

## **WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**

**24 JUNE 2019**

### **1. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2018/19**

Report of the Chair of the Scrutiny Committee.

RECOMMENDED

That the Authority receives the Scrutiny Committee Annual Report 2018/19.

### **2. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

This report is submitted to bring to the attention of the Authority the Annual Report of the Scrutiny Committee 2018/19.

### **3. BACKGROUND**

3.1 The Scrutiny Committee was established at the Annual General Meeting of the Authority in June 2012. The Committee was to undertake performance management functions and would also scrutinise human resource matters, equality and diversity and health and safety across the Service. Its purpose is to:

- inform policy development
- hold officers and the Service to account
- hold the Authority to account
- conduct reviews into specific issues

3.2 The Annual Report for 2018/19 is attached as Appendix 1 for consideration by the Authority. The report was approved by the Scrutiny Committee on 4 June 2019.

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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**

There are no particular legal requirements for the Authority to establish a Scrutiny Committee; it is however, considered good practice for authorities to have a vehicle through which monitoring and review of the Authority's policies and practices can be undertaken.

6. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

Advice may be provided internally by Officers at no direct cost to the Authority, supporting the Committee in its work. The Scrutiny Committee can, if required, access resources to be able to engage external professional advice where applicable.

**BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Authority and Scrutiny Committee Reports  
Minutes of the Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Chris Tranter  
Chair of the Scrutiny Committee

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**Appendix 1**

**WEST MIDLANDS FIRE SERVICE**

**Annual Report of the Scrutiny  
Committee  
2018/19**

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## 1. Background

The Scrutiny Committee was established by the Fire Authority at its Annual General Meeting in 2012. Its purpose is to:

- inform policy development
- hold officers and the Service to account
- hold the Authority to account
- conduct reviews into specific issues

The key benefits of the Committee can be seen as:

- Complementing the strategic and policy formulation and development work of the Authority and Service.
- Developing the skills of Members to enable them to investigate below the surface of policies, strategies and processes.
- Providing a useful oversight and an element of 'challenge' to performance improvement processes and continuous improvement.
- Encouraging public involvement in the policy process.
- Supporting the development of an environment that stimulates a more reflective, evaluative and evidence based culture within the Authority and Service.

The Terms of Reference for the Committee can be found at Appendix A of this report.

## 2. Meetings

During 2018/19, the Committee met on the following dates:

• 05 September 2018 (rescheduled)
• 12 September 2018
• 10 October 2018
• 14 November 2018
• 27 February 2019
• 27 March 2019
• 05 June 2019

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### 3. Members & Attendance Record

	05/09/18*	12/09/18	10/10/18	14/11/18	27/02/19	27/03/19	05/06/19
Councillor Barlow	√	√	<b>X</b>	√	√	√	√
Councillor Barrie	<b>X</b>	√	√	√	√	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
Councillor Brackenridge	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Councillor Jenkins	√	√	√	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	√	<b>X</b>
Councillor Spence	<b>X</b>	√	√	√	√	<b>X</b>	√
Councillor Tranter	√	<b>X</b>	√	√	√	√	<b>X</b>
Councillor Young	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	√	√	√	√	√
S Middleton (co-optee)	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	√	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	√	<b>X</b>

\*Note: The meeting scheduled for 5 September was rescheduled to 12 September.

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

Working Groups are also appointed to consider scrutiny reviews. The Committee are to undertake a maximum of two such reviews each year. Each Working Group has a minimum of three Members allocated to it.

### 4. Business

During the year the Committee conducted the following business:

- Scrutiny of Positive Action and Firefighter Recruitment
- Review of Safeguarding
- Operational Assessment Improvement Register
- Quarterly Analysis of Corporate Performance against 'The Plan'
- Diversity, Inclusion, Cohesion and Equality quarterly updates
- Dispute Resolution Monitoring
- Work programme selection

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## 5. The Committee's main achievements

The Committee believes its key achievements during the year included:

- The Committee undertook to review and evaluate the Service's approach to positive action and firefighter recruitment in 2016/17 (original proposal and scoping document submitted to the Committee at the February 2017 meeting). The Scrutiny Review of Positive Action and Firefighter Recruitment included the examination of the associated protocols and procedures, analysing their effectiveness, and identifying and removing barriers where present. The review was concluded in November 2018, with a final report submitted to the Committee on 14 November.
- The Committee undertook to review and evaluate the effectiveness of the Service's safeguarding policy, procedures and practice (original proposal and scoping document submitted to the Committee at the 4 June 2018 meeting). The purpose of the review was to ensure that:
  - The Service's policy and procedures were compliant with the legislation, statutory guidance and addressed the learning from recent fire safety prohibition cases
  - The whole workforce had the necessary skills and knowledge to identify safeguarding concerns within the context of their role and apply the policy and processes consistently and competently
  - The safeguarding policy was owned by the most appropriate Strategic Enabler so that safeguarding was seen as everyone's responsibility
  - There were quality standards and monitoring processes in place so that the Service could be assured that safeguarding concerns were being identified and managed in accordance with the Service policy
- A working group of the Scrutiny Committee was set up to support the review. An external independent professional was appointed to work with the Scrutiny working group, and conducted the review, analysing the information gathered

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and produced a report which included recommendations and an action plan framework (submitted to the Committee as part of the conclusion of the review, at the meeting on 27 March 2019). Additionally, an internal working group comprised of key stakeholders from a variety of areas within the Service, was set up to support the Scrutiny working group and the external independent professional.

- Following the publication of the Service's Operational Assessment and Fire Peer Challenge in June 2017, the Committee has monitored the progress of the work undertaken by the Service in addressing the areas for consideration raised by the Fire Peer Challenge Team via the monitoring of the Operational Assessment Improvement Register. All 38 areas for consideration within the Register were classed as completed in February 2019, and the final update was submitted to the Committee on 27 March, representing the conclusion of the process with the Register considered as closed.
- The robust monitoring of the Service's performance in the areas of Diversity, Inclusion, Cohesion and Equality, analysis of Corporate Performance against 'The Plan', workforce profile indicators and dispute resolutions.

## **Appendix A**

### **Terms of Reference for the Scrutiny Committee**

#### **Scrutiny Committee**

To carry out a maximum of two scrutiny reviews per annum selected by the Committee. Such reviews will be member-led and evidence based, and will produce SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and timely) recommendations to the Authority.

To track and monitor the implementation of review recommendations that are accepted by the Authority.

To summon any officer or member of the Authority to give account in respect of reviews or any other relevant matter.

To manage, in consultation with the Strategic Enabler for Finance and Resources, a specific budget for the purpose of buying in any necessary external advice and support in connection with the reviews.

To receive and scrutinise performance information including progress against the Community Safety Strategy and 'The Plan', the Service's objectives and corporate performance indicators and review performance targets.

To have responsibility for scrutiny of Diversity, Inclusion, Cohesion and Equality and diversity throughout the West Midlands Fire Service and to review policies and monitor performance in relation thereto.

To monitor and scrutinise as appropriate the Authority's HR policies.

To monitor and scrutinise sickness levels, promotion policies and employee exit information.

To receive information and statistics on grievance monitoring and to report outcomes to the Joint Consultative Panel.

To ensure that the Authority is meeting its duties under Health & Safety and environmental and other relevant legislation.

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To deal with any matters referred to it by the full Authority, the Policy Planning Forum, the Chief Fire Officer, Clerk, Monitoring Officer or Treasurer, not within its work programme.

To refer any matter for consideration by the Authority, another Committee or an officer where considered appropriate.

To submit its minutes and an Annual Report to the Authority.

In order to allow for separation of the scrutiny and decision making functions, findings and recommendations of Scrutiny reviews will be presented to the Authority by the Chair of the Scrutiny Committee. Members (excluding substitutes) of the Scrutiny Committee shall not vote on matters arising from Scrutiny reviews.

The Committee will sit in public with minimum exceptions.

In addition to its programmed meetings, the Committee will hold additional meetings, as and when required, in order to efficiently manage its workload.