



**WMFS**

**West Midlands  
Fire Service**

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

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**Monday, 24 November 2025 at 11:00**

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To be held at West Midlands Fire Service Headquarters  
and digitally via Microsoft Teams

<b>Distribution of Councillors</b>	
<b><u>Birmingham</u></b>	D Barrie M Bernasconi M Locke M Idrees
<b><u>Coventry</u></b>	C Miks G Lloyd
<b><u>Dudley</u></b>	C Bayton S Henley
<b><u>Sandwell</u></b>	R Jalil F Haq
<b><u>Solihull</u></b>	P Hogarth MBE
<b><u>Walsall</u></b>	K Ferguson K Margetts
<b><u>Wolverhampton</u></b>	J Dehar B Evans
<b><u>Police &amp; Crime Commissioner</u></b>	S Foster
<b><u>Representative - Assistant PCC</u></b>	W Ali
<b><u>Co-opted Members</u></b>	Professor S Brake ABCA – Vacant
<b><u>Independent Member</u></b>	Mr David Page
<b><u>Observers</u></b>	D Gough, Fire Officer's Association S Hitchins, Fire Brigades Union D Evans, UNISON

Please note: Meetings of the political groups will be held at 10.00 am

## **Fire Authority**

You are summoned to attend the meeting of Fire Authority to be held on  
Monday, 24 November 2025 at 11:00

At Fire Service Headquarters, 99 Vauxhall Road, Nechells,

Birmingham B7 4HW

and digitally via Microsoft Teams

for the purpose of transacting the following business:

### **Agenda – Public Session**

- 1 To receive apologies for absence (if any)
- 2 Declarations of interests
- 3 Chair’s announcements
- 4 Chief Fire Officer Announcements
- 5 Public minutes of the previous Fire Authority held on Monday 29 September 2025 7 - 24
- 6 Public Questions [Max 20 Minutes]
- 7 Appointment to the Authority and Appointments to Committee 25 - 32
- 8 Corporate Governance Improvement Board Notes 33 - 44
- 9 Governance Improvement Plan - Executive Committee 45 - 60
- 10 Governance Improvement Plan - Member Role Description, Core Tasks and Paper Format 61 - 82

11	<b><u>Governance Improvement Plan - Independent Chair of Audit and Risk and Co-opted members</u></b>	83 - 98
12	<b><u>Review of the Member Development Strategy</u></b>	99 - 134
13	<b><u>Best Value Inspection - November Update</u></b>	135 - 138
14	<b><u>Strategic Key Performance Indicators - Q2 and Year To Date 2025-26</u></b>	139 - 214
15	<b><u>2026 CRMP Public Consultation</u></b>	215 - 228
16	<b><u>WMFRA Independent Remuneration Panel</u></b>	229 - 238
17	<b><u>Finance update</u></b>	239 - 250
18	<b><u>Designation of Section 151 Officer</u></b>	251 - 256
19	<b><u>Scrutiny Committee Update Report</u></b>	257 - 282
20	<b><u>Appointment, Standards and Appeals Committee - Update Report November 2025</u></b>	283 - 286
21	<b><u>Audit and Risk Committee Update Report</u></b>	287 - 314
22	<b><u>Fire Authority Work Programme</u></b>	315 - 320

23 **Date of next meeting**

24 **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 Paragraph 3 of the Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006."*

## **Agenda (not open to public and press)**

25 **Exempt minutes of the previous Fire Authority held on Monday 29 September 2025**

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

## **26 Planned Procurement Exercises for 2025-26**

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

## **27 Conviction Notification**

- Information relating to any individual;

**Agenda prepared by Kirsty Tuffin**

**Democratic Services, West Midlands Fire Service**

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**This agenda and supporting documents are also available electronically on the [West Midlands Fire Service Committee Management Information System](#)**

This meeting of the West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority will be held at Fire Service Headquarters.

The meeting will also be held digitally via Microsoft Teams allowing observers to access remotely. To access the meeting, please contact a member of the Portfolio Team, West Midlands Fire Service, who will be able to provide login details (please note that Microsoft Teams is not required to join a meeting) or provide guidance if you wish to attend in person at HQ.

Clerk Name:	Tom Embury
Clerk Telephone:	
Clerk Email:	tom.embury@wmfs.net



**West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority**

**29 September 2025 at 11.00 hours**

**Meeting held at Headquarters  
and digitally via Microsoft Teams**

Present: Councillor Bayton (Chair)

Councillor(s): Barrie, Hogarth, Jalil, Aston, Ferguson, Lloyd, Miks, Idrees, Locke, Haq and Evans.

Wasim Ali (Assistant Police Crime Commissioner), Professor Brake (Co-Opted Member), Sasha Hitchins and Darren Evans.

Chief Fire Officer (CFO) Simon Tuhill, Deputy Chief Fire Officer (DCFO) Simon Barry, Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO) Steve Ball, Kelly Harding (Head of People), Satinder Sahota (Monitoring Officer), Tom Embury (Interim Clerk), Iain Newman (S151), and Kirsty Tuffin (Democratic Services).

Online: Zoë Billingham, Independent Chair of Corporate Governance Improvement Board (until 11:29am)

**01/25 To receive any apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from Cllr(s) Bernasconi, Dehar, Margetts and ACFO Richard Stanton.

**02/25 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest submitted.

**03/25 Chair's Announcements**

The Chair welcomed members and officers, with a special welcome to Zoë Billingham, the Independent Chair of the Corporate Governance Improvement Board and the Best Value Inspection Team.

The Chair formally requested for the microphones used for Fire Authority to be replaced as a matter of urgency to ensure the meeting can be facilitated adequately. It was felt all relevant updates would

be provided throughout the agenda and therefore no further announcements were required.

#### 04/25 **Chief Fire Officer's Announcements**

The Chief Fire Officer echoed the Chair's warm welcome to both Zoë Billingham and the BVI Team. He outlined a number of significant incidents attended by crews in the past week as follows:

- An unfortunate fatal fire occurred on 19<sup>th</sup> September in the Highters Heath area of south Birmingham. Sadly, one 36 yr old man died with the cause subject to police and fire investigation.
- On the same day a serious collision between a motorcyclist and car in Tiverdale, Oldbury occurred which sadly resulted in the motorcyclist being killed. Following both incidents crew welfare was paramount.
- Crews also attended a high-profile incident in the centre of Birmingham on 15<sup>th</sup> September involving a fire at a high-rise office building on Colmore Row. 8 crews attended and had to manually run out hose to the 16th floor due to building works rendering the dry risers installations out of use. Crews contained and extinguished the fire within a couple of hours to enable the bus and tram network to reopen for the end of rush hour.

The Chief provided an overview of Exercise Pegasus, a national exercise run by central government to test the nation's response plans through the local resilience forums to a pandemic. The exercise comes as a result of recommendations from the National COVID inquiry and is in three parts. The first part took place on 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> September and involved dealing with the emergence of a new virus from Asia. West Midland LRF were working alongside Warwickshire LRs as part of the exercise to coordinate our responses. WMFS co-chaired the strategic coordinating group and whilst a major incident wasn't declared, the next stage was due to take place in October where the situation will have escalated and there will be a need to test our individual and collective response.

**05/25 Public Questions**

Tom Embury, Interim Clerk confirmed no public questions had been received.

**06/25 Public minutes of the previous Fire Authority on Monday 16 June 2025**

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that the minutes were a true and accurate record.

**07/25 Public minutes of the previous Fire Authority on Monday 23 June 2025**

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that the minutes were a true and accurate record subject to 'fighters' being updated to 'firefighters' on page 27 of the agenda pack.

**08/25 Best Value Inspection – Update**

The Chief Fire Officer provided an overview of the Best Value Inspection Update report that outlined the progress made with the inspection and indicative cost associated.

Members were advised that the previous Fire Minister Dame Diana Johnson MP announced in November 2024 that a Best Value Inspection would take place. On the 8 July 2025 the Terms of Reference and appointed lead inspectors was announced and confirmed by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

A project team to support the inspection had been established with Kelly Whitmore, Head of Strategy, as the Senior Leadership Team Lead and Lucy Lawson, Governance and Strategic Planning Manager as the nominated Single Point of Contact (SPOC). Work has already begun for the team, with over 80 documents being provided to the inspection team since August 2025. The inspection team had also been in attendance at the last Corporate Governance Improvement Board meeting in September to observe the meeting. During this time the inspection team have met with senior officers with formal interviews planned with senior managers, authority members and

officers. The CFO reiterated that the inspection team would speak to anyone should they wish to make contact.

Members were advised that the cost of the inspection was the responsibility of the service. It was anticipated that the cost would be around £270k and would be covered within earmarked reserves. This figure may increase, and the service would ensure that all costs and any impact on officer time would be calculated to assess any impact this may have.

Following concerns on potential duplication of work between the Best Value Inspection Team and the Corporate Governance Improvement Board (CGIB), the CFO acknowledged the importance of avoiding this and asked for Zoë Billingham, Independent Chair of CGIB, to provide input following her meeting with the Lead Inspector. Zoë confirmed that she had met with Fenella Morris before the last CGIB meeting where it was acknowledged how each area of work must complement one another. Regular meetings would take place to ensure this.

It was agreed that as the figure may increase, a regular report be brought to each Fire Authority to keep members updated on the cost implications. It was acknowledged that both officer and member's time would be helpful to track.

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that the content of the report, including the Inspection Terms of Reference included in Appendix A, be noted.

09/25 **Corporate Governance Improvement Board – Quarterly Update September**

Zoë Billingham, Independent Chair of CGIB, presented the Corporate Governance Improvement Board Quarterly Update up to September 2025 and provided an overview of the last CGIB meeting that took place on Friday 26 September. She acknowledged the importance of these updates to provide both the Fire Authority but also public on the work of the Board and the progress being made.

Members were advised that progress was being made at a strong pace and were on track to implement the approved Improvement Plan, with special acknowledgement being given to the teams involved. On Friday, CGIB had reviewed the Member Development Strategy, Member Role Description and the Definition of core Strategic Tasks that will all form part of the fundamental constitutional changes. The Board also received a presentation from VVV provided them with an essential update on the work of the constitution review where the importance of member engagement was acknowledged.

Thanks were given to the members of CGIB and the Interim Clerk for their work so far and to Fenella Morris. The Independent Chair would continue to liaise with Fenella to ensure both pieces of work compliment rather than duplicate and ensure the best possible outcome is reached. Future work of CGIB would include a full review of the Improvement Plan to track its progress to date.

Following queries on whether an Executive Committee was still being looked into, Zoë confirmed that no decision had been made on this recommendation as of yet. The Board were in the process of information gathering from across the country. The Interim Clerk reiterated that the Authority could not have a cabinet model and the proposal being looked at would be to incorporate an Executive Committee to the current committee structure.

Councillor Hogarth reiterated Zoë's comment of thanks to the Interim Clerk, praising the credit he has been to the service and superb advice given.

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that members note the content of the update from the Independent Chair of CGIB.
2. That it be agreed that members note the actions and notes from CGIB meetings on 27 June 2025 (Appendix A) and the CGIB Forward Work Plan (Appendix B).

#### 10/25 **Corporate Governance Improvement Plan – Update Report**

Tom Embury, Interim Clerk, provided an overview of the Corporate Governance Improvement Plan – Update report that outlined the

progress made against actions within the Governance Improvement Plan, including some minor changes.

Members were advised that progress had been made on actions within the plan, as outlined in table 5.1 within the report, with the following actions completed in June 2025; 1.b, 2.1, 5.b, 6.d, 6.e, 1.c and 4.f. A number of changes to the constitution would be made at November's Fire Authority meeting and it was agreed in CGIB on Friday that the Full Constitution, incorporating those changes would be brought to Full Fire Authority in February 2026. All changes to the plan were highlighted in red for members attention.

Following queries on the use of workshops ahead of February's meeting, The Interim Clerk confirmed that elements of the constitution would be brought to December and January Member Engagement Forums for members input ahead of February's Fire Authority.

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that members note the progress made against the Corporate Governance Improvement Plan.
2. That it be agreed that members approve the minor proposed changes within the Improvement Plan included within Appendix A.

#### 11/25 **Regulation 28 Report – Prevention of future deaths**

The Chief Fire Officer provided an overview of the Regulation 28 - Prevention of Future Deaths report and outlined the service's response to the recommendations received from the Senior Coroner, Louise Hunt in relation to the death of former CFO Wayne Brown.

Members were advised that the coroner concluded that findings relating to WMFS highlighted within the report did not contribute to the former CFO's death, however, did highlight two matters of concerns as per the report. Upon receiving the report, the service had 56 days to respond with actions to address those concerns. The following actions were highlighted:

- Review of Death in Service policy

- Incorporation of specific support and provision for senior officers within the service's Health and Wellbeing Policy and/or the WMFRA Constitution.
- Explore third party support for senior officers
- Strengthen process for officers involved in disciplinary proceedings.

The CFO advised that the action 3 was likely wider than just the West Midlands and could impacted on other Fire and Rescue Services. Work was underway with the Firefighters Charity, National Fire Chiefs Council and LGA to address this. One approach would be a 24/7 helpline. It was proposed that an update on progress on the above actions be brought to the Scrutiny Committee in January 2026, with a further review in July 2026.

Professor Simon Brake reiterated the importance of differentiating the CFO given the Authority responsibility for this role. It was agreed that updates on the actions be incorporated into a standing item on Member Engagement Forums agendas moving forward. It was agreed that wording under 5.1 of the report, incorporate how support will be for all staff, including senior officers and a specific reference to the support for CFOs.

Queries were raised from the Independent Member - Audit and Risk, around whether there was a formal process in place at the time focused upon Mental Health and, availability to Fire Authority members and whether other CFO deaths in the sector had been caused due to similar circumstances. The CFO reassured members that discussions had been held at the last Members Engagement Forum on changes made to occupation health to reflect the shift towards Mental Health and confirmed he was not aware of other CFO deaths. Several Councillors provided reassurance that all support and where to access it were provided to them during a difficult time where threatening emails and phone calls were directed to members and acknowledged what the previous CFO would have endured. It was agreed that an update be brought to Members Engagement Forum on the work that has been undertaken on the R28 and the formal pathways for members of the Service.

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that the members note the content of the Senior Coroners Regulation 28 Report and the services response (linked within background documents).
2. That members note the LGA guidance on supporting employees experiencing online abuse and harassment.
3. That members note the proposed way that recommendations, and action against such recommendation, will be tracked within the service.
4. That it be agreed that updates on the Regulations 28 actions be incorporated into a standing item on Member Engagement Forums agendas moving forward.
5. That it be agreed that wording under 5.1 of the report, incorporate how support will be for all staff, including senior officers and a specific reference to the support for CFOs.
6. That it be agreed that an update be brought to Members Engagement Forum on the work that has been undertaken .

#### 12/25 **Consultation Policy**

Tom Embury, Interim Clerk presented the Consultation Policy report that outlined the context and background to the development of a consultation policy.

Members were advised that although the authority/service were responsible for consulting on key matters, the policy aimed to put a clear process in one place to provide consistency. The new policy incorporated the service's statutory duties to consult and was aligned with the NFC Framework. Should the draft policy be approved, this would form how consultation would be undertaken for the review of the services CRMP, outlined in agenda item 13. A full Equality Impact Assessment, as outlined under 6.1 of the report, had been conducted and had identified areas that needed focus on and had been incorporated into the draft policy. The assessment had shown that some groups could be impacted and therefore, different approaches would need to be taken to reduce this impact.

Praise was given on the clarity of the policy. It was agreed that the last sentence of 10.6 of the policy be removed as the first section covered the requirement elements.

The Independent Member – Audit and Risk, queried the length of consultations and whether evidence showed changes to policies following consultations. Tom Embury advised the length was determined by what was being consulted on. If referring to the upcoming CRMP consultation, these concerns could be covered by the Scrutiny Committee who would have the opportunity to feedback on the draft consultation prior to its implementation. The service had a history of good engagement with its communities compared to other counterparts. Communication and consulting in multiple ways was key. The Chief Fire Officer echoed this and highlighted the positive feedback acknowledged by HMICFRS on the services consultation/ engagement. He provided an example of consultation changing policy with reference to Warwickshire Fire Service CRMP.

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that members approve the draft consultation policy included within Appendix A, subject to the following amendment:
  - The last sentence of 10.6 of the policy be removed as the first section covered the requirement elements.

### 13/25 **2026 CRMP Public Consultation**

The Chief Fire Officer presented the 2026 CRMP Public Consultation report that outlined the phased approach to consultation of the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) including key themes and questions planned.

Members were advised that it was the intention to undertake a pre-consultation (phase 1) in January 2026, with a full consultation (phase 2) taking place late 2026. Appendix A reflected the proposed questions that would be fully transparent, inclusive and an opportunity to influence key decisions made on topics such as financial insecurity, estate, contaminants within stations and resilience/equality matters. It was acknowledged that it would take £9m just to bring the most urgent fire stations up to a basic required standard.

Members were advised that Phase 1 pre consultation would look to educate the public on these crucial matters and provide the opportunity to shape the direction of travel needed ahead of Phase 2.

It was the intention to look ahead and plan for a period of 15-20 years, to allow for opportunity around estates and to consolidate the need to reduce or combine where needed. July 2026 options will be provided with planned workshops to be scheduled. Members assistance in this involvement would be appreciated. Three different consultations would be created with slight amendments to each to reflect the audience: public, partners and a staff version.

Following queries on how the consultation would be tailored to keep public engagement, the CFO reassured members that there would be a balance of simple questions but ultimately some questions would need to be more complex given the nature of what is being discussed. Questions would be brought to life with the use of case studies, pictures and interactive tools to aide the public in responding. Members suggested using councillor drop in sessions, collaboration with the West Midlands Combined Authority and station visits to get the message out there. The CFO thanked members and confirmed he would be utilising their connections and the Service's own staff to enhance the consultations reach.

Concerns were raised on the ability to look ahead and plan 20 years in advance. The CFO advised that this would be a first for the West Midlands to plan so far ahead however, reiterated the importance of building long term plans. He acknowledged that the service may not get it completely accurate however, it would allow the service to keep on top of trends and future proof its approach. Examples given included the emerging risk of lithium batteries.

Sasha Hitchins, FBU Representative, advised that the union did have concerns with the review. She emphasised that staff needed to have confidence in the consultation and data referenced within needed to be correctly portrayed. The CFO provided reassurance that all data would be reviewed prior to the consultation going live. The Chair of the Authority provided further reassurance that regular meetings take place with the unions and they would be kept informed as things progress.

Following queries around the 12-hour shift pattern and praise given on the potential use of an interactive tool, the CFO advised members that the service did already have 12-hour shift patterns at some

locations. The consultation would look at options of expanding this further. The Interactive online tool would be very helpful and work was underway to get this in place.

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that the authority approve the proposed approach to Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) consultation as outlined within this report, including the draft content, consultation themes and proposed questions.

#### 14/25 **Finance Update**

Iain Newman presented the finance update report that outlined the forecast outturn position based on period 4 of the 2025/25 financial year.

Members were advised that the forecast was based on 4 months of actual data and a projection of 8 months. The service had taken the opportunity to repay £14.8m loan to save on interest. Taking into account the loss of interest on investments and early repayment premiums and discounts, the cost saving for repaying the loan equated to around £200k per full year for the service. A treasury report would be submitted to Audit and Risk in October to provide further detail. As per 4.8 of the report, the forecast showed a £6,294k variance in capital that would be slippage into 2026-27. This had mainly been the result of slippage in the vehicle replacement programme. Although the process to acquire BRV+ and PRLs was underway, the majority of expenditure would not take place until the next financial year. The forecast showed 4.9% would be expected in the budget reserves and therefore the service was on track to reach the target of 6% in line with the national average.

Following queries on potential cash flow concerns as a result of early repayments of loans, Iain Newman reassured members that the service had £32m in liquid investments. There was no risk to cash flows as a result of early repayments and the service was better off as a result of paying no additional interest on the paid off loans.

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that the authority note the overall forecast revenue underspend of £729k.

2. That it be agreed that the authority note the P4 capital forecast outturn variance of £6,294k against the budget, resulting mainly from slippage of the Vehicle Replacement Programme.

15/25 **Contract Award Summary**

Iain Newman presented the Contract Award Summary report that outlined contract awards taken since April 2025 in excess of £250k.

Following queries by members on the National Smoke Alarm Framework and work being conducted with other services, Iain confirmed that no money would be exchanged as the service let the contract and would be a transfer of goods between those involved. It was agreed that information on the BRV+ Chassis to explain why the annual cost and contract value differed and the percentage of those outlined within the social value element of the report were based within the West Midlands, would be provided to members.

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that the appendix to the report, summarising the contracts in excess of £250k that have been awarded since April 2025 be noted.

16/25 **Interim Clerk Extension**

Please note: The current Interim Clerk, Tom Embury left the room prior to deliberations.

Kelly Whitmore presented the Interim Clerk extension report, highlighting the need to extend as a result of an extended secondment.

Both Members and Senior Officers praised the quality of work and advice given by the Interim Clerk, acknowledging he is a credit to the service. Members were provided with reassurance that Tom's mental health would be considered by HR to ensure his wellbeing is protected and the extension was in line with the current HR policies.

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that the continued appointment of Tom Embury as Interim Clerk to the Authority until 16 February 2026 or until such time as the Services' Substantiative Clerk returns to the

service be approved. The interim appointment would be terminal with one months notice.

Please note: The Interim Clerk re-entered the room at 12:37pm.

17/25 **Pension Update – September 25**

Kelly Harding, Head of People, presented the Pension Update report that outlined the work of the Pension Board up to September 2025.

Members were advised that the Pension Board had raised concerns around the resource capacity within the pensions team given the number of new starters and the upcoming departure of the pension and payroll manager and will continue to monitor this. The service had strong compliance, as per 4.2 of the report, with 2 of 3 performance indicators receiving 100% completion. Remedy statements were doing well, acknowledging the impact of contingent decisions following the removal of national guidance. By August 2025, the service had issued 1,076 Annual Benefit Statements however, members were made aware that 581 Deferred Benefit Statements were not achieved by the required deadline due to a late update by the software provider. A further 143 active scheme members did not receive a statement due to other issues around remedy and contingent decisions. The late submissions were reported to the Pension Regulator as a breach and since the publication of the update report, all statements had been progressed.

Two Appointment, Standards and Appeals Committees had been held in July and September 2025 to deliberate on a total of 5 stage 2 appeals. All appeals had upheld the decision made at Stage 1 by the Scheme Manager. Councillor Hogarth expressed that the committee's decision had been difficult and individuals taking a career break need to seek good advice and have clarity that any break would impact on their pension. Kelly Harding echoed Cllr Hogarth's empathy to the 5 individuals impacted but unfortunately a decision needed to be made based upon the policy at the time and any career break would ultimately be leaving the service. A review of the policy was underway to look into this.

Following queries from the Independent Member around the figures held within 4.2 and the significant drop in members, Kelly reassured members that the Pension Board regularly spoke on this issue. It was hoped that the auto-enrolment due to take place in October 2025 would increase numbers enrolling back into the pension scheme. There were challenges in the societal shift that had occurred with the younger generation opting to not pay into the scheme as it was seen as less attractive and more optional than previous generations. The team were conducting education sessions with a desire to improve this trend.

Following queries around the option to anonymously ask individuals why they do not enrol into the scheme, Kelly Harding advised she could look into this as part of the auto-enrolment process in October. The CFO expressed that although it was important to find the reasonings, there were multiple factors impacting one's decision including cost of living challenges, the length of service being extended or simply staff wanting to explore careers outside of the fire and rescue service. Sasha Hitchins, FBU Representative, expressed concerns as the reasons behind one's decision to opt-out could be personal, sensitive issues that need to be treated very carefully. The Chair of the Authority asked that Kelly look into this further and discuss with the representative bodies. It was confirmed that it was unknown when national guidance would be published on Contingent decisions.

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that members note the content of the six-monthly West Midlands Firefighter Pension Scheme Update report.

#### 18/25 **Scrutiny Committee - Update Report September 2025**

Councillor Lloyd, Chair of the Scrutiny Committee, presented the committee's update report that outlined the work of the committee up to September 2025.

Members were advised of the committee's remit with a special welcome being extended to DCFO Simon Barry who would be the principal officer moving forward. He advised that the committee had been provided with an update following its review of the services

training and development process. Other items included business continuity, BRV+ and the annual letter from the Local Government Ombudsman. The Chair of the Committee thanked all the crews he spoke to personally for their feedback regarding the BRV+.

Upon reflection, although the Committee had agreed for Business Continuity to be brought to Fire Authority, it was felt that the item needed further review by the Scrutiny Committee. He felt the minutes did not comprehensively address the engagement with representative bodies but acknowledged they were to note and changes would be made by the Committee if necessary. The Chair of the Authority agreed that a discussion would be needed in regard to submitting draft reports to Fire Authority and the best approach to be taken. Sasha Hitchins, FBU Representative, requested that the reference within the minutes to 'further engagement' be removed as no engagement took place. The Chair of the Committee asked this be raised in the next Scrutiny Committee meeting if required.

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that members note the work of the Scrutiny Committee as outlined in the report.
2. That it be agreed that members note the draft minutes of the previous Scrutiny Committee attached as Appendix A, which will be approved by the Committee at its October 2025 meeting.
3. That it be agreed that members note the Scrutiny Committee work plan for 2025-2026 attached as Appendix B.

#### 19/25 **Audit and Risk Committee - Update Report September 2025**

Councillor Ben Evans, Chair of Audit and Risk Committee, presented the committee's update report that outlined the work of the committee up to September 2025.

Members were advised of the committee's remit and need to be politically independent. He advised members that in July, as per the delegation by the authority, Mr David Page had been appointed as the Independent Member of the Audit and Risk Committee. A second independent member would be sought in the near future, with the intention to have financial qualifications if possible. The issues identified with A&R within the improvement plan endorsed by

the Authority on 16 June was acknowledged, and the need to reshape the committee was emphasised.

The committee would be looking to undertake a full refresh of the Audit Charter and conduct deep dives into high risks included within the corporate risk register. The Chair of the Committee confirmed that he would be meeting regularly with both internal and external auditors to ensure a strong relationship is maintained.

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that members note the work of the Audit and Risk Committee at its meetings held on Monday 30 June and Monday 21 July, as per report.
2. That it be agreed that members note the draft minutes of the previous audit and risk committee meetings held on Monday 30 June and Monday 21 July 2025, as attached in Appendix A and Appendix B, which are due for final approval and Octobers A&R Meeting.

20/25 **Appointment, Standards and Appeals Committee - Update Report September 2025**

Councillor Jail, Chair of the Appointment, Standards and Appeals Committee (ASAC), presented the committees update report that outlined the work of the committee up to September 2025.

Members were advised that as part of the Corporate Governance Improvement Board work, they had reviewed a revised version of the Member Development Strategy that would be discussed at the next Committee meeting. The Committee had met twice since the last Fire Authority meeting to deliberate on Stage 2 pension appeals. A total of 5 had been received and heard by the Committee with all Stage 1 outcomes being upheld.

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that members note the work of the ASAC in the last quarter, as per the report.

21/25 **Fire Authority Work Programme**

Tom Embury, Interim Clerk, presented the Fire Authority Work Programme, that outlined proposed future agenda items. Members were advised that new additions were highlighted in blue.

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that the Fire Authority work programme be approved.


22/25 **Exclusion of the public and press**

Resolved:

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

**Please note:** Private minutes of this session have been created and are exempt under Paragraph 1 and 3 of the Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.



 <p><b>WMFRA</b> West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority</p>	<p><b><u>WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY</u></b></p> <p><b><u>24 NOVEMBER 2025</u></b></p>
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## **APPOINTMENTS TO COMMITTEES/PANELS**

### **For DECISION**

#### **Report of the Interim Clerk to the Authority Authored by the Democratic Services Officer**

#### **1. PURPOSE**

- 1.1. To advise of the change in political proportionality and appoint members to the relevant committees.

#### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1. That's members **approve** the appointments to the relevant committees outlined within Appendix A.

#### **3. OBJECTIVES & EXPECTED OUTCOMES**

- 3.1. To ensure the Authority membership of committees and panels are aligned with the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

#### **4. BACKGROUND**

- 4.1. Appointments are made by the local authorities in line with the Local Government Act 1985, Local Government Act 86 and Fire and Rescue Authority (Membership) Order 2017. The Local Government and Housing Act 1989 provides that where a Joint Authority is divided into different political groups, it shall ensure seats are allocated on ordinary committees of the authority proportionally.
- 4.2. Cllr Idrees whilst being in post on the authority, has stepped down from the Labour Group, becoming an Independent. This in affect changes the authority's proportionality to the following:

- 4.3. As an independent member, Cllr Idrees is entitled to 1/15 of committee posts (rounded to the nearest whole number). With a total of 19 committee positions available between Scrutiny, Audit and Risk and ASA Committees, this means he is entitled to one committee post. The Conservative group are entitled to 5 posts, and the Labour group to 13.
- 4.4. Currently, Councillor Idrees is a member of both the Audit and Risk Committee and Scrutiny Committee. It is proposed that Councillor Idrees be removed from the Audit and Risk Committee.
- 4.5. Changes to committee roles and substitute roles as a result are outlined within **Appendix A**.

## 5. **STRATEGY ALIGNMENT**

- 5.1. Political balance upon committees allows for effective, balanced governance of the Authority and Service, including delivery, oversight and scrutiny of the Authority's agreed Strategy.

## 6. **IMPACT ASSESSMENTS**

- 6.1. No initial equality impact assessment has been undertaken.

## 7. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1. Fire and Rescue Authorities were first established by Section 26 of the Local Government Act 1985, which provides that such authorities shall consist of members appointed by the metropolitan districts comprised in the relevant county. The number of members to be appointed by each district council is set out in the Fire and Rescue Authority (Membership) Order 2017.
- 7.2. The Local Government and Housing Act 1989 provides that where a Joint Authority is divided into different political groups, it shall review the representation of those groups. It also has a duty following such a review, to determine the allocation of committee seats to the different political groups into which the Members of the Authority are divided.

7.3. Non-compliance with the provisions of the 1989 Act would render the Authority's decisions vulnerable to judicial review.

8. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

8.1. All members will receive a basic allowance of £3500 (+any additional SRA where appropriate).

9. **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

9.1. There are no environmental implications arising from the content of this report.

10. **BACKGROUND PAPERS & APPENDICES**

- **Appendix A** – Membership of Committees and Panels
- [Local Government and Housing Act 1989](#)

Relevant Statutory Officer	Tom Embury	Interim Clerk
Report Author	Kirsty Tuffin	Democratic Services Officer



**West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority**  
**Appointments to Committees and Panels 2025/2026**

<b>Fire Authority</b> 15 elected members – (Lab 10; Con 4, 1 Independent) PCC/APCC Co-Opted members [2 vacant] 1 Independent Member 3 Special Observers	<b>Members Engagement Forum</b> 15 elected members – (Lab 10; Con 4, 1 Independent) Co-Opted members [2 vacant] 1 Independent Member 3 Special Observers
<b>Appointments, Standards and Appeals Committee</b> <b>7 elected members plus 1 Observer</b> <b>(Lab 5; Con 2)</b> <b>At least one Member from each Authority</b>	
<b>Councillor</b>	<b>Substitute</b>
Cllr Rizwan Jalil (Chair)	Cllr Klara Margetts
Cllr Farzana Haq (Vice Chair)	Cllr Ben Evans
Cllr Peter Hogarth	Cllr David Barrie
Cllr Marcus Bernasconi	Cllr Mary Locke
Cllr Cathryn Bayton	Cllr Mary Locke
Cllr Catherine Miks	Cllr Gavin Lloyd
Cllr Ken Ferguson	Cllr Stuart Henley
Independent Person  Ray Tomkinson (Observer)	Standards Items Only


<b>Scrutiny Committee (7 elected members) (Lab 4; Con 2, Independent 1)</b>	
<b>Plus 1 Co-optee (Non-Voting)</b>	
<b>Councillor</b>	<b>Substitute</b>
Cllr Gavin Lloyd (Chair)	Cllr Catherine Miks
Cllr Marcus Bernasconi (Vice-Chair)	Cllr Mary Locke
Cllr Mohammed Idrees	
Cllr Catherine Miks	Cllr Farzana Haq
Cllr Jas Dehar	Cllr Ben Evans
Cllr David Barrie	Cllr Peter Hogarth
Cllr Ken Ferguson	Cllr Stuart Henley
Prof. Simon Brake Co-Opted Member	Non-Voting

<b>Audit and Risk Committee</b>	
<b>5 members (Plus 1 Independent Member)</b>	
<b>(Lab 4; Con 1)</b>	
<b>Councillor</b>	<b>Substitute</b>
Cllr Ben Evans (Chair)	Cllr Catherine Miks
Cllr David Barrie (Vice-Chair)	Cllr Stuart Henley
Cllr Farzana Haq	Cllr Rizwan Jalil
<b>Cllr Jas Dehar</b>	<b>Cllr Mary Locke</b>
Cllr Cathryn Bayton	Cllr Klara Margetts
<b>Independent Member:</b>	
Mr David Page	

<b>Joint Consultative Panel</b>	
<b>(5 elected members + 5 employee representatives)</b>	
<b>(Lab 4 ; Con 1)</b>	
<b>Councillor</b>	<b>Substitute</b>
Cllr Jas Dehar(Chair)	Cllr Ben Evans
Cllr Mary Locke (Vice-Chair)	<b>Cllr Marcus Bernasconi</b>
Cllr Rizwan Jalil	Cllr Farzana Faq
Cllr Klara Margetts	Cllr Cathryn Bayton
Cllr Stuart Henley	Cllr Peter Hogarth

\*Please note: if both the original member and substitute are unavailable, then a member of the political party can be appointed to attend by the Leader of that party.



 <p><b>WMFRA</b> West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority</p>	<p><b><u>WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY</u></b></p> <p><b><u>24 November 2025</u></b></p>
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**CORPORATE GOVERNANCE IMPROVEMENT BOARD NOTES**

**For NOTE**

**Report of the Independent Chair of the Corporate Governance  
Improvement Board**

**Authored by the Interim Clerk to the Authority**

**1. PURPOSE**

- 1.1. To provide the Authority and local communities of the summary notes of the Corporate Governance Improvement Board (CGIB)

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1. That members note the actions and notes from CGIB meeting on 26 September 2025 (**Appendix A**)

**3. OBJECTIVES & EXPECTED OUTCOMES**

- 3.1. The objective of this report is to provide members and the public, The approved summary notes from Septembers CGIB meeting.

**4. BACKGROUND AND UPDATES**

- 4.1. Work has continued on multiple aspects of the Governance Improvement Plan, with the meeting of 26 September including consideration of an updated Member Role Description, Core Authority Roles, Member Development Strategy and Authority Paper Format. All of these are brought to Authority for consideration and approval as part of other papers at today's meeting.

4.2. Wider work of the Board continues, and members will be updated in the Quarterly update report at Februarys Fire Authority meeting.

5. **IMPACT ASSESSMENTS**

5.1. An initial or full EIA has not been undertaken as it was not required.

6. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

6.1. There are no direct legal implications of this report.

7. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

7.1. There are no financial implications arising from the content of this report. The costs of the work of the CGIB are being met by the Local Government Association.

8. **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

8.1. There are no environmental implications arising from the content of this report.

9. **BACKGROUND PAPERS & APPENDICES**

- Appendix A – CGIB Summary Notes – 26 September 2025

Relevant Officer	Zoë Billingham	Independent Chair of Corporate Governance Improvement Board
Report Author	Tom Embury – <a href="mailto:tom.embury@wmfs.net">tom.embury@wmfs.net</a>	Interim Clerk to the Authority

## Corporate Governance Improvement Board Summary Notes and Actions

### Friday 26 September 2025

Ref	Action	Summary
		<p><b>In Attendance:</b> Zoe Billingham, Cllr Chris Read, Chris West, Lisa Kirkman, Craig Parkin, Cllr Bayton, Cllr Hogarth, Simon Tuhill, Simon Barry, Tom Embury, Sarah Sprung.</p> <p><b>Observers:</b> Fennella Morris, Rafal Pisula, Angela Chadha,</p> <p><b>Online:</b> Helen Edwards, Satinder Sahota, Cllr Miks (Until 11am), Cllr Bailey, Cllr Lloyd (Joined at 10:46am).</p>
		<p><b>Agenda item 1: Apologies</b></p> <p><b>Executive Summary:</b> There were apologies for absence from Mark Norris and Iain Newman. Introductions were provided to the Best Value Inspection Team.</p>
		<p><b>Agenda item 2: Arising Actions - September 2025</b></p> <p><b>Executive Summary:</b> Tom Embury, Interim Clerk provided an overview of the arising actions report. The Board were advised of the following updates:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Additional DSO due to start on Monday 6<sup>th</sup> October. A Corporate Risk Specialist would also join the Governance Team in November 2025.</li> <li>2. Document storage request – security issues were still ongoing. A solution may be possible with a proposed system used by Grant Thornton (External Auditors)</li> <li>3. Cost analysis action 4 - incorrect date to be updated to October 2025.</li> <li>4. Action 3 – Risk Reporting – Corporate Risk report to be taken to the next Audit and Risk Committee in November. Date updated to reflect this.</li> <li>5. Action 5 – meetings online/in-person ongoing.</li> <li>6. Action 4 – 3PT – ongoing.</li> <li>7. Action 5 targeted FRAs, action 6 Member Development Strategy and action 8 FRA involvement in constitutional review to be discussed later in the agenda.</li> </ol>

<p>8. Action 8 constitutional changes to MEF – the last MEF overran so two items, as per the work plan will be taken to the next MEF in October.</p> <p>9. Action 9 – complete with acknowledgment that ongoing meetings with BVI and the Ind. Chair would be helpful.</p>		
1	That an update be given on the document storage solution.	Following a proposed solution of using a system used by the External Auditors, the Chair requested a specific update on this at the next meeting.
2	That action 5 – meetings in person/online be marked as completed. Invites to be updated to remove Teams links for in-person meetings.	To ensure clarity on required attendance via teams or in-person.
3	That the full improvement plan be brought to the next meeting to provide members updates on progress on all items.	To ensure progress is being made in all areas of the Improvement Plan.
<p><b>Agenda item 3: CGIB Summary Notes</b></p> <p><b>Executive Summary:</b> The Chair presented the CGIB summary notes.</p>		
4	That the summary notes were a true and accurate record.	All members agreed.

**Agenda item 4: Governance Models – Executive Committees**

**Executive Summary:** Tom Embury provided an overview of the Governance Models – Executive Committees report that outlined the questionnaire used to engage with the previously approved organisations. The Board were advised that one of the five organisations had met with him and Helen Edwards and provided comprehensive, honest responses to the questions answered. Key themes, strengths and weaknesses raised by the organisation was highlighted, with acknowledgment that the organisation overall had been very positive on their experience. Members queried the difference in the number of members impacting the experience of other organisations, the risk of repetition, impact of multi-party scenarios and similarities with the current Appointment, Standards and Appeals Committee. Members expressed the need for further feedback to make a definitive decision. Thanks were given to the organisation for their engagement. A further two of the five had promised a response in due course.

5	That an option appraisal paper on executive committees be brought to the next CGIB meeting.	<p>The options paper would include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengths, weaknesses and risks</li> <li>• Benefits and any potential impacts anticipated (to include any cross over with the current committee set up)</li> <li>• All options available</li> <li>• Anonymised feedback from organisations responding to the questionnaire circulated by the Interim Clerk and Independent Member for Governance</li> <li>• Multi-party scenarios</li> </ul>
6	That Simon Tuhill CFO and Craig Parkin CFO would highlight the questionnaire to their counterparts in the previously agreed organisations.	Both CFOs offered their assistance in sharing the questionnaire with their counterparts in the 4 remaining organisations.

**Agenda item 5: Definition of Core Strategic Tasks**

**Executive Summary:** Tom Embury provided an overview of the Definition of core strategic tasks report that outlined the revised strategic tasks ahead of their formal approval at Fire Authority in November. Members of the Authority had been engaged at the Members Engagement Forum early September. The strategic tasks had been linked with the FRA National Framework. It was acknowledged that some areas had been very comprehensive and others lacked detail. All changes would be incorporated as part of the wider constitutional changes being conducted by VWV.

7	That the proposed changes be incorporated and circulated to the Board via email for further comment ahead of formal sign off by the Authority in November.	<p>That the following changes be made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Table to be clear on breakdown and distinguish what is deemed as FRA and Committees responsibilities</li> <li>• Term ‘Secure assurance’ was believed to be too passive. Review wording to strengthen its requirement.</li> <li>• Clearer set of roles i.e. setting the strategy and who oversees and who actions to ensure clarity.</li> <li>• Pg 22 on recruitment of officers to be amended to reflect what is outlined within the constitution as elements are delegated.</li> <li>• Property and assets to be included.</li> <li>• Transparency code to be reflected in scheme of delegation.</li> <li>• Wording on holding officers to account to be clearer on which officers. Reference to the process for the Monitoring Officer, Clerk, Treasurer to be included.</li> </ul>
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**Agenda item 6: Member Role Description**

**Executive Summary:** Tom Embury provided an overview of the Member Role Description that outlined the proposed changes. Member of the Authority had been engaged at Members Engagement Forum in early September, and their feedback had been incorporated including clearer expectations on workloads to assist Local Authorities with their appointments process. The revisions aligned with LGA guidance, best practice and the National framework. Concerns were raised that it was unclear to members when being appointed by their leaders on the workload required for the role and further work needed to be done to rectify this. Emphasis was given on the need for clear skills required for the role, mechanisms to identify any gaps that could be filled during the appointment process with acknowledgement given on the need to pre-engage with leaders and councillors prior to appointments being made.

8	That the proposed changes be incorporated and circulated to the Board via email for further comment ahead of formal sign off by the Authority in November.	<p>That the following changes be made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The Chairs role to be clear on requirements to engagement with Local authority leaders throughout the year for Chair.</li> <li>● Specific skills to be included. Sarah Sprung, LGA, to assist with wording.</li> <li>● Pg. 36 – ceremonies to be included.</li> <li>● More engagement/profile at SRA level to be given emphasis</li> <li>● Feed into LGA on learning</li> <li>● Co-optees/non voting members to be added.</li> <li>● 2.1c behaviour to be included.</li> <li>● Breakdown section on Chairs of different committees.</li> </ul>
9	That a video be developed on what the Authority is and its roles and responsibilities to circulate to Local Authorities to share with their members. -	<p>The video to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● FRA roles and responsibilities</li> <li>● Different members roles,</li> <li>● Intro from the CFO,</li> <li>● Incorporate statutory officers</li> <li>● Statements from current members on their experiences</li> </ul>

10	That the LGA assist with incorporating information on the FRA, including the information video, into the Local Authorities induction packs for members joining their councils following the May 2026 elections.	
11	To engage with DSO counterparts to provide the opportunity to submit a summary page of what is expected from members to the Local Authority Leaders meeting.	The Chair of the Authority to present accordingly.
12	That work be fed back into the LGA to develop any learning that could be established.	

**Agenda item 7: Full Review of Member Development Strategy**

**Executive Summary:** Sarah Sprung provided an overview of proposed changes to the current member development strategy, to better align with best practice. The strategy had been member and responsive led, with lessons being learnt from other local authorities. Praise was given on the focus of strengths rather than skills as it seemed more appropriate/helpful to distinguish. The Board were advised that 6 monthly appraisals with members already took place with the Leaders of each political group but it was felt the template needed further work. Discussions were held on the potential incorporating the role of 'whip' into the strategy however, it was felt this was a political matter for their respective groups and would not be appropriate for officer involvement and emphasis was on the Leader of the political groups in an authority setting. Following queries on the pace of implementation, it was acknowledged that the publication of an overarching report in the summer was an aspiration at this point in time.

13	That the proposed changes be incorporated and circulated via email to Cllr Bailey, Cllr Chris Reed, Chair of the Authority and CFO Craig Parkin to ensure all amendments incorporated for ahead of its submission to the Appointment, Standards and Appeals Committee in November.	That the following changes be incorporated: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Specific statement on behaviour/culture to be included.</li> <li>● More visibility to be given on code of conduct,</li> <li>● Clear reference on performance and leadership behaviours to be added.</li> <li>● References and examples within the WM to be added to bring it to life.</li> <li>● Specific induction section for the Chair of the Authority.</li> <li>● Reflection time to be incorporated to ensure any issues can be addressed.</li> </ul>
14	That an update be given at Novembers CGIB meeting on the Member Development Strategy following ASAC and FRA meetings.	

15	That Sarah Sprung, LGA assist with reviewing/updating the appraisal document used for members of the authority.	DSO to circulate the previous version used.
<p><b>Agenda item 8: Report Format and Input Process by Statutory Officers</b></p> <p><b>Executive Summary:</b> Tom Embury provided an overview of the report format and input process by statutory officers that outlined the current template and the internal process to sign off reports. The Board were advised that the template had been updated in Spring of that year and aligned with the Internal Senior Leadership teams report template to provide consistency across the service. Providing consistency also assisted with officer development through report writing at different levels of the service. It was acknowledged that the actual content being input into the reports was a crucial element.</p>		
16	That the proposed changes be incorporated into the template.	<p>That the following changes be made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Add risk implications</li> <li>• 3.6 – to be updated to reflect that the Monitoring Officer would sign off the whole report, not just legal implications.</li> </ul>
17	That Chris West assist with wording on the financial implications.	To ensure that it is clear what budget the recommendations would be funded from, or should there be no allocated budget, how they would be funded.

**Agenda Item 9: Constitutional Changes**

**Executive Summary:** Lisa Kirkman, Deputy Monitoring Officer – VWV, provided members of the Board with a presentation that outlined the progress made against the Improvement Plan actions (and incorporating ESI and Grant Thorntons statutory recommendations) and next steps to be taken as part of the wider constitution review. 5 actions had been completed thus far, with timeliness addressing how further actions would be completed being presented. Meetings had taken place with relevant officers, including the S151, Clerk, DSO with feedback being received on the current version of the constitution. Engagement with Fire Authority members on relevant Sections of the constitution had already begun, with further sessions planned at future Member Engagement Forums to ensure all sections have had thorough engagement. Officer input would be sought at the training session planned in October. It was anticipated that the final fully revised constitution would be presented to the Fire Authority in February 2026 and would be in a position to implement at the point of decision. The extended timeframe would ensure that all relevant training and relevant, meaningful engagement could be incorporated within the timelines provided. Emphasis was given by members that this was a comprehensive review and once final would have the full backing of those on the Board should different views arise from membership changes anticipated after the May 2026 elections. The board highlighted the revision must strengthen key elements including the scheme of delegations and the golden triangle and ensure it is accessible/modern for all users.

18	That an update on the constitution be brought to every board meeting.	Members felt the presentation slides were a useful tool to track progress and next steps clearly.
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**Agenda Item 10: Officer Governance Training**

**Executive Summary:** Tom Embury confirmed that training was scheduled for the Senior Leadership Team with VWV for the 14<sup>th</sup> October 2025 and an update would be given at Octobers meeting.

No actions.

**Agenda item 8: CGIB Forward Work Plan**

**Executive Summary:** Tom Embury advised members that the work plan would be updated to reflect today's actions and revised timelines.

No further actions.

**Agenda item 13: Meeting Reflections**

**Executive Summary:** Thanks was given to the Clerk for his work on the Board and ensure was given that the team had sufficient resources to follow up on actions arising from the meeting. Board members felt there was a clear steer for direction to take forward relevant actions.

No actions.

**Agenda item 14: Any other business**

**Executive Summary:** The Chair thanked Sarah Sprung, Clerk and DSO for their work on today's papers and felt the direction forward was positive. She felt that the Board was able to openly challenge and voice opinions effectively. Thanks were given to the Best Value Inspection Team for their time and any feedback from them would be appreciated.

 <p><b>WMFRA</b> West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority</p>	<p><b><u>WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY</u></b></p> <p><b><u>24 November 2025</u></b></p>
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**GOVERNANCE IMPROVEMENT PLAN – EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**  
**For DECISION**

**Principal Officer: Chief Fire Officer**  
**Report of the Interim Clerk to the Authority**  
**Author: Interim Clerk to the Authority**

**1. PURPOSE**

- 1.1. For members to decide whether to implement an Executive Committee within its governance mode, in line with the recommendation made by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny in its independent review and incorporated within the Fire Authority's Improvement Plan as agreed on 16 June 2025.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1. The members either;
- 2.1.1. Approve the continuation of the existing committee structure as most recently updated on 23 June 2025, as recommended by the Corporate Governance Improvement Board; **or**
- 2.1.2. Approve the implementation of a new Executive Committee
- 2.2. Should members agree Option 2.1.2 above, provide input on the following matters to be included within the terms of reference of the committee, which will be brought for approval to the Fire Authority's next meeting on 16 February 2026 and subject to consultation with members through a Member Engagement Forum;
- 2.2.1. Scope of decision making to be delegated to the Executive Committee by the FRA, to include matters currently

undertaken by the Appointments, Standards and Appeals Committee (ASAC).

2.2.2. Size and membership of the Executive Committee.

2.2.3. Frequency of Executive Committee meetings and any changes to the frequency of Fire and Rescue Authority meetings as a result.

### **3. OBJECTIVES & EXPECTED OUTCOMES**

3.1. To give Authority appropriate information to make an informed decision on whether to adopt an Executive Committee within WMFRA's governance model and make appropriate changes to the Constitution to allow for this.

3.2. Subject to approval of either option, this will be fed into the overall review of the WMFRA Constitution, which is due for consideration and approval by the Fire Authority at its February 2026 meeting. Members will also be engaged through Member Engagement Forums in December 2025 and January 2026.

### **4. BACKGROUND**

4.1. The WMFRA Governance Improvement Plan (The Improvement Plan) was agreed by the Authority on 16 June 2025. It was based on the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny independent review of WMFRA governance, and the outstanding recommendations of the Authority's External Auditors Value for Money Report and the Monitoring Officer's Section 5 report. Included within this was recommendation 1.a):

*Explore potential governance models to include the recommendation to establish an Executive Committee to provide more agile and effective decision making by the Authority.*

4.2. Fire and Rescue Authorities are unable to operate a truly "executive" model of governance, where individual elected members (normally of a cabinet) can make decisions. Instead,

Stand-alone FRAs are required to operate a committee model. However, 14 of 24 Fire and Rescue Authorities operating a committee model currently have an Executive Committee which is delegated at least some decision-making power on behalf of the whole of Authority. The other Fire Services operate either Mayoral, County Council or Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner models of governance.

- 4.3. The intended purpose of such a committee is usually to speed up the process of decision making and ensure the Authority can make decisions in an agile manner as a smaller committee is able to meet more easily and frequently.
- 4.4. Any such committee would typically be made up of the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Authority, plus between three and five other members. It would still be required to ensure political proportionality within its membership in line with requirements of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.
- 4.5. The executive committee would be delegated decision making powers over most matters currently determined by the full Fire Authority, excepting the range of powers which are reserved in law to the full authority – see Section 7 Legal Implications for more detail. This could include the Appointments and Appeals elements of the work of ASAC. Standards matters would need to remain the responsibility of a separate, potentially ad-hoc, committee.
- 4.6. Members of the Scrutiny and Audit and Risk Committees would not be members of the Executive Committee, to enable them to effectively undertake their roles in relation to any decisions made by the Executive Committee.

## **5. CGIB RECOMMENDATION**

- 5.1. In line with its Terms of Reference, the Corporate Governance Improvement Board put in place by the Authority in February 2025 has considered this area and the options appraisal it considered is outlined within **Appendix A**, providing further detail on the strengths and weaknesses of the executive and non-executive

model.

- 5.2. It is the recommendation of the CGIB that based on this options appraisal, WMFRA do not implement an executive committee model. The matter was discussed by the CGIB at its meeting on 31 October 2025. CGIB Members' view was that;
- 5.2.1. An executive committee risks exacerbating the detachment and lack of engagement from members found to have occurred in 2024 rather than resolving it, and to concentrate power in the hands of a smaller number of members would go against the authority's stated aim within the wider Improvement Plan of improving the quality of decision making and skill of authority members.
  - 5.2.2. It is furthermore not apparent that an executive committee would have prevented or resolved the issues WMFRA faced in 2024.
  - 5.2.3. Given WMFRA's already relatively small size of fifteen elected members, it is not clear that an executive committee is needed to speed up decision making, with such a committee more relevant when a large number of members may make decision making potentially cumbersome.
  - 5.2.4. An executive committee risks duplicating work that will still ultimately need to be determined by full authority and therefore failing to deliver value for money.
  - 5.2.5. There are significant challenges to managing the membership of an executive committee and other committees (where membership could not overlap) with only 15 elected members, especially if in future the Authority has a more mixed political balance.
  - 5.2.6. An executive committee would drive significant additional workload for officers and members without clear additional benefit.

## **6. STRATEGY ALIGNMENT**

- 6.1. The Authority is committed to continuous improvement, and to delivering on the actions within the Governance Improvement Plan. Consideration of alternative models of governance is a key means of ensuring the Authority's governance remains fit for purpose.

## **7. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS**

- 7.1. As this matter relates to the creation of a committee whose membership would be determined by political appointment, and which would only consider matters delegated to it by the Fire and Rescue Authority, an Equality Impact Assessment has not been undertaken as this will not represent a change to how the Authority interacts with or impacts on protected groups. Decision making by the Executive Committee would still be subject to case-by-case EIA. Responsibility for scrutiny of Equalities issues would remain a matter for the Scrutiny Committee.

## **8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1. An executive model of governance, whereby either a mayor or leader and cabinet is able to exercise executive decision making, was introduced by the Local Government Act 2000 (LGA 2000). The permitted forms of governance are set out within Part 1A, with the specific functions within section 9D, and the detail of the leader and cabinet model within Section 9I.
- 8.2. However, Part 1, Section 1 of the LGA 2000 makes clear that the local authorities in England to which this applies are limited to County, District, London Borough and eligible Parish Councils, not Fire and Rescue Authorities.
- 8.3. Although a Fire and Rescue Authority does not have the ability to operate an executive model under the LGA 2000, they are permitted to delegate powers and functions to committees and officers in accordance with relevant legislation. However, certain key functions cannot be delegated, and responsibility for a wide range of delegable functions and duties will remain. These are

incorporated in various pieces of legislation and regulation, including, but not limited to:

- a. setting the budget and precept (Local Government Finance Act 1992 and para. 6, section 101 LGA 1972)
- b. approving the statement of accounts (Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015)
- c. preparing and approving a pay policy statement (sections 38 and 39, Localism Act 2011)
- d. appointing committees and setting terms of reference (section 102 LGA 1972)
- e. appointment of head of paid service, monitoring officer and treasurer (section 151, LGA 1972 and sections 4 & 5 LGHA 1989)
- f. electing the chair, vice chair and clerk (section 34, LGA 1985)
- g. preparing and keeping up to date a constitution (section 9P, LGA 2000).

8.4. The Authority, plus any committees or bodies to which is has delegated functions, are required by Section 15 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 to ensure political proportionality, in alignment with the overall political makeup of the Authority.

## **9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

9.1. An Executive Committee may be . This would need to be considered by the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) which will be making recommendation on FRA allowances in early 2026. Any additional allowance would have to be met from the FRA budget. This may be offset by a reduction in allowances for non-executive committee roles, again as determined by the IRP. There would also be some small resource implications for officers from servicing an additional meeting, although this would likely be offset by a reduction in meetings of the ASA Committee.

9.2. If it is determined not to adopt an Executive Committee, there will be no additional financial implications.

**10. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

10.1. An Executive Committee would be a Statutory Committee required to meet in person and be open to the public. The addition of further meetings would have some transport related environmental costs. This may be partially offset by a reduction in full authority meetings.

**11. CONSULTATION**

11.1. This proposal has been considered extensively by the membership of the CGIB before submission to the FRA for consideration. In considering this model, the CGIB consulted with a number of other high performing Fire and Rescue Authorities to understand their governance approaches and the effectiveness of their executive committee arrangements. The CGIB are grateful for the time and input of officers from these services.

**12. BACKGROUND PAPERS & APPENDICES**

- **Appendix A** – CGIB Options Appraisal – Executive Committee Model
- [WMFRA Governance Improvement Plan – as of September 2025](#)
- [Corporate Governance Improvement Board Terms of Reference – as at 16 June 2025](#)
- [Local Government Act 1972](#)
- [Local Government Act 1985](#)
- [Local Government and Housing Act 1989](#)
- [Local Government Finance Act 1992](#)
- [Local Government Act 2000](#)
- [Localism Act 2011](#)

Relevant Principal Officer	Simon Tuhill	Chief Fire Officer
Relevant Statutory Officer and Author Member	Tom Embury <a href="mailto:tom.embury@wmfs.net">tom.embury@wmfs.net</a>	Interim Clerk to the Authority



## Appendix A

**Options Appraisal Considered by CGIB – 31 October 2025****Options**

1. Any Executive Committee meetings, regardless of format, would be held in public, with all papers published in advance in the same manner as Fire Authority and other committee meetings. It is suggested that any model of Executive Committee decisions would be subject to scrutiny by the Scrutiny Committee.
2. This section provides an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of two options. It draws on desktop analysis of other executive committee models and feedback provided by two FRAs we have received direct feedback from.

**Option 1 – Adoption of an Executive Committee**

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
Streamlined decision-making process. Other FRAs said it was easier to brief and get engagement from a smaller number of councillors. This could help to ensure members have a more proactive role in decision making and are able to interrogate proposals more thoroughly.	It could be difficult to operate an Executive Committee in an FRA with just 15 members. Most FRAs have far more members than ours and this helps them to accommodate an Executive Committee within their structures. As Executive Committee members cannot serve on the Audit and Risk or Scrutiny committees, these latter committees would have to be served by many of the same councillors.
Greater agility in responding to urgent matters. It is easier to convene a small group of councillors for a meeting to discuss matters that need to be addressed at speed. It is also easier to ensure councillors are able to contribute to the debate on such matters in this smaller group setting.	One of the key reasons the CfGS report recommends the creation of an Executive Committee is that it is difficult to make decisions and have the space for members to debate them fully with such a large numbers of councillors on an FRA. However, this is less applicable in an authority with a comparatively small number of members.
With fewer members on the Executive Committee than the full Fire Authority, there is a reduced chance of a conflict of interest arising due to members	Risk of centralising power in the hands of those on the Executive Committee. There is a risk that this committee's decision-making mandate could give a small

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<p>exercising both decision-making and scrutiny roles.</p>	<p>number of councillors too much influence over the Fire Authority and deprive those outside of it of their voice, as full Fire Authority delegates away most of its decision making. The reduced decision-making powers of councillors not on the Executive Committee could result in them being disenfranchised and having little involvement in the functions of the Fire Authority. This lack of member engagement was highlighted as an existing issue in the CfGS report.</p>
<p>There would also be a clearer demarcation of decision-making responsibilities from scrutiny responsibilities, allowing the Scrutiny Committee to more effectively hold decision making to account.</p>	<p>There is a risk that confusion could arise between the roles of the Executive Committee and the full Fire Authority. As the Fire Authority delegates some of its functions to the Executive Committee, it could become unclear to members where decision-making powers lie and what their individual role is. Some FRAs said this structure created duplication, in which the same discussions and decisions were happening at two separate committees.</p>
<p>The size of agendas at full Fire Authority meetings risks preventing proper scrutiny of each item. The Centre for Governance and Scrutiny (CfGS) report suggested members were “sighted” rather than proactively involved in decision making. The introduction of an Executive Committee would create the opportunity for smaller, more focused agendas and more considered decision making.</p>	<p>In a more politically balanced Fire Authority in which no one party had a majority and many were represented, it may be difficult to maintain political proportionality on the Executive Committee due to its smaller size. It may also be difficult for such a committee to function effectively if it is made up of a small number of councillors from different political parties who have widely diverging views on key policy matters.</p>
<p>While some FRAs said there was a risk of duplication, as both full Fire Authority and the Executive Committee debated and voted on certain issues, this could be</p>	<p>This option would not completely remove the chance of a conflict of interest. No structure could eliminate the possibility of a conflict of interest as there are not</p>

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<p>seen as a positive in that it allows for an extra layer of political oversight over key decisions.</p>	<p>enough councillors to ensure that no one member has both a decision-making role and a scrutiny role.</p>
<p>In a Fire Authority in which one party has a clear majority, it would be easy to maintain political proportionality on an Executive Committee. One would expect that in these circumstances such a committee would be able to quickly develop a common perspective on key policy areas and make decisions efficiently.</p>	<p>Taking forward this option would have resource implications. The Fire Authority would have to prepare for and organise additional meetings and councillors on the Executive Committee would have to commit additional time to their roles on it.</p>
	<p>It would be difficult to retain the independence of the Audit and Risk and Scrutiny Committees. Executive Committee members would not be able to serve on either of these committees, meaning there would be lots of overlap between the memberships of them.</p>

**Option 2: Do not establish an Executive Committee and retain the current structure**

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
<p>All members maintain their current say in decision making. Members would not have to cede their current role in policy making to an Executive Committee.</p>	<p>Making key policy decisions at meetings of the full Fire Authority means agendas are very heavy and members may not have the chance to fully debate critical decisions.</p>
<p>Familiar structure with established processes. Members of the Fire Authority would not have to adapt to and learn a new process.</p>	<p>Whereas focusing decision making in a smaller Executive Committee would give members time to scrutinise proposals in greater detail.</p>
<p>No additional pressures on resource. Retaining the current structure would prevent the additional burden on the Fire Authority and its members that</p>	<p>Preserving the current model could prevent the Fire Authority becoming more agile in its decision making. Without an Executive Committee to deal with certain policy matters, many decisions have to go</p>

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facilitating, preparing for and attending extra meetings would create.	through the full Fire Authority. This can lead to a less agile process, in which it is not possible to make decisions on urgent matters as quickly as is needed for the effective functioning of the Fire Service.
There would be no issue maintaining political balance on the authority, as there would still be 15 members which would be easier to split between different parties.	
Role of the PCC and Co-opted members remains clear, without risk they are left out of ability to scrutinise decision making.	

**Executive Committee Models**

1. If Option 1 is recommended, this section outlines two different models that the FRA could choose to adopt. In both models, the scrutiny committee would have a key role in holding the committee to account and where necessary calling-in decisions.
2. Option 1 is a maximalist Executive Committee that contains seven councillors and takes on the vast majority of decision making, including most ASAC responsibilities and all but statutory responsibilities from the FRA.
3. Option 2 is a minimalist model that contains five members and sees the Executive Committee taking on some decisions, but leaves many to other committees and the full FRA. For instance, the ASAC would remain in place and retain its functions.
4. This section provides an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of these two options. Members will have the chance to explore these options in more detail if they choose to go ahead with forming an Executive Committee.

**Option 1 – Maximalist Executive Committee, 7 people**

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
Having more councillors on the committee will make it easier to balance	Having more councillors on the Executive Committee will lead to a lot of overlap in

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politically, particularly so in a situation where many parties are represented on the authority.	the membership of the Audit and Risk Committee and the Scrutiny Committee. This is because there will be a smaller pool of councillors available to make up these two communities, given no one councillor can serve on the Executive Committee and one of these two committees.
There will be more councillors available to do the work of the Executive Committee, meaning it can get more done and dig into key decisions more thoroughly.	This option would have extra resource implications, as it would see more councillors required to do the additional work required to sit on the Executive Committee.
Having more councillors will enable the committee to take on more decision-making powers, helping the authority to become more agile and quicker in its decision-making process.	This option could more fully disenfranchise councillors not on this committee, as most decisions would be taken away from them.
This should create more capacity for considered debate on key issues.	Associated with this is the risk of concentrating a lot of power in the hands of the seven Executive Committee members and giving too little a say to the rest of the members on the authority.
The chances of duplication between the Executive Committee and the full FRA would be reduced as the Executive Committee would be taking on most of the decisions.	This would reduce the opportunity for extra scrutiny of key decisions that having both bodies look at them would create.

**Option 2 – Minimalist Executive Committee**

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
With fewer members on the Executive Committee, there will be less of an overlap between the memberships of the Audit and Risk Committee and the Scrutiny Committee.	It will be more difficult to politically balance a smaller Executive Committee, particularly in an authority in which many different political parties are represented.

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There will be a potential resource benefit, as fewer councillors will have to commit time to this extra role on the authority.	There will be fewer councillors available to do the work of the Executive Committee.
Fewer councillors will be disenfranchised, as many powers will remain with the full FRA. This will help to retain the purpose of full authority meetings and ASAC.	The authority may be less agile in its decision making, as fewer decisions would be made by this smaller committee.
The opportunity for additional scrutiny of key decisions would be increased as both bodies would get the chance to look at them.	There would be fewer resources available to thoroughly debate and consider decisions being made at the Executive Committee.
	The chances of duplication between the Executive Committee and the full FRA would be increased as the Executive Committee would have less decision-making power and may end up spending time debating decisions that ultimately have to be made at full FRA meetings.

**Further considerations**

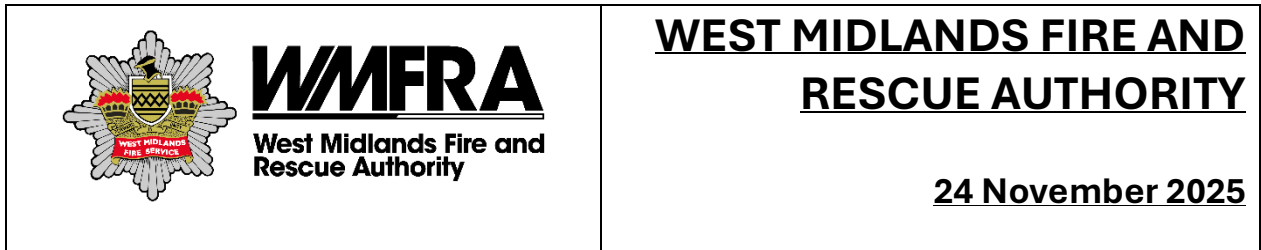
1. Some other FRAs who have an Executive Committee have Lead Members who specialise in different policy areas – for instance Finance, Community Risk Management Planning and Strategic Assets. They report on progress in their areas to full FRA or the Executive Committee itself, but do not (and cannot) have executive decision making powers.

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
This would have the advantage of putting a particular focus on each policy area and ensuring councillors were regularly updated on the work of different parts of the fire service.	This move would create extra items at Executive Committee and full FRA meetings, which could clutter them and risk exacerbating a problem of members being “sighted” regarding key decisions rather than being proactively involved in making them.

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<p>It may also create subject matter experts on particular policy areas among members of the Executive Committee, with more ability to challenge officers and ensure good decisions are being made.</p>	<p>It also risks creating silos, in which Lead Members are experts on their policy area but other councillors leave the detail to them and disengage from their role on the Executive Committee and the authority more broadly.</p>
	<p>A Lead Member model also risks creating a situation in which councillors and those outside of the organisation believe Lead Members to have cabinet-style executive powers – in which they have delegated power to take certain key decisions. In practice, this would not be the case and they would have no more formal power to dictate policy in a given area than any other member of the Executive Committee.</p>





**GOVERNANCE IMPROVEMENT PLAN – MEMBER ROLE DESCRIPTION,  
CORE TASKS AND FRA PAPER FORMAT**  
For DECISION

**Principal Officer: Chief Fire Officer**  
**Report of the Interim Clerk to the Authority**  
**Author: Interim Clerk to the Authority**

**1. PURPOSE**

- 1.1. To gain final member approval for three updated documents progressed as part of the WMFRA’s Governance Improvement Plan which was approved on 16 June 2025.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1. That members approve the updated Member Role Description outlined in **Appendix A**, for adoption into the WMFRA Constitution as part of the wider review of that document due in February 2026, and for sharing with constituent Authorities.
- 2.2. That members approve the updated Core Tasks of the Authority as outlined in **Appendix B**, for adoption into the WMFRA Constitution as part of the wider review of that document due in February 2026.
- 2.3. That members approve the updated Authority paper template outlined in **Appendix C**, for adoption for all future FRA and Committee meetings not already published.

**3. OBJECTIVES & EXPECTED OUTCOMES**

- 3.1. The WMFRA Governance Improvement Plan included a number of actions relation to strengthening governance, authority purpose

and member roles. This paper resolves a number of these, identified below;

<b>1. Strengthen Committee Governance</b>	
Action	Accountable Officer and Member
d) Simplify reports and communications to sharpen decision-making, including clear guidance for officers/authors.	Interim Clerk/Fire Authority Chair  Key contact: Interim Clerk
<b>2. Clarify purpose and strategic oversight of the Authority</b>	
a) Define a set of core strategic tasks for the Authority and committees, guided by the Fire and Rescue National Framework and Authority Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP).  Once agreed, embed understanding of these roles with members and officers through workshops and development process.	Chief Fire Officer/Fire Authority Chair  Key contact: Fire Authority Chair
<b>3. Enhance member and officer capability and development</b>	
f) Introduce a more detailed member role description, to include skills and expertise requirements and expectations.  Ensure this is shared with all appointing Authorities and prospective members.	Interim Clerk/Fire Authority Chair  Key Contact: Interim Clerk

4. **BACKGROUND – MEMBER ROLE DESCRIPTION**

- 4.1. WMFRA’s current member role description has been identified as lacking sufficient detail and is not closely linked to the constitution and requirements of documents such as the National Framework. Member roles are also separately described within the Constitution within Article 2 – Members of the Authority.
- 4.2. Officers engaged with members at a Member Engagement Forum on 8 September on this topic and have used the feedback to shape the draft role description included in **Appendix A**. Particular areas highlighted include further detail on the overall time commitments, required training commitments and clearer definition of specific roles, such as Committee Chair or Section 41 member. CGIB has also provided input and further refined roles and strengthened language throughout.
- 4.3. The single member role description now also includes members and co-opted members, S41 members, committee chairs, the Authority chair and party group leadership in one document so expectations are set for all members, and all members can understand other roles.
- 4.4. Efforts have been made to link the role to the draft member development strategy created with support from the LGA, as well as to key internal documents such as the Constitution and agreed Code of Conduct (which is based largely on the LGA Model Code).
- 4.5. Subject to approval this new role description will be used to inform Member Development, will be shared with constituent Authorities and be integrated with the revised Constitution for adoption in February 2026.

5. **BACKGROUND – CORE TASKS OF THE AUTHORITY**

- 5.1. West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority is required to undertake specific roles as set out in legislation and within the Fire and Rescue National Framework. Under section 21 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 (“the 2004 Act”), the Secretary of State must prepare a Fire and Rescue National Framework. Every fire and

rescue authority must have regard to the Framework in carrying out their functions and must publish an annual statement of assurance of compliance with the Framework. The latest National Framework was published in 2018.

- 5.2. Set out within the National Framework is a requirement to put in place a Community Risk Management Plan, which sets out the full range of foreseeable risks that might impact the local communities of the West Midlands, and how the service will address and mitigate them. The current WMFRA CRMP was agreed in February 2024 and runs until 2027.
- 5.3. The current strategic role of the Authority is outlined in the Constitution, and especially “Article 6 – The Authority”. Article 6 specifically outlines the matters reserved the authority and covers some of the relevant matters from the National Framework and CRMP but not in a comprehensive or structured manner. It is predominantly focused on describing in detail the limits of decision making by the Authority and does not include full details of the Authority’s roles in terms of scrutiny and assurance.
- 5.4. The revised core strategic tasks, outlined in **Appendix B** are designed to be more comprehensive and more explicitly linked to the Authority’s role as set out within the National Framework. It also includes which of those core roles have been delegated to Committees.
- 5.5. The draft strategic task list is deliberately linked to the drafted update to the Member Role Description, which also includes key tasks for members and individual office holders. These two documents will inform the member induction and training process.

## 6. **BACKGROUND – AUTHORITY PAPER TEMPLATE**

- 6.1. The current Authority paper format was updated in June 2025, to provide a more comprehensive approach to the information provided to members in meetings and provide more guidance to authors. The same format is used for all Authority and Committee meetings. In particular, effort has been made to align Authority and Senior Leadership Team paper formats such that decisions made

at SLT which require Authority approval or input can be escalated in much the same format to ensure continuity of decision making.

6.2. Following recommendations from the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny Review and member and CGIB feedback, some additional changes are proposed (**Appendix C**) to further strengthen the report writing and approval process, and ensure members are provided with appropriate information to guide decision making and scrutiny. The changes made include;

- 6.2.1. Ensuring all papers provide more than one option for consideration when making recommendations.
- 6.2.2. Including CRMP alignment as well as Strategy alignment
- 6.2.3. Including Corporate Risk Implications within the Impact Assessments
- 6.2.4. Redrafting the Financial Implications guidance to report authors to improve quality of information provided
- 6.2.5. Adding sign off boxes for all Statutory Officers

## 7. **STRATEGY ALIGNMENT**

7.1. Effective governance is critical to the delivery of all elements of the Authority's Strategy. Clearer Authority and elected membership roles are designed to support members to better understand their role in determining, overseeing and scrutinising the delivery of the strategy, and the changes to paper format are designed to ensure the information provided to members is most helpful.

## 8. **IMPACT ASSESSMENTS**

8.1. No equality impact assessment has been undertaken as all three papers do not relate to a change in policy or approach, but instead a clearer restating of existing responsibilities or roles. The changes to the paper format do not represent a significant change likely to impact on any protected groups.

## 9. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

9.1. The roles and responsibilities of elected members, and the functions of the Fire and Rescue Authority, are set out in various

pieces of legislation to include the Local Government Act 1972 and the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, as well as statutory guidance such as the National Fire and Rescue Service Framework. These have been considered in the creation of all three documents for approval.

**10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

10.1. There are no financial implications from this paper as none of these proposals will incur any additional cost.

**11. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

11.1. There are no environmental implications of this update report.

**12. CONSULTATION**

12.1. Consultation has been undertaken with Fire Authority members on all three areas through Member Engagement Forums between September and October 2025. The CGIB has also considered and provided comment on all three drafts both through its formal meetings and offline which have been incorporated into the drafts.

**13. BACKGROUND PAPERS & APPENDICES**

- Appendix A – Proposed Member Role Description
- Appendix B – Proposed Core Tasks for WMFRA
- Appendix C – Proposed updates to WMFRA Paper Format
- [WMFRA Constitution – June 2025](#)
- [Fire and Rescue Service National Framework](#)

Relevant Principal Officer	Simon Tuhill	Chief Fire Officer
Relevant Statutory Officer and Author	Tom Embury <a href="mailto:tom.embury@wmfs.net">tom.embury@wmfs.net</a>	Interim Clerk to the Authority

## WMFRA Member Role Description

### 1. **Role Purpose**

#### 1.1. **All members including co-opted members**

Fire Authority members must work collectively through the Authority and its Committees and Panels to provide effective governance and oversight in line with their statutory duties (specifically the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004) and the National Framework. This includes;

- A. Setting a strategic plan for what the Fire Service priorities and outcomes what it should achieve.
- B. Setting a budget to fund delivery of that strategic plan including a medium-term financial strategy, efficiency plan and reserves strategy
- C. Securing assurance that the strategy is being delivered, the service manages its budget effectively and achieves value for money
- D. Approving the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) and securing assurance that the service is effectively assessing all foreseeable fire and rescue risks that could affect the communities of the West Midlands through the CRMP.
- E. Securing assurance that the service is effectively delivering on its requirement to prevent, protect and respond to fires and other emergencies.
- F. Securing assurance that the service is effectively collaborating with other emergency services and partners and delivering an interoperable service.
- G. Securing assurance that the service is effectively contributing to national resilience and has effective business continuity processes in place
- H. Securing assurance that the service has an effective workforce strategy, training and staff support and provision, and delivers in line with nationally agreed professional standards.
- I. Actively support and seek assurance that the service engages fully and transparently with inspection processes as required.
- J. Hold the Chief Fire Officer to account for the exercise of their functions in line with the agreed scheme of delegation.

#### 1.2. **Section 41 members**

Members appointed as 'lead' members for their constituent council, under Section 41 of the Local Government Act 1985, will be required to answer questions put to them at meetings of their constituent council relating to the discharge of functions of the Fire and Rescue Authority.

#### 1.3. **Committee/Panel Chairs/Vice-Chairs**

The Authority has determined to deliver some aspects of its work through committees and panels. The role of the Chair (and in their absence the Vice-Chair) is to chair and coordinate the business of their respective committee/panel, support their members to ensure appropriate skills and understanding, and providing updates to Fire Authority on its work. Chairs should promote a political open discussion, managing meetings to cover all business and encouraging a candid approach from all participants and ensure the committee maintains focus on matters of greatest priority.

**1.4. Audit and Risk Committee Members**

Audit and Risk Committee members, including the Chair and Independent Members, are to provide oversight of a range of core governance and accountability arrangements, including corporate risk management. They must also be responsive to the recommendations of assurance providers including Internal and External Auditors and help to ensure robust control arrangements are maintained.

**1.5. Scrutiny Committee Members**

Scrutiny committee members are expected to provide oversight and scrutiny across a wide range of areas including human resources policy, performance, complaint handling, collaboration and much more. Members will also choose and undertake specific scrutiny reviews of areas of interest or concern. Members will act as a critical friend to officers and the wider authority over decision making and performance, supporting a culture of accountability and continuous improvement.

**1.6. Appointments, Standards and Appeals Members**

Appointments, Standards and Appeals committee has a wide remit to undertake the interviews for appointment of principal officers and statutory officers as required, to consider the outcomes of commissioned standards reviews and to hear stage 2 appeals under the Internal Dispute Resolution Procedure (IDPR) for the Firefighter Pension Schemes. The committee also has responsibility for reviewing and embedding the Authority's Member Development Strategy, and to hear appeals in relation to discipline of some senior managers.

**1.7. Joint Consultative Panel Members**

Members of the Joint Consultative Panel form an important part of the service's Employee Relations Framework. They will work alongside officers and representative bodies to make recommendations to the Authority or Chief Fire Officer on applications of terms and conditions or other employment or HR

related matters. Where necessary, the JCP has responsibility to refer to National Joint Council for consideration as necessary.

### 1.8. **Party Group Leads**

The lead member for each political party group represented on the authority is responsible for providing political leadership for their group and acting as that party's lead spokesperson.

### 1.9. **Authority Chair/Vice-Chair**

The Authority Chair (and in their absence the Vice-Chair) is responsible for providing the political and strategic leadership to the Fire Authority and its members. They are expected to foster a collegiate approach and ensure all authority business is conducted effectively and transparently. They will act as lead spokesperson for the Authority and ensure an ongoing engagement with all seven constituent local authorities throughout the year

## 2. **Key Tasks and Functions**

### 2.1. **All Members**

- A. Make collective decisions in line with the authority Constitution for the benefit of the whole community of the West Midlands with full consideration of relevant information, guidance and external factors.
- B. Maintain a good understanding of the Authority Constitution, Community Risk Management Plan and Authority Strategy, key fire and rescue service issues, policies and developments.
- C. Undertake effective and considered challenge and scrutiny of service strategy, budgets, policy, performance and officer decision making and behaviours.
- D. Attend and effectively participate in all meetings of the Authority and Committees or Outside Bodies to which they have been appointed, in line with the Standing Orders of the Authority as set out in the Constitution.
- E. Actively represent their local authority on the Authority and its committees
- F. Represent the Fire Authority and Service publicly at events.
- G. Proactively engage with the Authority Member Development Strategy and participate actively in all training and development activities.
- H. At all times adhere to the Authority's Code of Conduct, and challenge behaviour and from colleagues and officers that do not meet the standards set out in the Code.

### 2.2. **Co-opted members**

- A. Provide independent and expert challenge to the Authority in its decision making.
- B. Maintain a good understanding of the Authority Constitution, Community Risk Management Plan and Authority Strategy, key fire and rescue service issues, policies and developments.
- C. Undertake effective and considered challenge and scrutiny of service strategy, budgets, policy, performance and officer decision making and behaviours.
- D. Attend and effectively participate in all meetings of the Authority and Committees or Outside Bodies to which they have been appointed, in line with the Standing Orders of the Authority as set out in the Constitution.
- E. At all times adhere to the Authority's Code of Conduct, and challenge behaviour and from colleagues and officers that do not meet the standards set out in the Code.

### 2.3. **Section 41 members**

- A. Answer questions on the role, functions and performance of the Fire Authority within the respective home authority
- B. Provide regular, proactive updates on the work of the authority to the respective home authority's meetings.

### 2.4. **Committee/Panel Chairs/Vice-Chairs**

- A. Effectively chair meetings of the relevant committee in line with the Authority Standing Orders.
- B. Lead the committee/panel in ensuring it delivers against its terms of reference.
- C. Attend regular pre-meetings with relevant officers to support effective delivery of committee business.
- D. Provide written update reports to each full fire authority meeting on the work of their committee/panel.

### 2.5. **Party Group Leads**

- A. Support all party group members to engage with the Member Development Strategy through regular experience assessments and one-to-one meetings.
- B. Act as champion of the Nolan Principles and the Authority Code of Conduct within the party group

### 2.6. **Chair/Vice-Chair of the Fire Authority**

- A. Effectively chair meetings of the Authority and Members Engagement Forum in line with the Authority Standing Orders

- B. Act as champion of the Nolan Principles and the Authority Code of Conduct for the whole Fire Authority.
- C. Represent the Fire Authority at key public events, in the press and to WMFS staff.
- D. Provide regular public and staff communications on the work of the Authority.
- E. Meet regularly with the Chief Fire Officer and other Statutory Officers and ensure effective ongoing working relationships between the “Golden Triangle”.

### 3. **Experience and Skills**

#### 3.1. **All Members**

- A. Ability to question, challenge and scrutinise effectively and constructively
- B. Effective spoken and written communication skills
- C. Ability to analyse and digest complex information
- D. Excellent understanding of ethical conduct and the Nolan Principles.
- E. Respectful and courteous approach

#### 3.2. **Section 41 members**

- A. Excellent presentation and verbal communication skills
- B. Strong understanding of the specific fire services risks and proposals in relation to their local area.

#### 3.3. **All Committee/Panel Chairs/Vice-Chairs**

- A. Effective and confident chairing of meetings
- B. Effective forward planning

#### 3.4. **Audit and Risk Committee Chair/Vice-Chair**

- A. Strong understanding of audit principles
- B. Strong understanding of governance across the organisation
- C. Strong understanding of the Authority’s Risk Management Arrangements
- D. Apolitical, inquisitive and independent approach

#### 3.5. **Scrutiny Committee Chair/Vice-Chair**

- A. Strong understanding of scrutiny principles including effective questioning methods
- B. Strong understanding of the services policies and performance metrics
- C. Apolitical, inquisitive and independent approach.

#### 3.6. **ASA Committee Chair/Vice-Chair**

- A. Strong understanding of relevant recruitment and human resources policies to consider appeals and recruitment of senior leaders.
- B. Strong understanding of relevant pension legislation
- C. Strong understanding of the Authority's Code of Conduct, Standards processes and the Nolan Principles generally.

### 3.7. JCP Chair/Vice-Chair

- A. Strong understanding of the service's Employee Relations Framework
- B. Strong understanding of relevant terms and conditions and HR policies, including specifically the grievance and disciplinary processes.
- C. Collegiate and apolitical approach to working with officers and representative bodies
- D. Ability to resolve and mediate difficult conversations

### 3.8. Party Group Leads

- A. Ability to manage and support their group members, including undertaking regular appraisal processes.

### 3.9. Chair/Vice-Chair of the Fire Authority

- A. Effective and confident chairing of meetings
- B. Strategic and political leadership
- C. Strong written and spoken communication skills, including press and external communications.
- D. Broad knowledge of authority governance model, constitutional rules and relevant background legislation

## 4. Working arrangements and time commitments

Meeting/Role/Function	Occurrences per annum	Typical length (hours)	Online or in person?
Fire Authority Meetings	5	2-3	In Person
Member Engagement Forum	8-10	2	Mixed
Audit and Risk Committee	5	2	In Person
Scrutiny Committee	5	2	In Person
Appointments, Standards and Appeals Committee	1 minimum but ad hoc as required	2-3	In Person
Joint Consultative Panel	4	1.5	Online
Fire Station Visits	2 minimum	2	In Person
Member Training	5-7 depending on role	2-3	Mixed
Please note:			

- Formal Authority business is typically arranged on Mondays between the hours of 9.30 and 17.00 at Fire Service Headquarters in central Birmingham.
- Members will also be invited to optional events such as formal ceremonies, awards evenings, service celebrations and station open days which will occur on weekends and evenings
- Members may be required to attend further extraordinary meetings or briefings at short notice.

#### 5. **Further Reading/Background Documents**

- [Fire Service National Framework](#)
- [LGA Fire Authority Members Guide](#)
- WMFRA Member Code of Conduct
- WMFRA Constitution

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## Appendix A

## West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority – Core Strategic Tasks and Delegations

Task	Aspects delegated
<b>Setting Strategic Direction and Budget</b>	
Agree and regularly review the strategic plan for Fire Service put forward by officers including priorities and outcomes that it should achieve.	
Agree the annual budget put forward by officers to fund delivery of the strategic plan including a medium-term financial strategy, efficiency and productivity plan and reserves strategy.	
Approve significant changes to the way the service uses its estate and assets and scrutinise the effective use of those resources.	
Approve significant changes to either the strategy or budget including significant new expenditure in line with the Authority's Financial Regulations.	
Actively scrutinise and challenge the delivery of the strategy effective budget management and value for money.	Audit and Risk Committee have delegated responsibility to
Regularly monitor and scrutinise delivery against the strategic plan, including delivery against agreed performance metrics	Scrutiny Committee have delegated responsibility for various areas of performance and project scrutiny.
Regularly review and update the Authority's Constitution and other key governance documents.	
<b>Community Risk Management Planning</b>	
Scrutinise the development of, approve and ensure the publication of the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) as developed by officers.	Scrutiny Committee provide scrutiny of the CRMP process and content ahead of consideration by Full Authority.
Actively scrutinise and challenge the service to ensure it is effectively assessing all foreseeable fire and rescue risks that could affect the communities of the West Midlands through the CRMP.	Audit and Risk Committee support the Authority to scrutinise the effectiveness of risk analysis

## Appendix A


Ensure and promote effective consultation with the public and key stakeholders on the CRMP and at all other times as required by legislation, regulations and the service's external consultation policy.	
<b>Assurance against key functions</b>	
Actively scrutinise and challenge the service to ensure it is effectively delivering on the requirement to prevent, protect and respond to fires and other emergencies.	Scrutiny Committee and Audit and Risk Committee have various delegated responsibilities to support the full authority in this scrutiny and challenge role.
Actively scrutinise and challenge the service to ensure it is effectively collaborating with other emergency services and partners and delivering an interoperable service.	Scrutiny Committee has specific delegated responsibility for assessing the effectiveness of partnerships, interoperability and collaboration.
Actively scrutinise and challenge the service to ensure it is effectively contributing to national resilience and has effective business continuity processes are in place in line with requirements of the CCA.	
Actively scrutinise the service's people/workforce strategy, including the provision of appropriate training and staff welfare support and provision, and delivers in line with nationally agreed professional standards.	Scrutiny Committee has overall delegated responsibility for scrutiny of the service's People and HR policies and plans.
Scrutinise officers on the effective identification, monitoring and mitigation of corporate risks..	Fully delegated to Audit and Risk Committee
Scrutinise the effectiveness of the service's complaint handling process.	Fully delegated to Scrutiny Committee, with annual complaint handling report provided to full Authority.
<b>Key publications and Transparency</b>	
Publish all relevant papers and minutes of authority business within relevant statutory timelines.	
Ensure public access to authority business, policies and documentation except where specifically exempted.	

## Appendix A

Publish all documentation required by law including Annual Statement of Assurance, Annual Pay Policy Statement, Annual Governance Statement and Annual Statements of Accounts.	
Scrutinise the service and authority's compliance with the Local Government Transparency Code	Fully delegated to Scrutiny Committee
<b>Conduct and Ethics</b>	
Approve and implement a comprehensive member Code of Conduct	Standards Committee has delegated responsibility to review and update the Code of Conduct for Full Authority approval.
Ensure effective investigation and action in cases of breaches of the Code of Conduct	Standards Committee has delegated role to hear outcomes of standards investigations commissioned by the Monitoring Officer.
Support an effective disciplinary and appeals process for principal and statutory officers	Standards and Appeals Committee has delegated responsibility
<b>Holding Officers to account</b>	
Hold the Chief Fire Officer, as Head of Paid Service, the Monitoring Officer, Section 151 Officer and Clerk to account for the effective delivery of their roles,	All Committees also responsible for this in line with their Terms of reference.
Hold to account all other officers acting under delegated authority on behalf of the Chief Fire Officer, Monitoring Officer or Section 151 Officer.	All Committees also responsible for this in line with their Terms of reference.
Undertake effective recruitment of Principal and Statutory Officers in line with the Constitution and Service and Authority recruitment policy	Appointments Committee have delegated responsibility to interview and recommend for appointment all such roles.
<b>Pensions</b>	
Hear Stage 2 Appeals under the Pensions Act 1995	Full delegated to Appeals Committees



**For FRA purposes only if exempt** - Exempt under Paragraph [XXX] of the Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006

 <p><b>WMFRA</b> West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority</p>	<p><b>WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY /COMMITTEE NAME</b></p> <p><b>[DATE]</b></p>
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**[TITLE]**

For **[DECISION, DISCUSSION, INFORMATION]**

Principal Officer: **[RELEVANT PRINCIPAL OFFICER]**

Report of the **[RELEVANT SLT MEMBER]**

Author: **[RELEVANT AUTHOR]**

*All Authority papers require sign off by the relevant Principal Officer, Monitoring Officer, Section 151 Officer and Clerk. This should be recorded within the table at the end of the paper.*

1. **PURPOSE**

1.1. *Succinctly describe the purpose of the discussion or consideration in no more than two or three sentences.*

2. **RECOMMENDATIONS [FOR NOTING]**

2.1. *Clearly outline each recommendation you are asking the authority/committee to take. Matters may be for decision, discussion or to note. E.g. That the [authority/committee/forum] approve the proposed changes highlighted in Appendix 1.*

2.1.2.2. *Ensure multiple options are provided to members, even if that is simply to offer the option to “do nothing” except where that is impossible.*

3. **OBJECTIVES & EXPECTED OUTCOMES**

**For FRA purposes only if exempt** - Exempt under Paragraph [XXX] of the Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006

3.1. *Please clearly state the objectives and therefore expected outcomes of the recommendation(s). Please also set out any relevant timelines in terms of achieving the stated objectives.*

#### 4. **BACKGROUND**

4.1. *Provide relevant background information to support the decision making. This should be short, objective and to the point, with additional information provided within background papers or appendices.*

4.2. *Please include **all** options that have been considered **including and in** addition to the recommendation(s) listed in item 2.1., along with any identified risks and issues and rationale for not pursuing the option(s).*

#### 5. **STRATEGY AND CRMP ALIGNMENT**

**5.1.** *State how the recommendation(s) would support the delivery of the Organisational Strategy, and what impact this may have.*

**5.1.5.2.** *State how the recommendation(s) would support or impact upon the risks identified within Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP).*

5.2. *Outline the business benefits that could potentially be realised if the proposal receives approval.*

#### 6. **IMPACT ASSESSMENTS**

**6.1.** *EIA: State whether an initial or full EIA has been undertaken or will need to be undertaken and any identified impacts thus far.*

**6.1.6.2.** *Risk implications: Include analysis of any implications for the Corporate Risk Register and its mitigations.*

#### 7. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

~~For FRA purposes only if exempt~~ - Exempt under Paragraph [XXX] of the Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006

- 7.1. *Provide any relevant legal implications, which should be considered in consultation with the Monitoring Officer or relevant legal advisors. If none: - 'There are no legal implications arising from the content of this report.*

## 8. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- ~~8.1.—Provide any relevant financial implications—in particular any budgetary costs or savings to be produced by any decisions made. This should be prepared in consultation with the Section 151 Officer/Treasurer. If none: - 'There are no financial implications arising from the content of this report.~~

The report should:

### 8.1. The Report should:

- 8.1.1. Identify any costs or income associated with the proposals and state whether these are revenue or capital  
8.1.2. Identify whether the costs or income fall within the existing approved budgets of the Authority  
8.1.3. If they do not, state clearly how any unbudgeted cost will be funded or unbudgeted income will be accounted for.

## 9. **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1. *State whether environmental impacts have been considered or are not relevant. If none: - 'There are no environmental implications arising from the content of this report.*

## 10. **CONSULTATION [Delete if not required]**


- 10.1 *Please list all consultation with relevant bodies, organisations or individuals.*
- 10.2 *Please specify where direct consultation has occurred with representative bodies and any outcomes that have occurred from those discussions as appropriate.*

## 11. **BACKGROUND PAPERS & APPENDICES**

**For FRA purposes only if exempt** - Exempt under Paragraph [XXX] of the Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006

*Provide a list of relevant background information in the form of appended documents or links (only use links to publicly accessible documents or webpages). Appendices can be submitted alongside the main report for publication. Please clearly label the appendices accordingly.*

Relevant Principal Officer	[Insert name and contact details – email or number]	[Insert Job title]
Relevant SLT Member	[Insert name and contact details – email or number]	[Insert Job title]
Report Author	[Insert name]	[Insert Job title]
<b>Sign Off</b>		
<b>Monitoring Officer</b>	<b>Section 151 Officer</b>	<b>Clerk</b>

 <p><b>WMFRA</b> West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority</p>	<p><b><u>WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY</u></b></p> <p><b><u>24 November 2025</u></b></p>
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**GOVERNANCE IMPROVEMENT PLAN – AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE  
MODEL AND CO-OPTED MEMBERS**  
For **DECISION**

**Principal Officer: Chief Fire Officer**  
**Report of the Interim Clerk to the Authority**  
**Author: Interim Clerk to the Authority**

**1. PURPOSE**

- 1.1. To allow members to determine whether to appoint an independent Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee, to agree updates to the Audit and Risk Terms of Reference, and to consider how to fill the currently vacant Co-opted post and whether further Co-opted roles should be added to the Authority membership.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1. That members either;
- 2.1.1. Approve the appointment of an Independent Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee, as recommended by the Corporate Governance Improvement Board (CGIB), with job description and recruitment process to be developed for consideration by the FRA in February 2026 and recruitment for appointment from June 2026, or
  - 2.1.2. Maintain the current elected member model of Audit and Risk Committee Chairing, with two independent members of the committee.
- 2.2. That members approve the draft Terms of Reference of the Audit and Risk Committee agreed by the Committee on 20 October

(**Appendix A**), to be adopted as part of wider review of Constitution in February 2026. This terms of reference to be further modified as from the June 2026 AGM if option 2.1.1 is approved.

- 2.3. That members approve the appointment of between one and three additional co-opted member from the options outlined within section 5.3 and considering the recommendations of the Corporate Governance Improvement Board (CGIB), outlined within sections 5.4 and 5.5.
- 2.4. That members agree a delegation to the Interim Clerk, in consultation with the Section 151 Officer and Monitoring Officer, to undertake an advertising and recruitment process or approach relevant bodies as appropriate to identify potential candidates for co-option to be considered and agreed at a future Fire and Resuce Authority, for appointment from the June 2026 AGM.

**3. OBJECTIVES & EXPECTED OUTCOMES**

- 3.1. These paper is intended to support the Authority to address a number of the actions within its Governance Improvement Plan, specifically;

<b>4. Improve the function of the Audit and Risk Committee</b>	
<b>Action</b>	<b>Accountable Officer and Member</b>
a) Scope feasibility of an independent Audit and Risk Committee Chair. Consider appropriate remuneration for this post.	S151 Officer/Fire Authority Chair Key Contact: S151 Officer
e) Review and consider the future role of Independent Members of the Audit Committee to include; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The number of such Members (and whether this includes an Independent Chair as per 4.a above)</li> <li>• Role specification</li> </ul>	Interim Clerk/Fire Authority Chair Key Contact: Interim Clerk

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appropriate remuneration</li> </ul>	
<b>1. Strengthen Committee Governance</b>	
<p>e) Expanded independent expertise through the appointment of additional Independent/Co-Opted Members with appropriate expertise, to Authority and Committees</p>	<p>Chair/Interim Clerk Key contact: Interim Clerk</p>

3.2. This paper also supports the Authority to meet its requirement, as set out with the Constitution, and in line with good practice, to regularly review the Terms of Reference of its committees.

4. **BACKGROUND – AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE MODEL**

4.1. Audit and Risk Committees are a recommended feature of local authority governance, and CIPFA makes specific recommendations about how such a committee should be structured and its membership formed. This includes a specific recommendation that Audit Committees include least two independent members, to provide appropriate technical expertise.

4.2. Some Authorities take this further to appoint an Independent Chair of their Audit Committee. Although CIPFA’s guidance does not recommend an independent chair, it does emphasise that the chairs of Audit Committees should be “strong, independently minded” and “display [...] a depth of knowledge, skills, and interest.”

4.3. The approach across FRAs, Local Authorities and Combined Authorities is mixed. Three of the seven constituent local authorities in the West Midlands utilise an independent chair, alongside the West Midlands Combined Authority. Only one stand-alone Fire Authority uses this model, with several not including any independent members on their audit committee.

4.4. There is therefore no standardised description for the role of an Independent Chair. Examples from Local Authorities are linked within the background papers in Section 12, but

- 4.4.1. Requirement to not be (or have been for a set period) a member or officer of the authority or any constituent authority or closely related to anyone who is.
  - 4.4.2. Demonstrable experience of independence and impartiality, commitment to the Nolan Principles
  - 4.4.3. Strong communication and leadership skills
  - 4.4.4. Ability to understand, interpret and question complex information
  - 4.4.5. Knowledge and experience of chairing and managing meetings at a senior, corporate environment.
  - 4.4.6. Knowledge and experience of corporate governance, control, audit, risk management and financial processes
  - 4.4.7. Professional accountancy, audit or risk management qualifications (normally desirable)
- 4.5. The Independent Chair would take the position of one of the two proposed independent members, and the membership of the Authority, to include Vice-Chair, would remain the same. Like the existing independent member role, the chair would serve for a term of four years before requiring reappointment.
- 4.6. The Audit and Risk Committee have also, as part of its regular review of its Terms of Reference agreed a number of changes to better align the terms of reference with the CIPFA Position Statement on Audit Committees in Local Government and Police. This includes a change to require the committee to have two independent members. These proposed changes are outlined within Appendix A for member approval. They would need to be further modified were the Authority to decide to appoint an Independent Chair of the committee.
- 4.7. The Authority's CGIB considered this option as part of its meeting on 31 October 2025 and recommended that the Authority should

appoint an Independent Chair of Audit and Risk.

- 4.8. It is the view of the CGIB that this would support the independence and effective operation of the Audit and Risk Committee function and ensure appropriate skills and expertise on the committee on a longer-term basis. It was also felt it would ensure continuity for the committee's functions, which would be particularly important where the membership of the Authority as a whole, and by extension of its committees, is likely to change significantly on a yearly basis.

5. **BACKGROUND – CO-OPTED MEMBER OPTIONS**

- 5.1. Co-option is a mechanism by which an Authority can bring additional expertise and experience into its meetings and deliberations, in particular addressing skills gaps which may exist amongst elected members. As unelected members, co-opted members do not have voting rights but can contribute to all public and private work of the Authority and any committees to which they are appointed. They are expected to adhere to the same Code of Conduct as elected members and their role is outlined within the Constitution.
- 5.2. WMFRA have already successfully operated a co-opted member model since June 2018 when it was adopted as part of wider changes to the Authority's governance, including a reduction in the number of elected members. The Authority has one current co-opted member serving on the Authority and Scrutiny Committee, and one position currently vacant.
- 5.3. Based on engagement with WMFRA members through Member Engagement Forums, the identified areas for improvement within the Governance Improvement Plan, and consideration of key regional stakeholders, the following options for additional co-opted members are proposed;
- 5.3.1. Co-opted Member – Legal: Reserved for an individual with appropriate local government legal experience and relevant legal training and expertise.

- 5.3.2. Co-opted Member – Finance: Reserved for an individual with appropriate local government finance experience and relevant finance training and expertise. Should members agree to the appointment of an independent Chair of Audit and Risk, it may be deemed unnecessary to appoint this role.
- 5.3.3. Co-opted Member – WMCA: Reserved for an officer or appointed/elected representative of the West Midlands Combined Authority as a key local stakeholder, and in recognition of the government’s devolution agenda.
- 5.4. The CGIB have considered this matter as part of its meeting on 31 October 2025 and have recommended that the Authority appoint at least one further co-opted member to fill the current vacancy and specifically supports the appointment of co-opted member(s) with legal and/or finance expertise. The CGIB offered no view on the number of co-opted members the Authority may wish to appoint.
- 5.5. The CGIB recommends that members ensure any co-opted members are appointed with a remit to serve the whole of the West Midlands as a member of the Authority, rather than as a representative of any specific organisation or group.

## 6. **STRATEGY ALIGNMENT**

- 6.1. Effective oversight to governance, risk and financial reporting are a core part of the effective delivery of the Authority’s Strategy. Audit and Risk Committee, under its current terms of reference, are responsible for oversight of a number of key areas identified within the strategy, including financial efficiency and effective management of risk.
- 6.2. Co-opted members bring additional expertise to the functioning of the full Authority and its committees, which collectively have responsibility for the development, approval, scrutiny and implementation of the authority strategy in its entirety.

## 7. **IMPACT ASSESSMENTS**

- 7.1. An initial Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken regarding the recruitment processes for Co-opted members and the potential recruitment of an Independent Chair of Audit and Risk. In both cases, it will be important to ensure such processes adhere to WMFS recruitment policy and ensures equality of opportunity and equal access throughout the recruitment process. The Clerk, in developing the recruitment materials and undertaking recruitment processes, will consult the service Diversity, Equality and Inclusion team to ensure a fair and equitable approach.
- 7.2. A full EIA will be completed to support the recruitment processes, subject to WMFRA approval.

## 8. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1. While WMFRA are not required in law to have an audit committee, it does have various statutory duties relating to financial reporting, governance, and audit, and CIPFA recommend that an Audit Committee oversee these duties.
- 8.2. There is no legal requirement to have an independent chair of Audit Committees, or for the chair to be an elected member. However, CIPFA Guidance recommends that an Audit Committee have at least two independent members to ensure appropriate skill mix and independence.
- 8.3. There is also no requirement to have co-opted members. Such members cannot have voting rights as unelected members.

## 9. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1. An Independent Chair of Audit and Risk Committee, if appointed, would be expected to receive a specific Special Responsibility Allowance alongside reasonable expenses.
- 9.2. Table 1 below provides details of current allowances paid to independent Audit and Risk chairs from other Local Authorities, FRAs and Combined Authorities, where they exist. The table also

includes the allowance currently paid to the elected Chair of Audit and Risk Committee. Given the current allowance paid is at the upper end of the range of comparable roles, it is unlikely any proposed allowance would significantly increase and therefore represent an additional cost to the FRA. Any proposal for this allowance would be subject to consideration by the Independent Remuneration Panel due to meet in early 2026.

*Table 1 – Example Independent Chair Costs*

Authority	Annual Allowance
Birmingham City Council	£5,658
Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council	£4,465
Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council	£6,070
Humberside Fire and Rescue Authority	£1,789
Greater Manchester Combined Authority	£4,067 (last published data)
West Midlands Combined Authority	£10,003
West Yorkshire Combined Authority	£5,500
WMFRA Audit Committee Chair SRA	£8,575

9.3. It is proposed that any allowances to be paid to Co-opted members (currently zero), be considered as part of the forthcoming Independent Remuneration Panel considerations.

## 10. **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

10.1. There are no environmental implications of this update report.

## 11. **CONSULTATION**

11.1. These matters have been discussed informally with Authority members at Member Engagement Forums in September and October 2025.

11.2. Audit and Risk Committee considered its Terms of Reference at its meetings in July and October 2024, including approving the draft Terms of Reference outlined in **Appendix A**.

11.3. The Corporate Governance Improvement Board considered these matters at its meeting on 31 October and have made recommendations incorporated within this paper.

12. **BACKGROUND PAPERS & APPENDICES**

- **Appendix A** – Proposed updates to Audit and Risk Committee Terms of Reference
- Governance Improvement Plan - as at September 2025
- [CIPFA Positions Statement: Audit Committees in Local Government and Police](#)
- [Item 5 – Audit and Risk Committee Terms of Reference – Audit and Risk Committee 20 October 2025](#)
- [Birmingham City Council – Independent Audit Chair](#)
- [West Midlands Combined Authority – Independent Chair of Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee](#)
- [West Yorkshire Combined Authority - Independent Audit Chair](#)

Relevant Principal Officer	Simon Tuhill	Chief Fire Officer
Relevant Statutory Officer and Author	Tom Embury <a href="mailto:tom.embury@wmfs.net">tom.embury@wmfs.net</a>	Interim Clerk to the Authority



## Appendix A

## Appendix A – Draft Audit and Risk Committee Terms of Reference

### Article 8 - Audit and Risk Committee

#### 8.1 Purpose

8.1.1 The Authority has established an Audit and Risk Committee comprising five members, selected in accordance with current proportionality requirements with a quorum of three members. The Committee will meet a minimum of four times per year.

~~8.1.18.1.2~~ 8.1.2 The Audit and Risk Committee is a key component of the Authority's corporate governance, and is aligned to CIPFA guidance on the function of Audit Committees. It provides an independent and high-level focus on the audit, assurance and reporting arrangements that underpin good governance and financial standards.

8.1.3 The purpose of our Audit and Risk Committee is to provide independent assurance to the Members of the adequacy of the risk management framework and the internal control environment. It provides independent review of the governance, risk management and control frameworks and oversees the financial reporting and annual governance processes. It oversees internal audit and external audit together with financial and governance reports, helping to ensure efficient and effective assurance arrangements are in place for both internal challenge and public accountability.

8.1.4 The membership of the Audit and Risk Committee must maintain an independent, apolitical and inquiring approach, maintaining appropriate professional scepticism. This will require members to undertake regular training in order to demonstrate appropriate skills and understanding. Members must treat auditors, other members and officers fairly, but be willing and able to challenge all of them when required.

~~8.1.28.1.5~~

#### 8.2 Independence

8.2.1 The Audit and Risk Committee must be able to provide objective oversight and its role as an advisory committee means it must have sufficient independence and its opinions must carry weight with all those charged with governance.

8.2.2 To support this the committee has rights of access to and the ability to engage with other committees/functions, for example scrutiny committee. The Committee has the right to request specific reports and seek assurances from any relevant officer on area within its areas of responsibility.

## Appendix A

8.2.3 In order to reinforce the independence of the Committee, and in line with CIPFA recommendations, the Authority shall appoint two independent members to the Committee:

- a) The role of an Independent Member is to assist members of the Committee in providing independent assurance of the adequacy of the Authority's risk management framework and associated control environment, independent scrutiny of the Authority's financial and non-financial performance to the extent that it affects the authority's exposure to risk and weakens the control environment and overseeing the Authority's financial reporting process.
- b) The appointments are reviewed on a four-yearly basis.

### **8.28.3** Role and functions - Governance, risk and control

8.2.18.3.1 To review the Authority's corporate governance arrangements against the good governance framework and consider annual governance reports and assurances.

8.2.28.3.2 To review the annual governance statement prior to approval and consider whether it properly reflects the risk environment and supporting assurances, taking into account internal audit's opinion on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the Authority's framework of governance, risk management and control.

8.3.3 To support a comprehensive understanding of governance across the authority and among all those charged with governance.

8.3.4 To actively promote the Nolan Principles and NFCC/LGA Core Code of Ethics throughout the corporate governance process.

8.2.38.3.5 To consider the Authority's arrangements to secure value for money and review assurances and assessments on the effectiveness of these arrangements.

8.2.48.3.6 To consider the Authority's framework of assurance and ensure that it adequately addresses the risks and priorities of the Authority.

8.2.58.3.7 To monitor the effective development and operation of risk management in the Authority.

8.2.68.3.8 To monitor progress in addressing risk-related issues reported to the Committee.

8.2.78.3.9 To consider reports on the effectiveness of internal controls and monitor the implementation of agreed actions.

8.2.88.3.10 To review the assessment of fraud risks and potential harm to the Authority from fraud and corruption.

## Appendix A

~~8.2.98.3.11~~ To monitor the counter-fraud strategy, actions and resources.

~~8.2.108.3.12~~ To review the governance and assurance arrangements for significant partnerships or collaborations.

### ~~8.3.18.4~~ **Role and functions - Internal Audit**

~~8.3.18.4.1~~ To approve the internal audit charter.

~~8.3.28.4.2~~ To review proposals made in relation to the appointment of external providers of internal audit services and to make recommendations.

~~8.3.38.4.3~~ To approve the risk based internal audit plan, including internal audit's resource requirements, the approach to using other sources of assurance and any work required to place reliance upon those other sources.

~~8.3.48.4.4~~ To approve significant interim changes to the risk-based internal audit plan and resource requirements.

~~8.3.58.4.5~~ To make appropriate enquiries of both management and the head of internal audit to determine if there are any inappropriate scope or resource limitations.

~~8.3.68.4.6~~ To consider reports from the head of internal audit on internal audit's performance during the year, including the performance of external providers of internal audit services. These will include:

- a) Updates on the work of internal audit including key findings, issues of concern and actions in hand as a result of internal audit work.
- b) Regular reports on the results of the quality assurance and improvement programme;
- c) Reports on instances where the internal audit function does not conform to the [Code of Practice for the Governance of Internal Audit in UK Local Government Public Sector Internal Audit Standards](#) and [Local Government Application Note](#), [Global Internal Audit Standards in the UK Public Sector Application note](#), considering whether the non-conformance is significant enough that it must be included in the annual governance statement.

~~8.3.78.4.7~~ To consider the head of internal audit's annual report:

- a) The statement of the level of conformance with the [Code of Practice for the Governance of Internal Audit in UK Local Government Public Sector Internal Audit Standards](#) and [Global Internal Audit Standards in the UK Public Sector Application note](#), [Local Government Application Note](#) and the results of the quality assurance and improvement programme that supports the statement - these will indicate the reliability of the conclusions of internal audit.

## Appendix A

- b) The opinion on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the Authority's framework of governance, risk management and control together with the summary of the work supporting the opinion - these will assist the committee in reviewing the annual governance statement.

~~8.3.88.4.8~~ 8.3.88.4.8 To consider summaries of specific internal audit reports as requested.

~~8.3.98.4.9~~ 8.3.98.4.9 To receive reports outlining the action taken where the head of internal audit has concluded that management has accepted a level of risk that may be unacceptable to the authority or there are concerns about progress with the implementation of agreed actions.

~~8.3.108.4.10~~ 8.3.108.4.10 To contribute to the quality assurance and improvement programme and in particular, to the external quality assessment of internal audit that takes place at least once every five years.

~~8.3.118.4.11~~ 8.3.118.4.11 To consider a report on the effectiveness of internal audit to support the annual governance statement, where required to do so by the Accounts and Audit Regulations.

~~8.3.128.4.12~~ 8.3.128.4.12 **Ensure the independence of the internal audit function and** ~~To~~ consider any impairments to independence or objectivity arising from additional roles or responsibilities outside of internal auditing of the head of internal audit. ~~-~~ To approve and periodically review safeguards to limit such impairments.

~~8.3.138.4.13~~ 8.3.138.4.13 To provide free and unfettered access to the Audit and Risk Committee Chair for the Head of Internal Audit, including the opportunity for ~~a~~ private meetings with the Committee.

### **8.48.5** Role and functions - External Audit

~~8.4.18.5.1~~ 8.4.18.5.1 To consider the external auditor's annual letter, relevant reports, and the report to those charged with governance.

~~8.4.28.5.2~~ 8.4.28.5.2 To consider specific reports as agreed with the external auditor.

~~8.4.38.5.3~~ 8.4.38.5.3 To comment on the scope and depth of external audit work and to ensure it gives value for money.

~~8.4.48.5.4~~ 8.4.48.5.4 To commission work from internal and external audit.

~~8.4.58.5.5~~ 8.4.58.5.5 To advise, **support** and recommend on the effectiveness of relationships between external and internal audit and other inspection agencies or relevant bodies.

8.5.6 To support the independence of external audit through consideration of the external auditor's annual assessment of its independence and review of any issues raised by PSAA or the Authority's auditor panel as appropriate.

~~8.4.68.5.7~~ 8.4.68.5.7 **To meet privately and separately with the external auditor as required.**

## Appendix A

### 8-58.6 Role and functions - Financial Reporting

~~8-5-18.6.1~~ To review and approve the annual statement of accounts. Specifically, to consider whether appropriate accounting policies have been followed and whether there are concerns arising from the financial statements or from the audit that need to be brought to the attention of the Authority.

~~8-5-28.6.2~~ To consider the external auditor's report to those charged with governance on issues arising from the audit of the accounts.

### 8-68.7 Role and functions - Accountability arrangements

~~8-6-18.7.1~~ To report to those charged with governance on the Committee's findings, conclusions and recommendations concerning the adequacy and effectiveness of their governance, risk management and internal control frameworks, financial reporting arrangements, and internal and external audit functions.


~~8-6-28.7.2~~ To report to full Authority on a regular basis on the Committee's performance in relation to the terms of reference, and the effectiveness of the Committee in meeting its purpose and provide an annual report on the work of the Committee and submit its minutes to the Authority.

### 8.7—Independent Member

~~8.7.1—In order to reinforce the independence of the Committee, the Authority has appointed an independent member to the Committee:~~

- ~~a) —The role of the Independent Member is to assist members of the Committee in providing independent assurance of the adequacy of the Authority's risk management framework and associated control environment, independent scrutiny of the Authority's financial and non-financial performance to the extent that it affects the authority's exposure to risk and weakens the control environment and overseeing the Authority's financial reporting process:~~
- ~~b) —The appointment is reviewed on a four-year basis:~~



 <p><b>WMFRA</b> West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority</p>	<p><b><u>WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY</u></b></p> <p><b><u>24 NOVEMBER 2025</u></b></p>
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**REVIEW OF THE MEMBER DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY**  
**For DECISION**

**Principal Officer of the Chief Fire Officer**  
**Report of the Interim Clerk**  
**Author: Democratic Services Officer**

1. **PURPOSE**

- 1.1. To provide members with the opportunity to provide input into the draft Member Development Strategy that has been developed by Sarah Sprung, the Independent Peer from the Local Government Association on the Corporate Governance Improvement Board.

2. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1. That the authority **approve** the draft Member Development Strategy, found in **Appendix A** of this report including its appendices.
- 2.2. That the authority **approve** the implementation of a Member Development Steering Group and its Terms of Reference, found in Appendix
- 2.3. That the authority **approve** the draft Member Induction Programme, found in **Appendix B** of this report.

3. **OBJECTIVES & EXPECTED OUTCOMES**

- 3.1. The revised Member Development Strategy seeks to provide current and new members joining the Authority with the necessary skills and experience they need to fulfil their roles and responsibilities.

3.2. The work conducted by Sarah Sprung from the Local Government Association and Independent Peer on the Corporate Governance Improvement Board has aligned the strategy with best practice across the country. It also addresses the recommendations highlighted within the Authorities Improvement Plan agreed at Fire Authority in June 2025.

4. **BACKGROUND**

4.1. The Member Development Strategy was last revised and approved by the Authority in December 2024. Following a review conducted by Ed Hammond, from CFGS, his report highlighted some issues around the skills and understanding of authority members. These findings were then incorporated in the Improvement Plan, overseen by the Corporate Governance Improvement Board, and agreed by the Authority in June 2025 and are as follows:

<b>3. Enhance member and officer capability and development</b>	
<b>Action</b>	<b>Accountable Officer and Member</b>
a) Strengthen the Member Development Strategy and Programme, to include some elements of compulsory training, to ensure all members are supported in acquiring key governance skills, and have capacity to effectively challenge officer decision making and recommendations (Statutory Recommendation 1 from EA)	Interim Clerk/Fire Authority Chair Key Contact: Governance Support Officer
b) Improve member understanding of corporate risk and the service’s Community Risk Management Plan as part of training and induction	Interim Clerk/Fire Authority Chair Key Contact: CRMP Manager
c) Introduce a programme of joint member/senior and statutory officer development	Chief Fire Officer/Fire Authority Chair Key Contact: SLT Support Manager

- 4.2. A full review of the Member Development Strategy was agreed, following an initial review of the existing strategy by the Corporate Governance Improvement Board in June 2025. Sarah Sprung kindly volunteered to oversee this review with the assistance of the Interim Clerk. A full re-write was taken to the Corporate Governance Improvement Board on 26 September where further feedback was provided. Revisions were made subsequent to the meeting following collaborative work with the Chair of the Authority and Cllr Chris Read, LGA National/Regional Peer for Labour. The Final revision was taken to the Board on 31 October 2025.
- 4.3. A further review by the Appointment, Standards and Appeals Committee (ASAC) took place on Monday 3 November. **Appendix A** reflects all amendments and feedback requested by both the Board and ASAC.
- 4.4. The revised draft includes proposals for necessary support mechanisms, to include a Member Development Steering Group and peer networking/training opportunities. A terms of reference for the steering group has been developed and can be found at **Appendix 2** within the strategy. The proposal also includes draft role-specific pathways found at **Appendix 3**, and a template experience audit which would replace the current, more limited skills grid and can be found at **Appendix 1** of the strategy.
- 4.5. **Appendix B** of the report includes a draft Member Induction Pack that looks to set out an annual programme of compulsory and voluntary training opportunities for all members and for specific committee members, as well as additional resources members can access and utilise in their own time.
- 4.6. Should the authority approve the draft strategy the following timeline would be aspired to:
- Establish the Member Development Steering Group (from November 2025)
  - Launch the Experience Audit and development conversations (Winter 2025/26)

- Publish the first Annual Member Development Report (June 2026)

5. **STRATEGY ALIGNMENT**

- 5.1. The revised strategy looks to enhance its members in order for them to carry out the critical role they play in shaping the strategic direction, governance, and accountability of the Fire and Rescue Service.

6. **IMPACT ASSESSMENTS**

- 6.1. No Equality impact assessment is required. When offering out relevant training, any special adjustments required to aid members will be incorporated on a case by case basis.
- 6.2. There will be a higher demand on both members and officers time to incorporate the training programme.

7. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1. There are no direct legal implications arising from the content of this report.

8. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1. There will be a financial cost associated with the delivery of external training. It is expected that these will be met from within the existing Democratic Services Budget.

9. **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1. The majority of the training sessions will be held remotely to reduce the carbon impact from members travelling to Headquarters from across the West Midlands.

10. **CONSULTATION**

- 10.1. The Corporate Governance Improvement Board, which includes the Chair and Vice Chair of the Authority, Leader of the Main Opposition and the Chair of the Scrutiny Committee, have been

consulted on a regular basis. The Appointment, Standards and Appeals Committee has provided feedback prior to its submission.

11. **BACKGROUND PAPERS & APPENDICES**

- Appendix A – Draft Revised Member Development Strategy
- Appendix B – Draft Member Induction Pack
- [Fire Authority, Member Development Report, 09 December 2024 / Appendix A](#)
- [Fire Authority, Corporate Governance Improvement Plan and Centre for Governance Review, 16 June 2025 / Appendix A / Appendix B](#)
- [Appointment, Standards and Appeals Committee - 3 November 2025](#)

Relevant Principal Officer	Simon Tuhill	Chief Fire Officer
Relevant Statutory Officer	Tom Embury <a href="mailto:Tom.embury@wmfs.net">Tom.embury@wmfs.net</a>	Interim Clerk
Report Author	Kirsty Tuffin <a href="mailto:Kirsty.tuffin@wmfs.net">Kirsty.tuffin@wmfs.net</a>	Democratic Services Officer



## **Appendix A - West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority (WMFRA)**

### **Member Development Strategy 2025–2028**

#### **1. Introduction**

The West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority (WMFRA) recognises the critical role that its members play in shaping the strategic direction, governance, and accountability of the Fire and Rescue Service. As elected representatives, members bring a wealth of experience, insight, and community connection that is vital to ensuring the service remains responsive, inclusive, and forward-thinking.

This Member Development Strategy 2025–2028 sets out a comprehensive and forward-looking approach to supporting members in fulfilling their responsibilities effectively. It reflects the increasing complexity of the fire and rescue landscape, including evolving risks, financial pressures, and the growing importance of inclusive leadership and community engagement.

The strategy builds upon previous development frameworks and incorporates best practice from across the fire and rescue sector, as well as guidance from the Local Government Association (LGA), the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC), and the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England. It also responds to feedback from members and officers, as well as recommendations made as part of WMFRA's Governance Improvement Journey, supported by the Corporate Governance Improvement Board. It recognises the need for a more personalised, strengths-based, and accessible approach to development.

By investing in member development, WMFRA aims to:

- Strengthen governance and decision-making
- Enhance members' confidence and capability in their roles
- Promote a culture of continuous learning and reflective practice
- Ensure alignment with the strategic priorities of West Midlands Fire Service (WMFS)

- Support members in championing equity, diversity, and inclusion across the organisation and the communities it serves

This strategy is a living document and will be reviewed annually to ensure it remains relevant, impactful, and responsive to the needs of members and the wider service.

## 2. Vision and Purpose

Our vision is to empower all WMFRA members to lead with confidence, integrity, and insight—drawing on their unique experiences, perspectives, and community connections to shape a safer, more resilient West Midlands.

This strategy is rooted in the belief that effective member development is not only about acquiring knowledge, but also about fostering leadership, collaboration, and innovation. It recognises that members play a pivotal role in ensuring the Fire and Rescue Service remains accountable, inclusive, and responsive to the diverse needs of the communities it serves.

The strategy supports members in upholding the highest standards of conduct, aligned with the Code of Conduct and the Authority's values.

The Member Development Strategy supports and complements the strategic aims of West Midlands Fire Service (WMFS), which include:

- **Making the West Midlands safer, stronger, and healthier** through proactive risk reduction and community engagement.
- **Delivering excellence in governance and community risk management**, ensuring decisions are informed, transparent, and evidence based.
- **Championing inclusive leadership and innovation**, enabling members to lead with empathy, challenge constructively, and drive continuous improvement.

By aligning member development with these aims, the strategy ensures that elected members are equipped not only to fulfil their statutory duties, but also to act as ambassadors for the service.

### 3. Strategic Objectives

This strategy aligns with the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England and promotes cross-authority collaboration to share best practices, strengthen governance, and enhance member capability across the sector.

The strategy is underpinned by the following objectives, each designed to ensure that member development is purposeful, inclusive, and impactful:

**1. Align member development with strategic outcomes**

Member learning will be directly linked to WMFS's strategic priorities, including community risk management, climate resilience, and inclusive leadership. Development activities will be designed to support members in making informed decisions that contribute to a safer and stronger West Midlands.

**2. Foster a member-led development culture through co-design and peer learning**

Members will actively shape the development programme through the Member Development Steering Group and feedback mechanisms. Peer learning, mentoring, and shared experiences will be central to the approach, encouraging collaboration and mutual support.

**3. Embed inclusive, accessible, and blended learning pathways**

Training will be delivered through a mix of in-person sessions, digital platforms, and self-directed resources. Accessibility will be prioritised, with content tailored to different learning styles, needs, and schedules—including support for neurodiverse members and those with additional requirements.

**4. Promote successful and ethical leadership, transparency, and a positive organisational culture**

Development will support members in modelling behaviors aligned with the Nolan Principles, fostering trust, openness, and accountability in all aspects of governance.

#### 5. **Recognise and build on members lived experience and leadership strengths**

The strategy moves beyond traditional skills audits to embrace a strengths-based model. Members' civic, professional, and community experiences will be valued and used to inform personalised development pathways.

#### 6. **Measure impact through meaningful KPIs and reflective evaluation**

A robust evaluation and appraisal framework will track engagement, satisfaction, and outcomes. This includes baseline metrics, longitudinal tracking, and qualitative feedback. Annual reporting will ensure transparency and continuous improvement.

### 4. **Key Principles**

This strategy is guided by a set of core principles that reflect WMFRA's commitment to inclusive, effective, and forward-thinking member development:

**Leadership-Focused:** Development will emphasise the behaviours, mindset, and skills required to lead the organisation with strategic clarity, influence, and impact. This includes successful and ethical leadership, transformational thinking, and cultural stewardship—actively shaping and sustaining a positive organisational culture that reflects WMFRA's values and priorities.

**Inclusive and Accessible:** All members will have equitable access to development opportunities, delivered in multiple formats and tailored to individual needs—including support for neurodiverse members and those with additional requirements.

**Strengths-Based:** The approach builds on each member's unique experiences, perspectives, and leadership strengths, rather than focusing solely on gaps. This fosters confidence, impact, and personal growth.

**Member-Led:** The development programme will be co-designed with members through the Member Development Steering Group and regular feedback, ensuring relevance, responsiveness, and ownership.

**Ethical and Transparent:** Development will support members in fostering trust, transparency, and respectful engagement - recognising that strong leadership is built on clarity, confidence, and constructive challenge.

**Strategically Aligned:** All development activities will be linked to WMFS's strategic priorities—such as governance, community risk management, climate resilience, and inclusive leadership—to ensure learning contributes directly to organisational goals.

**Continuous:** Member development is an ongoing process, supported through annual experience audits, personal development conversations, and reflective evaluation throughout each member's term.

## 5. Core Components

### 5.1 Experience Audit

Replacing the traditional skills audit, the Experience and Strengths Profile captures each member's leadership roles, committee experience, sector knowledge, and personal values. This forms the basis for personal development conversations with Group Leaders and informs tailored learning pathways.

### 5.2 Member Induction and Onboarding

An annual induction session is delivered post-AGM and is mandatory for new or returning members. It will be delivered by the Head of Paid Service (CEO/CFO), Section 151 Officer (Treasurer), Monitoring Officer, and Clerk.

It will cover:

- How to lead successfully: role modelling, ethical decision making and influencing organisational culture.
- Service structure, strategy, vision and purpose
- Key service developments
- Financial environment
- Interests and Gifts and Hospitality
- Code of Conduct
- Governance processes and Constitution

Members will receive a briefing document and have the opportunity for Q&A. Specific committee training will be provided based on appointments.

There will also be a follow up session that will take place in September or October.

Members with leadership responsibilities will receive an enhanced induction, including standards, decision making, constructive leadership practices, strategic briefings on governance culture, successful leadership, and the Code of Conduct.

### 5.3 Role-Specific Learning Pathways

Modular development is provided for Committee Chairs, Audit and Risk, Pensions, Appeals Committees, and Member Champions. This ensures members are equipped for their specific responsibilities.

There will also be a Leadership Induction Pathway for committee chairs which will explore the complexities of decision-making, the role of confidence and resilience, and how leaders can navigate challenges while maintaining transparency and trust.

The Authority Chair and Vice-Chair, in recognition of their leadership role and in particular responsibility for representing the authority will be supported with additional training and support on communications, press and overall authority management.

### 5.4 Blended and Digital Learning

Members have access to structured e-learning via LGA and WMFS platforms, external providers, webinars, virtual briefings, and downloadable workbooks. This supports flexible and self-paced learning.

### 5.5 Peer Learning and Networking

A Member Development Steering Group will co-design the programme. Opportunities for shadowing, mentoring, and joint sessions with senior officers and other authorities will be promoted.

### Station Visits

All elected Authority Members are expected to visit fire stations in their local area at least twice per year.

Visits should be coordinated via Ops Commanders or Democratic Services and include:

- Meeting crews
- Touring facilities
- Discussing local issues

Members are encouraged to invite local MPs or councillors and must arrange

visits in advance. Unannounced visits are discouraged.

### Shadowing Opportunities

Members may arrange to spend a day shadowing a watch at a local station.

Activities may include:

- Training
- Prevention visits
- Operational response

These experiences will be tailored to individual members' interests, capability and availability. Again, visits should be coordinated by Ops Commanders or Democratic Services.

### 5.6 Inclusive Leadership and Accessibility

EDI principles are embedded in all training. Sessions are offered in multiple formats and additional support is provided to underrepresented members to ensure equitable access.

## **6. Evaluation and Impact**

A Member Development Impact Framework will track engagement, satisfaction, and outcomes. Key indicators include:

- % of members completing induction and core modules
- Feedback scores and qualitative reflections
- Case studies of impact on governance and decision-making
- Annual Member Development Report to ASA Committee

## **7. Governance and Delivery**

The Clerk and Democratic Services Team will lead programme delivery. Group Leaders will conduct personal development conversations and appraisals. The Member Development Steering Group will oversee implementation and conduct annual reviews.

Risks to delivery such as low engagement and resource constraints will be identified and mitigated. A continuous feedback loop will be established to gather member input throughout the year.

## **8. Next Steps**

- Establish the Member Development Steering Group (from November 2025)
- Launch the Experience Audit and development conversations (Winter 2025/26)
- Publish the first Annual Member Development Report (Summer 2026)

Appendix 1:

**WMFRA Member Experience Audit Template**

Purpose: This template is designed to capture the lived experience, strengths, and leadership background of members to inform personal development conversations and tailored learning pathways.

**Member Details**

Name:

Local Authority:

Political Group:

Years of Service on WMFRA:

**Leadership and Governance Experience:** Please describe any leadership roles you have held (e.g. council cabinet, scrutiny chair, voluntary sector leadership):

**Committee and Board Experience:** Please list any committees or boards you have served on (e.g. audit, pensions, scrutiny):

**Professional experience:** Please outline any relevant experience from your professional life (e.g. people management, financial management)

**Sector Knowledge and Expertise:** Please outline any professional or lived experience in sectors relevant to fire and rescue (e.g. housing, health, finance, education):

**Community and Civic Engagement:** Please describe any community roles, civic duties, or voluntary work that inform your perspective as a member:

**Learning Preferences and Strengths:** What are your preferred learning styles (e.g. visual, experiential, discussion-based)? What personal strengths do you bring to your role on WMFRA?

**Personal experience:** Please what personal experiences, skills or interests you have which are relevant to your role.

**Development Interests:** Are there specific areas you would like to develop further (e.g. governance, resilience, EDI)?

Date Completed:

Reviewed by Group Leader:

Appendix 2:

## **WMFRA Member Development Steering Group - Terms of Reference**

### **1. Purpose**

The Member Development Steering Group (MDSG) exists to co-design, oversee, and evaluate the Member Development Strategy and Programme for the West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority (WMFRA).

### **2. Objectives**

- Ensure member development aligns with WMFRA strategic priorities
- Promote a strengths-based, inclusive approach to member learning
- Support the implementation of the Experience Audit and development conversations
- Monitor engagement, impact, and feedback from development activities
- Recommend improvements and innovations in member development

### **3. Membership**

The Steering Group will consist of:

- One representative from each political group
- The Chair of WMFRA (or nominee)
- The Clerk or Governance Support Officer
- Up to two co-opted members with relevant experience (optional)
- Officer support from Democratic Services and Learning & Development

### **4. Responsibilities**

- Review and update the Member Development Strategy annually
- Oversee the Experience Audit process and personal development conversations
- Advise on the content and format of induction and learning modules
- Receive and review the Annual Member Development Report
- Champion inclusive and accessible development opportunities

## **5. Meetings and Governance**

The Steering Group will meet quarterly, with additional meetings as required. Notes of meetings will be shared with the ASA Committee. The Clerk will provide secretariat support.

## **6. Reporting**

The Steering Group will report annually to the ASA Committee via the Member Development Report, summarising engagement, impact, and recommendations.

Appendix 3:

## **Role-Specific Learning Pathways**

This appendix outlines tailored learning pathways for key member roles within WMFRA, drawing on best practice from the sector.

### **1. Core Component – Applicable to All Members**

#### **Focus Areas:**

- WMFRA Strategy and CRMP
- Governance and Accountability
- Code of Conduct, Behaviours, successful Ethical Leadership and Culture
- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI)
- Community Risk Management
- Climate Resilience and Sustainability
- Digital and Data Literacy
- Emergency Planning and Resilience

#### **Learning Methods:**

- LGA e-learning modules
- WMFS briefings and webinars
- Peer-led workshops
- Experience audit and development conversations
- Shadowing and mentoring opportunities

### **2. Committee Chairs**

Responsibilities: Lead committee meetings, ensure effective governance, facilitate discussion, and drive strategic oversight.

Learning Pathway:

- Leadership behaviors and ethical governance – covering standards, constructive leadership practices, organisational culture and facilitation skills
- Governance and decision-making frameworks

- Conflict resolution and consensus building
- Sector-specific strategic briefings

### **3. Audit and Risk Committee Members**

Responsibilities: Oversee financial controls, risk management, and internal audit processes.

Learning Pathway:

- Financial oversight and audit principles including Treasury Management
- Strategic risk register analysis
- Internal control mechanisms
- External and Internal audit engagement
- Fraud

### **4. Pensions and Appeals Committee Members**

Responsibilities: Review pension cases, appeals, and ensure legal compliance.

Learning Pathway:

- Legal frameworks and pension regulations
- Case review and ethical decision-making
- Appeals procedures and governance

Source: County Durham & Darlington FRA – Pensions Committee training

### **5. Scrutiny and Challenge Roles**

Responsibilities: Provide constructive challenge, review performance, and ensure accountability.

Learning Pathway:

- Performance analysis and benchmarking
- Scrutiny techniques and questioning skills
- Policy review and evaluation
- Governance and transparency principles

These pathways will be reviewed annually and updated in consultation with the Member Development Steering Group.



# **MEMBERS INDUCTION PACK**

## **2026/2027**

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## Welcome

Welcome to West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority. We look forward to your contribution to the Authority as a Member. It is appreciated that the work of the Authority, the environment it operates within, and the fire sector as whole can be complex, comprising a variety of challenges at a local and national level.

West Midlands Fire Service is the second largest fire and rescue service in England serving a population of over 2.9million people, from one of the most diverse and multi-cultural communities in the country, spreading across the seven local authorities: Birmingham, Coventry, Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull, Walsall and Wolverhampton.

Our vision is to empower all WMFRA members to lead with confidence, integrity, and insight—drawing on their unique experiences, perspectives, and community connections to shape a safer, more resilient West Midlands. We welcome the support from you as a member representing not only your own ward and local authority but also the West Midlands as a whole to help achieve our goal to keep it Safer, Stronger and Healthier.

To help support you as a new Member, the following document highlights all relevant training you will be required to undertake alongside a variety of key documents and useful sources of information. The list is not exhaustive and is designed to start to pull together some of the key developments and issues, many of which you will hear about in more detail as the municipal year progresses.

## Members Induction Programme 2026

The Members Induction Programme has been developed by Councillors for Councillors, building upon their skills, experiences and feedback, and supported by Officers to ensure its delivery.

The Induction Programme is essential and includes mandatory training for all newly appointed WMFRA Members, and it is recommended that all WMFRA Members attend these sessions as they will assist them in their role in supporting the Fire Service in making West Midlands Safer, Stronger and Healthier.

Members have responsibility to develop and maintain their skills and knowledge necessary to perform their role effectively. All appointed committee members will be required to attend the relevant training for their appointed committee.

The Induction Programme will commence in the weeks following the Fire Authorities Annual General Meeting that takes place the end of June every year. Additional training including Committee specific topics will be provided throughout the Municipal Year to ensure it is current and relevant at the time of delivery.

As part of our Buddying Scheme, each member has also been assigned with a member of the Senior Leadership Team to aid you in your role. Democratic Services will confirm your buddy who will make contact with you shortly after joining.

All training will be reviewed/Developed by the Member Development Steering Group on a regular basis with an annual review to be conducted by the Appointment, Standards and Appeals Committee to ensure it remains relevant, impactful, and responsive to the needs of members and the wider service. Should you have any feedback then please contact Democratic Services.

Please see below a high-level calendar overview of the Members Induction Programme for 2026. The following pages will include a breakdown of what each session will entail, key individuals involved and their contact details should you have any further questions or if additional support is needed.

## Essential Training Calendar – New and returning councillors

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
29 June	30 June	1 July	2 July	3 July
Fire Authority Annual General Meeting - 11am Meet & Greet with Senior Leadership Team – 1pm Members Induction – 1:30pm (All in person)	No Scheduled Training	Finance Overview  In person and Teams Time – TBC	*Leader(s) Appraisals with members 1-2-1	CMIS and Internal Systems  10:30am (via Teams)
6 July	7 July	8 July	9 July	10 July
Scrutiny Processes *External provider  Time – TBC (via Teams)	No Scheduled Training	Code of Conduct and Code of Ethics on social media Time – TBC	Leader(s) appraisals with members 1-2-1  Online Harassment and Safety LGA – Time TBC (via Teams)	Appointment, Standards and Appeals 10:30am (via Teams)  Joint Consultative Panel Processes 12noon (via Teams)
13 July	14 July	15 July	16 July	17 July
Audit and Risk Processes 10:30am (Via Teams)	No Scheduled Training	Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Time – TBC (via Teams)	Leader(s) appraisals with members 1-2-1	Effective Chairing (LGA)  Time – TBC (via Teams)

\*An overview of each session can be seen below. Externally provided training subject to change.

## Additional Training 2026-2027

### All Councillors / Committee Membership

Training	Date/Time	Key contact / Provider
<b>Audit and Risk Committee</b>		
Treasury Management (To align with a scheduled Audit and Risk Committee Meeting)	October 2026 In person	External Provider
Fraud Awareness (To align with a scheduled Audit and Risk Committee Meeting)	March 2026 In person	Internal Auditors
Statement of Accounts		Internal – Finance Team
<b>Scrutiny Committee</b>		
Scrutiny Review deep dive sessions	*To be determined by the Committee	Relevant Officer support
<b>Appointment, Standards and Appeals</b>		
Additional Appointment Training	*To be scheduled should a process be required after a 12 month period or new members.	Internal – Recruitment
Stage 2 Pension Appeals Training	*To be scheduled should a process be required after a 12-month period or new members.	Internal – Pension Team
<b>Chair and Vice-Chair</b>		
Bespoke Chair and Vice-Chair Training to include press, social media and familiarisation training.	July-August 2026	Internal and External as required.

<b>All Members</b>		
CRMP Training	September 2026	
Devolution	September 2026	Internal
Climate Resilience and Sustainability		
Emergency Planning and Resilience		
Visit to HQ Command Room / Fire Control (To coincide with Fire Authority)	September 2026	Internal
Visit to Safeside (To coincide with Fire Authority)	November 2026	Internal
Site Visits (Minimum to per year)	August/September 2026 And March 2027	Contact Democratic Services/Buddy/Ops Commander to arrange.

## Overview of sessions

### Meet and Greet with the Senior Leadership Team and Statutory Officers

**Monday 29 June 2026**

**13:00pm (30 minutes)**

#### [West Midlands Fire Service, HQ](#)

**Attendees: All new members (mandatory)/Returnee members (desired), Statutory Officers and all Senior Leadership Team**

This session is for you as new members to meet with the Senior Leadership Team, including the Principal Officers and Statutory Officers. It is an informal session to help build upon your working relationships and have the chance to speak face to face with the Head of each relevant department.

### Members Induction

**Monday 29 June 2026**

**13:30pm (2 hours)**

#### [West Midlands Fire Service, HQ](#)

**Attendees: All new members (mandatory)/Returnee members (desired), Statutory Officers and Brigade Managers**

The Authority will hold an annual induction event for new Members following the Annual General Meeting. This event will also act as an annual update for existing Members who wish to attend. The induction event will cover the following topics:-



- How to lead successfully: role modelling, ethical decision making and influencing organisational culture.
- Service structure, strategy, vision and purpose
- Key service developments

- Financial environment
- Interests and Gifts and Hospitality
- Code of Conduct
- Governance processes and Constitution

A follow up session will be held in October 2026.

## Finance Overview

**Wednesday 1 July 2026**

**TIME TBC**

**LOCATION TBC**

**Attendance: All members and finance team**

A high-level finance overview training to cover the following areas:

- Budget
- Accounts
- Financial forecast



## Committee Management Information Service (CMIS) and Internal IT systems

**Friday 3 July**

**10:30am via Microsoft Teams (1 hour)**

**Attendance: New members, Governance and IT support Team and workforce planning?**

This session will show you how to access CMIS where all authority business is published, MESH for all internal updates and Oracle where you can access payslips, P60s and expenses.

## Scrutiny Processes

**Monday 6 July**

**TIME TBC via Microsoft Teams (2 hours)**

**Attendance: New members and Scrutiny Committee membership and external provider**

The session will include:

- The purpose of scrutiny
- Effective scrutiny
- Your role as a member of the committee
- Scrutiny reviews/deep dives

## Code of Conduct and Code of Ethics on social media

**Wednesday 8 July**

**TIME TBC (2 hours)**

**West Midlands Fire Service, HQ, The Hub**

**Attendees: All new members (mandatory)/Returnee members (desired), Statutory Officers**

This will assist you in understanding your role as a member looking closely at the Code of Conduct and essential areas of the constitution. Key areas include:

- Our Core Values and Behaviours and Ethics,
- Values and Behavioural Framework,
- Member/Officer Protocol on Relationships
- Gifts and Hospitality
- Registration and disclosure of interests
- Complaints

## Appointment, Standards and Appeals Processes

**Friday 10 July**

**10:30am via Microsoft Teams**

**Attendees: Appointment, Standards and Appeals Committee membership**

This session will cover off the responsibilities for the appointment, standards and Appeals Committee, as per their Terms of Reference. The key topics will include:

- Chief Fire Officer (CFO), Deputy CFO and Assistant CFO Appointment processes
- Behavioural Framework and scoring, The Equality Act 2010 and protective characteristics and Unconscious Bias and the impact on recruitment
- Standards
- Conduct Appeals and Stage 2 Pensions Appeals

## Joint Consultative Panel Processes

**Friday 10 July**

**12:00noon via Microsoft Teams**

**Attendees: Joint Consultative Panel membership**

This session will cover off the responsibilities for the Joint Consultative Panel, as per their Terms of Reference covering off the Employee Relationship Framework.

## Audit and Risk Committee Processes

**Monday 13 July**

**10:30am via Microsoft Teams**

**Attendees: Audit and Risk Committee membership, S151 Officer/Clerk**

This session will cover off the responsibilities for Audit and Risk Committee, as per their Terms of Reference.

## Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion

**Wednesday 15 July**

**Time – TBC via Microsoft Teams**

**Attendees: all members and EDI team members**

This session will cover the important roles and responsibilities that equality diversity and inclusion play in your role as a member of the authority.

## Effective Chairing

**Friday 17 July**

**Time TBC via Microsoft Teams**

**Attendees: Committee Chairs**

The session will cover a Leadership Induction Pathway for committee chairs which will explore the complexities of decision-making, the role of confidence and resilience, and how leaders can navigate challenges while maintaining transparency and trust.

## Additional training 2026-2027

### Fraud Awareness Training

**March Audit and Risk Committee**

**Time – TBC (1 Hour)**

**Attendees: Audit and Risk Committee Members, Internal Auditors, S151 Officer**

The session will cover off the following:

- An introduction to the Counter Fraud Unit
- Current Fraud Landscape
- CIPFAs Code of practice on managing the risk of fraud and corruption
- Work of the Counter Fraud Unit
- Relevant legislation

## Statement of Accounts Training

**DATE TBC**

**LOCATION TBC**

**ATTENDEES TBC**

The session will cover off the following:

- Timetable
- International Financial Reporting Standards
- Statutory accounting overrides
- Explanation of the Movement in Reserves Statement

## Treasury Management Training

**DATE: Octobers A&R Committee**

**Location: West Midlands Fire Service, HQ, The Hub**

**Attendees: A&R Committee membership**

In depth external training on Treasury Management for Audit and Risk Committee.

## CRMP – TBC

**DATE TBC**

**LOCATION TBC**

**Attendees: all members, Statutory Officers and relevant CRMP team members**

Introduction to and explanation of the CRMP process, including the service's long term risk analysis. Will include detail on previous CRMP consultation and development.

## Devolution – TBC

**DATE TBC**

**LOCATION TBC**

**Attendees: All members, Statutory Officers and relevant SLT and Strategy Officers**

Introduction and update on the devolution agenda, including relevant legislation and ongoing national level policy developments, as well as WMFRA devolution working group and collaboration with WMCA.

## Additional resources and helpful documentation

The WMFS website includes a [variety of information](#) on structure and work of the West Midlands Fire Service, plus a variety of useful documents and publications relating to finance and performance.

It is a helpful place to refer constituents and members of the public who want more information or to contact the service for a Safe and Well or Safe and Strong visit.

There are a number of key documents, which alongside the Constitution, you will need to familiarise yourself with as a member of the Authority. A sample of some of the key documents are as follows:

- [Strategy 2024-2027](#)
- [Unaudited Statement of Accounts ending March 2025](#)
- [Corporate Risk Policy](#) – Sets out how we will put in place a structured risk management framework that supports the assessment and treatment of the Authority’s corporate risks.
- [Pay Policy Statement](#) – Setting out how our staff and in particular our senior staff are paid, our pay differentials.
- [Anti-Fraud, Corruption and Bribery Policy](#) – setting out how the service will foster a culture of openness and honesty and prevent and address fraud and corruption.
- [Management of Information Policy](#) - This policy outlines how we manage our information assets to facilitate access to accurate, reliable, and timely information to support core activity and meeting legislative obligations.
- [Equality and Diversity Policy](#)
- [Statement of Assurance](#) - published annually (reviewed 6 monthly), in accordance with the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England, it provides assurance on financial, governance and operational matters and shows how the Authority has due regard to the expectations set out in its Community Risk Management Plan, and the requirements of the

National Framework.

## Legislation / Guidance:

There are several key pieces of legislation and national guidance that oversee the fire sector, an awareness of which is important in developing the wider context and environment that the sector and the Authority operates in, in addition to understanding the statutory responsibilities that a Fire and Rescue Authority is to meet.

- Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 (LGA guidance – [roles and responsibilities of Fire & Rescue Authorities](#))
- Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 ([guidance for Fire & Rescue Authorities](#))
- [Policing and Crime Act 2017](#) (introduced place a duty on police, fire and ambulance services to work together and enable police and crime commissioners to take on responsibility for fire and rescue services where a local case is made)
- [Fire Safety Act 2021](#)
- [Fire and Rescue National Framework](#) (sets out the government's priorities and objectives for Fire & Rescue Authorities)

## Guidance Bodies:

[National Fire Chiefs Council](#) (the professional voice of the UK fire and rescue service, driving improvement and development throughout the UK FRS whilst supporting strong leadership).

[Fire Standards Board](#) – Independent body responsible for developing and setting standards for the sector in areas such as CRMP, Emergency Preparedness etc

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS):



The [HMICFRS website](#) includes a full overview of the Inspectorate and includes the publication of all information and findings for the inspections of every Fire and Service.

- [State of Fire Report 2022](#): contains an annual assessment of the sector in England, based on the inspections carried out during

2022.

Other key reports published by HMICFRS:

- [Values and Culture in the Fire and Rescue Service](#) – a spotlight report focused on the values and culture in all 44 fire and rescue services in England, based on existing evidence.

## Local Government Association (LGA):



In addition to the wide array of support provided to local government in general including local authorities and councillors, the LGA provides a range of support and guidance for the Fire Sector and

specifically for Members of Fire Authorities. The [LGA website](#) is a useful resource for any Member, and the following lists some of the key documents that may prove useful:

### [Leading the Fire Sector: Member Development Support](#)

- [Leading the Fire Sector](#)
- [Fire Authority Members Guide](#)

Core Code of Ethics for Fire and Rescue Services – introductory [news item](#) published by West Midlands Fire Service and the [Code is available via the LGA](#) and the [NFCC](#).

The national Core Code of Ethics are the foundation for Our Values.



**BEST VALUE INSPECTION – NOVEMBER UPDATE**  
**For INFORMATION**

**Principal Officer: Chief Fire Officer**  
**Report of the Head of Strategy**  
**Author: Interim Clerk to the Authority**

**1. PURPOSE**

- 1.1. To provide members with an update on the Best Value Inspection process.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NOTING**

- 2.1. That members note the content of the report.

**3. OBJECTIVES & EXPECTED OUTCOMES**

- 3.1. To ensure members remain aware of the progress of the Best Value Inspection, and the steps taken by officers to ensure a transparent and comprehensive inspection process.

**4. BACKGROUND**

- 4.1. The then Fire Minister Dame Diana Johnson MP first confirmed a Best Value Inspection in November 2025. This was welcomed by the Vice-Chair and DCFO on behalf of WMFRA and WMFS in correspondence with the Minister. The full detail of the inspection, including the appointed lead and assistant inspectors, was confirmed by the then Fire Minister Alex Norris MP on 8 July 2025 in a ministerial statement made to the House of Commons.

- 4.2. Inspectors have met with a number of officers and fire authority members throughout October and November, both in person and remotely. There may be further follow up meetings later in November and into early December.
- 4.3. The WMFS Inspection Project team continue to provide information and documentation as requested by the team.
- 4.4. Inspection team members have also been attending all Fire Authority and Committee meetings, as well as meetings of the Corporate Governance Improvement Board throughout September, October and November 2025.
- 4.5. Throughout all aspects of the inspection process so far and moving forward, the service and authority are committed to delivering a transparent and constructive approach, including being frank in our assessments of areas for improvement. This will include regular public updates such as this paper, and through our website and internal communications channels as the inspection progresses.

## 5. **STRATEGY ALIGNMENT**

- 5.1. Effective support to and delivery of the Best Value Inspection is a key priority for the service and authority, and important to ensuring that the service can learn lessons and deliver against its commitments to continuous improvement. This is essential to the delivery of all aspects of the Authority's strategy.

## 6. **IMPACT ASSESSMENTS**

- 6.1. This is an update report, so no initial EIA has been undertaken.

## 7. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1. Local authorities in England, including fire and rescue authorities, have a statutory duty 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". This is known as the Best Value Duty and is defined in Part 1 of the

Local Government Act 1999 (the 1999 Act).

- 7.2. The Government provides statutory guidance to Best Value authorities and while not a requirement it is regarded as good practice for all Best Value authorities to be mindful of the principles set out in that guidance in order to ensure they deliver the Best Value Duty. This same guidance also sets out how the Secretary of State can utilise their powers of inspection and statutory intervention under the 1999 Act.
- 7.3. The Secretary of State has powers under section 10 of the 1999 Act to appoint a person to carry out an inspection into an authority's compliance with the Best Value Duty.
- 7.4. Under section 11 of the 1999 Act, a Best Value inspector has wide ranging powers to access premises and information necessary to undertake their work. A person who without reasonable excuse obstructs the exercise of any power conferred by this section or fails to comply with a requirement of an inspector under this section is guilty of an offence and liable on summary conviction and a fine. The Authority is also Audited as a Best Value Authority under its external Auditing arrangements.

## 8. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1. As per the 1999 act, the costs of the inspector's time, travel and expenses are met by the Fire Authority. The agreed daily fee for the lead inspector, as confirmed by MHCLG is capped at £1200, and £1100 for assistant inspectors. Based on estimated future hours provided by MHCLG at this midway point, total costs by the end of process are estimated at £205,000 plus related expenses.
- 8.2. Total costs invoiced for the period up to the end of September stood at £33,894.
- 8.3. The Authority and Service are committed to positive engagement with the inspection process. The inspection is under the direction of MHCLG and as such the cost, and the resultant impact on our ability to fund services, is beyond our control.


## 9. **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1. There are no environmental implications arising from the content of this update report.

## 10. **BACKGROUND PAPERS & APPENDICES**

- [WMFS News Item – Confirmation of Best Value Inspection process, 14 November 2024](#)
- [Ministerial Statement - Fire and Rescue Best Value 8 July 2025](#)
- [West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority Meeting – Best Value Inspection Update – 29 September 2025](#)
- [Local Government Act 1999](#)

Relevant Principal Officer	Simon Tuhill	Chief Fire Officer
Relevant SLT Member	Kelly Whitmore <a href="mailto:kelly.whitmore@wmfs.net">kelly.whitmore@wmfs.net</a>	Head of Strategy
Report Author	Tom Embury <a href="mailto:tom.embury@wmfs.net">tom.embury@wmfs.net</a>	Interim Clerk to the Authority

 <p><b>WMFRA</b> West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority</p>	<p><b><u>WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY</u></b></p> <p><b><u>24 November 2025</u></b></p>
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**Strategic Key Performance Indicators – Quarter Two (& Year to Date)  
2025 - 2026**

**For DECISION**

**Principal Officer: Chief Fire Officer, Simon Tuhill**

**Report of the Head of Strategy, Kelly Whitmore**

**Author: Governance and Performance Support Officer, Stephen  
Timmington**

**1. PURPOSE**

- 1.1. This report is submitted to provide Members with an analysis of the performance position of the Service’s suite of strategic key performance indicators for quarter two and year-to-date 2025/26.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NOTING**

- 2.1. THAT the Authority notes the status of the Service’s strategic key performance indicators in the second quarter of 2025/26 (set out within Appendix 1).
- 2.2. THAT the Authority note the progress made in delivering the strategic priorities contained within the 2024-2027 Strategy: 2025 update.
- 2.3. THAT the Authority approve the proposed change to the SKPI ‘percentage of core skills assessment compliance’.

**3. OBJECTIVES & EXPECTED OUTCOMES**

- 3.1. This report is submitted to inform Officers and Members of the status, and provide an analysis of, the performance position of the

Service's Strategic Key Performance Indicators (SKPI), for quarter 2 and year to date 2025/26 (see Appendix 1).

3.2. The report notes the progress made in delivering the strategic commitments, goals and measures across the Service's six ambitions, as outlined within the Strategy 2024-2027: 2025 Update, namely:

- Preventable water, road and fire deaths
- Strengthened community engagement
- Staff trust
- Optimal efficiency and innovation
- Productivity
- Net Zero

3.3. The Service's suite of strategic indicators features a total of 29 SKPIs and 7 sub-SKPIs. As of quarter 2 (year-to-date), the performance across the suite of SKPIs is as follows:

- 4 SKPIs have demonstrated over-performance against the tolerance levels
- 11 SKPIs have demonstrated performance within the tolerance levels
- 9 SKPIs have demonstrated under performance against the tolerance levels
- 5 SKPIs have no performance rating applied
- 2 sub-SKPIs demonstrate over-performance against the tolerance levels
- 5 sub-SKPIs demonstrate performance within the tolerance levels

3.4. Appendix 1 contains an 'at a glance' overview of the status of the SKPIs, associated executive summaries, and detailed analysis. This has been completed directly by members of the Senior Leadership Team and officers within their respective teams nominated as single points of contact (SPOC).

3.5. In response to a point raised by Members when reviewing Q4 2025/26 SKPI report, a direction of travel box has been added, to

signify if the general trend in performance of an indicator and whether it is improving, declining, or if there is no change.

**3.5.1. Change to SKPI ‘percentage of core skills assessment compliance’**

3.5.2. The Authority is asked to consider a change to the SKPI ‘percentage of core skills assessment compliance’, with the SKPI to be split into two separate measures: sub-SKPI A for Incident Command, and sub-SKPI B for Breathing Apparatus.

3.5.3. Doing so will support more accurate reporting and ensure that positive / negative performance isn’t being masked by the other and will enable the percentage for each area to be more easily and clearly identifiable. This approach to reporting is currently done for statutory consults and has proved to be effective and works well.

3.5.4. If approved, it is proposed that this change will come into effect going forward, with the SKPI reported in this format in the coming quarters.

**4. BACKGROUND**

4.1. In accordance with the Service’s Strategy, Governance, Performance and Assurance Framework, the Service undertook a refresh of the 2024-2027 Strategy, with the 2025 update approved by the full Fire Authority at its meeting in February 2025. In addition to further articulating the Service’s vision, purpose and areas of focus, the update included changes to the goals and introduced new and revised SKPIs, building upon the development of a broader suite of indicators which was first implemented in the first year of this strategy, 2024/25.

4.2. Quarter 2 marks the first performance position statement reported to the Fire Authority following the introduction of the revised SKPIs and target setting process in April 2025.

4.3. In line with continuing developments, the suite of SKPIs continue to be wider ranging than those reported in previous years. This approach is intended to provide an increasingly holistic view of

strategic performance across the Service, providing a more comprehensive set of measures better reflecting the full range of service activity. In turn, this supports the provision of assurance for, and scrutiny by, the Fire Authority, the Senior Leadership Team, the Wider Leadership Team and wider organisation, and importantly, our communities.

#### 4.4. **Strategic Key Performance Indicators**

- 4.4.1. A high-level overview and further detailed analysis is provided within Appendices 1 including the addition of executive summaries. These are provided by the respective SLT members and outline, where applicable, actions and mitigation plans, timeframes, rationale, forecast of performance of the next quarter and beyond.
- 4.4.2. The status of a SKPI is determined by the performance of the indicator compared to its upper and lower tolerance levels. Tolerance levels are identified through the annual target setting exercise which supports the development of the SKPIs by the SLT and subject matter experts within their teams, and approval by Fire Authority. The setting of targets is informed through data analysis including comparison of the three-year average, activity and interventions put in place or to be delivered by the Service, and alignment to the strategic goals. Further detail and analysis for each SKPI is contained within Appendix 1.
- 4.4.3. This report continues to be the culminative effort of a wide group of stakeholders and contributors, not limited to but including risk management, workforce planning, our prevention, protection, and response teams, and other departments.

### 5. **STRATEGY ALIGNMENT**

- 5.1 The continued integration of the strategic key performance indicators (SKPI) into the Strategy has ensured that the measures fully align with the Service's vision, purpose and areas of focus.
- 5.2. The SKPIs are linked directly to the Service's strategic goals, enabling the suite of indicators to provide a snapshot of how the

Service is performing and delivering against the ambitions and goals set out within the Strategy.

- 5.3 The development of a broader suite of SKPIs enables the monitoring and reporting of a wider range of areas at a strategic level. In doing it provides ever greater performance oversight by the SLT and Service, providing assurance to the Fire Authority, our partners, and importantly, our communities.

## 6. **IMPACT ASSESSMENTS**

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

## 7. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1. There are no legal implications arising from the content of this report. This report does not raise any issues which should be drawn to the attention of the Authority's Monitoring Officer.

## 8. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1. Although there are no direct financial implications arising from this report, the financial resources required to achieve the targets were approved by the Authority as part of the 2025/26 budget setting.

## 9. **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1. There are no environmental implications arising from the content of this report.

## 10. **CONSULTATION**

- 10.1. The contents of this report do not require any form of consultation.

## 11. **BACKGROUND PAPERS & APPENDICES**

- Appendix 1 – SKPI Status Over, Executive Summaries, and Analysis

- [Key Performance Indicators and Target Setting 2025-26](#)
- [Strategy 2024-2027: 2025 Update](#)

Relevant Principal Officer	Simon Tuhill <a href="mailto:simon.tuhill@wmfs.net">simon.tuhill@wmfs.net</a>	Chief Fire Officer
Relevant SLT Member	Kelly Whitmore <a href="mailto:kelly.whitmore@wmfs.net">kelly.whitmore@wmfs.net</a>	Head of Strategy
Report Author	Stephen Timmington <a href="mailto:stephen.timmington@wmfs.net">stephen.timmington@wmfs.net</a>	Performance and Governance Support Officer

## SKPI Status Overview – Quarter 2 2025/26

Key:	
<b>Blue</b>	<b>Over performance against the tolerance levels</b>
<b>Green</b>	<b>Performance is within the tolerance levels</b>
<b>Red</b>	<b>Under performance against the tolerance levels</b>

## Preventable Water, Road and Fire Deaths

SKPI	Performance (actual to date)	Target (tolerance)	Direction of Travel	Q3 forecast
The number of Safe and Wells achieved by the Service	12,243	11,750	Improving	Green
The number of children engaged in prevention education activity	11,159	15,000 (Q2 tolerance n/a)	No change	Green
The number of accidental dwelling fires	717	716 (681 – 730)	No change	Green
The number of accidental fires in non-domestic premises	220	167 (151 – 175)	Declining	Red
The number of deliberate fires in derelict buildings	79	100 (80 – 110)	No change	Green
The number of false alarm calls due to fire alarm equipment in dwellings	3105	3127 (3065 – 3189)	No change	Green
The number of false alarm calls due to fire alarm equipment in non-domestic premises	706	702 (688 – 716)	No change	Green
The number of statutory consults completed in timeframes:				
a) % of target met for building regulation consults	98.33%	85%	No change	Blue
b) % of target met for planning application	98.4%	90%	No change	Blue
c) % of target met for licensing applications	94.25%	90%	No change	Green
Risk-based attendance standard	4:58	5 minutes (Cat 1 High-Risk)	Declining	Green
Risk-based attendance standard – call handling	77 seconds	80 seconds (80 - 85 seconds)	Improving	Green

## Strengthened Community Engagement

SKPI	Performance (actual to do)	Target (tolerance)	Direction of Travel	Q3 forecast
Percentage of Safe and Well visits referred by our partners	45.2%	55%	No change	Red
Percentage of public and staff trust in Service communications	TBD	90% (+/- 10%)	n/a	n/a

## Staff Trust

SKPI	Performance (actual to date)	Target (tolerance)	Direction of Travel	Q3 forecast
Percentage of staff with protected characteristics and their role within the Service				
a) Gender	26.9%	27.6% (+/-5%)	No change	Green
Percentage of staff with protected characteristics and their role within the Service				
b) Ethnicity	15.0%	15.5% (+/-5%)	No change	Green
Percentage of staff with protected characteristics and their role within the Service				
c) Gender Pay Gap	5%	4.5%	n/a	n/a
Percentage of staff with protected characteristics and their role within the Service				
d) Ethnicity Pay Gap	5%	3%	n/a	n/a
Percentage of staff trust in the Service	Will be reported Q4	n/a	n/a	n/a
Percentage of completed appraisals	89.66%	100% (90%)	Choose an item.	Choose an item.
Total number of injuries	89	30 (3-year average minus 5%)	n/a	n/a
Total number of RIDDOR injuries	10	6	n/a	n/a

		(3-year average minus 5%)		
Average number of working days / shifts lost due to sickness – uniformed and Fire Control staff	1.88 (Q2 figure)	1.95	Improving	Green
Average number of working days / shifts lost due to sickness – non-uniformed staff	3.44 (Q2 figure)	2.01	Declining	Red
Average number of working days / shifts lost due to sickness – all staff	2.25 (Q2 figure)	1.97	Improving	Red

### Productivity

SKPI	Performance (actual to date)	Target (tolerance)	Direction of Travel	Q3 forecast
Percentage of core skills assessment compliance	92%	100% (95%)	Choose an item.	Green
Improvement in a range of productivity measures	7.7%	3% increase (averaged across all of our productivity measures)	Improving	Green

### Optimal Efficiency and Innovation

SKPI	Performance (actual to date)	Target (tolerance)	Direction of Travel	Q3 forecast
Percentage achievement of current and reviewed Business Continuity Plans (BCPs)	92%	100% high priority BCPs (75%)	Improving	Green
IT Operations Metric	99.59%	99.99% (+0.01% to -0.49%)	No change	Green
Cyber Standards Compliance	91.77%	95% (+5% to -10%)	Improving	Green
Statutory Data Compliance	76.5%	95% (+5% to -10%)	Improving	Green
Set a balanced budget at the beginning of the year and spend within that budget	5.4%	3.5%	No change	Blue
Identify service changes and other efficiencies that can be delivered from 2026/27	Not Applicable	£1.6M	n/a	Green

## Carbon Neutral

SKPI	Performance (actual to date)	Target (tolerance)	Direction of Travel	Q3 forecast
Total Service carbon footprint / output	Due to the switch to a Green Tariff, CO2 from purchased electricity has reduced by 100%. Full carbon footprint is calculated annually.	Not to rise above 3022 tCO2e for the year. The current usage will fluctuate Qtr on Qtr.	Improving	Blue
Service Gas usage (KWH and Carbon Tonnes)	2,175,460 kWh (Some billing data is pending; however, it's anticipated that the RAG rating will remain blue)	1,387,512.9 kWh	No change	Green
Electricity usage (KWH and Carbon Tonnes)	1,792,323 kWh (Some billing data is pending; however, it's anticipated that the performance rating will actually be red)	2,834,409.3 kWh	No change	Green

## Executive Summary

### Service Delivery

SKPI	SKPI Owner	Key Takeaways from performance review & high-level associated actions In this box articulate a brief high-level summary of performance with reason plus what action is being taken as a result.	Strategic Ambition Alignment
The number of Safe and Wells achieved by the Service	Martin Ward-White	<p>YTD Actual: 12, 243 (within tolerance levels) YTD Target: 11,750</p> <p>Q2 Actual: 6,386 (above upper tolerance level for the qtr) Q2 Target: 5,875</p> <p>Q2 has met the quarterly target which is the first time this has been achieved since the SKPI previously changed to a points-based system. The change mid-year 2024/25 to a minimum quantity-based target has provided greater clarity in expectations on number of Safe and Wells (SAW) to be completed by crews. This along with greater flexibility for crews to generate referrals locally have helped increase the number of referrals and visits completed. There has been a particular push in Q2 to exceed the target as historical trends show that over the Christmas period SAWs reduce. The over performance in Q2 is therefore expected to balance out over the back end of Q3 and the start of Q4.</p> <p><b><u>What are our Actions</u></b></p> <p>Crews will remain committed to generating and delivering a greater number of SAWs in line with monthly and quarterly targets whilst ensuring a proportionate spread between High, Medium and Low risk properties. For Q2 the breakdown of numbers were: H-4,081; M-1,433; L-585.</p>	Preventable Water, Road and Fire Deaths

<p>The percentage of Safe and Well visits referred by our partners</p>	<p>Emily Fernandez</p>	<p>There has been a focus in Operations on achieving the Number of Safe and Wells (SAW) target. One of the impacts has been that the target for percentage of SAWs from Partner referrals has not been achieved.</p> <p>Analysis of the number of SAWs from partner referrals shows that compared to Q1 and Q2 there were more than 1,000 additional SAW referrals from partners compared to the same period this financial year. Over the same period the percentage reduced by nearly 10%. The reduction in the percentage is therefore due to the additional number of SAWs from self-referrals or proactive initiatives rather than a reduction in SAWs from partners.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Year</th> <th colspan="4">2024-25</th> <th colspan="2">2025-26</th> </tr> <tr> <th>Qu</th> <th>Q1</th> <th>Q2</th> <th>Q3</th> <th>Q4</th> <th>Q1</th> <th>Q2</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>SAWs from Partner</td> <td>2,202</td> <td>2,531</td> <td>2,954</td> <td>3,212</td> <td>2,882</td> <td>2,887</td> </tr> <tr> <td>% of total SAW</td> <td>53.0%</td> <td>54.6%</td> <td>49.3%</td> <td>52.0%</td> <td>48.2%</td> <td>43.8%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>There is a pilot in Birmingham North whereby the Prevention Team is supporting crews to evaluate the effectiveness of existing partnerships and to establish new ones. Once the approach has been tested, the plan is to roll out across the brigade before the end of the current financial year.</p> <p>Crews undertake a lot of work to generate High risk referrals that doesn't get captured as part of this SKPI. To better measure this work and evaluate the effectiveness we are planning to explore revising the SKPI to be a wider measure of Collaboration – covering the existing work with partners but also work with groups and other initiatives that could generate high risk referrals.</p>	Year	2024-25				2025-26		Qu	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	SAWs from Partner	2,202	2,531	2,954	3,212	2,882	2,887	% of total SAW	53.0%	54.6%	49.3%	52.0%	48.2%	43.8%	<p>Strengthened Community Engagement</p>
Year	2024-25				2025-26																										
Qu	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2																									
SAWs from Partner	2,202	2,531	2,954	3,212	2,882	2,887																									
% of total SAW	53.0%	54.6%	49.3%	52.0%	48.2%	43.8%																									

		<p>Work is underway to determine the best way of defining and recording this work with a view to proposing changes to the SKPI for 2026-27.</p> <p>What are our actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High level stakeholder mapping commencing to target strategic discussions with Local Authorities, Integrated Care Boards and NHS Trusts.</li> <li>• New SAW referral pathway being piloted in Bham North - designed to equip crews with the tools and give them the confidence to generate local partnership referrals.</li> <li>• Station Risk Profiles being developed in collaboration with Strategy Team to support crews with understanding their local demographic and target vulnerable persons</li> <li>• Partners receiving training on the benefits of a SAW and which service users they should be targeting             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) A partnership event is being planned for November, to raise the profile of our prevention offer, educate partners on our service, support their understanding of our reciprocal referral mechanisms and increase partners referrals of high risk vulnerable individuals into the service for a SAW.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
<p>The number of children engaged in prevention education activity</p>	<p>Emily Fernandez</p>	<p>Q2 permanence against this SKPI is often lower due to the period covering the summer holidays. Qs 3 and 4 often even out in terms of number of children engaged in prevention activity.</p> <p>The Prevention department continually monitor the component parts of our prevention education interventions.</p> <p>What are our actions:</p>	<p>Preventable Water, Road and Fire Deaths</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to monitor our core service indicators.</li> <li>• Work with Ops admin to target our educational initiatives to pupils in schools with &gt;60% pupil premium.</li> <li>• Forecast our education interventions based on existing bookings made.</li> <li>• Devise a plan where forecasted numbers are not aligned to target.</li> </ul>	
<p>The number of accidental dwelling fires</p>	<p>Martin Ward-White</p>	<p><b>Q2 Narrative</b></p> <p>Performance for Q2 is 339, -0.9% or 3 below the quarterly target set at 342. Looking across the year to date, the actuals are 717 against a target of 716 (+1).</p> <p>Most incidents are attributable to cooking or electrical issues. These causes form part of the areas covered by the SAW offer the Service makes to high and medium risk dwellings.</p> <p>Apart from August, the two other months in Q2 was within target. All but Birmingham South have performed within the tolerance for Q2. Whilst July and August Birmingham South was outside of the target, September has seen this command over perform against the target. In Q1, Birmingham South was within tolerance which may suggest that the rise in incidents for July and August has been a temporary issue for the command.</p> <p><b>What are our Actions</b></p> <p>We will continue to monitor Birmingham South to see if the rise in Accidental Dwelling Fires (ADF) was confined to July and August in Q2 and not part of a more sustained increase in ADFs for the command. If not we will look to</p>	<p>Preventable Water, Road and Fire Deaths</p>

		<p>increase the number of SAWs carried out in the areas we can identify as seeing an increase (Sparkbrook, Sheldon and Weoley &amp; Selly Oak wards).</p>							
<p>The number of accidental fires in non-domestic premises</p>	<p>Gemma McSweeney</p>	<p>3-year average YTD is 181, quarter 2 performance is 106 incidents against a quarterly target of 88.</p> <p>In Q2 all commands are in exception except for Black Country South Command.</p> <p>Highest contributing area is Birmingham North Command.</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p><b>Accidental Non-Domestic Fires - up to end of September</b></p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Birmingham North 29</td> <td>Black Country North 20</td> <td>Coventry...</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Birmingham South 26</td> <td>Black Country South 17</td> <td>14</td> </tr> </table> </div> <p><b><u>What are our Actions</u></b></p> <p>Total safe and Strongs that have been carried out by Operations</p> <p>Q1: 120 accepted, 30 declined = 156</p> <p>Q2: 245 accepted, 45 declined = 290.</p>	Birmingham North 29	Black Country North 20	Coventry...	Birmingham South 26	Black Country South 17	14	<p>Preventable Water, Road and Fire Deaths</p>
Birmingham North 29	Black Country North 20	Coventry...							
Birmingham South 26	Black Country South 17	14							

		<p>We have reviewed our audit strategy which has now introduced a target number of audits to be carried out in commercial properties. Themes of these property types will be monitored and will feature as part of Protections Education and Engagement plan.</p> <p>Fire Safety have a process whereby any accidental non-domestic property goes onto a fire safety task list. This list is triaged with a number of outcomes that can be proposed, for example: audit is required, refer to internal dept, refer to external agencies, advice given or no action required. The monitoring of these outcomes will be strengthened to give indications of the actions taken by Protection to feature in reporting. This will provide assurances that where an intervention (Engagement, Education or Enforcement) has been carried out, we will be able to report our actions as a result of the fire. This will also be a mechanism for safe and strong and auditing targeting.</p> <p>We have increased the number of Fire Safety Advisors as we have been working under establishment through Q1 and Q2 whilst we transition through a change of terms and conditions and where our Fire Safety Advisors have naturally progressed into Fire Safety Inspector roles. This will increase Protections capacity to directly target nondomestic properties and fire safety concerns for Q3.</p> <p>Additionally, the revised Auditing Strategy enables FSIs to deliver a number of their activities at premises based on local intelligence/incidents.</p> <p>Since the revision of our audit strategy, we have seen an increase in our audit numbers which brings us on track to be in line with national average by the next reporting quarter.</p>	
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<p>The number of deliberate fires in derelict buildings</p>	<p>Martin Ward-White</p>	<p><b>Q2 Narrative</b></p> <p>The number of incidents for Q2 remains within target at 43 against the target of 48. Year to date is 79 against the YTD target of 100 (-21% below YTD Target).</p> <p>Work has continued from Q1 with local authorities to apply legislative options to compulsory purchase land or enforce public protection legislation available to local authority. As a service we have increased our support for local authorities in obtaining these orders through the provision of data and risk information where we see trends in a geographical area that can be linked to derelict properties. This involves placing a duty on site owners to secure premises or the local authority issuing compulsory purchase orders should the site owners not engage.</p> <p>Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Bill House, Handsworth (Community Protection Order)</li> <li>- Moat Street, Walsall Council (Compulsory Purchase Order)</li> <li>- Villiers Street, Walsall Council (Compulsory Purchase Order)</li> </ul>	<p>Preventable Water, Road and Fire Deaths</p>
<p>The number of false alarm calls due to fire alarm equipment in dwellings</p>	<p>Gemma McSweeney</p>	<p>This SKPI remains a continued area of focus within Protection and is currently being managed to prevent exception. Strategic actions have been implemented to target high offenders such as enhanced targeting of high offenders. Each quarter, Responsible Persons (RPs) of the top five offending premises receive formal correspondence from the Head of Protection outlining their legal responsibilities under the Fire Safety Order and the operational and financial impacts of repeated false alarms on WMFS.</p> <p><b>High Offenders</b></p>	<p>Preventable Water, Road and Fire Deaths</p>

		<p>Brierley Hill – Crews identified spike worked with Fire Safety Advisors (FSAs). Fire Safety Inspector (FSI) conducted audit in August, continued monitoring of False Alarm Equipment (FAE’s)</p> <p>Bloxwich – Crews have attended, residents reluctant to engage with crews. FSI requested for audit. FSAs continuous monitoring.</p> <p>Bloxwich – Crews have engaged with residents. Audit requested by FSIs. FSAs continuous monitoring.</p> <p>Ladywood – Unusual spike in activations. Engage with management agent to identify activations. Cause has been identified and management working with Tall Buildings Team. FSAs to monitor.</p> <p>Aston – Ongoing battle for management agent, previous interaction by crews bought down FAEs. Increase of FAEs again, FSAs working with management agent to reduce FAEs. Continuous monitoring.</p> <p>Coventry – Spike in FAEs due to faults, since building has been decanted. LOR has been reduced and working with management.</p> <p><b>What are our Actions</b></p> <p>As part of the ongoing Automatic Fire Alarm review, we are quality assuring incidents to ensure that a proportionate mobilisation aligned to policy is happening.</p> <p>This is performed on a monthly basis and aims to understanding any impact to Operations (PRL’s) in relation to Business Support Vehicle (BSV) availability. Additionally continued liaison with Alarm Receiving Centres and Housing Providers to build stakeholder awareness around potential future changes that WMFS may implement to risk based mobilising policies.</p>	
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<p>The number of false alarm calls due to fire alarm equipment in non-domestic premises</p>	<p>Gemma McSweeney</p>	<p><b>High Offenders</b></p> <p>Smethwick – High number of FAEs due to accidental break glass actuations. Crews have worked with management who have fitted battery squealers to problematic call points, improved signage and given staff training. There will be continuous monitoring by FSAs.</p> <p>Ward End – Slight increase in FAEs, although within tolerance. Bucket has been reopened and engagement with Fire Safety Manager and FSA. Continuous monitoring.</p> <p>Fallings Park – Increase in FAEs for various reasons although within tolerance. Bucket has been reopened to monitor.</p> <p><b>What are our Actions</b></p> <p>As part of the ongoing AFA review, we will monitor incidents to assure proportionate mobilisation and alignment to current policy. This will be performed on a monthly basis and will also aim to proactively support understanding of impact to Operations in relation to BSV availability.</p>	<p>Preventable Water, Road and Fire Deaths</p>
<p>The number of statutory consults completed in timeframes:</p> <p>a) % of target met for building regulation consults</p>	<p>Gemma McSweeney</p>	<p>98.33% for all Building Reg applications within the time frame of 15 days. (991 Hours)</p> <p>Exceeding the target and tolerance set. 8 building reg applications have been completed but the deadline not met for the quarter.</p> <p>Due to individuals starting the Fire Engineering degree away at university and an increase in Building Safety Regulator (BSR) gateway 2 Applications.</p> <p>Backfilled staffing to provide resilience. Continue to monitor the allocation of staff on courses, the impact and the balance.</p>	<p>Preventable Water, Road and Fire Deaths</p>

<p>b) % of target met for planning application</p>		<p>98.49% for all planning applications within time frame of 21 days. (384 Hours)</p> <p>Exceeding the target and tolerance set. 3 planning applications have been completed but the deadline not met for the quarter.</p> <p>Due to individuals starting the Fire Engineering degree away at university and an increase in BSR gateway 2 Applications.</p> <p>Backfilled staffing to provide resilience. Continue to monitor the allocation of staff on courses, the impact and the balance.</p>	<p>Preventable Water, Road and Fire Deaths</p>
<p>c) % of target met for licensing applications</p>		<p>New Applications – 91.4% deadline met.                  Variants Applications – 94% deadline met.                  Oher Applications – 100% deadline met.</p>	<p>Preventable Water, Road and Fire Deaths</p>
<p>Risk-based attendance standard</p>	<p>Martin Ward-White</p>	<p>The risk-based attendance standard has returned to within target following it being over by 5 seconds in Q1. The Q2 figure was 4 min 51 sec, 9 seconds below the 5-minute target. The main reason in Q2 for attendance times exceeding the 5-minute target is due to resources travelling to incidents on other station areas. For Q2 we have seen a 1 second drop in our reaction times, down from 55 for Q1 to 54 in Q2. We have also seen an improved picture with respect to sickness and stability in Voluntary Additional Shifts (VAS), with operational sickness reducing in Q2 and new VAS business rules seeing a 60% reduction in VAS cancellations which improves staffing.</p> <p><b><u>What are our Actions</u></b></p> <p>The SKPI will continue to be monitored. Whilst road variables may be beyond our control, we continue to look to improve sickness and restricted duty cases which contribute to fleet availability.</p>	<p>Preventable Water, Road and Fire Deaths</p>

<p>Risk-based attendance standard – call handling</p>	<p>Ella Warden</p>	<p>80 Second target achieved for four consecutive quarters, with consistent performance in all three months of Q2 25/26.</p> <p>Evidence of consolidation around the 77/76 second position, with a flattening curve. Evidence of a sustainable achievement.</p> <p>It is anticipated we may see an increase in call handling time over the next quarter due to the command-and-control training, meaning a lot of cross-watch working.</p>	<p>Preventable Water, Road and Fire</p>
<p>Percentage achievement of current and reviewed Business Continuity Plans (BCPs)</p>	<p>Ella Warden</p>	<p>Q2 25/26 - Target 86% - Current – 92%</p> <p>There are three areas currently under review:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fatalities and Serious Injury within WMFS (previously called Crisis Management Plan) - expected completion end of Oct 2025</li> <li>• Industrial Action (expected end 2025)</li> <li>• Pandemic (expected completion end of Nov 25 following testing within Exercise Pegasus)</li> </ul>	<p>Optimal Efficiency and Innovation</p>
<p>Improvement in a range of productivity measures</p>	<p>Martin Ward-White</p>	<p>There has been a 7.7% improvement in productive of crews which has largely come in Q2 from the increase in number of SAWs and Safe &amp; Strongs (S&amp;S) and the work that goes on around this generating the referral. Productivity across the service remains difficult to measure in the absence of metrics provided by departments outside the SKPI and core indicator recording.</p> <p><b><u>What are our Actions</u></b></p> <p>There is an ask on all departments to consider productivity measurements as part of their delivery plans for 2025/26. This will be with the view to generating a greater number of productivity measures where the activity in a department directly or indirectly contributes to operational output.</p>	<p>Productivity</p>

## Service Support

SKPI	SKPI Owner	Key Takeaways from performance review & high-level associated actions In this box articulate a brief high-level summary of performance with reason plus what action is being taken as a result.	Strategic Ambition Alignment
Percentage of public and staff trust in Service communications	Mark Hamilton-Russell	<p>In order to receive updates on a regular basis, on 9.9.25 we started to ask a new set of communications-focused questions during Station Peer Assessment (SPA) sessions to provide regular data. Data to date is based on responses from a sampling approach to surveying staff (34), but the process will help to gauge staff feeling pending the next all-staff survey.</p> <p>Due to current small sample numbers, we are unable to provide a true reading for this quarter. It is anticipated that we will have sufficient data to provide a reading for quarter four.</p>	Strengthened Community Engagement
IT Operations Metric	Kash Singh	IT Operations continues to remain within tolerance; we expect this to improve further once we have concluded our command-and-control project.	Optimal Efficiency and Innovation
Cyber Standards Compliance	Kash Singh	Ongoing efforts to ensure the full workforce are trained continue, we continue to make good progress towards the first of our cyber standards, which will reduce our related corporate risk.	Optimal Efficiency and Innovation
Statutory Data Compliance	Kash Singh	<p>There has been positive movement of 6.5%, currently we are operating at 76.5% compliance.</p> <p>We expect that this trend will continue over the next reporting period bringing this metric back into tolerance.</p> <p>We have increased the resourcing this this area and implemented a new system and real time dashboard to ensure that that this metric can be closely monitored and remains in tolerance.</p>	Optimal Efficiency and Innovation

<p>Set a balanced budget at the beginning of the year and spend within that budget</p>	<p>Iain Newman</p>	<p>Based on P6 monitoring, the forecast General Reserve at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026 as a percentage of the forecast budget for 2026/27 (based on the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) approved in February 2025) is 5.4%.</p> <p>For the average fire and rescue authority as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025, the General Reserve as a percentage of 2024/25 net revenue expenditure was 6%.</p> <p>These measures should be fully aligned for 2026/27 SKPIs.</p>	<p>Optimal Efficiency and Innovation</p>
<p>Identify service changes and other efficiencies that can be delivered from 2026/27</p>	<p>Iain Newman</p>	<p>Early debt repayment on 31<sup>st</sup> July 2025 will generate full year savings of approximately £0.2m per year on net interest costs. Review of capital financing has identified reduced Minimum Revenue Provision of £0.4m per year. Devolved Departments targeted to identify net savings options of £0.8m per year. The actual level of savings required will be determined when the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement is received in December. Savings proposals to Fire Authority will be considered by Senior Leadership Team on 18<sup>th</sup> December.</p>	<p>Optimal Efficiency and Innovation</p>
<p>Total Service carbon footprint / output</p>	<p>Mark Hamilton-Russell</p>	<p>WMFS now sources its electricity from a supplier that provides green energy. This transition ensures that all electricity consumed by the service is carbon-neutral, aligning WMFS with national net-zero targets and significantly reducing its carbon footprint.</p> <p><b>1. Strategic Impact</b> Carbon Neutrality: All electricity used is now sourced from a clean, green tariff</p> <p><b>2. Mitigation Plan</b> To build on this achievement, WMFS will implement a phased mitigation strategy aimed at reducing overall energy consumption and enhancing efficiency:</p>	<p>Align to a Carbon Neutral - target by 2036 Net Zero target by 2041</p>

		<p>a. <b>Phase 1</b> (Q3/4 2025): Ongoing audit of energy usage across all sites to identify high-consumption areas and inefficiencies.</p> <p>b. <b>Phase 2</b>: Ongoing rollout of smart metering and automated energy management systems. This will improve on actual live data.</p> <p>c. <b>Phase 3</b> (Q1–Q3 2026): Ongoing upgrade of lighting with passive infrared (PIR) systems to low-energy alternatives, based on the Estates Improvement Programme; staff training on energy-conscious practices.</p> <p>WMFS gas supplier is Total Gas through Crown Commercial Services (CCS) and has been for the past few years. The contract is due for review in Feb 2027 which could support a more favourable tariff, the adding of smart meters will also support actual usages as the info above.</p>	
<p>Service gas usage (KWH and Carbon Tonnes)</p>	<p>Mark Hamilton-Russell</p>	<p>Currently below target level. Q2 target 981,444.9kWh – actual consumption (July and August) 500,535 kWh. Some billing data is still pending; however, it is anticipated that we will remain below target.</p> <p>The actual usage of both Gas and Electric needs further analysis based on the whole estate vs the total target and based on the year on year % reduction of output.</p>	<p>Align to a Carbon Neutral - target by 2036 Net Zero target by 2041</p>
<p>Electricity usage (KWH)</p>	<p>Mark Hamilton-Russell</p>	<p>Currently below target level. Q2 target 909,603 kWh – actual consumption (July and August) 703,798 kWh. Some billing data is still pending; it is therefore anticipated that we will exceed our Q2 target.</p> <p>The actual usage of both Gas and Electric needs further analysis based on the whole estate vs the total target and based on the year on year % reduction of output.</p>	<p>Align to a Carbon Neutral - target by 2036 Net Zero target by 2041</p>

People

SKPI	SKPI Owner	Key Takeaways from performance review & high-level associated actions In this box articulate a brief high-level summary of performance with reason plus what action is being taken as a result.	Strategic Ambition Alignment
Percentage of staff with protected characteristics and their role within the Service	Kelly Harding	<p>In Q2 2025/26, workforce diversity performance remained within tolerance levels, maintaining a green rating across both gender and ethnicity measures. Female representation stands at 26.9% against a target of 27.6%, reflecting stability compared to previous quarters. The workforce includes 502 women overall, with higher representation among non-uniformed (57%) and fire control staff (88%), but continued underrepresentation among uniformed employees (14%). To address this, targeted positive action continues through firefighter recruitment activities such as taster days, meet and greet sessions, and awareness initiatives. The launch of the “Ignite Programme”, a female-only pre-recruitment pathway, alongside the “Fire-Start Fitness Programme”, will provide structured, inclusive support to help women engage confidently with the recruitment process. Despite balanced inflows and outflows of female staff (net change 0), the overall direction of travel remains static, indicating that sustained efforts are needed to drive further improvement.</p> <p>Ethnicity representation also remains on target, with 15% of the workforce identifying as being from underrepresented backgrounds, against a 15.5% target. This includes 18% of non-uniformed, 15% of uniformed, and 3% of fire control staff. Recruitment data shows that 16% of new firefighter recruits this year were from underrepresented communities, though ten leavers have resulted in a slight net reduction. Positive action initiatives continue to focus on community engagement and partnership development, including outreach through gyms, swimming clubs, and other diverse community spaces. Looking ahead, the Service will maintain its proactive recruitment and inclusion programmes, strengthen community partnerships, and deepen analysis of</p>	Staff Trust

		retention patterns to ensure lasting progress. Overall, while performance is stable and within target thresholds, both gender and ethnicity data highlight the need for continued, focused action to translate engagement and recruitment initiatives into measurable long-term representation gains.	
Percentage of staff trust in the Service	Kelly Harding	This data will be provided at Q4, with a proposal to measure this moving forward to be discussed with SLT in preparation for 2026/27.	Staff Trust
Percentage of completed appraisals	Marc Hudson	<p>Appraisals have been re-introduced this year following the introduction of Oracle into the service. Appraisals have replaced the former Personal Development Reviews (PDRs), which were mainly focussed on Operations. Positive progress has been made throughout 2025 to embed Appraisals into business as usual with 89.66% of all staff having had an appraisal. It is however, that there is still some way to go to ensure that all staff (100%) throughout the service have a completed appraisal.</p> <p>Appraisals are hugely important as they will be the first stage in our talent management process and will be instrumental in identifying and supporting development and progression throughout the service, including encouraging those from under-represented groups within the service to explore progression through meaningful conversation with their Line Manager.</p> <p>The People Development team are currently undertaking a review of the appraisal system following the first year in operation to better understand what works well for the end users and what areas of the system can be changed to provide a more user friendly, more simplified approach to appraisals, whilst still capturing the details of the appraisal conversations.</p> <p>January 2026 the service will reset expectation for all staff to undertake a fresh appraisal with a 6month review period set for June 2026. It is envisaged that</p>	Staff Trust

		<p>with the updates to the system and with the end user feedback and commitment from the Senior Leadership Team, the service will increase the levels of appraisals to the targeted level of 100% of all staff. As the expectation will be set to renew appraisals in January 2026, I anticipate that the appraisal data will be similar in the next quarter as it is in this quarter.</p>	
<p>Percentage of core skills assessment compliance</p>	<p>Marc Hudson</p>	<p>Incident Command forms part of the new operational training and development model, with changes made to Incident Command development mid-2024. As a result of the changes and the central management of performance (like what will be the case with the other core skills) the data for Incident Command is currently 98.68% an improvement on previous years.</p> <p>The service has now rolled out the new centrally coordinated training and assessment model which is based on a 2-year cycle of training, development and assessment for all core skills.</p> <p>In conjunction with this was the introduction of the revised competency expectation, providing a more robust assurance picture to the authority of our staff's operational core skills competency.</p> <p>As the new training and competency model went live on the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025, it won't be until 1<sup>st</sup> April 2027 that all operational personnel have cycled through all the core skills disciplines.</p> <p>The introduction of the new model has meant that some operational personnel will likely fall out of their 2-year competency for Breathing Apparatus as the new model embeds and rolls through the full 2-year cycle.</p> <p>To mitigate the risk of this specifically with Breathing Apparatus, a mitigation plan has been developed between the Operational Training &amp; Development department and Operations – this mitigation plan will ensure that all of our</p>	<p>Productivity</p>

		<p>staff will have a valid 'hot wear' assessment for Breathing Apparatus in line with the guidance within the National Operational Guidance (N.O.G) document throughout the embedding period of the new training model.</p> <p>It is anticipated that by the next quarterly reporting, Breathing Apparatus competence will be within tolerance level of 95%+.</p>	
<p>Total number of injuries</p>	<p>Marc Hudson</p>	<p>The service takes its responsibilities around Health and Safety extremely seriously and has a series of Health &amp; Safety related meetings which escalate issues from a local level to brigade wide. West Midlands Fire Service also chairs the regional group which in turn feed into the National NFCC Health &amp; Safety meeting.</p> <p>There has been a significant increase in injuries throughout this quarter comparative to the 3 yearly averages. Analysis of the data is conducted to look for trends, but the service very much encourages the reporting of accidents, injuries and near misses and view this as part of a healthy Health &amp; Safety culture. This is reinforced within the training as described below and may be contributing to the increased number of injuries being reported.</p> <p>Accident and Injuries including RIDDOR reportable are monitored for trends and discussed at the brigade quarterly performance meeting. All accidents will be investigated to varying degrees and information fed into the brigade committee – through quarterly performance.</p> <p>Struck By/Struck Against is continuing to become an emerging theme, additional analysis is being undertaken and will be discussed at the Brigade wide health and safety meeting, it is also worth noting that this has been discussed at the Regional Health and Safety committee where a theme appears to be emerging. This will be monitored and further information provided.</p>	<p>Staff Trust</p>

		<p>A review of data spanning a wider data set than the previous 12 months will now be commissioned to extract any trends over a longer period to support organisational learning.</p> <p>The service has also invested in an additional post to roll-out H&amp;S training across the service, commencing with managers (supervisory and above) with a view that further Health &amp; Safety training will be rolled out for all individuals.</p> <p>There is also a programme of workplace audit inspections across all Fire Stations but is now being rolled out across all workplaces with training locations completed, with Transport, Engineering and Workshops next to be audited.</p> <p>To supplement this programme of audit, the service participates in a regional peer audit programme which focuses on specific themes such as Breathing Apparatus or Personal Protective Equipment as examples.</p>	
<p>Total number of RIDDOR injuries</p>	<p>Marc Hudson</p>	<p>The service takes its responsibilities around Health and Safety extremely seriously and has a series of Health &amp; Safety related meetings which escalate issues from a local level to brigade wide. West Midlands Fire Service also chairs the regional group which in turn feed into the National NFCC Health &amp; Safety meeting.</p> <p>Accident and Injuries including RIDDOR reportable are monitored for trends and discussed at the brigade quarterly performance meeting.</p> <p>There has been 5 RIDDOR reports for Q2, which is the same as Q1 but less than the 7 RIDDOR reports the same period last year (Q2 2024).</p> <p>All accidents will be investigated to varying degrees and information fed into the brigade committee – through quarterly performance with any learning</p>	<p>Staff Trust</p>

		<p>being shared wider through the Organisational Learning and Intelligence team who feed into the Brigade Health &amp; Safety meetings.</p> <p>It should be noted as a consideration that the current 2days, 2 nights, 4 days off shift pattern may inadvertently impact the number of RIDDOR reportable incidents due to people booking fit to work on their first day back at work on the 8<sup>th</sup> Day. Further analysis of this will be conducted and reported back at future meetings.</p> <p>In addition to the above and like injuries, a deeper dive of the data spanning a wider data set will now be conducted for the purposed of trend analysis and organisational learning.</p>	
Average number of working days / shifts lost due to sickness – uniformed and Fire Control staff	Kelly Harding	<p>Performance in Q2 25/26 shows continued positive progress, with an actual figure of 1.88 against a target of 1.95, remaining comfortably within tolerance levels (green). This reflects a sustained downward trend compared to the previous year’s higher figures (2.07 in Q2 24/25 and 2.28 in Q3 24/25), demonstrating the effectiveness of ongoing interventions. The improvement is largely attributed to the outcomes of the attendance management audit, which strengthened policy compliance and case management practices. Additionally, the introduction of new business rules around return-to-work (RTW) processes appears to have enhanced the level of support provided to staff, contributing to the reduction in sickness rates. The forecast for the next quarter remains green, indicating confidence in maintaining current performance levels.</p>	Staff Trust
Average number of working days / shifts lost due to sickness – non-uniformed staff	Kelly Harding	<p>In Q2 25/26, performance continues to fall below expectations, with an actual sickness rate of 3.44 against a target of 2.01, resulting in a red rating for underperformance against tolerance levels. This represents a continuing negative trend compared to previous quarters, where sickness rates have consistently exceeded targets — for example, 2.70 vs 1.49 in Q1 25/26, and</p>	Staff Trust

		<p>2.08 vs 1.41 in Q4 24/25. The persistently high sickness levels, particularly among non-uniform staff, indicate ongoing challenges in absence management and data reliability. In response, an audit is scheduled for November, mirroring the approach taken in operational areas, to strengthen accountability and ensure consistent application of sickness management policies. Additionally, a working group will be established to address data integrity issues and support improved monitoring and reporting. The overall outlook for the next quarter remains red, highlighting the need for continued managerial focus and strengthened policy enforcement to achieve sustained improvement.</p>	
<p>Average number of working days / shifts lost due to sickness – all staff</p>	<p>Kelly Harding</p>	<p>In Q2 2025/26, sickness rates of 2.25 underperforming against the quarterly target of 1.97 and rated red for performance. This represents a slight deterioration compared with Q1 2025/26 (Actual: 2.11) and a continuation of a rising trend since Q2 2024/25 (Actual: 2.09). This can be attributed primarily to the increase of non-uniformed staff sickness, with reporting inconsistencies between UKG and Oracle systems complicating trend identification. Specifically, at audit, 311 uniformed and 901 non-uniformed sickness days were identified without corresponding absence reasons, limiting managerial insight into causal factors.</p> <p>When benchmarked against other UK Fire and Rescue Services, WMFRS performs better than the national average of 2.43 shifts lost per person (Range: 0.58 days in West Sussex to 3.84 days in Northumberland), ranking 11th out of 38 services and the 2<sup>nd</sup> best performing Metropolitan Brigade (with only South Yorkshire having less sickness (0.61), indicating that while performance is below internal expectations, it remains comparatively strong sector-wide. It is anticipated that the forthcoming non-operational audit in</p>	<p>Staff Trust</p>

		November will improve data accuracy and support more targeted interventions to address sickness trends.	
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## SKPI Detailed Analysis

<b>Key:</b>	
<b>Blue</b>	<b>Over performance against the tolerance levels</b>
<b>Green</b>	<b>Performance is within the tolerance levels</b>
<b>Red</b>	<b>Under performance against the tolerance levels</b>

## Service Delivery

<i>The number of Safe and Wells achieved by the Service</i>			
<b>Q2 25/26</b> <b>Target: 5875</b> <b>Actual to date: 6386</b> <b>Rating: Over performance against the tolerance levels (blue)</b>			Next quarter forecast Green
Q2 24/25 4524	Q3 24/25 5775*	Q4 24/25 6053	Q1 25/26 A: 5848 T: 5875
Commentary:  For the 2 <sup>nd</sup> quarter in a row the SAW target has been achieved, with Q2 exceeding it by 511 SAW. This is due to greater localised actions from crews to generate referrals outside of partnerships but within the vulnerability matrix developed by Prevention. This has been proving successful given they are hitting the proportion of High, Medium and Low Risk referrals expected (H-4070, M-1432, L-585). This action will continue into Q3 where we hope to hit the number of SAWs completed target.			

\*Please note that the way in which the SKPI was recorded changed in Q3 2024/25, moving from a points based system to one of quantity.

Direction of Travel based on 3-year average (YTD) – (only required to be completed for Q2 and Q4): Improving

Added by: Alex Shapland

Date: 16/10/24

*Percentage of Safe and Well visits referred by our partners*

<b>Q2 25/26</b> <b>Target: 55%</b> <b>Actual to date: 43.8%</b> <b>Rating: Under performance against the tolerance levels (red)</b>	Next quarter forecast Red
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Q2 24/25 54.6%	Q3 24/25 49.3%	Q4 24/25 52.0%	Q1 25/26 48.2%
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Commentary:

There has been a focus in Operations on achieving the Number of SAWs target. One of the impacts has been that the target for percentage of SAWs from Partner referrals has not been achieved.

Analysis of the number of SAWs from partner referrals shows that compared to Q1 and Q2 2024-25 there were more than 1,000 additional SAWs from partners completed in the same period this financial year. Over the same period the percentage reduced by nearly 10%. The reduction in the percentage is therefore due to the additional number of SAWs from self referrals or proactive initiatives rather than a reduction in SAW referrals from partners.

Year	2024-25				2025-26	
Qu	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2
SAWs from Partner	2,202	2531	2954	3212	2882	2887
% of total SAW	53.0%	54.6%	49.3%	52.0%	48.2%	43.8%

There is a pilot in Birmingham North Command whereby the Prevention Team is supporting crews to evaluate the effectiveness of existing partnerships and to establish new ones. Once the approach is proven to work the plan is to roll it out across the brigade before the end of the current financial year.

Crews undertake a lot of work to generate High risk referrals that doesn't get captured as part of this SKPI. To better measure this work and evaluate the effectiveness we are planning to revise the SKPI to be a wider measure of Collaboration – covering the existing work with partners, but also work with groups and other initiatives that could generate high risk referrals. Work is underway to determine the best way of defining and recording this work with a view to proposing changes to the SKPI for 2026-27.

Direction of Travel based on 3-year average (YTD) – (only required to be completed for Q2 and Q4): No change

Added by: Pete Wilson

Date: 13/10/2025

<i>The number of children engaged in prevention education activity</i>			
<b>Q2 25/26</b> Target: Q2 = 7,500, YTD = 15,000 Actual to date: Q2 = 2148 YTD = 11,159 Rating: Performance is within the tolerance levels (green)			Next quarter forecast Green
Q2 24/25 n/a	Q3 24/25 n/a	Q4 24/25 n/a	Q1 25/26 A: 9011 T: 7500
Commentary:			

<p>This new Performance Indicator has been introduced this year. The Annual Target is 30,000 children.</p> <p>The majority of activity that contributes to this target takes place in schools. Q2 covers the Summer Holiday period when in-school delivery is not possible. Given that activity is overwhelmingly focussed during Q1, Q3 and Q4 the performance is rated as green as we remain on track to achieve the annual target.</p> <p>The annual target of 30,000 children is profiled as 15,000 Primary School children receiving SPARKs delivered by Crews and 15,000 children receiving input from Prevention Team at Safeside and in school settings. Year to Date the split is 5,615 SPARKs and 5,544 Prevention Team.</p> <p>It is proposed that in future years the profile of activity to achieve this PI is spread as follows: Q1 33%, Q2 0%, Q3 33%, Q4 33%</p>	
<p>Direction of Travel based on 3-year average (YTD) – (only required to be completed for Q2 and Q4): No change</p>	
<p>Added by: Pete Wilson</p>	<p>Date: 13/10/2025</p>

<p><i>The number of accidental dwelling fires</i></p>			
<p><b>Q2 25/26</b>  <b>Target: 339</b>  <b>Actual to date: 342</b>  <b>Rating: Performance is within the tolerance levels (green)</b></p>			<p>Next quarter forecast                  Green</p>
<p>Q2 24/25 YTD                  T: 721                  A: 669                  -7.2%</p>	<p>Q3 24/25 YTD                  T: 1045                  A: 1035                  -1.0%</p>	<p>Q4 24/25 YTD                  T: 1378                  A: 1413                  +2.5%</p>	<p>Q1 25/26 YTD                  T: 374                  A: 366                  -2.1%</p>
<p>Commentary:</p>			

Performance for the quarter is 338, 1.1% below target, which was set at the 3 year average of 342. Looking across the year to date, the actual to target is much closer, 717 against a target of 716 being +1.

Most incidents are attributable to cooking or electrical issues, with smoking as the third most common cause. There is evidence of Safe and Well visits being carried out both pro-actively and post incident and this activity has increased in Q2 vs Q1. The use of social media to highlight risks, leaflet drops and engagement through schools and community groups is evident from the returns. Targetted campaigns on cooking and electrical safety further reduce incidents.

There is some mention of lithium ion batteries/e-mobility devices, which should be monitored in future months/quarters as a potential emerging trend.

Direction of Travel based on 3-year average (YTD) – (only required to be completed for Q2 and Q4): No change

Added by: Matt Stanton

Date: 15/10/2025

*The number of accidental fires in non-domestic premises*

<b>Q2 25/26</b>			Next quarter forecast
Target: 88			Red
Actual to date: 106			
Rating: Under performance against the tolerance levels (red)			
<b>Q2 24/25 YTD</b>	<b>Q3 24/25 YTD</b>	<b>Q4 24/25 YTD</b>	<b>Q1 25/26 YTD</b>
T: 184	T: 264	T: 350	T: 80
A: 168	A: 238	A: 336	A: 111
-8.7%	-9.8%	-4.0%	+27.9%

Commentary:

**Performance**

106 incidents during Q2 reflects an increase of +19.3% (+18 incidents) against the target of 88. The 3-year average for Q2 is 95 incidents. 220 YTD incidents is +31.7% (+53 incidents) against YTD target of 167. Performance for Q2 and YTD is above target and above the upper tolerance levels.

When compared with the culminative 3yr average of 181, the current trajectory is anticipated to return a below tolerance performance (red) during Q3. This is based on Q1 reporting 34 incidents above target and subsequently leading to an out of tolerance position for the financial year.

**Q2**

Cooking appliances were the most recorded source of ignition (17.1%), and entertainment venues were the most affected property type (26.7%). Faults in equipment or appliances (such as electrical faults) accounted for over a third of accidental fires at non-domestic premises (43.9%).

**Year to date**

Electricity supply is the most recorded source of ignition (16.9%) followed by cooking appliances, and retail premises are the most affected (25.6%), with faults in system (electrical) or appliances also the most common cause (42.9%).

Highest offender is Birmingham North Command during July (14 of 42); however, over the whole period and all command areas, September returned the lowest number of incidents (31). Retail Shops property type makes up nearly a quarter of all incidents (22%), with faults in system (electrical) the main cause of incidents.

**What are our Actions**

Total Safe & Strong completed (Q1: 120 accepted 30 declined 156) (Q2: 245 accepted, 45 declined = 290).

Continue to support Operations in their targeted delivery of the Safe & Strong activity, providing businesses and related non-domestic premises with information on how they can proactively reduce the likelihood of fires by improving Fire Safety Management. Additionally, the revised Auditing Strategy enables Fire Safety Inspectors to deliver 10% of their activities at premises based on local intelligence/incidents.

Direction of Travel based on 3-year average (YTD) – (only required to be completed for Q2 and Q4): Declining

Added by: Matt Young Darren Marshall

Date: 13/10/2025

<i>The number of deliberate fires in derelict buildings</i>			
<b>Q2 25/26</b> <b>Target: 48</b> <b>Actual to date: 43</b> <b>Rating: Performance is within the tolerance levels (green)</b>			Next quarter forecast Green
Q2 24/25 n/a	Q3 24/25 n/a	Q4 24/25 17	Q1 25/26 T: 53 A: 34
Commentary:  Q2 has seen 43 incidents against a target of 48 representing 10.4% below target. The performance of this SKPI is within the tolerance level target that is set. There has been significant work with local authorities to obtain compulsory purchase orders and protection orders for public sites. The derelict fire action plan continues to be used, including work with partners to highlight new buildings and improve security at derelict buildings.  Year to date performance is 79 against a target of 100. This reflects over-performance against the tolerance levels.  Ongoing actions: Coventry & Solihull Command have developed a teams site for notificaion to partners of problem sites, this is being developed to be shared and implemented across the 5 Command areas.			
Direction of Travel based on 3-year average (YTD) – (only required to be completed for Q2 and Q4): No change			
Added by: Matt Stanton		Date: 16/10/2025	

<i>The number of false alarm calls due to fire alarm equipment in dwellings</i>			
<b>Q2 25/26</b> <b>Target: 1666</b> <b>Actual to date: 1663</b> <b>Rating: Performance is within the tolerance levels (green)</b>			Next quarter forecast Green
<b>Q2 24/25 YTD</b> T: 2669 A: 3226 +20.9%	<b>Q3 24/25 YTD</b> T: 4067 A: 4870 +19.7%	<b>Q4 24/25 YTD</b> T: 5353 A: 6206 +15.9%	<b>Q1 25/26</b> T: 1461 A: 1390
Commentary:  <b>Performance</b>  1663 incidents during Q2 reflects YTD of 3085, maintaining a tolerance of -1.3% (which is -42 difference against target of 3127 incidents). When compared with the culminative 3yr average of 2944, the trajectory (-4.57% against target) enables the consideration of achieving a culminative end of year total that is within tolerance.			
<b>High Offenders</b>  Brierley Hill – Crews identified spike at premises, worked with Fire Safety Advisors (FSA). Fire Safety Inspector (FSI) conducted audit in August, continued monitoring of False Alarm Equipment’s (FAE).  Bloxwich – Crews have attended a residential premises, residents reluctant to engage with crews. FSI requested for audit. FSAs continuous monitoring. Crews have engaged with residents. Audit requested by FSIs. FSAs continuous monitoring.  Ladywood – Unusual spike in activations. Engage with management agent to identify activations. Cause has been identified and management working with Tall Buildings Team. FSAs to monitor.			

Aston – Ongoing battle for management agent, previous interaction by crews bought down FAEs. Increase of FAEs again, FSAs working with management agent to reduce FAEs. Continuous monitoring.

Coventry – Spike in FAEs due to faults, since building has been decanted. Level of Response has been reduced and working with management.

**What are our Actions**

As part of the ongoing AFA review, we will monitor incidents to assure proportionate mobilisation and alignment to current policy. This will be performed on a monthly basis and will also aim to proactively support understanding of impact to Operations in relation to Business Support Vehicle (BSV) availability. Additionally continued liaison with Alarm Receiving Centres and Housing Providers to build stakeholder awareness around any potential future changes that WMFS may apply to risk based mobilising policies. Next quarter is anticipated to return a within tolerance (green) outcome based on mitigation plans in place, which include writing to Responsible Persons that are considered as High Offenders (4 or more Unwanted Fire Signals within the reporting period).

Direction of Travel based on 3-year average (YTD) – (only required to be completed for Q2 and Q4): No change

Added by: Matt Young Darren Marshall

Date:13/10/25

*The number of false alarm calls due to fire alarm equipment non-domestic premises*

<b>Q2 25/26</b> <b>Target: 370</b> <b>Actual to date: 378</b> <b>Rating: Performance is within the tolerance levels (green)</b>	Next quarter forecast Green
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Q2 24/25 YTD T: 647 A: 669 +3.4%	Q3 24/25 YTD T: 1010 A: 1071 +6.0%	Q4 24/25 YTD T: 1436 A: 1309 +9.7%	Q1 25/26 T: 332 A: 352
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Commentary:

**Performance**

378 incidents during Q2 reflects YTD of 719, maintaining a tolerance of +2.4% (which is +17 incidents against target). When compared with the 3yr average of 682 (+5.42%), the trajectory enables the consideration of achieving a culminative end of year total that is within tolerance. Next quarter is anticipated to return a within tolerance (green) outcome based on mitigation plans in place, which include writing to High Offenders.

**High Offenders**

Smethwick – High number of FAEs due to accidental break glass actuations. Crews have worked with management who have fitted battery squealers to problematic call points, improved signage and given staff training. There will be continuous monitoring by FSAs.

Ward End – Slight increase in FAEs, although within tolerance. Bucket has been reopened and engagement with Fire Safety Manager and FSA. Continuous monitoring.

Fallings Park – Increase in FAEs for various reasons, although within tolerance. Bucket has been reopened to monitor.

**What are our Actions**

As part of the ongoing AFA review, we will monitor incidents to assure proportionate mobilisation and alignment to current policy. This will be performed on a monthly basis and will also aim to proactively support understanding of any impact to Operations in relation to BSV availability.

Direction of Travel based on 3-year average (YTD) – (only required to be completed for Q2 and Q4): No change

Added by: Matt Young Darren Marshall	Date: 13 <sup>th</sup> Oct 2025
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*The number of statutory consults completed in timeframes*

**A) Percentage of target met for building regulations**

<b>Q2 25/26</b> <b>Target: 85%</b> <b>Actual to date: 98.33%</b> <b>Rating: Over performance against the tolerance levels (blue)</b>	Next quarter forecast Blue
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Q2 24/25 94.70% 302 applications received 16 deadline not met	Q3 24/25 92.35% 379 received 29 deadline not met	Q4 24/25 98.92% 464 received 5 deadline not met	Q1 25/26 T: 85% A: 99.13%
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98.33% for all Building Reg applications completed within the time frame of 15 days. (991 Hours)  
 560 applications received.  
 8 completed deadline not met.  
 Exceeding the target and tolerance set.

<p>Due to individuals starting the Fire Engineering degree away at university and an increase in Building Safety Regulator (BSR) gateway 2 Applications. Backfilled staffing to provide resilience. Continue to monitor the allocation of staff on courses, the impact and the balance.</p>	
<p>Direction of Travel based on 3-year average (YTD) – (only required to be completed for Q2 and Q4): No change</p>	
<p>Added by: Darren Marshall Matt Young</p>	<p>Date: 13/10/25</p>

<p><i>The number of statutory consults completed in timeframes</i></p> <p><b>B) Percentage of target met for planning applications</b></p>			
<p><b>Q2 25/26</b>  <b>Target: 90%</b>  <b>Actual to date: 98.49%</b>  <b>Rating: Over performance against the tolerance levels (blue)</b></p>			<p>Next quarter forecast Blue</p>
<p><b>Q2 24/25</b>            94.70%            302 applications received            16 deadline not met</p>	<p><b>Q3 24/25</b>            93.89%            262 applications received            16 deadline not met</p>	<p><b>Q4 24/25</b>            97.01%            268 applications received            8 deadline not met</p>	<p><b>Q1 25/26</b>            T: 90%            A: 98.02%</p>
<p>Commentary:</p> <p>98.49% for all planning applications completed within the time frame of 21 days. (384) Hours)            207 applications received.            3 completed deadline not met.</p> <p>Exceeding the target and tolerance set.</p>			

Due to individuals starting the Fire Engineering degree away at university and an increase in BSR gateway 2 Applications. Backfilled staffing to provide resilience. Continue to monitor the allocation of staff on courses, the impact and the balance.	
Direction of Travel based on 3-year average (YTD) – (only required to be completed for Q2 and Q4): No change	
Added by: Darren Marshall Matt Young	Date: 13/10/25

<i>The number of statutory consults completed in timeframes</i>			
C) Percentage of target met for licensing applications			
<b>Q2 25/26</b> <b>Target: 90%</b> <b>Actual to date: 94.25%</b> <b>Rating: Performance is within the tolerance levels (green)</b>			Next quarter forecast Green
<b>Q2 24/25</b> 96.79% New Applications - 96.6% Variations – 96.4% Other – 100%	<b>Q3 24/25</b> 94.81% New Applications - 95.2% Variations – 93.5% Other – 100%	<b>Q4 24/25</b> 89.36% New Applications – 87.8% Variations – 89.3% Other – 94.1%	<b>Q4 24/25</b> T: 90% A: 92.72%
Commentary: Within Tolerance. New Applications – 91.4% completed deadline met. Variants Applications – 94% completed deadline met. Oher Applications – 100% completed deadline met.			
Direction of Travel based on 3-year average (YTD) – (only required to be completed for Q2 and Q4): No change			
Added by: Darren Marshall Matt Young		Date: 13/10/25	

<i>Risk-based Attendance Standard</i>			
<b>Q2 25/26</b> <b>Target: 4:51</b> <b>Actual to date: 5:00</b> <b>Rating: Performance is within the tolerance levels (green)</b>			Next quarter forecast Green
Q2 24/25 4min 48sec	Q3 24/25 4min 51sec	Q4 24/25 4min 49sec	Q1 25/26 T: 5 minutes A: 5 mins 5 secs
Commentary:  The 5 minute attendance standard moved out of exception on 3 <sup>rd</sup> September and has remained within tolerance levels, resulting in a Q2 performance of 4:51.  The year to date is 4:58 and will continue to be monitored throughout Q3 and beyond.  Operations continue to report on this monthly and there has been focus on reaction and response times to identify improvements locally.  Contributing factors continue to be time in attendance at incidents, which has increased from Q1 by 0.2% to 7.7%. Standby moves are also up from Q1 to 1.2%. This, coupled with increased call volume by approximately 2000 for Fire Control, who experienced call volume increases of 21% in Q1 means we are busier, and the nearest available appliance may already be at another incident, requiring a longer travel time for the next available appliance. Q2 reports Other Station area – 103 instances, as the highest recorded contributor to delays in attendance captured through incident workbooks.  The main reason in Q2 for attendance times exceeding the 5-minute target is due to resources travelling to incidents on other station areas. For Q2 we have seen a 1 second drop in our reaction times, down from 55 for Q1 to 54 in Q2. We have also seen an improved			

picture with respect to sickness and stability in Voluntary Additional Shifts (VAS), with operational sickness reducing in Q2 and new VAS business rules seeing a 60% reduction in VAS cancellations which improves staffing.

Compounding this, appliances OTR is up year on year, dropping by 0.1 from Q1 to 70.7%:

July: +118% on 24/25

August: +52% on 24/25

September: -14% on 24/25

While trending downwards, it's recommended that mitigation is considered for Q3 ahead of December, which year on year presents a spike in appliances unavailable and could have a critical impact on meeting the 5 minute attendance standard.

Direction of travel across 3 years shows the KPI is in decline:

22/23 -54.4% in target

23/24 - 52.5% in target

24/25 - 54.2% in target

25/26 - 51% in target

Direction of Travel based on 3-year average (YTD) – (only required to be completed for Q2 and Q4): Declining

Added by: Matt Stanton

Date: 16/10/2025

<i>Risk-based attendance standard – call handling</i>			
<b>Q2 25/26</b> <b>Target: 80</b> <b>Actual to date: 76.6</b> <b>Rating: Over performance against the tolerance levels (blue)</b>			Next quarter forecast Green
Q3 24/25 79	Q4 24/25 76	Q1 25/26 76	Q2 25/26 77
Commentary:  The median call handling for the reporting period (Q2 24/25 to Q2 25/26) was 78 seconds. This is 2 seconds below the services 80 seconds standard. The previous year saw a performance of 87 seconds.  80 Second target achieved for four consecutive quarters, with consistent performance in all three months of Q2 25/26.  Evidence of consolidation around the 77/76 second position, with a flattening curve. Evidence of a sustainable achievement.  It is anticipated we may see an increase in call handling time over the next quarter due to the command-and-control training, meaning a lot of cross-watch working.			
Direction of Travel based on 3-year average (YTD) – (only required to be completed for Q2 and Q4): Improving			
Added by: Doug Jones		Date: 15/10/25	

<i>Percentage of achievement of current and reviewed Business Continuity Plans (BCP)</i>			
<b>Q2 25/26</b> <b>Target: 85%</b> <b>Actual to date: 92%</b> <b>Rating: Performance is within the tolerance levels (green)</b>			Next quarter forecast Green
<b>Q2 24/25</b> N/A - unable to locate figures	<b>Q3 24/25</b> N/A - unable to locate figures	<b>Q4 24/25</b> 87%	<b>Q1 25/26</b> T: 85% A: 92%
<p><b>Commentary:</b>                  West Midlands Fire Service currently maintains 60 Business Continuity Plans (BCP) broken down into 5 areas of business:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WMFS – Regulation including COMAH</li> <li>• WMFS – other by subject matter</li> <li>• Transport Engineering Workshops (TEW)</li> <li>• Stations, Functional Department and Fire Control</li> <li>• Digital &amp; Data</li> </ul> <p><b>Areas of Note:</b>                  Exercise Pegasus (National Tier exercise) is taking place throughout September and October 2025 with an end date of 5<sup>th</sup> November 2025 – this exercise is testing the Fatalities and Serious Injury and Pandemic BCP’s and once complete these BCP’s can be finalised and published.</p> <p><b>Out of Date BCP’s</b> (explanation below):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Under Review - Fatalities and Serious Injury within WMFS (previously called Crisis Management Plan) - expected completion end of Oct 2025</li> <li>• Industrial Action (expected end 2025)</li> <li>• Under Review - Pandemic (expected completion end of Nov 25 following testing within Exercise Pegasus)</li> </ul>			

**Industrial Action**

This BCP still remains on hold while Government minimum service level (MSL) consultations continue to take place, which was further delayed by a change in government, but the legislation has since been removed. Proposals have been presented to scrutiny committee and work continues to develop a more permanent solution; this will then allow the BCP to be updated.

**Pandemic**

Review was started at the end of Dec 24 and as of August 2025 a final draft has been produced. Initial engagement with the clinical governance manager took place and EP updated to reach this draft version. This version is currently being tested as part of the National Tier Exercise Pegasus (Sept – Oct) and a finalised version will be published after this exercise.

**Fatalities & Serious Injury within WMFS Plan (previously known as Crisis Management Plan)**

Review commenced in September 2024, following learning from recent organisational intelligence, the plan has been updated to reflect the different situations that could occur within the workplace and feedback from Head of People following external recommendations. Alongside the Pandemic BCP, this plan may play a part within Exercise Pegasus and will therefore be tested, and if required updated, following this exercise.

Once tested, the final Draft plan will be shared with SLT for consultation before being shared with wider stakeholders for final consultation (although stakeholders have been contributing throughout the review).

Alongside this the Funeral Framework is being reviewed by Corporate Comms and must be complete before the BCP can be finalised. Upon agreement from all stakeholders the plan will then be sent for approval and publishing.

Direction of Travel based on 3-year average (YTD) – (only required to be completed for Q2 and Q4): Improving

Added by:

Lucie Tattersll & Daniel Evans

Date:

15<sup>th</sup> October 2025

<i>Improvement in a range of productivity measures</i>			
<b>Q2 25/26</b> <b>Target:</b> <b>Actual to date: +7.7% - 185%</b> <b>Rating: Performance is within the tolerance levels (green)</b>			Next quarter forecast Green
Q2 24/25 N/A	Q3 24/25 N/A	Q4 24/25 +20%	Q1 25/26 T: +2% A: +5%
Commentary:  Productivity still remains difficult to measure with consistency. This SKPI would benefit from clear metrics which are measured to provide consistency and value in the reporting. As a result, work is ongoing to examine how the reporting against this indicator can continue to be improved. Currently, responsibility for the indicator sits with Operations, however productivity is much wider in scope, reaching across all areas of the Service. Therefore, consideration is being given to whether it continues to be appropriate for ownership of the indicator to sit within operations, or whether it be better for this indicator to be collated by another Service area with broader consideration of the metrics which inform the return.  Productivity will be the subject of a review by the Scrutiny Committee in Q4 2025/26, in addition to internal review.  Q2 improvements include: SAW -+9.3% Safe & Strong - +185.8% activity increase (Q1: 156, Q2: 446) Attendance at incidents - +0.1%, remains higher year to year at 7.7%			
Direction of Travel based on 3-year average (YTD) – (only required to be completed for Q2 and Q4): Improving			
Added by: Matt Stanton		Date: 16/10/2025	

## Service Support

<i>Percentage of public and staff trust in Service communications</i>			
<b>Q2 25/26</b> <b>Target: 90%</b> (+/- 10%) <b>Actual to date: TBD</b> <b>Rating:</b> Choose an item.			Next quarter forecast Choose an item.
Q2 24/25 n/a	Q3 24/25 n/a	Q4 24/25 n/a	Q1 25/26 <b>Target (staff &amp; public): 90%</b> <b>Actual to date (staff): 80%</b> <b>Actual to date (public): 97%</b>
Commentary:  We are currently planning an all staff (annual) survey to take place in quarter 1 2026/27, which will provide data for this SKPI.  In order to receive updates on a regular basis, on 9.9.25 we started to ask a new set of communications-focused questions during Station Peer Assessment (SPA) sessions to provide regular data. Data to date is based on responses from a sampling approach to surveying staff (34), but the process will help to gauge staff feeling pending the next all-staff survey.			
Direction of Travel based on 3-year average (YTD) – (only required to be completed for Q2 and Q4): Choose an item.			
Added by: Neil Spencer		Date: 17.10.25	

<i>IT Operations Metric</i>			
<b>Q2 25/26</b> Target: 99.99% (+0.01% to -0.49%) Actual to date: 99.59% Rating: Performance is within the tolerance levels (green)			Next quarter forecast Green
Q2 24/25	Q3 24/25	Q4 24/25	Q1 24/25 T: 99.99% (+0.01% to -0.49%) A: 99.76%
Commentary:  We continue to perform within tolerance; the variance in performance is due to the high number of planned downtime activities we are completing to keep our legacy Command & Control operational.			
Direction of Travel based on 3-year average (YTD) – (only required to be completed for Q2 and Q4): No change			
Added by: Simon Bentley		Date: 17 <sup>th</sup> October 2025	

<i>Cyber Standards Compliance</i>			
<b>Q2 25/26</b> <b>Target: 95% (+5% to -10%)</b> <b>Actual to date: 91.77%</b> <b>Rating: Performance is within the tolerance levels (green)</b>			Next quarter forecast Green
Q2 24/25	Q3 24/25	Q4 24/25	Q1 25/26 T: 95% A: 90.17%
Commentary:  We continue to try and achieve 100% compliance with our cyber training currently we are supporting remaining individuals through this training. We are progressing our compliance with our first cyber standard and expect to have this in place in the next 2 quarters which will have a further positive impact on this SKPI and reduce Corporate Risk.			
Direction of Travel based on 3-year average (YTD) – (only required to be completed for Q2 and Q4): Improving			
Added by: Simon Bentley		Date: 17 <sup>th</sup> October 2025	

*Statutory Data Compliance*

<b>Q2 25/26</b> <b>Target: 95% (-10% +5%)</b> <b>Actual to date: 76.5%</b> <b>Rating: Under performance against the tolerance levels (red)</b>			Next quarter forecast Green
Q2 24/25 N/A	Q3 24/25 N/A	Q4 24/25 N/A	<b>Q1 25/26</b> T: 95% A: 70%

Commentary:

SKPI Measure: 76.5%

- Freedom Of Information (FOI) Compliance with Statutory Targets: 78%
- Data Subject Access Request (DSAR) Compliance with Statutory Targets: 75%

Additional LPI's monitored:

- Management of Information (MOI) Training Uptake: 47%
- Data Protection breaches: 13 ( 5 Medium, 8 Low) - Primary Root Cause: Human Error (77%)
- Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIA) undertaken: 6 Total

The SKPIs have improved on the previous reporting period and year to date up from 70% to 77%. Recent added resource now means we are confident that we have the right level of skill and resource to return to full compliance based on current workloads. This is in line with the previous predictions of returning to tolerance by Q3.

We are also on a transformative journey to automate manual systems wherever we can, this will deliver further efficiencies and now provides enhanced reporting.

With planned updates to policy we will improve our training offering, compliance and reduce human error contributing to data breaches.	
It should be noted that the trend of increased complexity and requests continues in line with continued public scrutiny of the authority.	
Direction of Travel based on 3-year average (YTD) – (only required to be completed for Q2 and Q4): Improving	
Added by: Martina Doolan	Date: 17 <sup>th</sup> October 2025

<i>Set a balanced budget at the beginning of the year and spend within that budget</i>			
<b>Q2 25/26</b> <b>Target: 3.5%</b> <b>Actual to date: 0.6%</b> <b>Rating: Performance is within the tolerance levels (green)</b>			Next quarter forecast Green
Q2 24/25	Q3 24/25	Q4 24/25	Q1 25/26 T: 3.5% A: 0.3%
Commentary: 2025/26 balanced budget set per the Fire Authority Report 17/2/25. P5 forecast £885k underspent = 0.6% of the total budget			
Direction of Travel based on 3-year average (YTD) – (only required to be completed for Q2 and Q4): No change			
Added by: Rebecca Yates		Date: 10/10/25	

<i>Identify service changes and other efficiencies that can be delivered from 2026/27</i>			
<b>Q2 25/26</b> <b>Target: N/A see below, target cannot be met until at least Dec 25 when provisional settlement is available</b> <b>Actual to date: N/A</b> <b>Rating: Choose an item.</b>			Next quarter forecast Green
Q2 24/25	Q3 24/25	Q4 24/25	Q1 25/26 N/A
Commentary: Strategy day 2 on 30/9/25 included a presentation to SLT by the Interim Head of Finance & Procurement on the 2026/27 budget process. Savings targets on devolved budgets were set for each service area and a pro forma was shared to capture savings and growth for 2026/27. During October and November the Finance Team will support budget holders and SLT members identifying and costing savings and growth and completing the pro forma. Strategy day 3 on 11/11/25 will check progress on pro forma completion and resolve any obstacles. Strategy day 4 on 18/12/25 will require SLT to decide on which savings and growth items will form part of the 2026/27 budget once the provisional Finance settlement is available.			
Direction of Travel based on 3-year average (YTD) – (only required to be completed for Q2 and Q4): N/A			
Added by: Rebecca Yates		Date: 10/10/25	

<i>Total Service carbon footprint / output</i>			
<b>Q2 25/26</b> <b>Target: Not to rise above 3022 tonnes a year</b> <b>Actual to date: Calculated annually</b> <b>Rating: Over performance against the tolerance levels (blue)</b>			Next quarter forecast Blue
Q2 24/25	Q3 24/25	Q4 24/25	<b>Q1 25/26</b> T: 92 tonnes A: 305 tCO <sub>2</sub> e
Commentary:  Total Service Carbon Footprint is based on scopes 1 and 2 only and aims for carbon neutrality by 2036, rather than Net Zero (scopes 1,2 and 3) by 2041. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scope 1 data includes natural gas, fuel oil, refrigerants, company fleet (diesel/petrol), pallet burning and Oriented Strand Board (OSB) burning</li> <li>• Scope 2 data includes purchased electricity</li> </ul> A full carbon footprint report is produced annually, due to the large quantity of data to be reviewed. Gas and electricity data is able to be downloaded on a regular basis, so that trends can be identified. Gas usage in Q2 (based on July and August – see below report) showed a drop in consumption of 90,211.2 kWh which equates to a saving of 16.5 tCO <sub>2</sub> e. Electricity consumption has increased, however the switch to a net zero tariff means the tCO <sub>2</sub> e for electricity has reduced by 100%. <p>On 23<sup>rd</sup> September 18 members of staff (predominantly from Black Country North) attended Carbon Literacy training and the impacts from this will be measured in Q3 and Q4, where hopefully a reduction in gas and electricity consumption will be noted following changes in behaviour, due to increased awareness of the impacts of climate change.</p>			

<p>WMFS was successful in achieving stage 1 funding through the Buildings Retrofit Pilot from the WMCA, to undertake retrofit assessments at Hay Mills and Sheldon. Following the completion of this assessment, we will apply for stage 2 funding, to undertake the proposed works, to improve efficiencies and reduce carbon.</p>			
<p>Direction of Travel based on 3-year average (YTD) – (only required to be completed for Q2 and Q4): Improving</p>			
<p>Added by: Liz Hopkins</p>		<p>Date: 15/10/2025</p>	
<p><i>Service gas usage (KWH and Carbon Tonnes)</i></p>			
<p><b>Q2 25/26</b>  <b>Target: 981,445 kWh</b>  <b>Actual to date: 500,535 kWh</b>  <b>Rating: No performance rating assigned</b></p>			<p>Next quarter forecast                  Green</p>
<p>Q2 24/25</p>	<p>Q3 24/25</p>	<p>Q4 24/25</p>	<p>Q1 25/26                  T: 2,094,382                  A: 1,674,925</p>
<p>Commentary:</p> <p>Gas consumption for Q2 currently stands at 500,535 kWh, however this only reflects the consumption for July and August and not the full quarter. Consumption figures are currently extracted from bills, and the figures for September are yet to be received. As a result, no performance rating has been applied to this SKPI due to incomplete data for the quarter. Smart meters and energy billing is not within the Service’s control and reliant upon the energy provider, which we continue to liase with on an ongoing basis.</p> <p>A new powerBI dashboard is in the process of being set up by the data team, which includes a live data stream from Total Energies and will enable us to increase the accuracy of our data reporting. It is anticiapted that once a complete set fo data for the quarter has been received, the final performance rating will be rated blue, reflecting over performace against the tolerance levels, based on the following</p>			

- July’s consumption of 249,228 kWh was under the target of 299,276.2 kWh by 50,048.2 kWh
- August’s consumption of 251,307 kWh was under the target of 291,470 kWh by 40,163 kWh

The heating was switched on following a drop in overnight temperatures, on Monday 6<sup>th</sup> October, however this increase in consumption will not be reflected until Q3 and it is anticipated that September’s consumption will also be either on target or under, due to the mild weather.

Q2 2024/25 had a consumption of 1,035,009 kWh and Q2 2023/24 had a consumption of 544,110 kWh (note: recurring data discrepancy from the provider resulting in low reading). Internal reporting procedures are being reviewed, so that data discrepancies can be identified sooner.

Direction of Travel based on 3-year average (YTD) – (only required to be completed for Q2 and Q4): No change

Added by: Liz Hopkins

Date: 14/10/2025

*Electricity usage (KWH)*

**Q2 25/26**

**Target: 909,603 kWh**

**Actual to date: 703,798 kWh**

**Rating: No performance rating assigned**

Next quarter forecast

Green

Q2 24/25	Q3 24/25	Q4 24/25	Q1 25/26 T: 1,042,086 A: 1,088,525
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Commentary:

Electricity consumption for Q2 currently stands at 703,798 kWh, however this only reflects the consumption for July and August and not the full quarter. Consumption figures are currently extracted from bills, and the bills for September are yet to be received. As a result, no performance rating has been applied to this SKPI due to incomplete data for the quarter. Smart meters and energy billing is not within the Service’s control and reliant upon the energy provider, which we continue to liase with on an ongoing basis

A new powerBI dashboard is in the process of being set up by the data team, which includes a live data stream from EDF and will enable us to increase the accuracy of our data reporting. It is anticipated that once a complete set of data for the quarter has been received, the final performance rating will be red, reflecting under performance against the tolerance levels, based on the following -

- July’s target of 297,607.9 kWh was exceeded by 49,330 kWh
- August’s target of 291,470 kWh was exceeded by 65,389 kWh

Q1 (25/26) also saw an underperformance, as target consumption was exceeded by 46,439 kWh, so the trend so far this year is for an increase in our anticipated consumption.

Q2 2024/25 had a consumption of 1,036,464.7 kWh and Q2 2023/24 had a consumption of 387,841.8 kWh (note: recurring data discrepancy from the provider resulting in low reading). Internal reporting procedures are being reviewed, so that data discrepancies can be identified sooner.

Electricity consumption will increase in 2026/2027 with the hope of increasing our EV fleet, however the potential carbon increase this could bring will be negated by our green energy electricity tariff.

Direction of Travel based on 3-year average (YTD) – (only required to be completed for Q2 and Q4): No change

Added by: Liz Hopkins

Date: 14/10/2025

## People

*Percentage of staff with protected characteristics and their role within the Service*

a) Gender

**Q2 25/26**  
**Target: 27.6% (+/-5%)**  
**Actual: 26.9%**

Next quarter forecast  
 Green

Rating: Performance is within the tolerance levels (green)			
<b>Q2 24/25</b> Target: 27.4% Actual: 26.5%	<b>Q3 24/25</b> Target: 27.4% Actual: 26.4%	<b>Q4 24/25</b> Target: 28.4% Actual: 26.7%	<b>Q1 25/26</b> Target: 27.3% Actual: 26.9%
<p><b>Commentary:</b></p> <p>When considering the whole workforce, 502 (26.9%) are female. 252 (57%) of non-uniformed, 185 (14%) of uniformed, and 65 (88%) of fire control staff are female. Due to underrepresentation of female uniformed staff, positive action continues to be focused on firefighter recruitment. Activities include taster days, meet and greet sessions, alongside ongoing support and awareness for women. The 'Ignite Programme' (female only programme) is being launched. This will be a standalone programme providing a structured, supportive, and practical pre-recruitment and / or parallel programme that enables women to engage confidently with the firefighter recruitment process. In addition, the 'Fire-start fitness programme' will support female candidates by providing guidance through a bespoke, inclusive training plan.</p> <p>There are 185 female uniformed staff. 16% (6) of the 38 firefighter recruits this year have been female. Five female Uniformed employees have left the Service this year (1 Retirement, 1 Resignation, 1 Employee transfer (FRS), 1 Career Break, 1 Dismissal) and one female uniformed staff has re-deployed to green book. Net change = 0</p>			
Direction of Travel based on 3-year average (YTD) – (only required to be completed for Q2 and Q4): No change			
Added by: Kelly Harding		Date: 24.10.2025	

Percentage of staff with protected characteristics and their role within the Service

b) Ethnicity

<b>Q2 25/26</b> <b>Target: 15.5% (+/-5%)</b> <b>Actual: 15.0%</b> <b>Rating: Performance is within the tolerance levels (green)</b>			Next quarter forecast Green
Q2 24/25 Target: 15.4% Actual: 14.9%	Q3 24/25 Target: 15.2% Actual: 14.7%	Q4 24/25 Target: 15.6% Actual: 14.9%	Q1 25/26 Target: 15.0% Actual: 14.8%
Commentary:  When considering the whole of the workforce 279 (15%) of staff are from an underrepresented background. 78 (18%) of non-uniformed, 199 (15%) of uniformed, and 2 (3%) of fire control staff are from an underrepresented background. Firefighter recruitment consists of a rolling programme of activity and a suite of positive action interventions are utilised on an ongoing basis. These include taster days, and meet and greet sessions, as well working alongside high-footfall gyms in our most diverse areas, and establishing a standing partnership with swimming clubs. Fire Control recruitment is campaign-based therefore positive action activity is instigated in a timely manner, in the build up to a recruitment campaign.  16% (6) of the 38 firefighter recruits were from Underrepresented communities. 10 uniformed employees from Underrepresented groups have left the service this year. Net change = -4.			
Direction of Travel based on 3-year average (YTD) – (only required to be completed for Q2 and Q4): No change			
Added by: Kelly Harding		Date:24.10.2025	

*Percentage of staff with protected characteristics and their role within the Service*

*c) Gender Pay Gap*

**Target: 4.5%**

**Actual to date: 5%**

**Rating: Performance is within the tolerance levels (green)**

Next quarter forecast

n/a

Q2 24/25

Q3 24/25

Q4 24/25

Q1 25/26

**Commentary:**

The mean gender pay gap is 5.0% showing an improvement from last year's figure of 5.5%. The gender pay gap for Uniformed staff is 5.3%, while the Non-Uniformed pay gap remains high at 12.1%.

We are taking action through a series of focused initiative designed to create a more equitable workplace for everyone, namely

- Transparent pay frameworks – our green book pay and grading review, including the introduction of sound job evaluation frameworks will ensure that we have a clear, fair, and consistent approach to pay decisions
- Leadership and progression programmes to support underrepresented talent to move into supervisory roles.

Reported on an annual basis.

Added by:

Kelly Harding

Date:

24.10.225

*Percentage of staff with protected characteristics and their role within the Service*

*d) Ethnicity Pay Gap*

<p><b>Target: 3%</b>  <b>Actual to date: 5%</b>  <b>Rating: Performance is within the tolerance levels (green)</b></p>			<p>Next quarter forecast</p>
<p>Q2 24/25</p>	<p>Q3 24/25</p>	<p>Q4 24/25</p>	<p>Q1 25/26</p>
<p>Commentary:</p> <p>The mean ethnic pay gap has increased and is now 5% compared to 3.5% last year. Uniformed staff have a higher ethnic pay gap (6.7%) than Non-Uniformed (2.1%). A number of higher paid employees from underrepresented groups have left the service in the last 12 months.</p> <p>As with gender (and other protected characteristics), we are taking action through a series of focused initiative designed to create a more equitable workplace for everyone, namely</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Transparent pay frameworks – our green book pay and grading review, including the introduction of sound job evaluation frameworks will ensure that we have a clear, fair, and consistent approach to pay decisions</li> <li>- Leadership and progression programmes to support underrepresented talent to move into supervisory roles.</li> <li>- Reviewing our attraction and progression process to assure ourselves that there is no bias impacting on recruitment and progression decisions</li> </ul> <p>Reported on an annual basis.</p>			
<p>Added by: Kelly Harding</p>		<p>Date: 24.10.2025</p>	

<i>Percentage of staff trust in the Service</i>			
<b>Q2 25/26</b> <b>Target:</b> <b>Actual to date: N/A</b> <b>Rating:</b> Choose an item.			Next quarter forecast Choose an item.
Q1 24/25	Q2 24/25	Q3 24/25	Q4 24/25
Commentary:  This data will be provided at Q4, with a proposal to measure this moving forward to be discussed with SLT in preparation for 2026/27.			
Direction of Travel based on 3-year average (YTD) – (only required to be completed for Q2 and Q4): Choose an item.			
Added by:		Date:	

<i>Percentage of completed appraisals</i>			
<b>Q2 25/26</b> <b>Target: 100% (90%)</b> <b>Actual to date: 89.66%%</b> <b>Rating: Under performance against the tolerance levels (red)</b>			Next quarter forecast Choose an item.
Q2 24/25 n/a	Q3 24/25 n/a	Q4 24/25 n/a	Q1 25/26 T: 100% A: 77%
Commentary:			

Progress has been made throughout 2025 to embed Appraisals into business as usual, with some way to go to ensure that all staff throughout the service have a completed appraisal. Appraisal data has been and will continue to periodically feature in Service Assurance Board to ensure that Line Managers across the service are having these vital conversations, including capturing new starters within the organisation.

As this is the first year of embedding this appraisal process, a review is currently being done to ensure that the process of appraisal can be streamlined and lessons learnt can be embedded, this will include identifying any barriers to people completing the appraisal process.

**End of Quarter performance**

Operations: 96% complete  
 Fire Control: 93% complete  
 Department: 80% complete

Direction of Travel based on 3-year average (YTD) – (only required to be completed for Q2 and Q4): Choose an item.

Added by: Marc Hudson

Date: 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2025

*Percentage of core skills assessment compliance*

**Q2 25/26**

**Target: 95% for Incident Command and Breathing Apparatus**

**Actual to date: 92% (average of IC and BA)**

- Breathing Apparatus 86%
- Incident Command across all levels 98.68%

**Rating: Under performance against the tolerance levels (red)**

Next quarter forecast  
 Green

Q2 24/25

Q3 24/25

Q4 24/25

Q1 25/26

Commentary:

**Incident Command**

- Incident Command Level 1 95.7% (Crew & Watch Commander)
- Incident Command Level 2 99% (Station and Group Commander)
- Incident Command Level 3 100% (Area Commander)
- Incident Command Level 4 100% (Brigade Manager)

**Breathing Apparatus**

- **Breathing Apparatus 86%**

Breathing Apparatus (BA) 'hot wear' competency forms part of the revised training model which was implemented following the scrutiny review of training. The new model and revised competency requirements will take 2 years to fully embed and therefore in the interim a mitigation plan has been introduced which will increase the level of BA competency back into tolerance levels. This will ensure that all operational staff will be compliant with the requirements contained within National Operational Guidance.

The next quarters forecasted position will be back in tolerance.

Direction of Travel based on 3-year average (YTD) – (only required to be completed for Q2 and Q4): Choose an item.

Added by: Marc Hudson

Date: 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2025

*Total number of injuries*

**Q2 25/26**

**Target: 30**

**Actual to date: 48**

**Rating: Under performance against the tolerance levels (red)**

Next quarter forecast

n/a

Q2 24/25

29

Q3 24/25

38

Q4 24/25

38

Q1 25/26

T: 30

A: 41

**Commentary:**

There have been 48 injury reports for quarter 2 (89 injuries YTD, against a target of 60). This is an increase in injury reports against the 3-year average for this period with the following data for Q2 in previous years 2024 – 29, 2023 – 32, 2022 – 42.

**By activity:**

- 15 occurred at incidents
- 13 during routine activities
- 15 during operational training
- 5 were non-operational

**By type, they are categorised as:**

- injury no accident (9)
- slips and trips (8)
- cuts (6)
- struck against / struck by (10)
- exposure to noise (3)
- exposure to heat (3)
- exposure to substance (3)
- manual handling (2)
- foreign body in eye (2)
- medical (2)

Struck against / struck by continues to be a trend of the service; however, when looking into the data for this data set, there appears to be no obvious trend.

**Struck against:**

Building – 1, Door – 1, Floor – 2, Metal - 1

**Struck by:**

Cable – 1, Holmatro – 1, Hose – 1, Padlock – 1, Tree – 1, Vehicle – 1

**Mitigation:**

A communication plan is currently being developed to ensure that trends in data are communicated wide across the service. Local committee meetings will also communicate the outcome to their respective stations / departments.

A review of data spanning a wider data set than the previous 12 months will now be commissioned in an attempt to understand any trends that are not currently being picked up.

The service encourages its staff in reporting accidents, injuries and near hits and sees this very much as a healthy H&S culture, this is reinforced within the new training programme and may be contributing to the rise in reporting.

**Service position:**

The service has a number of Health and Safety committee meetings that meet on a monthly basis across operations and departments which feed into a brigade wide monthly meeting chaired by the ACFO of People, Vice Chaired by Head of Development, on a quarterly basis the meeting agenda solely focuses on H&S performance data, which provides the opportunity to discuss accidents, injuries, RIDDORs, Near Misses etc with the opportunity to put mitigation in place if trends are identified.

The service has also taken the decision to invest in an additional post to roll-out Health and Safety training across the service, initially managers (supervisory upwards) will receive the input, with a view that this will be rolled out wider when the managers programme has been completed.

The service has a programme of auditing all fire stations and has more recently started to audit non-fire station locations such as training locations, with transport engineering and workshops to be completed next in line. In addition to this, the service also partakes in the regional audit programme, whereby regional partners come into the service to peer assess our performance and practices against agreed themes.

Direction of Travel based on 3-year average (YTD) – (only required to be completed for Q2 and Q4): Choose an item.

Added by: Marc Hudson

Date: 22/10/2025

<i>Total number of RIDDOR injuries</i>			
<b>Q2 25/26</b> <b>Target: 3</b> <b>Actual to date: 5</b> <b>Rating: Under performance against the tolerance levels (red)</b>			Next quarter forecast n/a
Q2 24/25 7	Q3 24/25 6	Q4 24/25 4	Q1 25/26 T: 3 A: 5
Commentary: There have been 5 RIDDOR reports for quarter 2, This is the same as quarter 1 but less than the 7 RIDDOR reports reported for Q2 in 2024.  The following is a breakdown of the RIDDOR reportable incidents: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Operational incident, a burn to the arm using a beater, over 7-day category.</li> <li>Operational incident, a rolled ankle whilst undertaking a 360 assessment in dark conditions, over 7-day category</li> <li>Operational training; an injury from kneeling in the fire house on a metal object, over 7-day category</li> <li>Operational training, a knee injury wading in water during mod 2 training at Cardiff, over 7-day category</li> <li>Operational training, here was one injury on a fire station during a training activity; the injured party was struck by a charging cable which became unsecure., over 7-day category.</li> </ul> It should be noted that the current 2 days, 2 nights, 4 days off shift pattern may inadvertantly impact the number of RIDDOR reportable incidents due to people booking fit to work on their first day back to work on the 8 <sup>th</sup> day. Further analysis of this will be conducted and reported back at future meetings.  Accident investigations have taken place with learning being followed up.			

**Service position:**

The service has a number of Health and Safety committee meetings that meet on a monthly basis across operations and departments which feed into a brigade wide monthly meeting chaired by the ACFO of People, Vice Chaired by Head of Development, on a quarterly basis the meeting agenda solely focuses on H&S performance data, which provides the opportunity to discuss accidents, injuries, RIDDORs, Near Misses etc with the opportunity to put mitigation in place if trends are identified.

The service has also taken the decision to invest in an additional post to roll-out Health and Safety training across the service, initially managers (supervisory upwards) will receive the input, with a view that this will be rolled out wider when the managers programme has been completed.

The service has a programme of auditing all fire stations and has more recently started to audit non-fire station locations such as training locations, with transport engineering and workshops to be completed next in line. In addition to this, the service also partakes in the regional audit programme, whereby regional partners come into the service to peer assess our performance and practices against agreed themes.

Direction of Travel based on 3-year average (YTD) – (only required to be completed for Q2 and Q4): Choose an item.

Added by: John Ashton

Date: 22/10/2025

<i>Average number of working days / shifts lost due to sickness – uniformed and Fire Control staff</i>			
<b>Q2 25/26</b> <b>Target: 1.95</b> <b>Actual to date: 1.88</b> <b>Rating: Performance is within the tolerance levels (green)</b>			Next quarter forecast Green
<b>Q2 24/25</b> Target: 1.74 Actual: 2.07	<b>Q3 24/25</b> Target: 1.84 Actual: 2.28	<b>Q4 24/25</b> Target: 1.91 Actual: 1.98	<b>Q1 25/26</b> Target: 2.01 Actual: 1.93
Commentary:  This has reduced following extensive work regarding an attendance management audit. This would likely be a contributing factor to the reduction of sickness in uniformed staff in terms of ensuring management of cases at the relevant stage in policy. New business rules regarding Return to Work may have increased support for individuals also.			
Direction of Travel based on 3-year average (YTD) – (only required to be completed for Q2 and Q4): Improving			
Added by: Josef Campbell		Date: 16/10/2025	

*Average number of working days / shifts lost due to sickness – non-uniformed staff*

<b>Q2 25/26</b> <b>Target: 2.01</b> <b>Actual to date: 3.44</b> <b>Rating: Under performance against the tolerance levels (red)</b>	Next quarter forecast Red
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Q2 24/25 Target: 1.88 Actual: 2.13	Q3 24/25 Target: 2.06 Actual: 2.76	Q4 24/25 Target: 1.41 Actual: 2.08	Q1 25/26 Target: 1.49 Actual: 2.70
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Commentary:


Sickness has increased for non uniform staff. We are scheduling an audit similar to that in operations for non operational staff throughout November. We foresee that this increased scrutiny will place a greater emphasis on sickness for managers in terms of managing in line with policy. There are however still reliability issues with data (see narrative below) which we are hoping to resolve through a working group which will support this.

Direction of Travel based on 3-year average (YTD) – (only required to be completed for Q2 and Q4): Declining

Added by:	Date:
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<i>Average number of working days / shifts lost due to sickness – all staff</i>			
<b>Q2 25/26</b> <b>Target: 1.97</b> <b>Actual to date: 2.25</b> <b>Rating: Under performance against the tolerance levels (red)</b>			Next quarter forecast Red
<b>Q2 24/25</b> Target: 1.77 Actual: 2.09	<b>Q3 24/25</b> Target: 1.89 Actual: 2.39	<b>Q4 24/25</b> Target: 1.80 Actual: 2.00	<b>Q1 25/26</b> Target: 1.89 Actual: 2.11
Commentary:  This KPI has increased due to the increase in non uniform sickness. At present it is difficult to ascertain trends and figures, as at the time of this audit WFP ran a report which identified 311 uniformed sickness days, and 901 non uniform sickness days which were on UKG and not Oracle. Due to this no absence reason was able to be input by the line manager to identify trends.  We are aspirational that this will reduce following the non operational audit taking place through November.			
Direction of Travel based on 3-year average (YTD) – (only required to be completed for Q2 and Q4): Improving			
Added by: Josef Campbell		Date: 16/10/2025	



 <p><b>WMFRA</b> West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority</p>	<p><b><u>WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY</u></b></p> <p><b><u>24 November 2025</u></b></p>
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**2026 CRMP PUBLIC CONSULTATION**  
**For DECISION**

**Principal Officer: Chief Fire Officer Simon Tuhill**  
**Report of the Head of Strategy Kelly Whitmore**  
**Author: Strategy Team Manager Hannah Spencer**

**1. PURPOSE**

- 1.1. The purpose of the paper was outlined in the Fire Authority paper presented on 29 September, and there have been no subsequent changes to this section.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1. That the Fire Authority approve the proposed approach to Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) consultation as outlined within this report, including the draft content, consultation themes and proposed questions.

**3. OBJECTIVES & EXPECTED OUTCOMES**

- 3.1. Objectives and expected outcomes were outlined in the Fire Authority paper presented on 29 September, and there have been no subsequent changes to this section.

**4. BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 Background information was outlined in the Fire Authority paper presented on 29 September, updates since this paper are detailed within this section.

4.2 The consultation content went to Scrutiny Committee on 27<sup>th</sup> October. A summary of feedback has been provided below:

- Members highlighted that the public might misinterpret consultation content as confirmation of station closures. To address this, those delivering the consultation will be briefed to provide clear explanations, supported by interactive tools that demonstrate the potential impact of changes, associated cost savings, and reinvestment opportunities.
- To maximise inclusion, the Service is working with stakeholders and charities to reach underrepresented groups, including those who may require support with translation or alternative access. Additional engagement routes will include station-based connections, Safe and Well visits, open days, charities, and community forums, with consideration also being given to physical response options.
- Members asked how the consultation would be accessible. Accessibility has been prioritised, with the consultation being developed under the guidance of the Service's Accessibility subject matter expert. The website will include built-in translation functionality. The Service is also exploring new social media platforms, such as TikTok, and targeted local promotion to reach diverse audiences.
- Members expressed strong support for promoting the consultation within their communities, recognising their local insight and influence. The team will contact members closer to the time with a consultation pack to support engagement.
- Finally, a consultation workshop was held with the SDM and stakeholder group representatives to identify further opportunities to maximise engagement and remove barriers, ensuring a representative sample of responses from across the community.
- Based on members feedback, the consultation wording has been revised to ensure it is accessible and easily understood by the public e.g. 20-year community risk forecast has changed to risk forecast.

4.3 Following engagement and feedback from the Fire Brigades Union (FBU), the following amendments have been made to the consultation content.

- Within the planning assumption question, figures (e.g. including historical number of large-scale incidents) have been removed to maintain focus on the methodology and allow for constructive challenge and refinement ahead of the next phase of the Service Delivery Model (SDM) review. The data and figures were not a necessary element of the question and may distract from comments on the methodology. The next phase of the review will present the planning assumptions in more detail, including a breakdown of the data, so collaboration with all stakeholders, including the trade unions will take place to ensure that data is presented in a way that is clear, accurate and easy to understand.
- The second amended concerns the ranking of investment opportunities. Given the limited background information available to the public on areas such as fleet, equipment, and decontamination procedures, the ranking question has been replaced with one that seeks open feedback on any additional areas for potential reinvestment. This will support a comprehensive investment overview for Senior Leadership Team consideration.

4.4 Presentation of information - Background information has been repositioned alongside the relevant questions to ensure respondents are appropriately informed when providing feedback, in line with the Gunning Principles.

## 5. **STRATEGY ALIGNMENT**

5.1. Strategy Alignment was outlined in the Fire Authority paper presented on 29 September, and there have been no subsequent changes to this section.

## 6. **IMPACT ASSESSMENTS**

6.1. An impact assessment was completed and shared in the Fire Authority paper presented on 29 September, and there have been no subsequent changes to this section.

**7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 The legal implications were outlined in the Fire Authority paper presented on 29 September, and there have been no subsequent changes to this section.

**8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

8.1. The financial implications were outlined in the Fire Authority paper presented on 29 September, and there have been no subsequent changes to this section.

**9. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

9.1. There are no environmental implications arising from the content of this report.

**10. CONSULTATION**

12.1 Consultation was discussed in the Fire Authority paper presented on 29 September, and there have been no subsequent changes to this section.

**11. BACKGROUND PAPERS & APPENDICES**

- Appendix A – Draft Consultation Content and Questions
- [WMFRA CRMP 2024-2027](#)
- Consultation Fire Authority Report – 29<sup>th</sup> September 2025 [2026 CRMP Public Consultation.pdf](#)
- [2026 CRMP Public Consultation.pdf](#) – Scrutiny Committee, 27 October 2025

Relevant Principal Officer	Simon Tuhill	Chief Fire Officer
Relevant SLT Member	Kelly Whitmore <a href="mailto:Kelly.Whitmore@wmfs.net">Kelly.Whitmore@wmfs.net</a>	Head of Strategy
Report Author	Hannah Spencer <a href="mailto:Hannah.Spencer@wmfs.net">Hannah.Spencer@wmfs.net</a>	Strategy Team Manager

## **APPENDIX A**

### **Draft Consultation Content and Questions**

#### **Introduction**

West Midlands Fire Service is England's second-largest fire and rescue service.

We've served our communities for more than fifty years, yet our operating model has stayed broadly the same for more than a decade.

We refer to how we organise our resources as our Service Delivery Model (SDM), and aim to get to more serious incidents in five minutes as we know this increases someone's chances of survival.

But our fire stations and other sites are ageing and need major investment. And the risks faced by our communities are changing – from climate change and flooding, through to people living longer and some becoming more vulnerable. Our current model isn't built for this complexity.

Our Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) (LINK) explains how we will use our resources to reduce foreseeable fire and rescue-related risk. We're currently updating our plan for 2027.

It's an opportunity to reimagine how we deliver our services - to improve how and where we offer them – so we can reinvest in the things that matter most: fire stations, our people, training, and community safety.

We want to be open about the issues we face, and we need you to let us know what you think about our direction of travel.

It's time to have your say, so please spare just a few minutes to answer the questions below.

We'll consider your views and then develop detailed options for public consultation later in 2026.

Thank you.

## **Planning assumptions**

We've developed a set of planning assumptions to guide how we design our future Service Delivery Model. This is so we have enough resources to deal with everyday demand and be able to respond to large or multiple incidents when they occur.

***\*\*DROP DOWN SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION TO SUPPORT PLANNING ASSUMPTIONS QUESTION\*\****

### **Planning Assumption Methodology**

#### Step 1: Understanding historical demand

We analysed a decade of incident data (2015 – 2025) to understand how our resources have been used over time. This included:

- everyday demand (business as usual)
- the severity and frequency of large-scale incidents
- occurrences of multiple simultaneous incidents
- our historical maximum resource usage.

This meant we could identify the maximum level of resources we've historically needed at any one time to manage significant or complex incidents.

#### Step 2: Building in additional capacity

We know that, in reality, not all resources are available all the time. Fire engines could be unavailable, for example, for repairs or due to staffing shortages. We must also maintain cover for ongoing day-to-day incidents, while managing more significant ones. So our planning assumptions include additional resource capacity to:

- maintain business as usual cover during major/significant incidents
- provide relief and rotation for crews at prolonged incidents
- offset expected levels of unavailability.

This is to ensure our model is both realistic and resilient for managing operational demand.

#### Step 3: Considering future risk

The future risk landscape is evolving, so we've factored in how this might influence resource needs. This includes:

- the potential increase in frequency or severity of large-scale incidents
- the impact of climate change and new risk types
- operational factors, such as extended decontamination times or changes in incident complexity.

By considering such trends, we ensure our planning assumptions remain sustainable, flexible, and capable of adapting to the changing environment.

Q1: Do you agree that we should base our future plans on these types of assumptions, which include factors such as frequency and severity of incidents, resource availability, impact of climate change, and need for resilience during busy periods?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Q2: We aim to get to serious incidents in five minutes. Should we keep this as a core principle of our Service Delivery Model?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

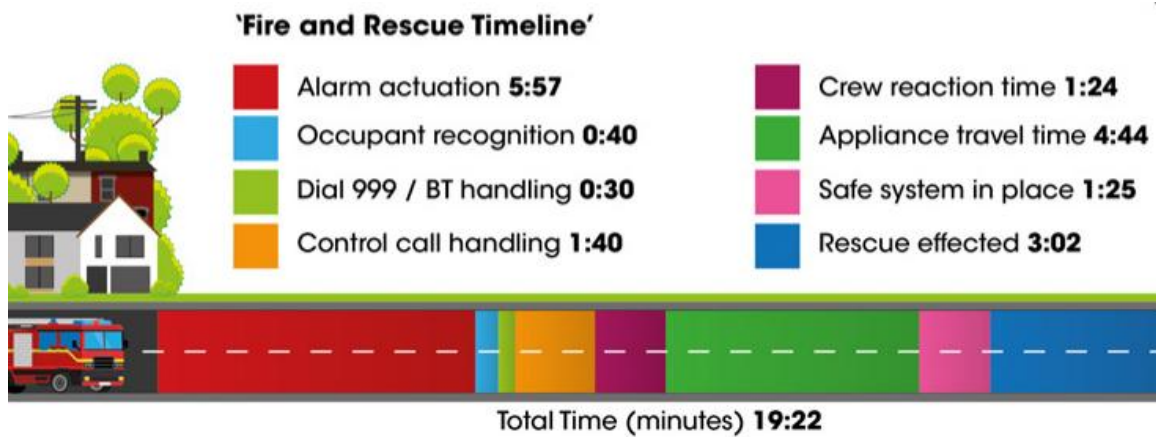
**\*\*DROP DOWN SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION TO SUPPORT 5-MIN QUESTION\*\***

**Survivability Case Study**

Research on survivability has highlighted the importance of responding to high-risk incidents in a timely manner. We have put this research alongside our own data to determine that a five-minute attendance time is critical to the likelihood of someone surviving a fire or any incident involving significant trauma. This has become the foundation of our Service Delivery Model which is centred around achieving a five-minute attendance standard for high-risk incidents.

The ‘Fire and Rescue Timeline’ below explains the different elements of an incident and, on average, the timeframe for each, from fire alarms actuating to dialling 999 and crews being mobilised and travelling to the incident. Within this timeframe, we know there are a number of critical stages where we can make a difference by reducing the average time taken for that particular activity.

(example graphic below)



Q3: Please tell us if there are any other factors you think we should build into our planning assumptions.

[Free text box]

## **Future Risks**

Challenges such as climate change, an ageing population, economic pressures, new technology, and changes to our built environment could affect how we keep people safe. Emergencies may become more complex,

Q1: Do you agree we should take such factors into account when planning for the future?

- Strongly agree
- Agree more frequent, and place greater pressure on our resources.
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Q2: Please tell us if there are any particular risks you think we should prioritise when developing our Service Delivery Model.

[Free text box]

***\*\*DROP DOWN SUPPLIMENTARY INFORMATION TO SUPPORT FUTURE RISK QUESTION\*\****

### **Future Risk**

This forecast explores the changes that may affect our communities over the next 20+ years and is informed by a wide range of national and local data sources. These include the Office for National Statistics (ONS), the National Risk Register, local authority population and housing data, climate and environmental forecasts, and health and socioeconomic datasets. By combining these insights with our own incident data and professional judgement, we can anticipate how community risk and vulnerability may evolve and ensure our planning remains grounded in credible, evidence-based intelligence. Our forecast includes:

- **Changing Climate** - We could see an increase frequency and severity of severe weather events, including heatwaves, drought,

flooding, wildfires and intense rainfall, driving up demand for our services and putting more pressure on our firefighters. These events will also disproportionately affect those with existing vulnerabilities.

- **Changing Society** - We are likely to see an ageing population, rising health inequalities, and growing social polarisation which will reshape community risk. We expect more incidents involving elderly or isolated individuals, and higher demand for targeted prevention work.
- **Economic Pressures** - reducing funding may restrict future investment for fire and rescue services, requiring us to prove value for money and make tough choices about how we invest.
- **New and Emerging Technology** - advancements present both opportunities and risks: new tool or approaches may make our work more efficient, but emerging risks or could mean we need to adapt our services, training and equipment.
- **Urban Growth and High-rise Developments** - All our local authority areas are seeing increased developments, including even taller buildings, this could mean incidents will become more complex, requiring new tactics, equipment, and training.
- **Disruptive Events** - globally we have seen an increase in disruptive events, such as such as pandemics, cyberattacks, to terrorism highlighting the need for effective planning so we can ensure we can maintain critical services even under extreme pressure.

Q2: Please tell us if there are any particular risks you think we should prioritise when developing our Service Delivery Model.

[Free text box]

### **A need to invest**

We are looking at how we can operate more efficiently. Any savings would be reinvested in our frontline – in ways that most benefit our firefighters, stations, and the communities we serve.

In no particular order, our staff have suggested the following as priorities for reinvestment:

- our fleet - fire engines and other frontline vehicles
- our buildings and essential maintenance
- tools and equipment
- staffing levels
- welfare facilities on fire stations, eg accessible toilets and showers
- better access to computers and technology at fire stations
- improved and more specialist training facilities
- occupational health provisions

Q1: Are there any other areas in which you think we should consider reinvesting?

[Free text box]

### **Our direction of travel.**

We want to be open and honest about the challenges we face and choices we may have to make. [*Final investment figures to be added here to give an awareness of the kind of investment required – awaiting from Estates*]. Our initial analysis has suggested potential options and considerations. These do not include redundancies.

**Fewer fire stations, similar cover:** We could operate from fewer sites while keeping the same number of fire engines. Our modelling shows that this would maintain a similar level of cover and protect our five minutes attendance standard. Fewer fire stations would reduce long-term investment needs, and generate income from selling sites with limited effect on emergency response.

**Align resources to demand:** We attend around 70 per cent fewer incidents overnight (10pm-10am), yet our shift patterns mean available resources only drop by around 15 per cent. Exploring different ways of working, eg more 12-hour shifts, rebalancing shifts to match 999 demand more closely could free vital funds to reinvest in our service delivery.

**Sudden demand:** Large fires, flooding and other wide-scale incidents can create surges in demand for our help. Climate change and other new risks mean these rarer events are becoming more common and severe. As part of any plans to change levels of cover, we will maintain our ability to handle surges while keeping up with day-to-day demand.

Interactive tool

Tell us what feels to you like a fair balance between savings, protecting emergency response, and reinvesting in our delivery of services.

***\*\*INTERACTIVE TOOL TO BE INSERTED HERE TO SUPPORT  
PROPORTINATE FIRE COVER QUESTION\*\****

The tool lets you adjust:

- Evening availability of fire crews (10pm-10am)
- Daytime availability (10am-10pm)
- Number of fire stations in operation

To see the impact on:

- Response times
- Potential savings
- Reinvestment into delivery of our services

Q1: What combination of changes do you think strikes a fair balance between savings, protecting emergency response, and reinvesting in our delivery of services?

Please submit your response by using the interactive tool.

### **Final thoughts**

So far we've talked about the challenges we face, the opportunities that reviewing our model presents, and where we might invest. Our analysis has taken us towards a direction of travel that would enable us to invest. We think we should look at fewer stations, and new shift patterns with resilience for sudden demand.

Q1: Do you agree that this direction of travel is the right approach to tackling the financial and estate challenges we face?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Q3: Please tell us why you feel this way.

[Free Text]

Q4: Please share your own ideas or suggestions for how we could address the challenges we've outlined, while continuing to protect and support our communities.

[Free Text]





**WMFRA**  
West Midlands Fire and  
Rescue Authority

**WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND  
RESCUE AUTHORITY**  
**24 November 2025**

**WMFRA Review of Members Allowances**  
**For DECISION**

**Report of the Interim Clerk to the Authority, Tom Embury**  
**Author of the report: Governance and Performance Support Officer,**  
**Stephen Timmington**

**1. PURPOSE**

- 1.1. This report is submitted to the Authority to seek Member approval for the commissioning of an independent review of Members' allowances in line with good governance principles.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1. THAT Members approve the commissioning of an Independent Remuneration Panel to review the Members' Allowance Scheme, utilising a joint IRP established in conjunction with the West Midlands Combined Authority
- 2.2. THAT Members approve the independent remuneration panel to conduct a review of the Members' Allowances Scheme for the current municipal year of 2025/26
- 2.3. THAT Members approve the independent remuneration panel to conduct a review of the Members' Allowances Scheme for the next municipal year of 2026/27, and to reflect any changes that may arise from the Authority's governance improvement journey.
- 2.4. THAT Members approve the Terms of Reference of the Independent Remuneration Panel (**Appendix A**)
- 2.5. THAT Members note that in accordance with the Constitution, the review of the Members' Allowances Scheme is to be co-ordinated

by the (interim) Clerk to the Authority (as per Article 5 – Roles and Functions of Officers)

**3. OBJECTIVES & EXPECTED OUTCOMES**

- 3.1. An independent review of the Authority’s Members’ Allowances Scheme to be undertaken using an independent remuneration panel (IRP), applying the principles as set out under the Local Authorities (Members’ Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003.
- 3.2. An independent review of the Authority’s Members Allowances Scheme to be undertaken within this municipal year, allowing any agreed changes to be processed and implemented within an appropriate timeframe.
- 3.3. The review is to be undertaken by an independent remuneration panel (IRP), with the scope of the review confirmed through the panel’s terms of reference (as approved by the Authority).
- 3.4. The review of the Members’ Allowances Scheme is to include the current arrangements for the current municipal year, 2025/26, and undertake a review of future arrangements for the municipal year 2025/26 that may arise from the Authority’s governance improvement journey, i.e. recommendations of the Corporate Governance Improvement Board (CGIB), reflected in revisions to the Constitution, committee structures, and Member roles and functions.
- 3.5. Review to be co-ordinated by the (interim) Clerk of the Authority in line within Constitutional delegations.
- 3.6. Indicative timescales:
  - 24 November 2025: Member deliberation and approval to proceed, including IRP terms of reference
  - IRP to be convened early 2026
  - IRP to report findings and recommendations to the Fire Authority for Member consideration April 2026 culminating in the implementation or otherwise of those recommendations

3.7 Members and Officers will be provided the opportunity to make representations to the IRP in relation to the review.

4. **BACKGROUND**

4.1. The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 require that an authority shall make a scheme in respect of the successful financial year on or before 31 March each year. The scheme may be amended at any time but may only be revoked with effect from the beginning of the year. Under these regulations Councils are required to establish and maintain an independent remuneration panel (IRP) to provide the local authority with advice on its scheme and the amounts to be paid. Local authorities must have regard to this advice.

4.2. It should be noted that although these regulations apply to a fire authority, the requirements for establishing an IRP only apply to district, county and London borough councils. Other authorities including fire authorities must have regard to the recommendations of the IRPs of the authorities that their members are nominated to (in short, a Fire Authority is required to have regard for the allowances paid in its constituent authorities).

4.3. Establishing an IRP is in accordance with best practice, and the principles of good governance, and will be a familiar process for Members who will have experience of such within their own respective authorities.

4.4. Establishing a joint IRP with West Midlands Combined Authority supports efficient and effective ways of working, benefiting from additional knowledge and insight, and reducing administrative burden. However, it is important to note that although members of the IRP will be asked to review various aspects of the respective allowance schemes of both organisations, the WMCA and WMFRA hold very specific and individual requirements and demands, reflecting both the different nature of each organisation, but also the different governance models and frameworks that they operate within. Guidance and information provided to the IRP will reflect the differing demands and challenges of organisation. It should be

noted that, in accordance with the regulations, a joint IRP must make separate recommendations to the appointing authorities.

- 4.5. It should be noted that the last independent review of the Authority's Members' Allowances Scheme was conducted following the introduction in June 2018 of new arrangements under the reformed Fire Authority. Members' allowances have not been reviewed since then, due to a combination of factors including the move to business continuity arrangements during the Covid pandemic. As a result, a review of allowances is overdue, and would be particularly timely considering the potential for changes to be introduced in the coming municipal year as a result of the Authority's governance improvement journey.
- 4.6. In the event of receiving Member approval to proceed, a joint advert of the WMCA and WMFRA will be published, requesting expressions of interest from interested parties. The appointment process will follow the standard guidelines, terms and conditions as laid out within the regulations. Membership of the IRP is a voluntary role with appointments to be for a 4-year period.

## 5. **STRATEGY ALIGNMENT**

- 5.1 The proposals within this report support the effective delivery of responsibilities as outlined within the Authority's Constitution and aligned with the principle of good governance.

## 6. **IMPACT ASSESSMENTS**

- 6.1. An equality impact assessment has not been completed as it does not represent a policy change.

## 7. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1. The Local Government and Housing Act 1989 sets out the requirements for local authorities to establish a scheme for paying allowances to their members, including a basic allowance for all members and special responsibility allowances for those with specific roles.

- 7.2. The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 sets out a more detailed framework for what schemes must include and how they should operate, and details specific allowances that can be included in a scheme and also the requirements for how such allowances should be determined i.e. via an IRP.
- 7.3. It should be noted that there is no statutory requirement for a fire and rescue authority to establish an IRP and to have regard for the allowances paid within its constituent authorities.

## 8. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1. Members of the IRP will be reimbursed for any reasonable travel expenses incurred in connection with their approved activities or time. Amounts will be accordance with WMFS policy. Members of the IRP will not be entitled to an honorarium allowance.
- 8.2. No further direct costs during the work of the IRP are envisaged other than Officer time (workstreams falls within existing roles and responsibilities of existing postholders – no additional resource has been required).
- 8.3. The establishment of a joint IRP by the Authority and West Midlands Combined Authority will realise efficiencies, by optimising Officer time and reducing the administrative burden associated with convening such a panel.
- 8.4. By its very nature, a review of the Members's Allowances Scheme will result in financial implications. At the time of writing these are unknown, however as the IRP conclude the review, the panel's findings and resulting recommendations will be set out in a report which will include financial details. This report and the financial implications will be considered by the Authority.

## 9. **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1. There are no environmental implications arising from the content of this report.

## 10. **CONSULTATION**

10.1. The proposals set out within this report do not require consultation.

## 11. **BACKGROUND PAPERS & APPENDICES**

- [Appendix A – IRP Terms of Reference](#)
- [Local Government and Housing Act 1989 \(section 18\)](#)
- [Local Authorities \(Members’ Allowances\) \(England\) Regulation 2003](#)
- [Local Government Councillors and civic dignitaries in England: ODPM guidance: Part One: members’ allowances](#)

Relevant Statutory Officer	Tom Embury <a href="mailto:tom.embury@wmfs.net">tom.embury@wmfs.net</a>	Interim Clerk to the Authority
Report Author	Stephen Timmington <a href="mailto:stephen.timmington@wmfs.net">stephen.timmington@wmfs.net</a>	Governance and Performance Support Officer

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

### **Independent Remuneration Panel**

#### **Terms of Reference**

The Independent Remuneration Panel are requested to carry out a full review of the WMFRA Members' Allowances Scheme. The panel are to review:

- the full existing Members Allowance Scheme in respect of the current Fire Authority structure for the current municipal year (2025/26)
- and to consider and make recommendations for the next municipal year (2026/27) to reflect proposed changes to the Fire Authority structure and Member roles, following revisions to the Authority's Constitution and recommendations arising from the Corporate Governance Improvement Board (to be confirmed following the meeting of the full Fire Authority on 24 November 2025).

#### **Scope of review**

Specifically, the panel are to consider and make recommendations to the Fire Authority on the Members Allowance Scheme in respect of the current structure of the Fire Authority:

- The Elected Member Basic Allowance
- The range and levels of the Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs), taking into account the full range of duties expected of various post holders, with specific reference to the following posts:
  - Chair of the Authority
  - Vice-Chair of the Authority
  - Chairs of the Authority's committees
  - Vice-Chairs of the Authority's committees
  - Leader of the Principal Opposition Group
- Independent Person allowances
- Independent Member of the Audit & Risk Committee allowance, to include a potential independent Chair.
- Co-opted Members allowances

Additionally, consideration is to be given to:

- Commencement dates for amendments to the Scheme, to include consideration of the backdating of allowances where applicable in line with the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003.
- Indexation of allowances -

To consider whether to recommend the introduction of an indexation measure to any or all elements of the Scheme, and the most appropriate index

- Travelling and subsistence allowance
- Dependents' carers' allowance
- Suspension of allowances

Note: The Independent Remuneration Panel is a joint panel established and to be maintained by West Midlands Combined Authority and West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority, for the purpose of advising each authority on its scheme of Members Allowances. In accordance with the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003, the panel must make separate recommendations to the appointing authorities (WMCA and WMFRA).

**Process and Support:**

Panel members will be provided training and support where applicable, including where necessary the setting of the legislative context, what allowances must and may be paid and how they are typically arrived at, and any elements specific to the respective allowance schemes.

Panel members will be provided an introduction pack outlining the role and responsibilities of WMFRA and WMFS, setting out the context and requirements of a metropolitan fire and rescue authority and a 24/7 emergency service.

Panel members will be provided advice including an information pack to support their deliberations. The information pack will provide the WMFRA Constitution and associated Standing Orders of the Authority, set out the current structure of the Fire Authority, Member role and functions, and current Members Allowances Scheme including schedule of Special Responsibility Allowances. To support the panel in formulating recommendations, benchmarking data from across the constituent local authorities and similar fire and rescue authorities will be provided.

The Panel will be expected to receive and consider representations from councillors and officers in relation to their review.


Information on all proposed changes to the Authority's Constitution, structure, and Member role will be provided to panel members.

Following completion of the review, the Panel will make recommendations to the next full meeting of the Fire and Rescue Authority, to be presented by the Chair, or in their absence, a nominated member of the panel.

**Background information:**

- [Local Authorities \(Members' Allowances\) \(England\) Regulations 2003](#)
- [Local Government Councillors and civic dignitaries in England: ODPM guidance: Part One: members' allowances](#)



 <b>WMFS</b> West Midlands Fire Service	<b><u>WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY</u></b> <b><u>24 November 2025</u></b>
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**Finance Update**  
**For INFORMATION**

**Principal Officer - Assistant Chief Fire Officer**  
**Report of the Interim Head of Finance & Procurement (S151)**  
**Author - Finance Manager (Deputy S151)**

1. **PURPOSE**

1.1. To provide a forecast outturn position as at Period 6 (P6) for the 2025/26 financial year.

2. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1 That Fire Authority note the overall forecast revenue underspend of (£1,490k).

2.2 That Fire Authority note the P6 capital forecast outturn variance of (£7,220k) against the budget, resulting mainly from slippage of the Vehicle Replacement Programme.

3. **OBJECTIVES & EXPECTED OUTCOMES**

3.1 This forecast is based on six months of actual data with six months of forecasting. A further forecast will be presented to Fire Authority in February, and the final outturn will be reported next June.

#### 4. **BACKGROUND**

4.1 Table 1 below shows a summary of the forecast revenue outturn for 25-26 as at P6. Further details are shown in Appendix A.

Table 1: 2025-26 Revenue Summary

<b>Service Area</b>	<b>Budget 2025-26 £m</b>	<b>Outturn 2025-26 £m</b>	<b>Variance £m</b>
Devolved Budgets	47,337	46,246	-1,091
Corporate Budgets	86,894	87,012	118
Spend from Earmarked Reserves & Revenue Costs of Capital	18,501	10,065	-8,436
Appropriations (from)/to Earmarked Reserves	-15,367	-7,433	7,934
<b>Net Expenditure</b>	<b>137,365</b>	<b>135,890</b>	<b>-1,475</b>
Funding	-137,365	-137,380	-15
<b>Total over/(under) spend</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-1,490</b>	<b>-1,490</b>

4.2 Devolved budgets are forecast to underspend by (£1,091k). The largest variances to budget are as follows:

- Digital & Data (£589k) underspend due to
  - Vacancies slightly offset by maternity cover and additional UK costs (£357k)
  - This forecast also now also includes forecast refunds from Virgin Media of (£228k) which is a one off credit relating to prior years. **It should be noted that the £228k is awaiting final agreement by Virgin.**
  - Other small savings (£4k)
- Response (£314k) underspend due to
  - vacancies within Fire Control including associated reduction in income from Staffordshire (£251k),
  - reduced spending on water capability and other training (£70k)
  - Other small variances £7k.

- People Support (£121k) due to staffing vacancies and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training being secured at no cost.
- Operations £72k overspend largely due to cover for absence in Area Command and water charges (backdated bills and 7.8% increase in price).
- Strategy (£70k) due to vacancies, acting up arrangements and reduced forecast for SLT development.
- Corporate Services (£41k) underspend due to:
  - Staff turnover not achieved, acting up and cover arrangements in Facilities Management £48k;
  - Staff turnover not achieved plus acting up and cover arrangements in Corporate Communications offset by reduced forecast for conference fees, course fees and car allowances, £37k;
  - BRV vehicle hire, £18k;
  - Forecast savings on gas & electricity for HQ (£90k)
  - Net (£50k) on fleet due to staffing vacancies, reduced income and slippage in telematics work
  - Other small variances (£4k).
- Other minor variances totalling (£28k) additional savings across other service areas.

4.3 Corporate budgets are forecast to overspend by £118k. The main reasons for this are:

- Digital & Data £102k due to Oracle improvements (e.g. Competency recording) that are ineligible to be funded as capital
- People Support £58k mainly due to additional external legal costs.
- Operational pay overall is forecast to be £18k overspent. At this stage, the forecast includes a (£1,206k) underspend on establishment largely due to continued vacancies mainly at Crew Commander level offset by a forecast overspend on VAS and disturbance allowances of £1,208k. **This forecast now reflects the additional costs from the introduction of an additional cohort of trainee fire fighters from November. The additional recruits are estimated to have a minimal impact**

**on VAS in the current financial year.** The remainder of the overspend, £16k, is due to pre-arranged overtime and blue light mileage.

- Corporate Services (£45k) due to:
  - Programme works (£250k) largely delays in ablution works
  - Responsive works £100k in line with prior year forecast and to cover increased Winter call outs
  - Business rates over budget across a number of stations £50k
  - Delayed occupation by West Midlands Police at Handsworth and rent free period for Wolverhampton Council, £29k in total
  - Inflation on maintenance contracts £40k
  - Electrical isolations savings (£14k)
- Various other small savings across Corporate of (£15k)

4.4 The forecast for interest, spend from earmarked reserves and capital shows a saving of (£8,436k). This is mainly due to:

- Capital slippage as outlined further below (£7,058k).
- Saving of (£215k) on net interest on borrowing and investments, broken down as follows:
  - The net saving for the rest of the year of (£76k) following the early repayment of £14.8m of Public Works Loan Board Debt. This takes account of the net effect of interest saved on debt, interest foregone on investments and the charging/crediting of early repayment premiums/discounts to revenue. The ongoing saving will be around £200k per year in future years.
  - A favourable variance of (£139k) due to interest on higher than expected investment balances.
- Lower than budgeted minimum revenue provision (£245k)
- Earmarked reserves savings against budget (£937k). See appendix C for full details
- Lower than expected vehicle sales, delays in VRP have led to less disposals than budgeted £19k.

4.5 Appropriations to and from reserves include the contra variance for the reduced use of capital reserves of £7,058k and other earmarked reserves of £876k.

4.6 The (£15k) favourable variance on funding is due to the finalised Section 31 grant.

#### 4.7 **Capital Programme**

The capital budget for 25-26 includes programmes budgeted in year totalling £11,685k plus slippage of £1,148k from 2024/25. Table 2 below shows a summary of the 2025-26 capital programme and further details can be found in Appendix B.

Table 2: 2025-26 Capital Summary

	<b>Budget 2025-26 £m</b>	<b>P6 Forecast £m</b>	<b>Outturn Variance £m</b>
Total Capital Expenditure	12,833	5,613	-7,220
<b>Financing</b>			
Earmarked Reserves	9,501	2,443	-7,058
Revenue	2,990	2,990	0
Prudential Borrowing	342	0	-342
Capital Grants/Contributions	0	180	180
<b>Total</b>	<b>12,833</b>	<b>5,613</b>	<b>-7,220</b>

4.8 The P6 forecast shows a £7,220k variance in capital this year, which is largely slippage into 2026-27. The main area of slippage is the vehicle replacement programme (VRP). The VRP budget originally assumed the purchase of 20 Brigade Response Vehicles costing £2.8m plus 7 Pump Rescue Ladders and 2 Technical Rescue Pumps also costing £2.8m. Invitations to tender have now been published in relation to 12 BRV+, up to 11 Pump Rescue Ladders and 2 Technical Rescue Pumps. Work is also in progress to procure 4 Prime Movers, 4 High Reach Appliances and a replacement Incident Command Unit. Whilst we anticipate that the contract for the Prime Movers will be awarded by the end of October 2025 with 2 possibly being delivered in 2025/26, all of the other procurement activity in 2025/26 will consist of pre-market engagement and research. The forecast therefore recognises that most of the expenditure will not be incurred until the 2026/27 and 2027/28 financial years. Since

previously reporting to Fire Authority there has been further slippage due to delays in determining the specification for vans.

4.9 In addition to the VRP slippage the following capital projects have also now slipped

- Windows and doors £105k
- Roof replacements £201k
- Oldbury Highrise £124k

5. **STRATEGY ALIGNMENT**

5.1. Based on the provisional outturn in this report, the Unearmarked General Fund would increase to £7,682k at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026 (5.4% of 2026-27 budget based on the current MTFP).

6. **IMPACT ASSESSMENTS**

6.1. This report is for noting and as such an EIA is not required.

7. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

7.1. There are no legal implications arising from the content of this report.

8. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 Financial implications are outlined in the sections above

9. **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 There are no environmental implications arising from the content of this report.

Relevant Principal Officer	Richard Stanton	Assistant Chief Fire Officer
Relevant SLT Member	Iain Newman iain.newman@wmfs.net	Interim Head of Finance & Procurement
Report Author	Rebecca Yates Rebecca.yates@wmfs.net	Finance Manager

**Appendix A: Detailed Revenue Budget & Forecast 2025-26**

<b>Service Area</b>	<b>Budget 2025-26 £'000</b>	<b>Forecast P4 2025-26 £'000</b>	<b>Variance £'000</b>
Corporate Management	1,261	1,239	-22
Strategy & Org Intelligence	2,442	2,372	-70
Operations	3,486	3,558	72
Prevention	2,270	2,264	-6
Protection	6,259	6,244	-15
Response, FC & Emergency	3,951	3,637	-314
Finance & Procurement	1,901	1,934	33
Digital & Data	8,878	8,289	-589
Corporate Services	6,447	6,406	-41
People Support	3,642	3,521	-121
Development & Inclusion	6,800	6,782	-18
<b>Total Devolved Budgets</b>	<b>47,337</b>	<b>46,246</b>	<b>-1,091</b>
Operations	76,846	76,864	18
Protection	-42	-42	0
Response, RC & Emergency	-95	-106	-11
Finance & Procurement	2,374	2,370	-4
Digital & Data	0	102	102
Corporate	4,934	4,889	-45
People Support	2,709	2,767	58
Development & Inclusion	168	168	0

<b>Total Corporate Budgets</b>	<b>86,894</b>	<b>87,012</b>	<b>118</b>
Minimum Revenue Provision & Net Interest	1,006	565	-441
Earmarked Reserves spend in year	5,004	4,067	-937
Capital funded from Revenue budget	2,990	2,990	0
Capital funded from Earmarked Reserve	9,501	2,443	-7,058
<b>Total interest, spend from earmarked reserves and capital</b>	<b>18,501</b>	<b>10,065</b>	<b>-8,436</b>
Contribution from (-)/to Insurance Reserve	-258	-258	0
Contribution from (-)/to Capital Reserve	-9,501	-2,443	7,058
Contribution from (-)/to Other Earmarked Reserves	-5,608	-4,732	876
<b>Total appropriations from (-)/to earmarked reserves</b>	<b>-15,367</b>	<b>-7,433</b>	<b>7,934</b>
<b>Net Expenditure</b>	<b>137,365</b>	<b>135,890</b>	<b>-1,475</b>
Funding	-137,365	-137,380	-15
<b>Total over/(under) spend</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-1,490</b>	<b>-1,490</b>

**Appendix B: Detailed Capital Budget & Forecast 2025-26**

<b>Programme</b>	<b>Budget 25-26 £'000</b>	<b>Forecast P6 £'000</b>	<b>Variance £'000</b>
Boiler Replacement Programme	360	360	0
Roof Replacement	354	153	-201
Windows & Doors Replacement	147	42	-105
Rewires	258	391	133
Drill Tower & Burns Facility Upgrade	96	96	0
Oldbury Highrise	124	0	-124
CDC Relocation	741	93	-648
Other Building Modifications	0	55	55
Vehicle replacement programme	7,267	857	-6,410
Service Provided Vehicles	235	238	3
Command & Control System	2,625	2,632	7
ICT Upgrades/Replacement	0	0	0
Equipment (Non ICT related)	0	70	70
RTC Cutting Equipment	321	321	0
Contaminants Project Phase 1 & 2	305	305	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>12,833</b>	<b>5,613</b>	<b>-7,220</b>

**Appendix C: Earmarked Reserves 2025-26**

Description	Opening Balance 01/04/25	Forecast Spend	Forecast Return to General Balances	Closing Balance 31/3/26
<b>Corporate Services</b>				
The Heritage Centre	4	1	0	3
Rewards & Recognition Event 2024 & 2025	50	40	10	0
24/25 & 25/26 Facilities Management Planned Works	223	223	0	0
Vehicle Charger Upgrades	20	0	0	20
Brigade Rebranding Project	150	70	0	80
Sustainability Project & Posts	146	102	0	44
Strategic Communications Support	44	44	0	0
Station commander post for Vehicle Replacement Programme	50	50	0	0
	<b>687</b>	<b>530</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>147</b>
<b>Strategy &amp; Organisational Intelligence</b>				
Strategy Assurance Monitoring System	30	0	0	30
Strategy - Governance team Fixed Term post	51	34	0	17
Learning & Development within Strategy team	15	15	0	0
Clerk of the Authority Duties	12	12	0	0
	<b>108</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>Development &amp; Inclusion</b>				
Youth Activities	3	3	0	0
Incident Command Training	348	125	0	223
Competitions fund equipment	15	15	0	0
Additional ICT equipment	20	20	0	0
CPD Sessions	30	19	0	11
Thermal Imaging Cameras	20	20	0	0
Road Sweepers	32	32	0	0
Fire Behaviour Trainer Personal Protective Equipment	200	50	0	150
	<b>668</b>	<b>284</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>384</b>
<b>Digital &amp; Data</b>				
Fire Ground Radio Replacement	290	0	0	290
Mobile Data Terminal Replacements	413	413	0	0
Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme Contingency	170	0	0	170
Business Transformation Project	225	55	0	170
Public Switched Telephone Network element of IT Infrastructure	50	0	50	0
TomTom Replacement	50	50	0	0
Data Maturity and Artificial Intelligence	50	50	0	0
Surface Hub Replacement	250	250	0	0
	<b>1,498</b>	<b>1,301</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>197</b>

<b>Finance &amp; Procurement</b>				
Replacement Mainline Branches	45	45	0	0
Backpack sprayers	18	18	0	0
Holmatro Equipment Replacement Project	0	0	0	0
	63	63	0	0
<b>Operations</b>				
Technical Rescue Unit New Emerging Risks Project	26	26	0	0
New Dimension Training & Crewing	30	30	0	0
Fire Investigation & Prevention Section Vehicle Modifications	5	5	0	0
Technical Rescue Unit Training & Equipment	16	16	0	0
Incident Command Transformation (Unblur Project)	38	38	0	0
UK International Search and Rescue Expenses	92	92	0	0
Ear defenders for Technical Rescue Unit	22	22	0	0
	229	229	0	0
<b>People Support</b>				
Pension Admin Grant	338	86	0	252
Pay & Grading Review	15	14	1	0
Workforce Planning Temporary Watch Commander B post	72	72	0	0
Employment Legal Costs	200	200	0	0
Post to Support UKG Implementation	45	35	0	10
	670	407	0	262
<b>Prevention</b>				
Road Casualty Reduction Team Travel Fund Scheme	8	8	0	0
Speed Indication Devices Grant	7	7	0	0
Road Casualty Reduction Team Street Racing & Operations Hercules	9	9	0	0
Road Casualty Reduction Roadshow	17	17	0	0
Carbon Monoxide Project	2	2	0	0
Children & Young People Promotional Materials & Digital Modernisation	15	15	0	0
Digital Solution for Prevention	350	175	0	175
Safeside Coaches	13	8	0	5
Safeside Nationwide Building Society Funding	32	32	0	0
ICT Updates Screens for Conference Rooms				
Safeside	12	12	0	0
New Bus & Education Outreach Resources	11	11	0	0
Fire Cadets new uniform	19	19	0	0
	495	315	0	180
<b>Protection</b>				
Protection Funding Grant	5	4	0	1
Protection Officers Accreditation & Recognised Prior Learning Grant	56	56	0	0
Building Safety Regulator Training	158	158	0	0

West Midlands Training Dept Training Aids & van fit outs	30	15	0	15
	249	233	0	16
<b>Response, Fire Control &amp; Emergency Planning</b>				
National Inter-Agency Liaison Officer Training	13	13	0	0
Firelink/Fire Control Revenue Project Costs	15	15	0	0
National Resilience Sector Led Training	17	17	0	0
Chemical, Biological, Radiological & Nuclear Training & Response	92	38	0	54
Responding to New Risks	19	19	0	0
High Volume Pump Unit Training	20	20	0	0
Water Implementation modification Year 2	150	115	0	35
Airwave Radios	17	17	0	0
Water Implementation modification Year 1	135	135	0	0
Fire Control Training and Competency framework	16	0	0	16
Fire Control Call Handler post	46	0	0	46
Grenfell Infrastructure Fund	39	0	0	39
	579	389	0	190
<b>Corporate Funding</b>				
Capital Reserve	10,083	2,443	0	7,640
Insurance Reserve	3,200	259	0	2,942
Fire Control including Command & Control	532	532	0	0
Governance improvement	1,000	809	0	191
Corporate Funding Total	14,815	4,043	0	10,772
<b>Total</b>	<b>20,061</b>	<b>7,372</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>12,629</b>



**WMFRA**  
West Midlands Fire and  
Rescue Authority

**WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND  
RESCUE AUTHORITY**

**24 NOVEMBER 2025**

**DESIGNATION OF S151 OFFICER**

**For DECISION**

**Principal Officer: Chief Fire Officer**

**Report of the Chief Fire Officer**

**Author: Interim Clerk to the Authority**

**1. PURPOSE**

1.1. To gain member approval for the designation of the Authority's Section 151 Officer in line with Constitutional requirements.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1. That members agree the formal designation of Sofia Mahmood, Head of Finance and Procurement as the Section 151 Officer/Treasurer.

**3. OBJECTIVES & EXPECTED OUTCOMES**

3.1. The Authority has constitutional responsibility for approving /confirming which Officer is designated as the statutory Section 151 Officer/Treasurer.

**4. BACKGROUND**

4.1. Under s151 of the Local Government Act 1972, every local authority (including fire and rescue service) shall make arrangements for the proper administration of their financial affairs and shall secure that one of their officers has responsibility for the administration of those affairs. They have a number of statutory duties, including the duty to report any unlawful financial activity involving the Authority (past, present or proposed) or any failure to set or maintain a balanced budget.

4.2. The Section 151 Officer must be a qualified accountant belonging to one of the recognised accountancy bodies;

- the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales,
- the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland,
- the Chartered Association of Certified Accountants,
- the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy,
- the Institute of Chartered Accountants in Ireland,
- the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants, and
- any other body of accountants established in the United Kingdom and for the time being approved by the Secretary of State for the purposes of this section.

4.3. Five of the key areas that the Section 151 Officer is responsible for are:

1) Ensuring lawfulness and financial prudence of decision making:

After consulting with the Head of Paid Service, the Monitoring Officer and the Clerk, the Head of Finance and Procurement will report to the Authority, (s114 of Local Government Finance Act 1988) or to the Executive in relation to an executive function, and the Council's external auditor if he/she considers that the Authority:

- a) has made or is about to make a decision which involves or would involve the Authority incurring expenditure which is unlawful,
- b) has taken or is about to take a course of action which, if pursued to its conclusion, would be unlawful and likely to cause a loss or deficiency on the part of the Authority, or
- c) is about to enter an item of account the entry of which is unlawful. Under the same act the Head of Finance and Procurement shall make a report under this section if it appears to him/her that the expenditure of the Authority incurred (including expenditure it proposes to incur) in a financial year is likely to exceed the resources (including sums borrowed) available to it to meet that expenditure.

2) Administration of financial affairs:

The Head of Finance and Procurement will have responsibility for the administration of the financial affairs of the Authority (section 151 of Local Government Act 1972) and will certify the robustness of the Authority's estimates of expenditure and the adequacy of the level of reserves in the proposed budget as required by Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003. The Head of Finance and Procurement is responsible for the preparation of the Authority's statement of accounts in accordance with proper practices as set out in the CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom (the Code).

3) Contributing to corporate management:

The Head of Finance and Procurement will contribute to the corporate management of the Authority, in particular through the provision of professional financial advice.

4) Providing advice:

The Head of Finance and Procurement will provide advice on the scope of powers and authority to take decisions, maladministration, financial impropriety, probity and budget and policy framework issues to all members and will support and advise members and officers in their respective roles.

5) Give financial information:

The Head of Finance and Procurement will provide financial information to the media, members of the public and the community. This is where the 'story' of the proposed decision is told. It can be used to provide background information or a context to the proposed decision or a narrative setting out the vision behind the decision.

- 4.4. A successful external recruitment exercise was undertaken to appoint a Section 151 Officer and Head of Finance and Procurement. Sofia Mahmood was appointed to this post on 17 July 2023. She is a member of both the CIPFA and CIMA accountancy

bodies and has extensive experience across the public sector in a number of organisations at a senior level. The decision in this report is to meet the governance requirements of the Authority and appoint the S151 designation.

5. **STRATEGY ALIGNMENT**

- 5.1. Effective management of the service’s finances, and appropriate and independent financial advice to the Authority to guide its decision making, are essential in the effective delivery of all aspects of the Authority’s Strategy. The S151 Officer/Treasurer is a key statutory role to support this with responsibility in this area.

6. **IMPACT ASSESSMENTS**

- 6.1. No Equality Impact Assessment is required for this decision.

7. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1. The Fire Authority is obliged to appoint an officer who has responsibility for the administration of the authority’s financial affairs under Section 73 of the Local Government Act 1985. This role is commonly known as the Section 151 Officer or Treasurer in line with the terminology used by most local authorities under the 1972 Local Government Act. The WMFRA Constitution also designates specific roles for the Section 151 Officer/Treasurer.
- 7.2. The Local Government Finance Act 1988, section 113, requires that those responsible for the administration of the authority’s financial affairs be a member of a relevant accountancy body.

8. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1. There are no additional financial implications as a consequence of designating an officer as Section 151 Officer.

9. **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

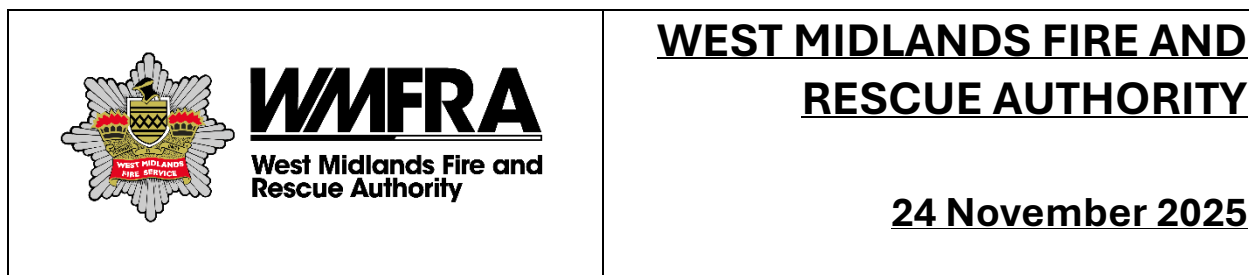
- 9.1. There are no environmental implications arising from the content of this report.

10. **BACKGROUND PAPERS & APPENDICES**

- [Section 73 Local Government Act 1985](#)
- [Section 113, Local Government Finance Act 1988](#)

Relevant Principal Officer	Simon Tuhill	Chief Fire Officer
Report Author	Tom Embury <a href="mailto:tom.embury@wmfs.net">tom.embury@wmfs.net</a>	Interim Clerk to the Authority





## **SCRUTINY COMMITTEE UPDATE REPORT NOVEMBER 2025**

**For NOTING**

**Principal Officer: DCFO Simon Barry**

**Report of the Chair of Scrutiny Committee**

**Authored: Chair of Scrutiny, Interim Clerk and Democratic Services Officer**

### **1. PURPOSE**

- 1.1. To provide the Authority an update on the work conducted by the Scrutiny Committee at its meeting held on Monday 27 October 2025.

### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1. That members **Note** the work of the Scrutiny Committee at its meeting held on Monday 27 October, as per the report.
- 2.2. That members **Note** the approved Scrutiny Committee minutes for the meeting held on Monday 21 July 2025, attached as **Appendix A**.
- 2.3. That members **Note** the Scrutiny Committee work plan for 2025-2026 attached as **Appendix B**.
- 2.4. That members **Note** the completed Scrutiny Review of Grievance and Disciplinary Processes linked, and recommendations outlined, in section 5.1.
- 2.5. That members **Note** the draft updates to the Committee's Terms of Reference in **Appendix C** discussed by the Committee on 27 October 2025 which will be submitted in final form as part of the Constitution Review for approval by Authority in February 2026.

### 3. **OBJECTIVES & EXPECTED OUTCOMES**

- 3.1. It was agreed that Committee Chairs will provide a quarterly update to each Authority meeting, to include an Annual Report at the end of each municipal year.

### 4. **BACKGROUND**

- 4.1. The Scrutiny Committee has been established to meet expectations set out in the Fire and Rescue National Framework. The Committee forms an integral part of the Authority's scrutiny framework, supporting the Authority in achieving its strategic objectives.
- 4.2. The Committee enables the scrutiny of decisions, made or to be made, on the basis of public safety, supporting the principles of pre-decision scrutiny and post-decision scrutiny. In doing so this further enables the committee to:
- inform policy development
  - hold the Authority to account
  - hold officers to account.
  - scrutinise performance of specific issues

The committee's Terms of Reference (TOR) can be accessed within the WMFRA Constitution as approved in June 2025. A deep dive review of the TOR and work programme is being undertaken with the Corporate Governance Improvement Board (CGIB) and will be brought to the Fire Authority meeting on Monday 24 November.

### 5. **OVERVIEW**

- 5.1. Since the Authority meeting on Monday 29 September, the Scrutiny Committee has held one formal, public meeting on Monday 27 October 2025.

#### **Monday 27 October 2025**

*In attendance: Cllr(s) Lloyd, Bernasconi, Idrees, Miks, Dehar, Barrie, Ferguson. Co-Opted Member Prof Brake.*

The full agenda pack can be accessed [here](#). Some of the key agenda items included:

- [Scrutiny Review of Grievance and Disciplinary Processes \(Full Report\)](#)

The findings of the review were presented to the committee. The recommendations outlined within the report included reviewing the disciplinary and grievance processes adopted by other fire services, particularly those that perform better in some areas.

Officers will also develop a full business case to understand the feasibility and potential costs of implementing a dedicated professional standards unit, as per Recommendation 4 of the HMICFRS Thematic Review.

**Outcome:** All recommendations as per report were approved.

- [Areas for Scrutiny Review](#)

Members were asked to agree priorities to be reviewed by Scrutiny Committee during the 2025/26 and 2026/27 municipal years based on the 18 Areas for Improvement (AFIs) developed by the HMICFS.

**Outcome:** Members were in agreement that the first topic to conduct a deep dive into would be workforce productivity (AFI 5).

Workforce promotion, development and talent management (AFIs 16, 17 and 18) would be reviewed after this, given it was a related area.

Delegation was given to the Interim Clerk to develop the Terms of Reference for the workforce productivity Scrutiny Review with a view to bring to the Scrutiny Committee meeting on January 26, 2026.

- [2026 CRMP Public Consultation](#)

The committee were provided with an overview of the draft public consultation regarding the fire service's Corporate Risk Management Plan (CRMP).

The process will contain three phases, the first of which will commence in January 2026 with a focus on engaging the public in the Service Delivery Model (SDM) Review. Phase Two will commence towards the end of 2026 and will be informed by the outcomes of phase one. The committee were given the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft questions and themes for the consultation.

The committee were informed that the fire service is working with a charity to support non-English speakers to complete the consultation and that there are plans for in-person events to support digitally excluded residents.

The committee suggested that officers contact the seven constituent local authorities to understand which foreign languages are most commonly spoken in each one. It was also suggested that the public could submit feedback into a post box at fire stations.

The Interim Clerk confirmed that the consultation would be promoted within the Section 41 reports that relevant members deliver to their local authorities.

**Outcome:** All recommendations as per report were approved.

- [Terms of Reference](#)

Members considered proposed amendments to the Terms of Reference which will inform the wider review of the WMFRA Constitution due to be approved by the Full Fire Authority in February 2026.

The committee were asked to consider the authority's approach to Scrutiny Call-in. They were informed that although the authority does not have to operate a Scrutiny Committee, if it chooses to do so it must follow statutory guidance – which requires such committees to have a Call-in function.

Members considered issues such as how much of the area covered by the authority would a decision have to impact in order for it to be subject to Call-in and how long members would get to call-in a decision before the time limit was reached. It was suggested that the committee reviews the Call-in process at the West Midlands Combined Authority as part of this piece of work.

**Outcome:** All recommendations as per report were approved, subject to;

- Section 7.3.11 of the Terms of Reference to specifically include information regarding the responsibilities of the committee on complaints handling and the requirement to submit an annual report to Fire Authority.

The Terms of Reference will be considered by Scrutiny Committee again in its January meeting, prior to the review of the Constitution in February. The Draft Terms of Reference is included in **Appendix C**.

- [Annual Performance Report – Fire Control](#)

The report provided the committee with an update on the operational performance of Fire Control for the period 1 September 2024 to 1 September 2025.

Staffordshire and West Midlands Fire Control received a total of 89,142 emergency calls over the reporting period compared to 75,561 the previous year (18% increase). Excluding the repeat calls to incidents, this leaves a total of 66,558 independent calls. Fire control mobilised to 43,283 (65%) of these incidents, following robust emergency call management and assessment.

The report makes clear that for the period covered, the proportion of incidents attended vs not attended in both West Midlands and Staffordshire demonstrates consistent performance by Fire Control in emergency call management, assessment and professional challenge. This ensures the fire service only mobilises to those incidents where attendance is required.

Members welcomed the figures but wanted to know what was driving the increase in call volumes. The committee was informed that call volumes were increasing across the sector, not just locally, and that more work needed to be undertaken to understand why this was the case.

It was agreed that the report will feature breakdowns showing the situation in each of the seven local authority areas in future reports.

Members also requested a further future report on performance indicators relating to prevention activities.

The FBU raised concerns around staffing levels in Fire Control. Officers agreed that steps would be taken to increase the staffing resources available to fire control.

**Outcome:** All recommendations as per report were approved.

Other agenda items included the [Complaint Handling Report \(Q1 and Q2 2025-26\)](#), the [Dispute Resolution Report](#) and an [update on Vetting Arrangements \(DBS\)](#).

## 6. **FUTURE WORK**

- 6.1 The approved Committee work programme can be accessed [here](#). A Scrutiny Review of workforce productivity will commence, as the committee chose to take this forward as the first area for a deep dive. The Terms of Reference for this review will be brought to the next Committee meeting in January. A deep dive on workforce promotion, development and talent management will follow this.

## 7. **IMPACT ASSESSMENTS**

- 7.1. No Initial EIA is required as this is an update report.

## 8. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1. There are no direct legal implications arising from this report or its appendices. All legal implications considered by the committee can be found within the reports pack taken to the committee (reports linked above).

## 9. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1. There are no financial implications arising from this report or its appendices. All financial implications considered by the committee can be found within the reports pack taken to the committee (reports linked above).

## 10. **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1. There are no environmental implications arising from this report or its appendices. All environmental implications considered by the committee can be found within the reports pack taken to the committee (reports linked above).

Relevant Principal Officer	Simon Barry	Deputy Chief Fire Officer
Report Authors	Cllr Gavin Lloyd  Tom Embury <a href="mailto:Tom.embury@wmfs.net">Tom.embury@wmfs.net</a> George Morgan <a href="mailto:George.Morgan@wmfs.net">George.Morgan@wmfs.net</a>	Chair, Scrutiny Committee Interim Clerk  Democratic Services Officer



**Minutes of the Scrutiny Committee**  
**14 July 2025**

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

**Present:** Cllr Gavin Lloyd (Chair), Cllr Marcus Bernasconi, Cllr Catherine Miks, Cllr Mohammed Idrees, Cllr Jasbinder Dehar, Cllr David Barrie, Cllr Ken Ferguson, Professor Simon Brake (online).

**Officers:** DCFO Simon Barry, Tom Embury – Interim Clerk, ACFO Richard Stanton, Kelly Harding – Interim Director of People, ACdr Marc Hudson – Head of Development, ACdr Steve Ball (until item 17/25) Kelly Letts – Democratic Services (Online until 12.00)

01/25 **Apologies**

There were no apologies for absence received.

02/25 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest received.

03/25 **Minutes of the Scrutiny Committee held on 14 March 2025**

**Resolved**

1. That the minutes of the Scrutiny Committee held on 14 March 2025 were approved as an accurate record.

04/25 **Training and Development Update**

Head of Inclusion and Development, Marc Hudson gave the committee an update on the actions taken in response to the Scrutiny Review, undertaken on training and development in April 2023.

The committee was informed of the 15 recommendations outcomes, including significant investment made across recruitment and progression. This included investment in programme such as the Springboard course designed to support women looking to progress to supervisory manager roles – given that the service recognises this is a gap.

For trainees, Marc Hudson outlined the move to a 12-week course, greater emphasis on expectations and behaviours and screening for neurodiversity as part of the process. It was confirmed that the service had completed a review of the offering of development internally, and that a new career development pathway had been implemented to support people to progress throughout the service.

Marc Hudson noted that the HMI inspection had taken place before this work had been completed which is why there were several Areas for Improvement in this area. It is

expected that these changes will address the outstanding training and development AFIs.

A member welcomed the additional screening during the recruitment phase and dyslexia. More information was requested on the springboard course. Marc H informed this is a national program and it was agreed that further information be shared with the members.

Members welcomed that training stations had been relocated into a more centralised location making it easier for access. Also highlighted that only once in eight years has the Authority been able to watch the training process. Compliments were extended to the training instructors on their professionalism and motivated delivery.

Marc Hudson highlighted the significant difference between the old and new training model is now we are able to significantly reduce operational disruption to training which was the biggest complaint from staff.

A member highlighted the case of a young firefighter in London who died by suicide as a result of bullying on a new station. They queried whether there was a mentorship approach for new Firefighters and Trainees. Marc Hudson confirmed this will be part of that of the newly implemented apprenticeship approach.

Further detail was provided by Marc Hudson and Kelly Harding on the additional Staff Networking Groups, and the additional support and investment made for the leads of the group to ensure they have the protected time and the resources they need to successfully engage with group members. The Senior Leadership Team were meeting with leads quarterly for development days.

Members queried whether the service continued to make progress with employing more BAME staff to better represent local communities. Marc Hudson recognised progress had plateaued over the recent months but can share a list of activities we plan on collaborating with members over the next 12 - 24 months

Interim Clerk, Tom Embury, highlighted that percentages of female and BAME workforce were Key Performance Indicators which were shared with full Fire Authority as part of six-monthly performance reporting.

Members enquired on how much involvement trainees had with the history of the FRS in the trainee FF induction. Marc H confirmed that all Trainee Firefighters and other staff are encouraged to visit the facilities available. Members suggested it would be beneficial for Authority members to visit the museum as well.

Queries were raised after having direct feedback from a recent group of Trainee FF about how they get exposure to the latest vehicles they will be using when on station. It was agreed that the budget positioning and the priority for operational vehicle replacement meant that for hands on training experience a new vehicle couldn't be used, but one trainee appliance was now the same model as that used on station and the other would be replaced soon. However, Trainee FF are also exposed to the same models as are used on stations as part of shadowing arrangements. Members suggested it may make sense to bring operational vehicles to training centre for familiarisation as well.

Members queried whether there would be an option for residential periods of training, as was highlighted by Trainee firefighters as part of the Training and Development Scrutiny review. Marc Hudson confirmed that due to the distributed training model, and the closure of a central training centre some years ago, this was an approach WMFS no longer have the facilities in place to be able to provide.

The Chair questioned the approach for supporting additional training for supervisory managers, and what the “tools” that are described in the report looked like. Marc Hudson confirmed this was part of the CDLP, and involved links to training and development in multiple areas. It was confirmed that officers would share details of this programme with members.

Resolved

1. That it be agreed that the Committee members note the progress achieved to date.
2. That it be agreed that the Committee has formally signed the actions off as completed.
3. That it be agreed that officers share detail of Career Development Leadership Pathways (CDLP) and the Springboard programme with members.
4. That it be agreed that arrangements be made for Authority members to tour the new Incident Command training facility at Headquarters.
5. That it be agreed that arrangements be made for Authority members to visit the fire service museum at Aston Fire Station.

#### 05/25 **Business Continuity**

Head of Response Steve Ball presented the recommendation, which included a request to note the legal and statutory business continuity requirements of the Authority, and a request for the committee to scrutinise and provide input on the proposed approach to Resilience Contracts.

Steve Ball outlined the approach that had been previously progressed to Audit and Risk Committee and the recommendation that would have been made to Fire Authority to consider this approach. However, the introduction of the Minimum Service Levels Act by the previous government had rendered this approach redundant. However, Labour have subsequently committed to remove that legislation and are not currently implementing it, meaning that an alternative approach was once more required to be considered.

Steve Ball emphasised that the financial figures and example contract included within the report were at this stage illustrative and based upon another FRS which had similar contracts in place. Further work would be needed to develop a finalised approach for WMFRA, which would be subject to further input from FRA before implementation.

It was made clear by DCFO Simon Barry that the request at this stage was to give members an opportunity to scrutinise and that officers were not looking for a decision now. It was noted that due to changes in legislation this was the right time to review and needs to be revisited.

Questions raised by members as to whether there were any gaps known and risks involved with supplier resilience. DCFO Simon Barry confirmed that the primary concern

was around having the right number of people rather than equipment, but further detail can be brought forward around any potential contract gaps.

The Chair inquired as to what the requirements to monitor any such approach by scrutiny committee would be. Tom Embury confirmed that at this stage, without a firm proposal or implementation, it was not clear, but it would ultimately be for scrutiny committee to determine how it wished to monitor and scrutinise this approach, if and when it would be approved by the Authority. This could mirror other areas of regular scrutiny where the committee receives annual or six-monthly update reports.

Discussion took place on the engagement of officers and Representative Bodies during the review process prior to any sign-off. The chair provided the opportunity to the observer from the FBU to raise any thoughts at this initial stage. Sasha Hitchens, FBU, highlighted the unions view that these were strike breaking contracts, emphasising this was the first time she was aware of the paper. The position from the FBU was to oppose this current approach. Having reached out to FBU members at Merseyside FRS, their feedback is that these contracts hadn't been successful there, and would cost significantly for little benefit. The Chair requested to have more evidence on this work done at a national level be included in any FRA paper and requested that officers engage with Representative Bodies on the further development of this going forward.

**Resolved:**

1. That it be agreed that Members noted the legal and statutory duties of the Authority to respond to emergencies, and to maintain robust business continuity arrangements.
2. That it be agreed that Members noted the previous recommendation of the Audit and Risk Committee from 27 November 2023, that the Authority consider the implementation of internal Resilience Contracts.
3. That Members scrutinised the proposed approach to business continuity resilience and provided feedback to officers.
4. That Members will make a recommendation to Fire Authority to consider the implementation of Resilience Contracts as a means of mitigating risks associated with business continuity.

06/25 **Introduction of BRV+**

ACFO Richard Stanton provided Members the opportunity to scrutinise the implementation of the BRV+ model, as approved by Fire Authority on 23 June 2025, and provide such feedback and recommendations as deemed necessary to inform the next stage of the project.

Papers provided included access to the SLT paper outlining the detail of why a change in approach was necessary. ACFO Stanton highlighted some particular points to note;

- The contamination considerations meant that BA sets will no longer be stored in the cab but in the lockers at the back of the vehicle, reducing crew exposure to contaminants.

- The BRV+ has similar capability to a BRV just with additional capacity to carry four rather than three staff, and the ability to hold more water, whilst using the same Hale pump as a BRV.
- The new BRV+ does not have 4X4 capabilities as we would need to capture better data to inform the usage of this during incidents.

The Chair requested more information for new members on why a change in approach was needed. ACFO Station explained that originally the service planning to replace the BRVs with a similar type of vehicle but with a higher weight allowance to allow more water to be carried. However, the service hit a number of number of procurement challenges with that, with only one possible supplier, limits on available chassis and long lead in times for production. As a result, an alternative “off the shelf” model was going to be utilised instead.

Following member queries, it was confirmed that the BRV+ would replace 10 current BRVs with the remaining 9 stations continuing with BRVs, with the plan to replace them on a more like-for-like basis in future.

Members suggested a change of the name from BRV+ and a consideration to be made to the number of abbreviations used to describe vehicles. There was concern over how this would impact on fire control when mobilising vehicles. ACFO Stanton confirmed there is a glossary of abbreviations available. The abbreviations support the Command & control systems to mobilise effectively. Officers will work with staff to ensure the new naming configurations are suitable.

**Resolved:**

1. That it be agreed that members note the proposal outlined in the Authority paper of 23 June 2025 (Appendix A) and the more detailed SLT paper (appendix B) which considers key issues relating to the implementation of the BRV+ model.

07/25 **Local Government Ombudsman - Annual Review Letter 2024-25**

Interim Clerk Tom Embury, update the Committee on the content of the Local Government Ombudsman’s (LGO) Annual Review Letter of West Midlands Fire Service, in line with the Committee’s role in scrutinising the Service’s complaint handling. This is in addition to the six-monthly updates on internal complaint handling that will be provided to the Authority, and this letter will be brought to the committee on an annual basis when it is received. It was noted that there had been no complaints raised to the LGO regarding WMFS or WMFRA. The Interim Clerk did note that he was aware of at least one case raised with the LGO in 2025/26 so far, so there would be more to report on this year.

The Chair queried whether the service are signposting people to the right places, so we make sure people are aware they have the right to complain to the LGO and how do complaints come into the FA. The Interim Clerk confirmed that yes, it is made clear on the service website how a complaint can be raised, and there are internal policies, which have been shared with Scrutiny Committee, that ensure responses are provided in a timely manner. At the final stage of any complaint complainants will be informed that they can escalate their complaint to the ombudsman. It was made clear that

complaints are not handled by the Authority but by the service or by the LGO. The FA see the outcomes on a 6 monthly basis and can scrutinise the implementation of such outcomes.

**Resolved:**

1. That it be agreed that Members note the content of the LGO Annual Review Letter 2024-25 (Appendix A).

08/25 **Scrutiny Committee Terms of Reference**

Interim Clerk Tom Embury provided Members with an opportunity to provide initial feedback on areas for improvement and amendment within the current Scrutiny Committee terms of reference, as part of the full review of all aspects of the Constitution. The foreseeable timescale was that it would come to full Authority in September and again to Scrutiny Committee in October. This is the first opportunity for members to provide feedback.

The Chair noted that the current that we are still not providing the three pillars of scrutiny within the ToR, missing “call in” as a mechanism. It was agreed that this would be added to drafts for consideration.

Members raised a query in reference to section 7.38 of the Terms of Reference and how these fits in with the work of the JCP. Tom Embury explained that whilst HR policies and performance metrics are discussed at JCP, JCP is not a public or statutory committee but instead a part of the service’s Employee Relations Framework, and therefore this information still needs to come into Scrutiny Committee for public scrutiny.

It was acknowledged that sickness rates, which are included within Scrutiny’s Terms of Reference, are not currently reported to the Committee but instead to the full Authority as part of six-monthly KPI reporting. This will be an area for consideration – as either the information should also be brought to the committee or should be removed from the Terms of Reference.

A member also suggested that efficiency, productivity and best use of resources should be included within the Terms of Reference but ensuring recognition of the difference in role between Scrutiny and Audit and Risk Committee.

**Resolved:**

1. That it be agreed that member feedback on potential changes or additions be incorporated into draft changes for consideration by Fire Authority in September 2025. Amendments to include: “call ins”, efficiency, productivity and best use of resource be included with a clear distinction from A&R Committees role and consideration around sickness rates inclusion.
2. That it be agreed that Members noted the content of the statutory guidance on Overview and Scrutiny Committees as part of their considerations.

09/25 **Progressing HMICFRS Findings and Scrutiny Areas of Focus**

Interim Clerk Tom Embury provided an overview of the HMICFRS Inspection Process, including the overall gradings provided to the service in June 2025. This included more detailed discussion of the range of Areas for Improvement (AFI) identified by the inspectorate. Detail of the service's process for developing an action plan and updating the HMICFRS on progress was also outlined.

The Chair requested that the Scrutiny Committee receive quarterly, rather than six-monthly updates on progress against AFIs and other considerations from the HMICFRS process. The Chair also expressed his view that the committee should consider all the elements of the AFI.

A member suggested that focus should be on those areas of the AFIs that were not already subject to regular update to the committee or wider Authority.

Members discussed the range of AFIs and those of particular interest, including AFIs 5, 6, 8, 9, 10 and 15-18. It was agreed that in some cases these could be combined into one scrutiny review topic.

Members resolved to delegate the matter to the DCFO and Interim Clerk to work in consultation with the Scrutiny Chair and Vice-Chair to determine topics for further scrutiny review.

Members expressed a desire to ensure that such scrutiny reviews were coordinated to ensure most efficient use of time, especially considering the significant additional workloads for FRA members at the moment.

**Resolved:**

1. That it be agreed that Members noted the processes that the Service has in place to enable the timely, appropriate and assured achievement of actions required to deliver the AFI identified in the Service's report.
2. That it be agreed that quarterly reports on progress against AFIs be brought the Scrutiny Committee.
3. That it be agreed that a delegation be given to the Interim Clerk and the DCFO to agree, in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Scrutiny Committee, on the topics for specific scrutiny review from amongst the AFI areas, based on member feedback in the meeting. Such reviews to be included within the updated workplan from October 2025.
4. That it be agreed that scrutiny review meetings either be coordinated to align to existing scrutiny and authority meetings or take place online to ensure member participation.

20/25 **Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2025-26**

Interim Clerk Tom Embury presented the draft workplan and highlighted that there would be a number of additions based on resolutions at the meeting.

Also clarified that the Staffordshire Rope Rescue collaboration, which was now a matter for Scrutiny Committee following merger with Collaboration and Transformation Committee.

**Resolved:**

1. That it be agreed that members noted the work programme 2025-26

Meeting concluded at 12.20pm

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**WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**  
**SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2025/26**

<b>2025</b>			
<b>Date of Meeting</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Responsible Officer</b>	<b>Completed</b>
14 July 2025	Minutes of the previous Scrutiny Committee	Democratic Services Officer Kirsty Tuffin	14 July 2025
	Training Update	Head of Inclusion and Development Marc Hudson	14 July 2025
	Final Scrutiny Review of D&G Report	Director of People Kelly Harding	Deferred
	Next Scrutiny Review - Agreement Terms of Reference	Interim Clerk Tom Embury	14 July 2025
	HMICFRS Report – Areas for Improvement Identified	DCFO Simon Barry	Combined with above
	Business Continuity Arrangements	Head of Response Steve Ball	14 July 2025
	Scrutiny Committee Terms of Reference Review	Interim Clerk	14 July 2025
	Local Government Ombudsman – Annual Review Letter 2024/25	Interim Clerk	14 July 2025

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	BRV Options [referred by Fire Authority]	DCFO/ACFO Richard Stanton	14 July 2025
	Staffordshire Rope Rescue Collaboration	Head of Response	Deferred
	Scrutiny Committee Work Plan 2025-26	Democratic Services Officer	14 July 2025
	<i>Scrutiny Committee Familiarisation and Training</i>	Interim Clerk	14 July 2025
	<i>Scrutiny Review of Grievance and Disciplinary – Evidence Session</i>	Members	14 July 2025
<i>Fire Authority 29 September</i>	<i>Quarterly Update from Scrutiny for July 2025 meeting</i>	Chair of Scrutiny Committee	
27 October 2025	Fire Control Performance – Annual Report	ACFO/Head of Response	27 October
	Staffordshire Rope Rescue Collaboration	Head of Response	Deferred.
	Final Scrutiny Review of D&G Report	Head of People	27 October
	Dispute Resolution Report	Head of People	27 October
	Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Report	Head of People	27 October
	Complaint Handling Report – Q1 & Q2	Interim Clerk	27 October
	Scrutiny Review [Topic to be determined]	DCFO/Interim Clerk	27 October
	Scrutiny Committee Terms of Reference Review	Interim Clerk	27 October

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	CRMP SDM Review Consultation		27 October
	Minutes of the Previous Scrutiny Committee	Democratic Services Officer	27 October
	Scrutiny Committee Work Programme	Democratic Services Officer	27 October
<i>Fire Authority 24 November</i>	<i>Quarterly Update from Scrutiny for October 2025 meeting</i>	Chair of Scrutiny Committee	
26 January 2026	Budget Review	S151/Head of Finance and Procurement Iain Newman	
	Safe and Wells Update	Head of Prevention Emily Fernandez	
	Neurodiversity Report	Head of People	
	Regulation 28 Report Action Update	Head of People	
	Scrutiny Review – WMFS Workforce Productivity	Interim Clerk	
	Final Review – Scrutiny Committee TOR	Interim Clerk/Monitoring Officer	
	HMICFRS Areas for Improvement - Quarterly Report	Head of Strategy	
	Minutes of the Previous Scrutiny Committee	Democratic Services Officer	

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	Scrutiny Committee Work Programme	Democratic Services Officer	
<i>Fire Authority 16 February 2026</i>	<i>Quarterly Update from Scrutiny for January 2025 meeting</i>	Chair of the Scrutiny Committee	
9 March 2026	Complaints Handling Report – Q3, Q4 and Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report 2025/26	Clerk	
	Dispute Resolution Report	Head of People	
	Scrutiny Review – WMFS Workforce Productivity	Clerk	
	Scrutiny Committee Work Programme	Democratic Services Officer	
	Minutes of the Previous Scrutiny Committee	Democratic Services Officer	
<i>Fire Authority 13 April 2026</i>	<i>Quarterly Update from Scrutiny for March 2025 meeting</i>	Chair of the Scrutiny Committee	
<i>Fire Authority 29 June (AGM)</i>			
13 July 2026	Terms of Reference Yearly Review	Clerk	
	Scrutiny Review options for 2026-2027	Clerk	
	Regulation 28 Report Action Update	Head of People	

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	Minutes of the Previous Scrutiny Committee	Democratic Services Officer	
	Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2026-2027	Democratic Services Officer	
	Final Report - Scrutiny Review [Topic to be determined]		
2026-2027 [TBC]	Fire Control Performance Annual report	ACFO/Head of Response	
	Complaints Handling Annual Report	Clerk	
	2026-2027 Work Programme	Democratic Services Officer	
	Dispute Resolution Report [6monthly reports]		

To report as appropriate:

- Updates on reviews

Note: separate meetings of any review working group are to be scheduled if and when required.



## Appendix A – Draft Scrutiny Committee Terms of Reference

### Article 7 - Scrutiny Committee

#### 7.1 Purpose

7.1.07.1.1 In line with expectations set out in the Fire and Rescue National Framework the Authority has established a Scrutiny Committee to support it in achieving its strategic objectives. ~~Having determined to put in place such a committee, the Authority is required to have regard to relevant Statutory Guidance on Overview and Scrutiny. The committee ensures that its policy and budgetary framework is followed and developed to reflect the changing needs and demands in meeting its statutory obligations.~~

7.1.2 ~~In line with that guidance, the Scrutiny Committee will act as a “critical friend”, aiming to amplify the voice of the communities served by WMFS, and drive improvement in the delivery of service and of strategic decision-making.~~

7.2.07.1.3 Effective scrutiny frameworks will be in place for both the scrutiny of strategic policy, as well as performance. Aligned to the role of the Fire Authority and CFO/CEO as set out in Articles 5 and 6 of this constitution, the scrutiny function should scrutinise decisions made or to be made, on the basis of ‘public safety’ aligned to the following definitions:

7.2.17.1.4 *Pre scrutiny* enables changes proposed to strategic policy decisions to be scrutinised. These are decisions which if implemented, would change the strategic priorities and outcomes agreed by the Fire Authority (for example, matters contained in Authority ‘forward plan’ for approval). Pre scrutiny can:

- a) Inform policy development and/or
- b) Hold the Authority to account

7.2.27.1.5 *Post scrutiny* enables the Fire Authority to seek assurance around operational decisions already made by the CFO/CEO and other officers in the delivery of strategic priorities and outcomes (for example: training, partnership working). Post scrutiny can:

- a) Scrutinise performance of specific issues and/or

b) Hold officers to account

- 7.1.6 Call-in enables the committee to ask the Authority as a whole to reconsider decisions it has made before they are implemented, but only where it is believed that such a decision was made outside the agreed policy and budget framework, or because there is a clear deficiency in the information provided to support the decision. As WMFRA cannot operate an executive governance arrangement, it is expected call-in will be used rarely. The process for Call-in is outlined within part ## of the Authority Standing Orders. Call-in can:
- a) Suggest that a decision be reconsidered
  - b) Ensure all necessary information is provided to inform decision making

## 7.2 Independence and support

- 7.2.1 The Scrutiny Committee must be able to provide objective oversight and its role means it must have sufficient independence, and its recommendations must carry weight with officers and the authority as a whole.
- 7.2.2 To support this the committee has the power to summon any officer or member of the Authority to give account in respect of reviews or any other relevant matter. It may also request external organisations and bodies provide evidence and input to its work.
- 7.2.3 The committee shall also be granted access to such information as is necessary to undertake its role
- 7.2.4 The committee will utilise, in consultation with the Treasurer (S151 Officer), the democratic services budget for the purpose of buying in or co-option of any necessary external technical advice and support in connection with the reviews.
- 7.2.5 The committee will also be allocated such other resources – such as officer time – as is necessary and reasonable to undertake its agreed role effectively.

### 7.3 Role and Functions: -

7.3.1 To carry out scrutiny reviews selected by the Committee, with appropriate consideration of committee and officer capacity and cost. Such reviews will be member-led, and evidence based, and will produce SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and timely) recommendations to the Authority. Such reviews can be one-off or held over multiple meetings depending on the matter to be scrutinised.

~~7.3.1~~7.3.2 To regularly review and shortlist topics for scrutiny review in the forthcoming municipal year.

~~7.3.2~~7.3.3 To track and monitor the implementation of review recommendations that are accepted by the Authority.

~~7.3.3~~ ~~To summon any officer or member of the Authority to give account in respect of reviews or any other relevant matter.~~

~~7.3.4~~ ~~To manage, in consultation with the Treasurer (S151 Officer), a specific budget for the purpose of buying in any necessary external advice and support in connection with the reviews.~~

~~7.3.5~~7.3.4 To review and scrutinise strategic performance information of the Shared Fire Control on an annual basis.

~~7.3.6~~7.3.5 To have responsibility for scrutiny of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and workforce diversity throughout the West Midlands Fire Service and to review policies and monitor performance in relation thereto.

~~7.3.7~~7.3.6 To monitor and scrutinise as appropriate the Authority's HR policies.

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

7.3.8 To monitor and scrutinise workforce productivity


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

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

- 7.3.11 To scrutinise the service's approach to complaints as the designated member for complaints under the Local Government Ombudsman Code of Practice, and to receive statistics on complaint numbers and handling, and produce and approve an annual report on complaint handling for submission to Full Authority. -
- 7.3.12 To scrutinise strategic development and assurance of transformational collaborative working agreements (up to implementation) aligned to the 'Duty to Collaborate' (Policing and Crime Act 2017)
- 7.3.13 To review the strengths, weaknesses and opportunities of strategic collaboration work between the service and regional partners.
- 7.3.14 To deal with any matters referred to it by the full Authority, the Member Engagement Forum, the CFO/CEO, Clerk, Monitoring Officer or Treasurer, not within its work programme.
- 7.3.15 To refer any matter for consideration by the Authority, another Committee or an officer where considered appropriate.
- 7.3.16 To submit its minutes to the Authority.

## 7.4 Meetings and quorum

- 7.4.1 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.
- 7.4.2 The Committee will sit in public with minimum exceptions.
- 7.4.3 In addition to its programmed meetings, the Committee will hold additional meetings, as and when required, in order to efficiently manage its workload.
- 7.4.4 Three Members who are eligible to vote shall form the quorum of the Committee. No business shall be transacted at any meeting of the Authority unless a quorum is present.

 <p><b>WMFRA</b> West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority</p>	<p><b><u>WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY</u></b></p> <p><b><u>24 NOVEMBER 2025</u></b></p>
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**APPOINTMENT, STANDARDS AND APPEALS COMMITTEE (ASAC) UPDATE  
REPORT - NOVEMBER 2025**

For **DECISION**

**Principal Officer: Simon Tuhill, CFO**

**Report of the Chair of ASA Committee**

**Authored by Chair of ASAC, Interim Clerk and Democratic Services Officer**

1. **PURPOSE**

- 1.1. To provide the Authority an update on the work conducted by the ASAC Committee at its meetings held since the last Fire Authority.

2. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1. That members **note** the work of the ASA Committee in the last quarter as outlined in this report.
- 2.2. That members **approve** the minor update made to the Authority Member Code of Conduct outlined in section 5.1 and linked in background papers in section 11.

3. **OBJECTIVES & EXPECTED OUTCOMES**

- 3.1. To support greater transparency and consistency between the work of authority and its committees, Committee Chairs will provide a quarterly update to each Authority meeting, to include an Annual Report at the end of each municipal year.

4. **BACKGROUND**

- 4.1. The Authority has established an Appointments, Standards and Appeals Committee under which allegations of breach of the member

Code of Conduct can be investigated and decisions on allegations can be made. The Appointments, Standards and Appeals Committee also operates as a quasi-judicial body in determining appeals relating to pensions and superannuation matters and the appointment of Brigade Managers.

- 4.2. The committees Terms of Reference (TOR) can be accessed within the WMFRA Constitution as agreed in June 2025. A deep dive review of the TOR and work programme will be undertaken with the Corporate Governance Improvement Board (CGIB). It was originally planned to bring this to Fire Authority in November however, it was acknowledged that until a decision is made on the implementation of an Executive Committee, it was not deemed appropriate. Once a decision has been made the review will commence and be brought to Fire Authority as part of the wider constitutional changes planned in February 2026.

5. **OVERVIEW**

- 5.1. ASAC meetings are ad-hoc and scheduled on an as needed basis. Since the Authority meeting on Monday 29 September, the ASA Committee has held one formal meeting on Monday 3 November 2025. The key agenda items were as follows:

- Members Code of Conduct

As per the committees TOR, the committee undertook its annual review of the Members Code of Conduct for both Members and Co-Opted Members.

The proposed changed below was agreed to the policy:

- A. 'The Monitoring Officer maintains a process for Managing Standards Complaints under the Localism Act 2011 in accordance with the LGA Guidance'.

Training on the Code of Conduct would be taking place at the Members Engagement Forum in November 2025.

- Member Development Strategy

The Committee had the opportunity to review and comment upon the draft strategy and approved its submission to the Fire Authority, as per today's agenda. The strategy aims to provide current and new members joining the Authority with the necessary skills and experience they need to fulfil their roles and responsibilities. The strategy has been brought in line with best practice and delivers on the key recommendations within the authority's improvement plan.

The following amendments were requested:

- A. More clear bespoke training for the Chair of the Authority
- B. Audit template to include life experiences

All training included within the Induction pack would be recorded/via teams where possible to take into account members work/caring commitments. The strategy was fluid and any additional training that members feel would be beneficial can be added ad hoc, including upcoming legislation changes around the Nolan Principals. Roles of member champions would be the responsibility of the new Member Development Steering Group.

5.2. Members in attendance: *Councillor Haq, Cathryn Bayton, Mary Locke (substitute), Ken Ferguson and Peter Hogarth.*

5.3. The full agenda pack and its reports can be accessed: [Here](#)

## 6. **FUTURE WORK**

6.1. The committee will look to schedule a meeting in the near future to determine the appointment of a Deputy Chief Fire Officer.

## 7. **IMPACT ASSESSMENTS**

7.1. No Initial EIA is required as this is an update report.

## 8. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

8.1. There are no legal implications arising from this report or its appendices.

9. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

9.1. There are no financial implications arising from the content of this report or its appendices.

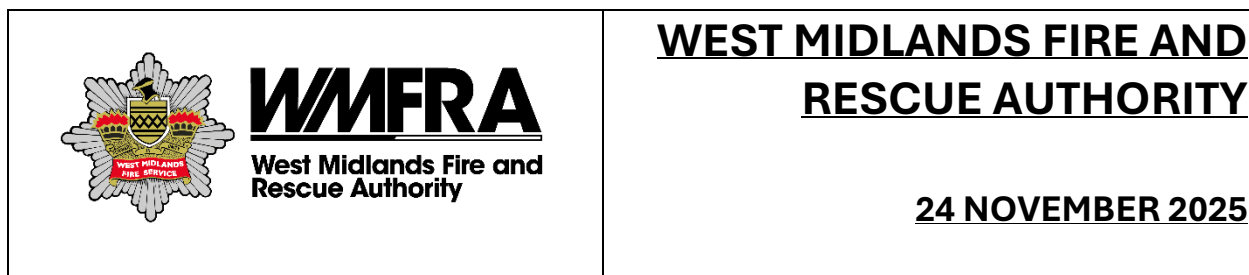
10. **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

10.1. There are no environmental implications arising from the content of this report or its appendices.

11. **BACKGROUND PAPERS & APPENDICES**

- [Code of Conduct for Members and Co-Opted Members](#) - as agreed by Appointments, Standards and Appeals Committee 3 November 2025.
- [ASA Committee Agenda – 17 July 2025](#)

Relevant Principal Officer	Kelly Harding	Interim Director for People
Report Authors	<p>Cllr Rizwan Jalil</p> <p>Tom Embury <a href="mailto:Tom.embury@wmfs.net">Tom.embury@wmfs.net</a></p> <p>Kirsty Tuffin <a href="mailto:Kirsty.tuffin@wmfs.net">Kirsty.tuffin@wmfs.net</a></p>	<p>Chair, Appointments, Standards and Appeals Committee</p> <p>Interim Clerk</p> <p>Democratic Services Officer</p>



## **AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE UPDATE REPORT NOVEMBER 2025**

**For NOTING**

**Principal Officer: ACFO Richard Stanton**

**Report of the Chair of Audit and Risk Committee**

**Authored Chair of Audit, Interim Clerk and Democratic Services Officer**

### **1. PURPOSE**

- 1.1. To provide the Authority an update on the work conducted by the Audit and Risk Committee at its meeting held on Monday 20 October 2025.

### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1. That members **Note** the work of the Audit and Risk Committee at its meeting held on Monday 20 October, as per the report.
- 2.2. That members **Note** the final minutes of the previous Audit and Risk Committee meetings held on Monday 30 June and Monday 21 July 2025, attached as **Appendix A** and **Appendix B**.

### **3. OBJECTIVES & EXPECTED OUTCOMES**

- 3.1. To support greater transparency and consistency between the work of authority and its committees, Committee Chairs will provide a quarterly update to each Authority meeting, to include an Annual Report at the end of each municipal year.
- 3.2. The reports should provide assurance regarding the effectiveness of the Committee, including details of any training undertaken by its members.

#### 4. **CHAIR'S ASSURANCE STATEMENT**

The Committee discussed an error in the Treasury Management Strategy Statement where the Capital Financing Requirement was misstated as £31.1m instead of £22.8m. This error had for a number of years masked over-borrowing. Corrective action included early repayment of twelve PWLB loans totalling £14.8m, generating an estimated annual saving of £200,000.

The Committee also reviewed the "Our Promises" policy, which does not fully align with the NFCC Core Code of Ethics. It's recommended that the Authority ensure that they review these, alongside our behaviours and values, to ensure that there is confidence that the NFCC principles are reflected in all policies.

Other matters included a review of the Committee's Terms of Reference, Q2 Corporate Risk Assurance (deep dive in staff sickness), and internal audit progress. Notably, data shows female applicants are over 11 times more likely than male applicants to be unable to swim, and ethnic minority applicants are 13 times more likely than white applicants to be unable to swim. The next meeting on 8 December will cover budget discussions, Q2 treasury updates, and audit findings.

#### 5. **BACKGROUND**

5.1. The Audit and Risk Committee was established by the Fire Authority in January 2008. Its purpose is to provide:

- independent assurance on the adequacy of the risk management framework and the associated control environment,
- independent scrutiny of the Authority's financial and non-financial performance to the extent that it affects the Authority's exposure to risk and weakens the control environment, and to
- oversee the financial reporting process.

The committee's Terms of Reference (TOR) is linked within the background papers in section. A full review of the TOR has been undertaken and will now be brought to the Authority for inclusion

within the wider Constitution review – due to be completed in February 2026.

## 6. **OVERVIEW**

6.1. Following the last Fire Authority, the Audit and Risk Committee held a meeting, with both public and private items on the agenda, on Monday 20 October 2025.

### 6.2 **Monday 20 October 2025**

*In attendance: Cllr(s) Evans, Bayton, Idrees, Haq, and Barrie.  
Independent Member David Page.*

The full agenda pack can be accessed [here](#). Some of the key agenda items included:

#### 6.2.1 [Terms of Reference Review](#)

The Audit and Risk Committee were given a further opportunity to provide feedback on amendments within the current Terms of Reference, compare with industry standards and other FRAs, before they are brought to the Fire Authority meeting on Monday 24 November.

Members were asked to consider the range of best practice examples, including the CIPFA Position Statement on Audit Committees in Local Authorities and background papers in relation to the proposed updates to the Terms of Reference.

**Outcome:** All recommendations within the report were agreed subject to:

- the inclusion of the Internal Auditors suggestion of reference to upholding the Code of Ethics within the TOR.
- 8.11 to use the word demonstrate

#### 6.2.2 [Corporate Risk Assurance Report Q2 2025-26](#)

Members were provided with a three-month period update on the management of the authority's corporate risks.

The red risk related to Staff Sickness was highlighted to members. Kelly Harding (Head of People) provided assurance related to this corporate risk. Private Healthcare though salary sacrifice and/or collaboration work with the police to provide additional GP provision was being investigated. The Fire Authority may wish to consider allocating additional budget provision to enable the recruitment of an extra Brigade Doctor, strengthening occupational health capacity and resilience. Reports would include figures/data on the relevant risks in future updates and DVLA would be contacted to regarding their performance accreditation.

Head of Digital and Data was unable to attend due to an emerging digital situation on the morning of the meeting and would be invited to attend the next Committee meeting. All written questions submitted on the red risk would be answered and published on CMIS for transparency. The Mitigation plan for the implementation of swimming and driving requirements would be brought to the next Committee meeting in December 2025. Notably, data shows female applicants are over 11 times more likely than male applicants to be unable to swim, and ethnic minority applicants are 13 times more likely than white applicants to be unable to swim.

**Outcome:** It was agreed that the Head of Digital and Data will attend the next Audit and Risk meeting in December, to provide assurance around his corporate risk areas.

A full briefing on the cyber situation and any risks associated would be circulated to members.

All recommendations as per report were approved.

### 6.2.3 [Treasury Management Quarterly Update](#)

The Treasury Management quarterly management update for April – June 2025, compares actual activity to the planned strategy agreed by members at budget setting for 2025/26.

The Capital Financing Requirement stated in the Treasury Management Strategy Statement published in February 2025 was incorrectly reported as £31.1 million; the correct figure is £22.8 million. This error had for a number of years masked over-borrowing.

Twelve long-term PWLB loans (with a total principal value of £14.8m) were prematurely repaid on 31 July 2025. Early repayment premiums will be debited to revenue and early repayment discounts will be credited to revenue over the appropriate period in line with the Code. The net impact of the above is an annual saving in a full year of around £200,000.

**Outcome:** All recommendations as per report were approved.

#### 6.2.4 [Internal Audit Progress Report October 25](#)

The Committee was provided with an update on the delivery of the Internal Audit Plan for 2025/26. Included within this was a review of the service's Ethical Framework, including standards of conduct and the core code of ethics.

The Committee discussed the "Our Promises" policy, which was developed in 2024. It is noted that the Fire and Rescue Authority (FRA) did not approve this policy. It was identified that the Promises themselves does not fully align with the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) Core Code of Ethics.

The NFCC Core Code of Ethics establishes five fundamental ethical principles intended to guide all Fire and Rescue Services. The Head of Human Resources confirmed that the Promises and Core Code of Ethics were being reviewed.

Considering this, the Chair recommended that the FRA adopt the NFCC Core Code of Ethics five ethical principles in full, instead of the unapproved "Promises", ensuring that all organisational policies and practices reflect these principles.

**Outcome:** All recommendations as per report were approved.

It was agreed that the Chair would highlight the issue of the lack of Authority input into the promises at the next Fire Authority meeting and request that changes be made to the ethical promises.

Other agenda items included a review of the Audit and Risk Committee Work Plan and a verbal update from the Chief Fire Officer on personnel matters within the exempt part of the meeting.

## 7. **FUTURE WORK**

7.1. The approved Committee work programme can be accessed [here](#). The programme outlines the planned agenda items for the 2025-26 municipal year.

7.2. The next committee meeting is scheduled for Monday 8 December with the following items planned:

- Draft discussion on the Authority's budget
- Treasury Management Report Q2
- Audit Findings Report
- Statement of Accounts
- Committee Members' Private meeting with External Auditors

## 8. **TRAINING**

8.1. Treasury management training was provided to the committee in October by an external provider.

8.2. Fraud awareness training will be provided to the committee in March 2026 by the Internal Auditors.

## 9. **IMPACT ASSESSMENTS**

9.1. No Initial EIA is required as this is an update report.

## 10. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

10.1. There are no legal implications arising from this report or its appendices. All legal implications considered by the committee can be found within the reports pack taken to the committee (reports linked above).

## 11. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

11.1. There are no financial implications arising from this report or its appendices. All financial implications considered by the committee can be found within the reports pack taken to the committee (reports linked above).

## 12. **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

12.1. There are no environmental implications arising from this report or its appendices. All environmental implications considered by the committee can be found within the reports pack taken to the committee (reports linked above).

## 13. **BACKGROUND PAPERS & APPENDICES**

- Appendix A - Audit and Risk Committee minutes - 30 June 2025
- Appendix B - Audit and Risk Committee minutes - 21 July 2025

Relevant Principal Officer	Richard Stanton <a href="mailto:Richard.stanton@wmfs.net">Richard.stanton@wmfs.net</a>	Assistant Chief Fire Officer
Report Authors	Cllr Ben Evans  Tom Embury <a href="mailto:Tom.embury@wmfs.net">Tom.embury@wmfs.net</a>  George Morgan <a href="mailto:George.Morgan@wmfs.net">George.Morgan@wmfs.net</a>	Chair, Audit Committee  Interim Clerk  Democratic Services Officer



**Audit and Risk Committee Minutes**  
**30 June at 10:30hrs**

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

**Present:** Councillor Evans (Chair), Councillor Barrie, Councillor Bayton, Councillor Locke.

**Virtually:** Avtar Sohar (Grant Thornton), Lisa Reid (Internal Auditors) and Satinder Sahota (Monitoring Officer).

**Officers:** Richard Stanton (ACFO), Iain Newman (Interim S151/Head of Finance and Procurement), Peter Farrow (Internal Auditors), Tom Embury (Clerk), Rebecca Yates (Finance Manager), Jennifer McGregor, Kirsty Tuffin (Democratic Services).

**Please note:** Richard Stanton, Iain Newman, Rebecca Yates and Jennifer McGregor left at 12:04pm due to a conflict of interest. Tom Embury and Internal Auditors left at 12:14pm, prior to agenda item 13.

01/25 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Councillor Idrees, substituted by Councillor Mary Locke.

02/25 **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Locke declared a non-pecuniary interest as a member of Birmingham City Council Pension Scheme and Councillor Evans declared a non-pecuniary interest as a committee member of the pension fund.

03/25 **Minutes of the Previous Audit and Risk Committee held on 24 March 2025**

Resolved:

1. It was agreed that the minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee held on 24 March 2025 are of an accurate record.

**Please note:** Councillor Ben Evans, the newly appointed Chair of the Committee read out a statement acknowledging the struggles and criticism of governance failings the committee had endured during 2024. He wished to look forward with new members and learn/improve.

#### 04/25 **Statement of Accounts 2024-25**

Iain Newman, Interim S151/Head of Finance and Procurement presented the statement of accounts 2024-25 with a visual presentation that outlined the key sections from the report.

Members were advised that the committee were looking to approve the draft version of the statement of accounts, within the required deadlines. Subject to approval, the draft document would be published on the WMFS website that day to allow for 30 working days public inspection/review. As per the Grant Thornton Audit Plan (agenda item 6), auditors would look to conduct their audit during October/ November with a view for the Committee to scrutinise the audited statement of accounts in December's meeting. The deadline for publication was 27 February 2026 and therefore the committee would have sufficient time to challenge before final sign off.

Iain Newman advised members that the team used two broad perspectives in their calculations: IFRS and Statute. IFRS was generally accepted accounting practice however, as the service was not a private industry, they were required to adhere to follow Statute that overrides IFRS and GAAP. Comparison was given on the outturn report taken to FRA the week prior, that only follows statute requirements whereas the Statement of Accounts uses both IFRS and Statute. The difference between statute and IFRS, with usable reserves reflecting statute and total reserves reflecting IFRS, was explained to members. Members were advised that there had been movement within the reserves, as per page 17 of the report, with negative total reserves (deficit) highlighted. There were also various adjustments between general and earmarked reserves.

Members were advised that the Annual Governance Statement was included within the draft Statement of Accounts. As agreed at Fire Authority, a statement on HMIC findings to be added to the Annual

Governance Statement. Tom Embury read out the following statement to be included:

Additional paragraph after 5.11

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) undertook an inspection in the autumn of 2024 and issued their final report in June 2025. The inspection assessed performance in 11 areas. The service was judged to be good in the areas of:

- understanding fire and risk;
- public safety through fire regulation;
- responding to fires and emergencies; and
- responding to major incidents.

The service was judged to be adequate in the areas of:

- preventing fire and risk;
- best use of resources;
- promoting values and culture; and
- promoting fairness and diversity.

The service was judged as requiring improvement in the areas of:

- future affordability;
- right people, right skills; and
- managing performance and developing leaders.

The identified areas for improvement will now be incorporated into service action plans.

Should any additional governance changes arise, such as development on the Best Value Inspection, these could be incorporated into the final Annual Governance Statement.

Following queries, members were reassured that a link would be circulated to members to circulate wider. Grant Thornton advised members that the 30 day period was to allow for members of the public to raise questions with themselves and would be available on the website until they had been audited and signed off. Following queries from Councillor Bayton around collection rates from local

authorities and if any additional reassurance was needed on DBS checks, Iain Newman and Tom Embury, Interim Clerk, advised that collection rates varied from year to year, with 2023-24 seeing a deficit, and that all local authorities have requirements around DBS checks, with an emphasis being given on those dealing with the vulnerable. The service was limited on what action they could do if the authorities do not uphold this. It was confirmed that the co-opted member on the FRA would be DBS checked given their current employment and any new appointments would be checked prior to appointment.

Following a query around the general reserves and whether there was a minimum level needed, Iain Newman explained that if the usable reserves likely to become negative were so low it would result in a negative Section 114 letter. There was no hard-set figure as to what the reserves should be and only comparative data from other FRAs could be considered. He would recommend that as they are lower than others, the authority look to gradually increase the reserves to the average over the upcoming years. The clerk highlighted the political pressures FRAs received in 2010 to reduce their reserves by those in central government.

Iain Newman reassured members that the service was proactive in chasing payments, following a query on page 67/84 of the report. It was highlighted that the main risk had been towards the service as the money was currently held within banks, so the service needed to ensure those banks were secure. Some areas of improvement were required, examples of ensuring Sandwell had full internal access to the services systems. This was acknowledged and talks were underway with Sandwell on how to resolve.

Following concerns raised on the public loan board high interest rates, Iain reassured members that the loans listed had been taken out many years ago and therefore the service was limited on what it could do. Some had fixed rates and others varied. Should the service pay early, a premium would be required on some loans and that may be detrimental to the services finances. Members sought assurance regarding the audit findings, as per page 126 of the agenda pack, regarding virements. Iain confirmed that this issue had not happened

again. The Corporate Governance Improvement Board would review the financial regulations and would be followed accordingly.

The Chair of the committee raised concerns around the pension liability drop referencing the table therein the report, in which Rebecca Yates confirmed that the table was correct as the % increase had the opposite effect. The Chair queried how sensitive the services funds were to the discount rate should the rate drop significantly in which Iain advised that hypothetically speaking changes could have a large impact, but they can move significantly. Statutory adjustments to the accounts mean that the service remains financially viable.

Following queries around a comms plan on McCloud/Remedy, the Clerk confirmed that the service had a comms plan in place. All FRAs had struggled however, and WMFRA are in a better position than most. All members had been communicated with by 31 March deadline. They then had 12 weeks to decide if they wish to take remedy. A small number of former retained staff (the service has no current retained staff) were impacted by Mathews. All statutory deadlines on all remedies were being met. The data on pay rates within both pensions reflected the scenario that individuals did not accept payment. Internal auditors confirmed that they would not be looking to assess Mathews and remedies unless the authority wished to have assurance, acknowledging that Wolverhampton oversees the pension fund.

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that the draft statement of accounts 24/25 as set out in appendix A be approved,
2. That members note the Annual Governance statement included within the statement of accounts and the inclusion of the HMIC findings wording.

#### 05/25 **Internal Audit – Information Governance**

Richard Stanton, ACFO, presented the internal audit – information governance report that provided assurance to the committee on information governance activities within the organisation. It was highlighted as a good news story as the service had been given a

clean report with a level of substantial assurance from the internal auditors.

Following queries around how areas of review are conducted, Peter Farrow confirmed that the auditors have a universal list of areas that could benefit from a review using a scoring method. If an area is RAG rated red then a review would be conducted. An offer of additional support to new members was offered by the Internal Auditors.

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that the contents of the report are noted.

#### 06/25 **External Auditors – Audit Plan**

Avtar Sohal, Grant Thornton, presented the external auditors – audit plan report that outlined the auditors plan for 2024-25.

Members were advised that land and buildings had been one of the main risks due to misevaluation, given its complexity as this can have material errors. Figures were £2.8m, similar to that of last year. If any errors were found over £240k an update would be given in November to members. It was highlighted that the plan was backward looking into 2024 and therefore would look at the concerns around governance. It was acknowledged that the service was moving on from this difficult time with the work of the Corporate Governance Improvement Board however, the auditors would still look at what went wrong. It was hoped the final report would be brought back to the committee in December 2025.

The Chair of the Committee queried how properties outside of the samples selected were assessed for their depreciation, in which Grant Thornton reassured the committee that other tools used as part of the process would highlight if something did not look right. The Chair queried what evidence the auditors needed from the authority to gain assurance, given the risk it faces regionally. Grant Thornton advised that it depended upon what the findings were. The auditors would speak with staff, look at procedures, external reports and changes to teams. Councillor Bayton highlighted the need for the auditor's report to be in a timely manner to ensure it can be incorporated into the work of the CGIB. Grant Thornton reassured the

committee that it was intended a draft report would be brought to Octobers/Novembers meeting.

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that the contents of the Grant Thornton Audit plan 2024-25 as set out in appendix a be noted.

## 07/25 **Internal Audit Annual report**

Peter Farrow presented the internal audit annual report for 2024-25 that outlined the audit work undertaken during 2024-25 and provided auditors opinion on the adequacy/effectiveness of governance, risk management and control processes.

Peter highlighted the table of reviews as per the report to members, with reference to the RAG rated used. The auditors had issued limited assurance for the management of absences. It was highlighted that 2024-2025 the authority had gone through a challenging time given the issues faced around governance. The auditors were unable to issue assurance around governance as a result however, the auditors acknowledged the steps the authority had taken, with the CGIB governance improvement plan and new management.

Following queries around the internal auditors review on DBS checks and whether assurance has been given, Peter reassured members that the review had been conducted early in the year, after the service asked the auditors to review. The auditors could see improvements since the review and an update would be brought back to the committee later in the year. After queries around the number of DBS checks outstanding, Richard Stanton and Tom Embury confirmed figures would be brought back to Fire Authority on a six-monthly basis, but no checks were outstanding for those in work. Richard Stanton confirmed that fortnightly meetings around absence management to improve the process was underway, following queries on the cross over with oracle and management policy. Peter Farrow advised that the temporary role for the S151 officer was only one element towards gaining assurance, highlighting this was not a reflection on the current post holder.

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that the committee review and comment upon the internal audit annual report for 2024-25.

08/25 **Update on Topical, Legal and Regulatory Issues (Verbal Report).**

Tom Embury advised members that the service was anticipating the Devolution Bill on the 10 July 2025. The bill would be relevant for both corporate risk and governance updates provided to members.

09/25 **Audit and Risk Committee Work Plan 2024-25**

Tom Embury provided an overview of the committee work plan for 2024-25, acknowledging that the meeting had been rescheduled from the original date of 16 June. Members were advised that the CGIB would be undertaking a review of the constitution and committee terms of references. It was anticipated that the TOR would be brought to the committee in July, with amendments for consideration to be brought back in October 2025. As per the plan, the recruitment assurance report, planned for July's meeting, would include grant Thorntons recommendations and provide the assurance needed to the committee. Training was also scheduled for July for committee members.

10/25 **Any other business**

The chair raised that he wished to recommend that the authority up its general reserves and set a new target of 5%. £6.2m equated to 4.5% of the budget and there was uncertainty around government grants, so he felt it appropriate. The Clerk confirmed that as this was covered under AOB, this could only be for discussion, and no decision could be made as it was the remit of Full Fire Authority. Iain Newman reassured the Chair that the Authority had set an indicative budget to get the reserves to £7m, up by £1m.

11/25 **Exclusion to 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 Paragraph 3 of the Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006."*

**Please note** it was agreed that a short comfort adjournment be taken. The meeting reconvened at 12noon.

12/25 **Workshop for Statement of Accounts**

**Please note:** Private minutes of this session have been created and are exempt under Paragraph 3 of the Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.

13/25 **Private session with External Auditors**

**Please note:** Private minutes of this session have been created and are exempt under paragraph 3 of the Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.



**Audit and Risk Committee Minutes**  
**21 July at 10:30hrs**

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

**Present:** Councillor Evans (Chair), Councillor Barrie, Councillor Bayton, Councillor Idrees,

**Virtually:** Peter Farrow (Internal Auditors)

**Officers:** Tom Embury (Interim Clerk), Simon Barry (DCFO), Iain Newman (Interim S151/Head of Finance and Procurement), Rebecca Yates (Deputy S151), Marc Hudson (Head of Development), Mr David Page, Kirsty Tuffin (Democratic Services Officer).

Please note: It was agreed that agenda item 7 be moved to agenda item 3.

01/25 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Councillor Haq and Richard Stanton (ACFO), substituted by Simon Barry (DCFO).

02/25 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest registered.

03/25 **Appointment of Independent Member for Audit and Risk Committee**

Tom Embury, Interim Clerk, informed members that following delegation from the Authority on 23 June, the Committee were asked to approve the appointment of the Independent Member, Mr David Page, following a recommendation from the Interim Clerk and Interim S151/Head of Finance and Procurement.

A thorough recruitment process had been conducted that saw the applicant process be extended to assist with the number of applications. All details around the interview were included within the report for members information. Following queries around recommendation 2.2, Tom Embury advised members that the

Authority had approved the desire for two independent members and as part of the Corporate Governance Improvement Plan it was intended to review the set up of independent members and Co-Optee to the authority, and therefore appropriate to attempt to recruit a second Independent Member.

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that the appointment of Mr David Page to a four-year term as Independent Member of West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority Audit and Risk Committee be approved.
2. That it be agreed that the committee recommend to the Fire And Rescue Fire Authority to consider recruitment of an additional independent member in the near future, as part of expected changes to the use of independent and external expertise on the Authority as part of the implementation of the agreed Governance Improvement Plan, be approved.

#### 04/25 **Audit and Risk Committee – Review of Terms of Reference**

Tom Embury provided an overview of the Audit and Risk Committee – Review of Terms of Reference (TOR) report that opened up the opportunity for members of the committee to provide input ahead of a comprehensive review expected as part of the improvement plan, agreed at Fire Authority on 16 June 2025.

Members were advised that this was the first step in the review process and although TORs were determined by the Authority, it would not be the last touch point with the committee. Any feedback provided by the committee would be taken to Fire Authority in September 2025, with the intention to take a revised version back in November for approval.

Following queries, Tom Embury advised members that there had been a variety of different TORs used across different organisations. It was clear that the core elements around finance, Statement of Accounts and auditors work was similar however, others incorporated their scrutiny functions within the committees. The internal Auditors confirmed that most TORs followed the CIPFA Model, and the authorities TOR covered the core elements. They felt it would be ideal to do some comparison work of other FRS, in which

Tom Embury confirmed that the Corporate Governance Improvement Board were seeking views of governance models within 5 different organisations and could incorporate the Audit function within this. It was confirmed that the 5 organisations were: Merseyside, Kent, Cambridge, West Yorkshire

Following queries, it was agreed that the Audit charter would be added to the work plan, and reassurance was given that it was being looked into how to ensure the authority oversees the governance statement in draft prior to its approval at the Annual General Meeting. It was highlighted that the term public sector audit standards needed to be updated to reflect the title change.

Tom Embury advised members that any additional feedback on the TOR could be submitted to him prior to the September meeting.

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that feedback be provided by members on potential changes or additions to be made to the current Terms of Reference.
2. That it be agreed that the content of the CIPFA position statement on Audit Committees and the LGA “Ten Questions for Audit Committees” in developing their views, be noted.

#### 05/25 **Corporate Risk Report Q1 2025**

Tom Embury, on behalf of Kelly Whitmore, presented the Corporate Risk Report that outlined all aspects relating to the management of the authority's corporate risks covering quarter 1 for 2025.

Members were advised that the authority had approved a new approach to the corporate risks in December 2024, with reports moving from 6 monthly to quarterly. Reports would look to highlight red rated risks, or risks that have increased, with the full risk register included as an additional appendix. As per the report, corporate risk 1892, relating to statutory assurance, was now closed given its similarities covered in other risks. Clinical risk had now been split into two as it was felt the mitigations were separate.

Following queries from the independent member and members on airwave virgin ISDS, Simon Barry confirmed that this was a result of

command/control and equipment that was covered by airwave, and the service was working to replace them. The approach was being taken proportionately ahead of January 2026, following slippage that has resulted in the deadline change from the previous November 2025. The specific connection to airwave and ISDN, would be brought back to the committee alongside the date of communications move to vibrate.

Simon Barry confirmed that risk 1872 regarding policy changes on driving/swimming requirements, was a new risk following the change having an adverse impact on BAME and female applicants. Figures would be provided on the total number. The service was looking at how to resolve this impact and looking at best practice at other fire services. The requirement had not previously been required which required the service to rely on volunteers however, due to the numbers required, there was not enough volunteers to meet the need. Marc Hudson confirmed that the service was looking at whether the requirement to swim and drive, could be extended given that successful applicants would undergo a 2-year probationary period before officially signing on. Simon Barry confirmed options were being considered but the financial cost would also need to be considered.

Tom Embury read the following statement on behalf of Kelly Harding, regarding the escalation of risk;

“The DoP commissioned a review into volunteering practices, from a lens of ensuring that our policies and practices are sound but also through a lens of understanding our volunteer experience. The review, which has recently concluded, showed that we have more to do to strengthen the volunteer experience so that volunteers feel appreciated and recognised but also that our policies and practices do not align with those of our employees; for example there is no progression pathway from volunteering to paid employment, we do not offer wellbeing support as effectively and frequently to our volunteers as we do to employees, and there is some confusion amongst volunteer managers of how to address low level behavioural concerns.

“Therefore, following the review being concluded and presented to the Senior Leadership team, it has been agreed that recommendation and action tracking will now sit in a volunteer governance group – reporting into the people and culture board. Until we have fully assured ourselves that progress is being made against all of the actions, then the risk will remain slightly higher than it has previously. However, we fully expect this risk to be accepted, and eventually mitigated, once we have drafted the review into an action tracker, of which the meeting is taking place over the next 2 weeks. Following queries around the vast changes in risks, with reference to risk on carbon neutral and risk 1861 media coverage, Simon Barry confirmed that as the Senior Leadership Team were attempting to provide more detail, some risks including the medica coverage 1861, had previously been underscored at 3 and had therefore been raised to 9. As the new approach to reports continue, changes in risk ratings would be more meaningful as the new figures are determined. An update on carbon neutral risk would be brought back to the committee.”

Tom Embury read the following statement regarding absence risk:

“The prominent issue with this risk is that, due to current system limitations, we are unable to assure ourselves that absence data is accurate. We have awareness of absence data on a day to day basis from an operational perspective and this is managed effectively within the operational command structure. However, in terms of the service being able to identify trends, understand absence levels month on month, this is not possible. We have set up a governance group to address two key points: that our systems need to be able to manage and present the data that is required to have adequate strategic oversight, and b) that the strategic leadership team can assure itself that absence in being managed in line with the policy. This latter point is something that we are making good progress in with all operational sickness having been audited with non-operational employee audits taking place over the coming weeks.”

Simon Barry reassured members that absence codes covered mental health. The key was balancing applying the policy alongside being a caring employer to its employees. Following queries around

the risk to operation absence figures, Simon Barry confirmed the service had performance data, with the service being acutely aware when issues arise as staffing was arranged on a daily basis. The ridership programme was utilised to cover any backfill needed by overtime opportunities for staff. Pre covid the data was an average of 15 absences, during covid this increased to 23, with it now sitting at 21. The service was looking at how the figure could be improved, and if it could not be, then what steps would be needed to resolve the gap moving forward. Members expressed high numbers of absence as a result of mental health was not bad with acknowledgement of the difficult job firefighters do being given. It was felt positive that people felt comfortable to address their mental health struggles.

Following queries on Oracle, it was agreed that an update be provided specifically covering IT elements, including cyber security, at the next meeting. Tom Embury advised members that risks on the governance move/devolution bill had been based upon the likelihood. Meeting with the West Midlands Combined Authority and HMCLG were underway, with hopes to meet with the Mayor later in the year. The Chair of the Authority confirmed that although it was not in law yet and changes could be made, there was risk associated with such a move and the uncertainty. A working group had been established and relationship building with the mayor was underway.

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that the areas of note and discussion as highlighted below with full detail in the Corporate Risk Assurance Report in Appendix A, be noted.
2. That it be agreed that closure of two risks and the introduction of a new risk as set out below, be noted:
  - a. Close Corporate Risk relating to Statutory Assurance R-1892, as through our monitoring it was determined that the themes covered within this risk and mitigation are captured within other existing Corporate Risks.
  - b. The segregation of Clinical Governance and Health, Safety and Wellbeing of staff into two separate risks. This has seen the introduction of Clinical Governance (R-1883) and the revision of

Health Safety and Wellbeing (R-1874) to remove reference of clinical governance.

3. That it be agreed that comment be provided on the corporate risks as presented in the Assurance Report in Appendix A.
4. That it be agreed that update on carbon neutral risk would be brought back to the committee.
5. That it be agreed that an update be provided specifically covering IT elements at the next meeting.

06/25 **Annual Treasury Management Review 2024-25**

Iain Newman, Interim S151/Head of Finance and Procurement, provided an overview of the Annual Treasury Management Review Report 2024-25 that outlines the actual activity to the planned strategy agreed by members during budget setting. The report covered both the borrowing and cash flow activity up to March 2025.

Members were advised that questions had been received in advance of the meeting from the newly appointed Independent Member that he would look to address. The queries covered a range of different areas including the underspend, investment portfolio and reliance on PWLB. It was confirmed that the underspend had been a result of the delay in vehicle replacements and other smaller elements, with reference made to the review of BRV. Tender had now been issued for the BRV+ that would look to replace the BRV fleet, as well as up to 11 PRLs and 2 tech rescue PRLs. Spending forecast would be revised in line with an updated timeline. Reserves had not been used as much as planned and borrowing had not increased. Iain Newman directed members to the table and page 14 of the report, that covered investment portfolio and investment movement, confirming that the increase had mainly been the result of movement of £3.4m in short term investments. It was confirmed that the last loan from PWLB had been 10 July 2008. The Interim Section 151 Officer indicated that it may be possible to make early repayment of around £15m of PWLB loans that could save the authority around £200,000 per year and would not prevent any planned delivery. Following queries on early payment penalties, members were advised that some loans do incur a penalty, whereas other provide discount to

pay off early, with calculations showing a potential saving from early payment of a number of PWLB loans. An update would be provided at the next Audit and Risk Committee meeting in October.

Following queries on the 2.74m receipts outlined on page 5 of the report, Rebecca Yates confirmed that properties and vehicles had been sold resulting in this figure. It was agreed that a breakdown of the capital receipts would be circulated to members. Iain Newman reassured members that there was no impact on measure of reserves and there was no threat to liquidity as they were based upon investments, following queries on the risk of reducing reserves.

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that the Annual Treasury Management Review 2024/25 as set out in Appendix A be approved.
2. That it be agreed that a breakdown of the capital receipts would be circulated to members.

#### 07/25 **Recruitment Assurance**

Tom Embury advised the Committee that this report was being provided to members following the concerns raised by Grant Thorntons in November 2024 around the recruitment processes. The aim of the report was to provide final assurance to the committee, following regular reports being presented at previous committee meetings.

Marc Hudson, Head of Development, provided an overview of the recruitment assurance report that outlined the steps taken to address the recommendations within Grant Thornton's Value for Money report. a review had been conducted on all relevant policies, with an addition to management policy around appointments of principle officers. Policies now included a new starter checklist for all applicants. During an organisation review of the DBS checks, gaps were found around internal progression and the DBS level required. It was confirmed that these gaps had now closed. DBS reports would continue to be reported to the Scrutiny Committee, as per their terms of reference. Previously, secondees employment checks were done by their relevant organisation however, with changes being

introduced HR would now be responsible for conducting checks on behalf of the service.

It was agreed that figures would be shared on staff overall turnover to the independent member, but it was confirmed by the DCFO in terms of Firefighters, the turnover would typically be around 70 usually as a result of retirement. Following queries around Recommendation 2 and the establishment of new roles, Tom Embury advised members that the changes would be relevant for where a role is new or looking to be created above £100k. It was agreed that relevant policies would be shared with the committee, following queries for a breakdown of different levels of DBS checks required for different roles. It was confirmed that DBS checks and transfer processes relevant to roles above £100k at all levels required Authority approval. The Service was responsible for the cost associated with the DBS checks.

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that the actions taken by the Service following the external auditor's report in relation to Recruitment, be noted.
2. That it be agreed that figures would be shared on staff overall turnover to the independent member
3. That it be agreed that relevant policies would be shared with the committee.

#### 08/25 **Audit and Risk Committee Work Plan 2025-26**

Tom Embury provided an overview of the committee work plan, reassuring members that all items agreed today would be included ahead of the next meeting, including the Annual Governance statement Mid-Year and the Audit Charter. It was highlighted that due to the June meeting being moved from the 16<sup>th</sup> of June to the 30<sup>th</sup>, it had not been possible to include the minutes from the last meeting on today's agenda pack and therefore would be included in the next meeting in October. Two items deferred, as per the work plan, were deferred following requests from the Monitoring officer and Grant Thornton and would be brought to a future meeting.

Peter Farrow confirmed that a progress update report would be brought to the committee in October from the Internal Auditors.

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that the Audit and Risk Committee work plan 2025-26 be noted.

09/25 **Update on Topical, Legal and Regulatory Issues (Verbal Report).**

There were no topical, legal and regulatory updates.

10/25 **Any other business**

No other business was raised.

The meeting concluded at 12:15pm.

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**WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY  
FIRE AUTHORITY  
WORK PROGRAMME 2025/26**

<b>Date of Meeting</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Responsible Officer</b>	<b>Completed</b>
<b>2025</b>			
29 September 2025	CFO/Chair Announcements	CFO/Chair	
	Public Questions [Maximum 20 minutes]	Interim Clerk	
	Minutes of the previous Fire Authority held on 16 June 2025 and 23 June 2025	Democratic Services Officer	
	Draft Fire Authority Work Plan 25/26	Democratic Services Officer	
	Corporate Governance Improvement Board Update	Independent Chair	
	Governance Improvement Scoping Papers for Discussion in line with agreed Governance Improvement Plan	Interim Clerk	
	Best Value Inspection	Chief Fire Officer	
	Coroner's Regulation 28 Letter	Interim Director of People	
	Pension Update	Scheme Manager (Chief Fire Officer)	

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	Service Delivery Model – Consultation	Chief Fire Officer/Will Doolan	
	Consultation Policy	Interim Clerk	
	Reappointment of Interim Clerk	Head of Strategy	
	SAW – Review	Head of Prevention	Withdrawn – updated at MEF
	Planned Procurement	Head of Procurement	
	Contract Awards	Head of Procurement	
	Finances Update	Head of Finance/ Procurement	
	Update Report from Audit and Risk Committee [to include consideration of TOR]	Interim Clerk/Chair of A&R	
	Update Report from Scrutiny Committee [to include consideration of TOR]	Interim Clerk/Chair of Scrutiny	
	Update report of Appointment, Standards and Appeals Committee [To include consideration of TOR]	Interim Clerk/Chair of ASAC	
	Brigade Manager Contracts [Private Item]	Interim Director of People	
24 November 2025	CFO/Chair Announcements	CFO/Chair	
	Public Questions [Maximum 20 minutes]	Interim Clerk	
	Corporate Governance Improvement Board Update	Chair of CGIB	

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	Governance Improvement Scoping Papers for Discussion in line with agreed Governance Improvement Plan [3 Reports – Executive Committee, Independent Chair/Co-Optees and Member Role Description, Strategic Core Tasks and Report format]	Interim Clerk/MO	
	Constitution Update in line with Governance Improvement Plan	Monitoring Officer and Interim Clerk	Verbal update – Chairs Announcements
	Statement of Assurance 2024/25	Chief Fire Officer/Chair of Authority	Deferred for consideration by A&R
	Member Officer Protocol Update	Interim Clerk/Monitoring Officer	Deferred
	Best Value Inspection Update	Chief Fire Officer	
	Analysis of Quarterly Performance Q1 and Q2 2025/26	Chief Fire Officer	
	Member Development Strategy	Interim Clerk	
	Finance Update	Interim Head of Finance/S151	
	Planned Procurement [Private]	Interim Head of Finance/S151	
	Appointment of S151 Officer	Interim Clerk/CFO	
	Member Allowance Review – Terms of Reference	Interim Clerk	

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	Membership of the Authority and Committees	DSO	
	Update Report from Audit and Risk Committee	Interim Clerk/Chair of A&R	
	Update Report from Scrutiny Committee	Interim Clerk/Chair of Scrutiny	
	Update Report from Appointments, Standards and Appeals Committee	DSO/Chair of ASAC	
	Conviction Notice		
	CRMP Consultation	CFO	
16 February 2026	CFO/Chair Announcements	CFO/Chair	
	Public Questions [Maximum 20 minutes]	Interim Clerk	
	Corporate Governance Improvement Board Update	Chair of CGIB	
	Budget / Precept	Interim Head of Finance/S151	
	Best Value Inspection Update	CFO	
	Constitution Update	Monitoring Officer and Interim Clerk	
	Update Report from Audit and Risk Committee	Interim Clerk/Chair of A&R	

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	Update Report from Scrutiny Committee	Interim Clerk/Chair of Scrutiny	
13 April 2026	CFO/Chair Announcements	CFO/Chair	
	Public Questions [Maximum 20 minutes]	Interim Clerk	
	Pension Update	CFO (Scheme Manager)	
	Best Value Inspection Update	CFO	
	Corporate Governance Improvement Board Update	Chair of CGIB	
	Update Report from Audit and Risk Committee	Interim Clerk/Chair of A&R	
	Update Report from Scrutiny Committee	Interim Clerk/Chair of Scrutiny	
29 June 2026	CFO/Chair Announcements	CFO/Chair	
	Public Questions [Maximum 20 minutes]	Interim Clerk	
	Corporate Governance Improvement Board Update	Chair of CGIB	
	Update Report from Audit and Risk Committee	Interim Clerk/Chair of A&R	
	Update Report from Scrutiny Committee	Interim Clerk/Chair of Scrutiny	

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