall revenue budget and the level of general balances had shown a slight increase of £0.003m resulting in £9.236m general balances at the end of the financial year.

The level of earmarked reserves had increased by £3.569m resulting in £43.734m earmarked balances at the end of the financial year. It was highlighted that approximately 75% of earmarked balances related to capital schemes and the Authority's Insurance arrangements.

Resolved:

1. That the Statement of Accounts for 2016/17 as set out in Appendix A be approved.
2. That the Statement of Accounts summary for 2016/17 set out in Appendix B be noted.

28/17 Treasury Management Annual Report 2016/17

The Committee received the Treasury Management Annual Report 2016/17, which covered the Treasury Activity during 2016/17 and the actual Prudential Indicators for 2016/17.

The Authority approved its Treasury Management strategy as part of the Budget Setting process in February 2016 and the Audit Committee received a mid-year Treasury Management update in November 2016.

The key Treasury Management activities were:

- Capital Expenditure
- The Authority's Debt
- The Authority's Investment

In response to a Member's enquiry it was confirmed that the Authority would be required to pay a penalty if any of the debts were paid early. The Treasurer stated that payment of a 'premium' would ordinarily make it less attractive to repay debt early, although the situation is monitored.

It was confirmed that the Balance Sheet in the Statement of Accounts clearly sets out the assets of the Authority.

It was confirmed that the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) issue loans from the Government and is more beneficial than other borrowing, some loans were taken out between 20 and 40 years ago.

In answer to a question from one of the Members, the Deputy Treasurer confirmed that the value of Headquarters was included in the total assets of property, vehicles, plant and equipment of £146m, but would confirm the value of Headquarters separately.

Resolved that the report and Appendix be noted and the Prudential and Treasury Indicators be approved.

29/17 **Work Programme**

The Committee noted and agreed its Work Programme for 2017/18 and that the next meeting of the Audit Committee would be on 4 September 2017.

30/17 **Update on Topical, Legal and Regulatory Issues**

The Treasurer informed the Audit Committee of the outcome of the work undertaken for the future external audit arrangements. Most Fire and Rescue Authorities and Police Authorities chose to umbrella option of the Public Sector Audit Body. The Broad outcomes of the was that the work was broken down into 6 lots, Lot 1, the highest value lot was awarded to Grant Thornton, although some details are still to be established.

Overall the exercise was successful and many different organisations are involved. The exercise has created a scale of fee savings across the piece and more analysis will be forthcoming.

Richard Percival, Grant Thornton, stated that he was pleased that his company had secured the largest share of the market and this would ensure continuity of service for the Fire Authority. There would be a reduction in the fee for 2017/18.

31/17 **A Member of the Committee asked for an update on Aston Fire Station**

There had been a number of attempts to progress the rebuilding of Aston Fire Station. It was recognised that the listed status of the building would be problematic. West Midlands Police had expressed interest in a joint heritage site with the Fire Service. The Ambulance Service would not be taking up a level of occupation at the new Station. New drawings had been undertaken with the current fire station remaining in situ with an additional new building. There would be some heritage space available and the officers were currently at the point of preparing a planning application. A subsequent report outlining the redesigned station would be submitted to the Fire Authority.

32/17 **Request for a Decision – Use of Discretion to Increase Widows Pension**

The Audit Committee, in their role as Scheme Manager for the Firefighters' Pension Scheme, were asked to confirm the decision of the Deputy Chief Fire Officer not to use the Authority's discretion to increase the widow's pension payable to a widow.

The Payroll and Pension manager outlined the circumstances that led to the decision of the Deputy Chief Fire Officer being made.

Having considered the circumstances and the options available, the Audit Committee supported and confirmed the decision taken by the Deputy Chief Fire Officer.

(The meeting ended at 1055 hours)

Julie Connor
Strategic Hub
0121 380 6906
Julie.Connor@wmfs.net

Minutes of the Executive Committee

Item 11

**7 August 2017 at 1000 hours
Fire Service Headquarters, Vauxhall Road, Birmingham**

Present: Councillor Edwards (Chair)
Councillor Idrees (Vice Chair)
Councillors Allcock, Aston, Atwal-Singh, Barlow,
Davis, Mottram, Sealey, P Singh, T Singh

Apologies: Councillors Cartwright, P Singh,

6/17 **Minutes of the Executive Committee held on
12 June 2017**

It was noted that the Clerk was still in conversation with Wolverhampton City Council in respect of the Monitoring Officer.

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 12 June, be approved as a correct record.

7/17 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no Declarations of Interest.

8/17 **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

Resolved that the public and press be excluded from the rest of the meeting to avoid the possible disclosure of exempt information under Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information)(Variation) Order 2006 relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) and information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any

(Official – WMFS – Public)

labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and employees of, or office holder under, the authority.

9/17 Coventry Fire Station

The Committee's approval was sought for the additional funding required to meet the costs for the redevelopment of Coventry Fire Station.

Following a recent tender exercise for the construction phase of the Coventry Fire Station Redevelopment, it had been identified that the overall estimate cost of the project would exceed the approved budget by approximately £475,000, the increase predominantly arising from construction price increases since the project had been approved combined with increases in demolition costs, primarily due to asbestos related issues.

The breakdown of the additional costs was provided as following

Temporary Accommodation	£65,000
Demolition	£120,000
Construction	£290,000
	<u>£475,000</u>

A number of questions were raised regarding the arrangements for the identification and removal of asbestos at Coventry Fire Station. It was confirmed that the removal and the associated work delays were the single biggest factor in the increase in demolition costs. In particular, a query was raised as to whether some of these costs could/should be passed onto the company which undertook the asbestos refurbishment and demolition survey.

An asbestos refurbishment and demolition survey was undertaken at Coventry Fire Station by a specialist asbestos surveying company prior to any demolition work starting.

(Official – WMFS – Public)

The intrusive asbestos refurbishment and demolition survey was carried out in compliance with Control of Asbestos Regulations CAR 2012 (regulation 7) and Health and Safety Guidance (HSG 264). Many samples were taken which provided valuable information prior to demolition. However, there were some areas of the station that were not accessible for tests to be carried out.

Unfortunately, due to unknown encapsulation (not visible and unable to be accessed on the asbestos refurbishment and demolition survey) asbestos was found within the soffits above all 12 appliance bay doorways (behind the appliance bay doors and frames). These areas could not be accessed prior to demolition without total removal of the appliance bay doors and frames, therefore, the asbestos could only be exposed and identified as the structure was being taken down. The asbestos containing material identified was notifiable to the Health & Safety Executive which resulted in a 14 day notice prior to commencement of removal work.

This, in addition to arranging a safe method of working/removal, led to a delay and stand still period on site of three weeks [the asbestos containing material was located at height, requiring a large amount of scaffolding to both sides of the structure ensuring the area was fully enclosed and air tight prior to the removal of any material].

Taking the availability of the main contractors and the additional costs of temporary accommodation, it was the view an independent project manager that the increase in the price range was within tolerable limits since the project had originally been approved and that this would be the most cost effective solution. To retender would increase costs further.

Mr David Gardiner, Head of Facilities Management, attended the meeting to provide further specialist knowledge in respect of the asbestos and demolition and removal of the asbestos. He confirmed that a full intrusive survey had been undertaken.

(Official – WMFS – Public)

Under the contractual arrangements of the asbestos refurbishment and demolition survey, any specific areas where inspection/tests could not be carried out for asbestos prior to demolition remained the client's risk (in this case the Fire Authority). Consequently, it was not considered that the Authority would be in a position to seek any costs from the specialist asbestos surveying company.

The Chair stated that it was not normal to have to approve an increase so soon after a tender had been let, but Members understood the reasons for the delay and additional costs. A further delay could increase costs further.

The Monitoring Officer stated that if there were any unforeseen delays or mistakes the Authority could potentially recover sums through liquidated damages and further information could be provided.

Members requested that if any savings could be made during the build that these would be welcomed as they wish to see the most cost effective use of resources now and in the future.

Resolved that the additional funding to meet the increased costs for the redevelopment of Coventry Fire Station be approved.

10/17 Procurement Exercise – Surface Hubs

The Committee noted the decision taken by the Chief Fire Officer in consultation with the Chair of the Fire Authority in accordance with Standing Orders Part 3, Section 17 (arrangements to act in matters of urgency) to allow the procurement for the supply and installation of Microsoft Surface Hubs (combined touch screen, user friendly tv/computers that provide interactive communication and enhanced presentation/training facilities) for all Fire Stations, Technical Engineering Workshops, Command Development Centre and the Command Support Vehicle.

(Official – WMFS – Public)

The Chief Fire Officer stated that the requirement for audio visual equipment within the training rooms at each fire station had been reviewed in line with the recent adoption of O365 and the age of usability of the current technology at these locations. Extensive research and analysis led to the recommended procurement of a Microsoft surface hub for each location.

The purchase of the Hubs, not only updated the IT equipment available to support the Service Delivery Model, but also supported the Brigade's approach to high standards of training and staff availability. Microsoft had offered a discount of £35k if an order was placed before the end of June and this gave the Service an opportunity to future proof training and to provide technologically enabled facilities on stations. The Hubs would have a 3 – 5 year life span and it was recognised that the staff using the equipment would receive a non-tangible benefit and better user experience.

It was agreed that the breakdown between the hardware and software licensing costs would be provided to one member who expressed an interest in these costs.

11/17 An update on workforce planning and business continuity Arrangements to deliver The Plan 2017-20 and a balanced budget

The Committee noted the Authority's commitment to the:

- Programme of workforce reform to support the delivery of The Plan 2017-20 and the associated efficiency plan.
- Delegated authority to the Chief Fire officer (CFO) for seeking to develop and agree the delivery of a local agreement with representative bodies as an enabler to workforce reform.
- Delegated authority to the CFO to develop and implement business continuity arrangements to ensure delivery of The Plan 2017-20 within the budgetary agreements of the associated efficiency plan.

(Official – WMFS – Public)

The Strategic Enabler (People Support Services) informed the Committee of the workforce planning and business continuity arrangements being made to deliver The Plan 2017-20 and a balanced budget in light of the decision of the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) to reject the pay offer made by the National Joint Council (NJC) and to withdraw support for a range of trials which have facilitated the delivery of The Plan 2017-20 and to seek the support of the Authority to continue with the strategic direction of the Service.

The Service is committed to providing an excellent service to communities and to maintain the Service Delivery Model (SDM). The service have explored and implemented a program of workforce reform to enable flexibility and agility. The alternative flexible funding has delivered wider benefits to the community providing better outcomes for the most vulnerable and to meet legislative responsibilities under the FRS Act and National Framework. And led to improved collaborative working with other local authorities as well as increased relevance as part of the Combined Authority.

The current delivery of health work, specifically non-emergency falls response, had been a key feature of the reform programme. The local engagement with health trials was a key feature and amongst the first in the country in September 2015. The Service had continued to engage with the NJC trials and this had been supported locally by the development of a Falls Improvement Group, this group consists of delivery staff, representative bodies and management who have developed shared ideas and solutions to enhance delivery and resolve health and safety issues.

As an outcome of the national pay negotiations the national FBU support for the NJC trials is planned to cease on the 24 August 2017. The local FBU have instructed their members to withdraw from the delivery of non-emergency falls response service, back home safe and well and elements of the safe and well visit that are not directly related to core prevention activities.

(Official – WMFS – Public)

The Service's view is that all elements of this work are linked to vulnerability and are essential to reduce fire related risks and are committed to continue with this work. Should the trials cease, business continuity arrangements have been put in place to deliver the existing work activities and to meet current contractual agreements.

The Service will continue to have discussions with the Representative Bodies as key stakeholders in enabling this change along with staff to reach an agreement.

In order to sustain the SDM and non-emergency falls response all new entrants will have a flexible contract that includes being able to deliver health work. This addendum to their contract will enable them to deliver the wider health work.

The Service has a strong track record and evidence base for delivering public sector reform and transformation and a flexible workforce will support existing activities and any new opportunities that may arrive.

At the Policy Planning Forum held on the 12 June 2017, the Chief Fire Officer had informed the Authority of the agreed approach to be taken to plan, implement and report back on the business continuity arrangements.

Wide and broad discussions have taken place with staff who wish to volunteer to carry out business continuity arrangements and deliver the service. A dedicated team, comprising a cross-section of both support staff and service delivery staff will undertake this work. In developing business continuity arrangements, there have been ongoing engagement with the representative bodies.

The Chair asked the CFO to provide further details on the fleet availability.

The CFO explained that to assist the Service in achieving its 5 minute attendance standard, a flexible and dynamic cover tool is used to provide information on how the Service distributes its resources to fires and road traffic accidents and how this impacts on saving lives through variable fleet availability and location.

(Official – WMFS – Public)

The Home Office had recently commented that it had never seen such a comprehensive tool in managing risks.

There are 41 Pump Rescue Ladders and 19 Brigade Response Vehicles. Training and maintenance also impacts on availability but currently the Service was enjoying its best availability at 99% compared to 96% previously. There is a cost factor in managing the day to day availability against risk, in order to achieve efficiency and a balanced budget.

In response to a question from the Chair, the CFO confirmed that the Service may have to pre-state one or more vehicles off the run to accommodate financial sustainability of the business continuity. The dynamic cover tool will be used to minimise moves and provide a measure of how the day to day resources are being used and effect this is having on the budget.

In response to an enquiry about the legal implications and reputational damage, the CFO confirmed that the FBU represents 80% of firefighters, 20% are not members of the FBU and other volunteers will be non operational staff and will provide the business continuity, the CFO felt confident that they would be able to deliver the service. Members were informed that they may be approached by members of the FBU lobbying them for their support.

The CFO also confirmed that through working with the Representative Bodies in an empathetic way before the trials commenced the approved, agreed and established method of responding to vulnerability was described as a prevention emergency response.

One Member asked if the Fire Service were becoming the victims of cuts to other services in respect of emergency medical response particularly in respect of red 1 cardiac arrest calls.

The Chief responded that the West Midlands Fire Service did not attend this type of incident, but other Service's were undertaking this type of work and stated that in the West Midlands area the West Midlands Ambulance Service was the only foundation trust rated as outstanding for attendance at this type of incident.

There were still benefits in engaging with this work and Adult Social Care benefit from the service delivered and this work could prevent the next accidental dwelling fire. The Service was aiming to achieve sustainable transformation plans.

The Chair summarised by stating that negotiations with the FBU were continuing regarding the pay settlement and the FBU wanted pay to be linked to Emergency Medical Response duties. There was no agreement on pay and negotiations were continuing but the support for this type of work would be withdrawn on 24 August 2017.

Business continuity arrangements and new contracts for new entrance were in place to enable the delivery of the Service Delivery Model and achieve a balance budget. Volunteers, support staff and front line firefighters would be delivering falls response through the business continuity arrangements.

The national FBU position is that there can be no local agreements met during this time. However, a resolution would allow the Service to develop a local agreement.

The Chair stated that the FBU, employers and employees had been happy to talk regarding the widening role of the firefighter but this opportunity had now been lost which was regrettable for communities and the Fire Service could be in jeopardy from the government with less firefighters and the opportunity to nationally widen the role and value of the fire fighters is decreased.

The Chair felt that the Fire Service nationally have a statement to make in respect of training, prevention and fire protection.

(Official – WMFS – Public)

Members were informed that they may be asked about the change of contract for new firefighters when visiting stations.

Members would be provided with regular updates on the latest position.

The CFO thanked the Strategic Enabler (People Support Services) for her visible role with workforce reform and the ongoing work with the representative bodies.

It was noted that there was a duplication of some of the wording in paragraph 9.2 of the report.

RESOLVED that the further development of flexible funding activities to continue to meet the intentions outlined in the Authority's approved efficiency plan and to achieve a balanced budget for the period 2017-20.

The meeting concluded at 1130 hours.

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(Official – WMFS – Public)