



WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

Monday, 14 December 2020 at 11:00

To be held digitally via Microsoft Teams

Distribution of Councillors	
<u>Birmingham</u>	D Barrie Z Iqbal K Jenkins S Spence
<u>Coventry</u>	C Miks S Walsh
<u>Dudley</u>	N Barlow P Miller
<u>Sandwell</u>	J Edwards M Singh Gill
<u>Solihull</u>	P Hogarth MBE
<u>Walsall</u>	S J Cooper A Young
<u>Wolverhampton</u>	G Brackenridge J Dehar
<u>Police & Crime Commissioner Representative</u>	Gurinder Singh Josan CBE
<u>Co-opted Members</u>	Professor S Brake S Middleton
<u>Independent Member</u>	Mr M Ager
<u>Observers</u>	Maurice Carter, UNISON
	Kevin Rowsell, Fire Officer's Association
	Steve Price-Hunt, Fire Brigades Union

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, 14 December 2020 at 11:00

at Digital meeting,

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's announcements
- 5 Minutes of the Fire and Rescue Authority held on 5 October 2020 5 - 22
- 6 Review of the Constitution 23 - 26
- 7 Monitoring of Finances 27 - 32
- 8 Analysis of Progress of Quarterly Performance Against The Plan Qtr 2 2020-21 33 - 52
- 9 Minutes of the Appointments, Standards and Appeals Committee held on 21 September 2020 53 - 54
- 10 Minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee held on 26 October 2020 55 - 62

Agenda prepared by Stephen Timmington

Strategic Hub, West Midlands Fire Service

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

This meeting of the West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority will be held digitally via Microsoft Teams. To access the meeting, please contact a member of the Strategic Hub, West Midlands Fire Service, who will be able to provide login details (please note that Microsoft Teams is not required to join a meeting).

Clerk Name: Karen Gowreesunker

Clerk Telephone: 0121 380 6678

Clerk Email: Karen.Gowreesunker@wmfs.net

West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority

5 October 2020 at 1100 hours

held digitally via Microsoft Teams

Present: Councillor Brackenridge (Chair)

Councillor Iqbal (Vice Chair)

Councillors Barrie, Barlow, Dehar, Edwards, Gill, Hogarth, Jenkins, Miller, Miks, Spence, Young and Walsh

Mr G Singh Josan (Representative of the Police and Crime Commissioner)

Professor S Brake, co-opted member – health

Mr M Ager, Independent Member

Maurice Carter (Unison), Steve Price Hunt (Fire Brigade's Union), and Kevin Rowsell (Fire Officers' Association).

23/20 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillor Cooper, and S Middleton, co-opted member – business.

24/20 Declarations of Interest

The Chair and Councillor Edwards declared a personal non-pecuniary interest in; item 11 Statement of Accounts, item 12 Consultation on Removing Age Discrimination from Public Pensions and item 13 Monitoring of Finances, due to being members of the Firefighters Pension Scheme(s). Councillor Barlow and Professor S Brake declared a personal non-pecuniary interest

in; item 11 Statement of Accounts, item 12 Consultation on Removing Age Discrimination from Public Pensions, and item 13 Monitoring of Finances, due to being members of the Local Government Pension Scheme.

25/20 Chairs Announcements

The Chair welcomed all attendees to the meeting, the first meeting of the full Fire Authority held digitally.

The Chair had undertaken an interview with Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) as part of the recent Covid 19 related inspection.

The representative bodies were thanked for their involvement in enabling the tri-partite agreement allowing the undertaking of additional activities.

It was noted that the Service worked with all stakeholders in delivering additional activities related workstreams.

The earlier investment in the Service's digital capability had paid dividends enabling the move to different ways of working as a result of the continuing pandemic.

It was noted that in a recent forum with the Fire Minister, topics discussed had included Grenfell, funding, pensions and pay.

The latest successful group of firefighter recruits would be welcomed by the Chair at their pass out parade.

26/20 Chief Fire Officer's Announcements

The Chief Fire Officer welcomed all attendees to the meeting.

The HMICFRS had commended the Service's approach to staff engagement during the inspection. The HMICFRS had not identified any immediate areas of concern but would raise a couple of areas for further consideration, for example business continuity.

The United Kingdom had returned to level four of the Government alerting system. The Chief Fire Officer would discuss with the

Chair the return to statutory meetings and additionally, how to return to normal.

It was noted that the Service was following the Manchester Arena Inquiry and its outcomes.

The Service had taken on the latest group of recruits in light of Covid 19. This was thanks to the combined efforts of Organisational Learning and People Development, People Support Services and the Scientific Cell to enable this to happen.

A Member stated that the performance of staff over the last six months in terms of absence rates, the service provided, and ensuring safety etc. was astonishing. The behaviour of firefighters, back office staff and technical advisors was highly efficient and productive. The Member thanked the Chief Fire Officer and all staff.

The Chair noted that he could not agree more with the views of the Member. Officers had monitored the situation closely and had maintained Briefings with Members.

The Chief Fire Officer noted that it was very much a joint effort between managers, staff, representative bodies and stakeholders to ensure the resilience of core services and to enable support to Covid 19 related activities. The Chief Fire Officer thanked all staff and stakeholders.

27/20 Minutes of the Fire and Rescue Authority 17 February 2020

Resolved that the minutes of the Fire Authority meeting held on 17 February 2020 be confirmed as a correct record.

28/20 Portfolio Management (3PT)

The report provided a strategic summary on the progress of delivery through 'Our Plan' based on the continual assessment of investment and value release within the three programmes of People, Process and Culture enabling progression of the Portfolio Management to be tracked.

The Chief Fire Officer noted that the report covered the forums set up to maintain work during the pandemic, enabling the Service to undertake core services and to support other organisations.

In answer to Members' questions, the following points were raised:

- The Service had evaluated what actions it undertook when the country was in level four of the Government alerting system. The subsequent findings would be taken into account as the country went back into level four of the alerting system.
- The Service was ensuring that guidance remained fit for purpose whilst maintaining that there was no complete lockdown this time and therefore, a higher level of fire service activity being undertaken as the retail and leisure sectors remained open. The workloads of Fire Safety Officers had increased, for example one-way systems applied at some retail premises didn't always comply with fire safety regulations and guidance was required. Fire Safety Officers had to visit sites where they utilised infection, prevention, control; non-personal protective equipment (social distancing, etc) was the first level of protection, scaling up to full personal protective equipment where required.
- With current levels of fire service activity higher than when previously in level four, it was important to ensure expectations were managed tying in with the tripartite agreement and the undertaking of additional activities.
- There were proposals to increase the frequency of engaging with and updating of Members using an increased schedule of Policy Planning Forums etc.
- Prevention work would continue whilst at level four, continuing to engage with the most vulnerable in our communities. Engagement would be via digital where possible, or in person where required.
- In aligning the business continuity plan to a BRAG (blue, red, amber, green) risk rating and agreeing the measures that would need to be taken at each rating, the Service had a

high degree of confidence in being able to manage the pandemic situation and to determine how the Service was performing. The rationale was applied across all external activities and to some internal activities such as training and exercises.

Resolved

The Authority noted the report on Portfolio Management (3PT).

29/20 Integrated Risk Management Plan Consultation

The report provided an overview of the engagement strategy for the consultation of the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) in October 2020 and the themes and questions to be consulted upon.

Under the National Fire and Rescue Framework, the Service had committed to consult on the IRMP every three years, or where there was a material change to the risk assessment.

It was proposed that the consultation would run from 7 October until 16 December 2020. The outcomes of the consultation would have a direct impact on the development of 'Our Plan'. Consideration had been given to the strategic planning timelines, in developing and presenting 'Our Plan' to the Authority.

The engagement strategy included the Service's intention to make the consultation as accessible as possible to respondents by utilising as many platforms that were available, whilst also ensuring that staff were kept as safe as possible during this pandemic.

To enable as much of a representative response as is possible from our diverse communities, partners and businesses, it was hoped that a wide range of views and opinions would be collected, via a variety of engagement proposals (as per section 5.3 of the report).

It was noted that the Community Safety Strategy tool was available and would allow the Service to target social media followers /

friends both at a corporate and team or station-based account. It would also allow users to explore the IRMP.

Further information on the proposals and intended approach to the consultation were provided within the appendices to the report.

Resolved

That the Authority noted the report on the IRMP consultation.

30/20 Review of Constitution – Roles and Responsibilities and Decision Making

The report was submitted to Members to provide an overview and rationale for the proposed changes to the Constitution.

Following recommendations from the Independent Cultural Review of the Service (by RealWorldHR), the HMICFRS State of Fire report, and developing definitions from the Local Government Association (LGA) Leading Fire report, as well as National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) sector progression recommendations (Fit for the Future), the report focussed on the clarification of roles and responsibilities of the Fire Authority as the governing body and of the roles and responsibilities of the Chief Fire Officer and Officers.

Definitions regarding decision making were set out within the report and proposed for inclusion within the Constitution. Decisions were defined as:

- Political decisions
- Governance decisions
- Operational decisions

The definitions were explained in detail within section 3.5 of the report.

Proposals for pre scrutiny and post scrutiny were detailed within the report, aligned to the role of the Fire Authority and the Chief Fire Officer (section 3.6 of the report)

The proposed changes / amendments to the Constitution would be made and would reflect in changes to a number of articles. The

detailed changes were set out in Appendix 1 and were summarised within section 3.7.3 of the report.

A Member queried the proposed changes regarding the process of appointing the posts of Deputy Chief Fire Officer and Assistant Chief Fire Officer.

The Member requested that the wording around the appointment process, including the supporting notes, be amended to reflect a number of concerns. For example, the Member acknowledged the need for any candidate to have a 'team fit' in with the Strategic Enabling Team but that there was also the need for any candidate to have the same with the Members.

The Member stated that they did not feel that the Appointments Committee would be comfortable with the recommendation of one candidate. It was accepted that it was the role of the Chief Fire Officer to ensure recommended candidates met the required professional and technical competencies but it was the role of the Committee to lead on the appointment, appointing from a list of recommended and suitable candidates. However, it was felt that the Authority could be uncomfortable with recruiting where just one candidate had been put forward and therefore the process could need to be rerun.

It was also noted that the informal meeting with candidates was very beneficial for Members.

In answer to Members' questions, the following points were raised:

- The last appointment process that had been undertaken (the appointment of the Deputy Chief Fire Officer) had been reviewed. The review recognised that the process was an Officer led process up to the Appointments Committee.
- The Chief Fire Officer would recommend candidates in line with technical competencies and professional expertise. Use of the term 'lead' was part of discussions between the Chair, Chief Fire Officer, and Statutory Officers. The Chief Fire Officer would lead and present the candidate(s) at the Appointments Committee.

- It was noted that in appointing a Deputy Chief Fire Officer or an Assistant Chief Fire Officer, the person had to be operationally competent and this had to be confirmed by the Chief Fire Officer and other Officers, not the Authority. Additionally, it was important that a candidate not only met the technical and professional criteria but also fitted in with the management team of the Service.
- Clarification was required as to the role of the Appointments Committee. The role of the committee was to appoint a person from a list of CFO recommended candidates. It was possible that only one candidate could be put forward to the committee. It was acknowledged that under such circumstances, the Authority may not be comfortable having just the one candidate and could request the process to be run again if they felt it was required, to broaden the scope of candidates.

Considering the discussion, it was agreed that the wording of the supporting notes to this section of the constitution could be amended, to reflect the views expressed by Members and amended wording would be presented at the next Policy Planning Forum for Members' consideration, before resubmission to the Authority at the December meeting.

Resolved

That Members approved the proposed amendments to the Fire Authority Constitution as set out in section 3.6 and Appendix's 1 to 7, except for the specific points raised by Cllr Edwards and seconded by Cllr Spence regarding the supporting notes for the appointments process.

That Members approved that the Clerk make any further consequential amendments to the Constitution in consultation with the Chair, Vice-Chair and opposition leader.

That Members noted the further development required to consider the role definitions for statutory officers and article and terms of reference for the Scrutiny Committee.

31/20 **Programme of Meetings 2020/21**

The Authority received a report for the Authority to approve the Programme of Meetings for 2020/21.

The Service had implemented its business continuity plans on 18 March 2020 in response to the then emerging Covid 19 Pandemic. A Major Emergency was announced for the region on 20 March and lockdown measures were announced on 21 March. Following these announcements, the Chair, Chief Fire Officer and Clerk to the Authority reviewed the approach to the operation of Authority business. This resulted in the postponement of all Authority meetings and the Service's 3PT programme, the instigation of matters of urgency delegations for the Chief Fire Officer, and the implementation of a regular Chief Fire Officer briefing to Members which were held digitally.

A proposed programme of meetings was outlined within the appendix for approval. The programme of meetings had been revised and the frequency of meetings refined to further enable the continued level of governance in an efficient and effective manner. The proposed programme of meetings included the introduction of monthly Policy Planning Forums aligned to the successful approach of the regular Covid 19 briefings, quarterly meetings of the full Authority, the reduction of Audit and Risk Committee meetings from six to five, the reduction of Scrutiny Committee meetings to a quarterly basis, and a reduction to three meetings of the Collaboration and Transformation Committee.

It was noted that the digital approach to meetings would continue and would be reviewed and developed going forward.

In answer to Members' questions, the following points were raised:

- The quarterly meetings of the Scrutiny Committee would focus on the normal business of the committee. Any urgent matters raised for the committee to consider would be dealt with via the scheduling of additional meetings. This approach would form part of the development of the committee's work programme.

Resolved

That the revised frequency of the Fire Authority and committee meetings were approved.

That the programme of meetings for 2020/2021 were approved.

32/20 Audit Findings Report 2019/2020

The Authority received a report to note the content of the Audit Findings Report.

R Percival of Grant Thornton provided an overview of the report.

The audit was substantially complete. The headlines summarised the key findings and other matters arising from the audit and the preparation of the Authority's financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2020. The headlines covered areas including Covid 19, financial statements, value for money arrangements and statutory duties. The report went on to cover the audit approach and the approach to materiality.

Significant audit risks were identified as follows; Covid 19, ISA240 revenue risk, management override of controls, valuation of land and buildings, and the valuation of the pension fund net liability Firefighter and Local Government Pension Scheme.

The report highlighted the risk regarding valuation uncertainty and the pension liability which would be impacted upon by the McCloud judgement.

It was noted that there were no impact upon the Authority's reserves. Additionally, the West Midlands Pension Fund audit was currently in progress and therefore, no assurance had been received yet.

It was noted the value for money audit examined financial sustainability and although the audit was satisfied that appropriate measures were in place, it was felt there was limited scope for further use of General Reserves. Additionally, there was uncertainty regarding funding going forward, delays to local

government funding changes and the forthcoming Comprehensive Spending Review.

It was noted that there were no issues arising as a result of the audit.

R Percival thanked the finance team for their support.

In answer to Members' questions, the following points were raised:

- Valuation of land and property was the role of the professional valuer, it was the auditor's role to challenge. It was difficult to determine how certain valuations could be assessed at March 2021 because the impact of the Covid 19 pandemic on property prices had not been quite seen yet.

Resolved

The Audit Findings Report was noted.

33/20 Statement of Accounts 2019/2020

The Authority received a report regarding the approval of the Statement of Accounts 2019/2020 and to note the Summary of Accounts for 2019/20.

M Griffiths, Treasurer and Strategic Enabler of Finance and Resources, provided an overview of the report.

The Audit and Risk Committee approved the unaudited Statement of Accounts for 2019/20 at its meeting on 27 July 2020. It was noted that some modest changes had been made to the statement since then.

An overview of the Balances Sheet was provided. It was noted that property and vehicles were the highest value item within the accounts.

The statement went on to provide detail of the Authority's current assets and current liabilities, including long term borrowing. It was noted that a proportion of debt had been paid off and no new borrowing had been undertaken during the year. It was indicated

that the same would happen in the current year. Other long-term liabilities were mainly related to how pensions were reported.

The usable reserves were noted which included general reserves. Reductions reported were within the anticipated amounts. It was noted that there was a need to monitor the reserves and that this funding could not be used indefinitely.

In answer to Members' questions, the following points were raised:

- A Member asked if short-term borrowing had increased. It was noted that short-term borrowing could change day to day and that the balance sheet was a snapshot taken on 31 March. Short-term borrowing at that date indicated an increase but cash equivalents also showed a broadly equivalent level of increase.

Resolved

That the Statement of Accounts 2019/20 were approved and the Summary of Accounts for 2019/20 were noted.

34/20 Response to the Government Consultation on Removing Age Discrimination from Public Sector Pension Schemes

The Authority received a report regarding the approval of the response to the Government Consultation on 'Changes to the transitional arrangements to the 2015 schemes'.

M Griffiths, Treasurer and Strategic Enabler of Finance and Resources, provided an overview of the report.

The Government had introduced new Pension Schemes in 2015 as a result of the Hutton Report into Public Service Pensions. As part of the introduction of these schemes, protection was offered to some existing members under transitional arrangements. Following the introduction of the new schemes, Unions representing Judges and Firefighters took Court action against the Government claiming that the transitional arrangements were discriminatory on grounds of age. In December 2018 the Court of Appeal ruled in favour of the Unions.

In July 2020, the Government published a Consultation on their proposals for removing the discrimination from all Public Sector Pension Schemes.

It was noted that the draft answers were provided in the report and that the answers were closely linked to the position of the Firefighters' Pension Scheme Advisory Board.

A significant response to the Consultation was expected from across the sector and elsewhere.

Resolved

That the response to the Government Consultation on 'Changes to the transitional arrangements to the 2015 Schemes' was approved.

35/20 Monitoring of Finances

The Authority received a report on the monitoring of finances.

M Griffiths, Treasurer and Strategic Enabler of Finance and Resources, provided an overview of the report.

The report dealt with the monitoring of the finances of the Authority in the current financial year and covered revenue expenditure and the Capital Programme. Expenditure was compared with a profile of the Authority's budget.

The Authority's 2020/21 Council Tax requirement was £44.485 million and the revenue budget was £100.147 million.

Appendix A compared the revenue budgeted to the end of August 2020 with the actuals to that date. Appendix B provided statistical data relating to the Firefighters' Pension Scheme. Appendix C provided an analysis of the Authority's approved capital programme for 2020/21.

It was noted that command delivery and workforce comprised a large portion of the overall budget. This reflected the bigger impact on frontline stations ensuring availability of appliances and the use of resilience shifts from officers from across the Service. A higher

number of resilience shifts early in the year could result in potentially less resilience shifts available as the year continued. . Business as normal had been suspended to focus on responding to the pandemic, resulting in budget underspends in some areas.

The statistical data regarding the Firefighters' Pension Scheme was in line with expectations for the time of the year.

The main forecast variance within the capital programme related to the Vehicle Replacement Programme and the delayed purchase of a number of vehicles, predominantly as a result of the pandemic. Additionally, the planned replacement of windows and doors at seven stations had been re-phased to 2021/22 due to supplier lockdown during the pandemic.

Resolved

That the report on the monitoring of finances was noted.

36/20 Contract Awards Summary for Period to 30 September 2020

The Authority received the Contract Awards Summary report.

M Griffiths, Treasurer and Strategic Enabler of Finance and Resources, provided an overview of the report.

In accordance with the Authority's procurement arrangements a retrospective twice yearly report of tender contract awards in excess of £250,000 was submitted to the Authority for information purposes. This report covered the period April to September 2020.

The only contract reported related to Pump Rescue Ladder (PRL) appliances.

Resolved

That the Authority noted the report of the contract awards summary for the period to 30 September 2020.

37/20 Result of Recent Fire Safety Prosecutions

The Authority received a report which was submitted to inform the Authority of the result of prosecutions under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

Resolved

That the Authority noted the details of the fire safety prosecution.

38/20 Result of Recent Fire Safety Prosecutions

The Authority received a second report which was submitted to inform the Authority of the result of prosecutions under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

Resolved

That the Authority noted the details of the fire safety prosecution.

39/20 Revocation of Explosives Storage Licence

The Authority received a report which was submitted to inform the Authority of the revocation of an explosives storage licence as a result of prosecutions under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974.

Resolved

That the Authority noted the details of the revocation.

40/20 Decisions Taken Under Matters of Urgency

The Authority received a report on decisions taken under matters of urgency.

The report was submitted to confirm retrospectively the two decisions taken and approved under 'Matters of Urgency' whilst the Authority meeting(s) were postponed during the Covid 19 pandemic.

The decisions were:

- The appointment of a Deputy Monitoring Officer
- The Corporate Performance Indicators for 2020/21

Resolved

That the Authority noted the decisions taken and approved under 'Matters of Urgency'.

41/20 Notes of the Policy Planning Forum held on 13 January 2020

The notes of the Policy Planning Forum held on 13 January 2020 were received.

42/20 Notes of the Policy Planning Forum held on 3 February 2020

The notes of the Policy Planning Forum held on 3 February 2020 were received.

43/20 Minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee held on 1 June 2020

The minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee held on 1 June 2020 were approved.

44/20 Exclusion of the Public and Press

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

45/20 Planned Procurement Exercise for 2020 - 2021

The Authority received a report for approval of the tender exercise for the provision of various works, goods and services to West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority during 2020/21 for:

- Boiler replacements

Resolved

That the tender exercises for the provision of various works, good and services to West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority during 2020/21 were approved.

The meeting ended at 13.20 hours.

Stephen Timmington

Strategic Hub

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WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

14 DECEMBER 2020

1. **REVIEW OF CONSTITUTION – RECRUITMENT PROCESS FOR DCFO AND ACFO (further amendments to explanatory notes)**

Report of the Clerk and Monitoring Officer

RECOMMENDED

THAT Members approve the proposed explanatory notes for inclusion in the Fire Authority Constitution. These notes explain the approach to the recruitment process for the roles of Deputy Chief Fire Officer (DCFO) and Assistant Chief Fire Officer (ACFO).

THAT Members approve that the Clerk make any further consequential amendments to the constitution in consultation with the Chair, Vice Chair and opposition Leader.

2. **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 2.1 This report is submitted to Members to provide further detail to support the process of recruitment of DCFO and ACFO roles as approved at the Fire Authority meeting on the 5th October 2020. This detail is contained in proposed explanatory notes.

3. **BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 On the 5th October 2020 the Fire Authority approved three recommendations which further detailed amendments/additions to the Authority's constitution (set out at paragraph 1.4 of this report).
- 3.2 The approval of these amendments was made on the provision that the explanatory wording aligned to Matters for Authority, Article 6, section 6.2.4 was amended to recognise:
- 3.2.1 The value of Members being able to engage informally with candidates ahead of the Appeals, Standards, Appointments Committee (Appointments Committee) interview process.

- 3.2.2 If a single candidate was recommended to the Appointments Committee, this may result in a re-commencement of the recruitment process, and
- 3.2.3 the Appointments Committee will ‘lead’ the appointment stage of the candidate.
- 3.3 Review of Appointments Process: The outcomes of a review of the most recent DCFO appointments process found that the Member engagement session did not support the recruitment process effectively at the outset and would be better placed once candidates were recommended to the Appointments Committee and prior to any Member led interview process.
- 3.4 Taking this into account the following wording for the ‘explanatory notes’ within the constitution are proposed. This is further supported by a flow diagram demonstrating the recruitment process from beginning to end at Appendix 1.
- 3.4.1 *The recruitment process for the roles of DCFO and ACFO’s will be led by the CFO, up to the recommendation of candidates to the Appointments Committee and appointment. This will enable a suitable appointment to be made by the Committee based on the professional and technical competence and behavioural attributes of any candidate.*
- 3.4.2 *The appropriateness of any candidate recommended to the Appointments Committee by the CFO will also be considered against the behavioural framework identifying best ‘team fit’ as an important aspect of the selection and appointment processes.*
- 3.4.3 *The Appointments Committee will lead the final stages of the recruitment process to ensure the most appropriate candidate is appointed into role. This will be undertaken in two stages: an informal meeting with candidates to allow Members to get to know the candidate and then the formal interview process of the Appointments Committee. This will be supported by the CFO and the HR Manager.*
- 3.4.4 *Where only one candidate can be recommended by the CFO to the Appointments Committee, a decision will be taken in consultation with the CFO and the Authority’s HR Manager, as to whether the recruitment process can continue or should be run again.*

3.4.5 *The CFO will lead the presentation of appointable candidate(s) who meet the professional and technical competencies as well as team fit for the role to the Appointments Committee. The Appointments Committee will make the decision of final appointment with due regard to the CFO recommendation.*

4. **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

The matters contained in this report will not lead to and do not relate to a policy change.

5. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

The recommendations in this report ensure the effective and efficient delivery of Fire and Rescue Authority Services as set out on the Fire and Rescue Services Act, Regulatory Reform Order, Emergency Order, Civil Contingencies Act and the National Framework which incorporates the duties of these Acts, but also the requirements for governance and assurance of performance..

6. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no direct financial implications to the approval of recommendations in this report.

7. **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no environmental implications.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

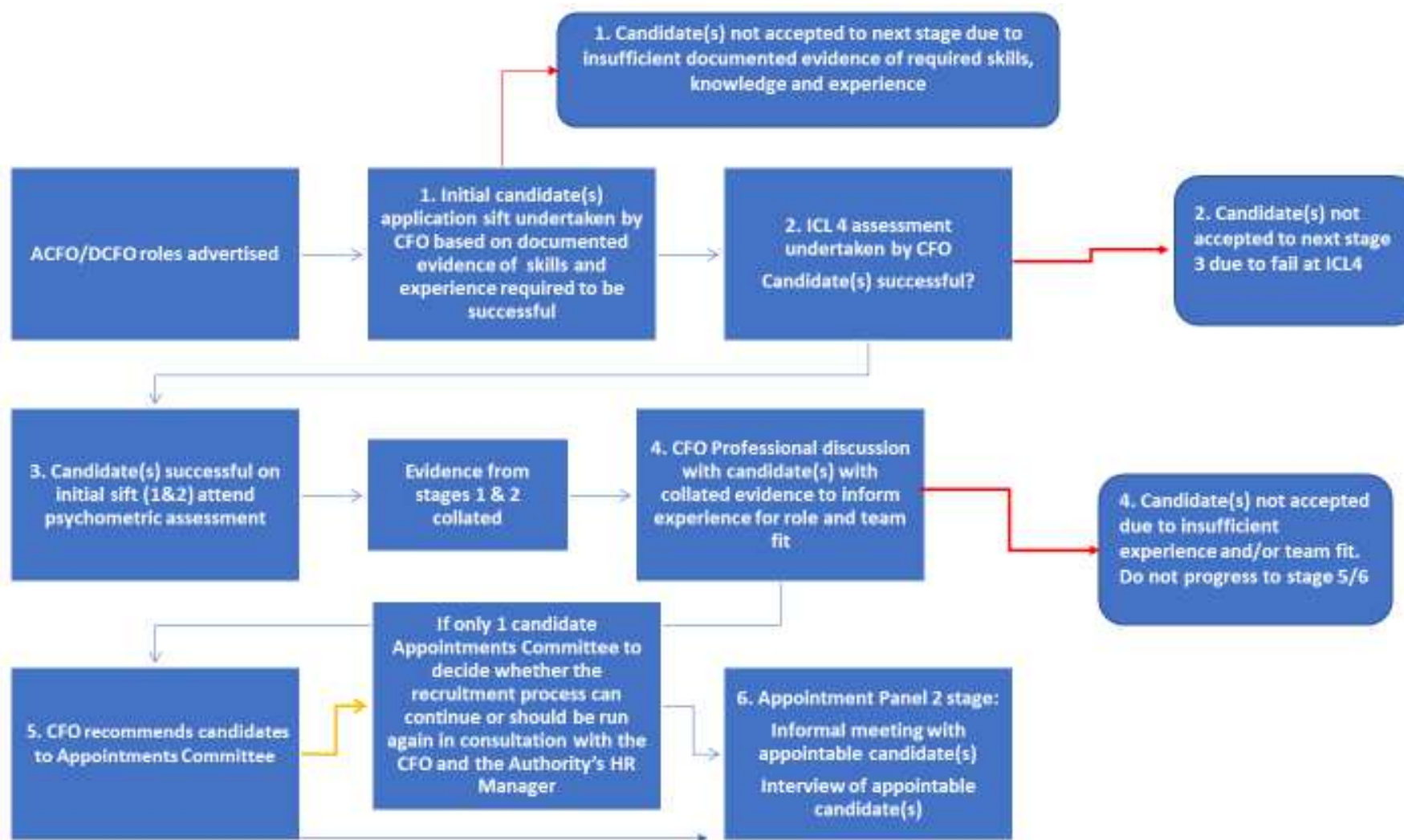
Review of the Constitution 5th October 2020
WMFRA Constitution 2019
LGA Leading the Fire
HMICFRS State of Fire Report 2019
RWHR Independent Cultural Review June 2019

The contact name for this report is Karen Gowreesunker – telephone number 07973 810338.

KAREN GOWREESUNKER CLERK TO AUTHORITY

SATINDER SAHOTA MONITORING OFFICER

APPENDIX 1



WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

14 DECEMBER 2020

1. MONITORING OF FINANCES

Report of the Treasurer.

RECOMMENDED

THAT the report be noted.

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

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

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

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 Revenue Expenditure

3.1.1 The Authority's 2020/2021 Council Tax requirement is £44.485 million and the revenue budget is £100.397 million. As part of the Authority's 2021/2022 budget setting process, the current year's budget has been reviewed. As a result, individual budget areas have been re-aligned and reflect, where appropriate, any impact of forecasted Covid-19 related expenditure.

3.1.2 Appendix A compares the revenue budgeted to the end of November 2020 with the actuals to that date. Devolved budgets are managed by the Section responsible for incurring the expenditure as opposed to corporate budgets, which are managed by the named Section on behalf of the Brigade as a whole.

3.1.3 Actual spend to November 2020, including commitments, was £63.709 million compared to a projected budget of £63.850 million, an overall favourable variance of £0.141 million.

3.1.4 The most significant variance relates to Command Delivery, Fire Control & Workforce Planning, mainly due to an underspend on the Operational pay budget.

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

3.2 **Capital Expenditure**

3.2.1 The Authority's approved capital programme for 2020/2021 is £7.679 million. A scheme analysis is shown on Appendix C. Expenditure to the end of November 2020 is shown as £1.462 million.

3.2.2 The main forecast variance within the capital programme relates to:

- Vehicle Replacement Programme – delayed purchase of the:
 - Command Support Vehicle,
 - Detection, Identification & Monitoring Vehicle,
 - Water & Foam Units,
 - Community Safety Trailers,
 - slippage of 6 PRL's to 2021/22.
- Replacement of windows and doors at 7 Fire Stations has been re-phased to 2021/22 due to supplier lockdown during the pandemic.

4. **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

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

5. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

The course of action recommended in this report does not raise issues which should be drawn to the attention of the Authority's Monitoring Officer.

6. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

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

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Authority's Budget and Precept Report – February 2020
Finance Office Budget Monitoring Files

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

MIKE GRIFFITHS
TREASURER

REVENUE MONITORING SUMMARY TO NOVEMBER 2020

	LATEST BUDGET 2020/2021 £'000	PROFILED BUDGET £'000	ACTUALS + COMMIT -MENTS £'000	VARIANCE TO PROFILED BUDGET £'000
DEVOLVED BUDGETS				
Democratic Representation & Corporate Management	1,195	785	771	-14
Corporate Charges	1	1	1	-
Strategy & Organisational Intelligence	1,339	811	821	10
Communications	808	501	493	-8
Digital & Data	5,250	3,288	3,291	3
Finance & Resources	5,738	3,619	3,621	2
People Services	788	503	506	3
Training, Health & Wellbeing	5,262	3,441	3,449	8
Prevention, Preparedness & Response	3,281	2,046	2,034	-12
Protection & Organisational Assurance	5,694	3,742	3,730	-12
Command Delivery, Fire Control & Workforce Planning	4,725	2,993	2,965	-28
CORPORATE BUDGETS				
Finance & Resources	14,629	8,099	8,068	-31
Digital & Data	176	117	115	-2
People Services	2,306	1,457	1,451	-6
Training, Health & Wellbeing	171	90	101	11
Protection & Organisational Assurance	44	68	73	5
Command Delivery, Fire Control & Workforce Planning	47,275	31,216	31,145	-71
Other Income & Expenditure	1,715	1,073	1,074	1
Appropriation to Reserves				
TOTAL (NET BUDGET REQUIREMENT)	100,397	63,850	63,709	-141
Core Funding	-55,912	-40,133	-40,133	0
TOTAL (COUNCIL TAX REQUIREMENT)	44,485	23,717	23,576	-141

FIREFIGHTERS' PENSION SCHEMES

NON-FINANCIAL INFORMATION	2020/21 PROJECTION				ACTUAL POSITION AS AT NOVEMBER 2020			
	1992 FPS	2006 FPS	2015 FPS	TOTAL	1992 FPS	2006 FPS	2015 FPS	TOTAL
Members of FPS at 1 st April 2020	139	6	1,108	1,253	139	6	1,108	1,253
New Members	-	-	95	95	-	-	27	27
Opt-In (including net auto-enrolment)	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	3
Transitional Members during year	-32	-1	33	-	-26	-	26	-
Transfers from Other Pension Schemes	-	-	4	4	-	-	-	-
Transfers to Other Pension Schemes	-	-	-4	-4	-	-	-1	-1
Retirements	-37	-4	-20	-61	-15	-	-15	-30
Opt-Out	-	-	-20	-20	-	-	-1	-1
Leavers	-	-	-12	-12	-1	-	-11	-12
Ill-Health Retirements	-4	-	-	-4	-	-	-1	-1
Members of the Fire Pension Schemes as at 30 November 2020	97	6	1,135	1,238				

CAPITAL MONITORING STATEMENT 2020/21

Scheme	Year 2020/21	Latest Budget £'000	Actuals November 2020 £'000	Forecast £'000	Variance £'000
<u>LAND & BUILDINGS</u>					
Boiler Replacement Programme	Ongoing	348	171	367	+19
Roof Replacements	Ongoing	87	0	87	-
Windows/Door Replacement	Ongoing	531	14	14	-517
Rewires	Ongoing	385	21	329	-56
Drill Towers / Training Facilities	3 of 3	559	10	559	-
Security Works	2 of 2	105	27	105	-
Occupational Health Relocation	2 of 2	60	39	60	-
Coventry Fire Station	6 of 6	84	84	84	-
Aston Fire Station	6 of 7	642	379	556	-86
Health & Safety Works (COVID-19)	1 of 1	256	0	256	-
<u>VEHICLES</u>					
Vehicle Replacement Programme	Ongoing	4,215	441	1,539	-2,676
<u>ICT & EQUIPMENT</u>					
C&C Upgrade Vision 4 / ESMCP	3 of 3	407	276	407	-
Grand Total		7,679	1,462	4,363	-3,316
<u>Funded By</u>					
Prudential Borrowing		0		0	-
Capital Grants / Contributions		74		74	-
Capital Receipts to be Applied		0		0	-
Revenue Financing / Earmarked Reserves		7,605		4,289	-3,316
TOTAL		7,679		4,363	-3,316
SURPLUS(-)/DEFICIT(+)					

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

14 DECEMBER 2020

1. AN ANALYSIS OF PROGRESS OF QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE AGAINST 'OUR PLAN' – QUARTER TWO 2020/21

Report of the Chief Fire Officer.

RECOMMENDED

- 1.1 THAT the Authority notes the status of the Service's key performance indicators in the second quarter of 2020/21 (Appendix 1).
- 1.2 THAT the Committee note the progress made in delivering the three strategic priorities contained in 'Our Plan' 2020-2023 (Appendix 1).

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report is submitted to provide Members with an analysis of the organisation's performance against 'Our Plan' for 2020-2023.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The setting of targets against the operational and other performance indicators enables the Service to define in key areas the improvements which contribute to making the West Midlands safer, stronger and healthier, and to manage the resources allocated to this work. The Service continues to improve and meet targets across a range of indicators.
- 3.2 The performance information contained within this report was submitted to and considered by the Strategic Enabling Team in October 2020. It is submitted to Members to support the joined-up method of managing performance and providing assurance around the on-going performance of 'Our Plan'.

4. PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- 4.1 Appendix 1 details the performance against our:
 - Performance Indicators covering:
 - Response, Prevention and Protection
 - People
 - Safety, Health and Environment

- Strategic Objectives as outlined in 'Our Plan'.

4.2 Service Delivery Performance Indicators

4.2.1 Response:

- PI 1 – the risk-based attendance standard; performance continues to be positive, with the targets having been met for all four categories of incident type. The performance is rated as over performance against the tolerance levels (blue).
- Average attendance times for Category 1 incidents (the most critical and important of the four categories) were 4 minutes 32 seconds in quarter two, a 6 second increase compared to the previous quarter.
- Average attendance times for Category 2, 3 and 4 Incident Types remain well within their respective targets:
 - Category 2 Incident Type: 5 minutes 15 seconds (target of 7 minutes)
 - Category 3 Incident Type: 4 minutes 39 seconds (target of 10 minutes)
 - Category 4 Incident Type: 6 minutes 31 seconds (target of 20 minutes)

4.2.2 Prevention:

- The performance indicators for the following areas demonstrate over performance against the tolerance levels (blue):
 - PI 11 The number of deliberate rubbish fires.
 - PI 12 The number of deliberate fires in derelict buildings.
- The performance indicators for the following areas demonstrate performance is within the tolerance levels (green):
 - PI 2 The number of accidental dwelling fires.
 - PI 3 Injuries from accidental fires in dwellings, taken to hospital for treatment.
 - PI 8 The number of deliberate fires in dwellings.
 - PI 9 The number of deliberate fires in non-domestic premises.

- PI 10 The number of deliberate vehicle fires.
- The performance indicators for the following areas demonstrate under performance against the tolerance levels (red):
 - PI 5 The percentage of Safe and Well visits referred by our partners.
 - PI 6 The number of Safe and Well points achieved by the Brigade.
- The following two performance indicators do not have a performance rating assigned:
 - PI 4 The number of deaths from accidental fires in dwellings.
 - PI 7 The number of people killed or seriously injured in Road Traffic Collisions.

4.2.3 Protection:

- The performance indicator for the following area demonstrates performance is above the tolerance levels (blue):
 - PI 13 – The number of accidental fires in non-domestic premises.
- The performance indicator for the following area demonstrates performance is within the tolerance levels (green):
 - PI 14 – The number of false alarm calls due to fire alarm equipment in dwellings and non-domestic premises.

4.3 People Support Services Performance Indicators

4.3.1 The performance indicator for the following area demonstrates over performance against the tolerance levels (blue):

- PI 20 – The average number of working days/shifts lost due to sickness (non-uniformed employees).

4.3.2 The performance indicators for the following areas demonstrate performance is within the tolerance levels (green):

- PI 17 – The percentage of all staff from black and minority ethnic (BAME) communities.
- PI 17a – The percentage of uniformed staff from BAME communities

- PI 18 – The average number of working days/shifts lost due to sickness (all staff).

4.3.3 The performance indicators for the following areas demonstrate under performance against the tolerance levels (red):

- PI 15 – The percentage of employees that have disclosed their disabled status.
- PI 16 – The number of female uniformed staff.
- PI 19 – The average number of working days/shifts lost due to sickness (uniformed and Fire Control staff).

4.4 Safety, Health and Environment Performance Indicators

4.4.1 The performance indicators for the following areas demonstrate over performance against the tolerance levels (blue):

- PI 24 – To reduce the gas use of Fire Authority premises.
- PI 25 – To reduce the electricity use of Fire Authority premises.

4.4.2 The performance indicator for the following area demonstrates performance is within the tolerance levels (green):

- PI 21 – The total number of injuries

4.4.3 The performance indicator for the following area demonstrates under performance against the tolerance levels (red):

- PI 22 – The total number of RIDDOR injuries.

4.4.4 The following performance indicator is reported on an annual basis (in quarter four):

- PI 23 – To reduce the Fire Authority's carbon emissions

5. **PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM**

5.1 The InPhase performance management system is embedded across the organisation. It is envisaged that InPhase will be reviewed for its ongoing performance in the context of the ongoing development and implementation of 3PT.

5.2 Performance management has been made through the ongoing Covid 19 Business Continuity project within 3PT, and performance indicator

information via InPhase.

6. **CORPORATE RISK**

- 6.1 Corporate Risks are those risks that, if realised, would seriously affect the Service's ability to carry out its core functions or deliver key objectives.
- 6.2 In accordance with the Corporate Risk Management Strategy, all risks maintained within the Corporate Risk Register have been reviewed by Senior Risk Owners in order to update the relevant triggers, impacts and control measures and determine a relevant risk score, if appropriate, based on assessment of likelihood and impact.
- 6.3 A report of progress against our Corporate Risks is submitted separately to the Audit and Risk Committee.

7. **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

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.

8. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

The course of action recommended in this report does not raise issues which should be drawn to the attention of the Authority's Monitoring Officer.

9. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 The level of response, protection and prevention resources required to achieve the targets for the operational indicators shown in Appendix 1 were considered as part of the Authority's 2020/2021 budget setting process which established a total revised net budget requirement of £100.147 million. As at the end of September 2020 actual expenditure was £48.024 million compared to a profiled budget of £48.733 million resulting in a £0.709 million underspend.
- 9.2 The delivery of services which contribute to the performance achievements comprise of goods such as smoke alarms and staff time. The staff time includes those who are solely engaged in prevention work and watch-based staff that provide emergency response as well as prevention services.
- 9.3 The full year budget for smoke alarms and other supporting materials in 2020/2021 is £329,600. Actual expenditure as at the end of September

2020 was £63,800. Expenditure to the second quarter is below the profiled budget and an underspend of approx. £80k is forecast for 2020/21.

10. **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no environmental implications arising from this report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

‘Our Plan 2019-22’ Strategic Objectives.

Corporate Action Plan updates.

Corporate Risk Update Quarter 4 2019/20 and Quarter 2 2020/21 (exception report).

The contact name for this report is Sarah Warnes, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Strategic Enabler - People, telephone number 0121 380 6907.

PHIL LOACH
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

Key Performance Indicators Status – Quarter Two 2020/21


Item 8

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

Response

Our response priorities focus on dealing excellently with emergency incidents:


- Through risk management, the most serious incidents in high-risk areas will be attended within five minutes, to save life, protect homes and businesses, and keep our transport networks moving
- Risk to life and property will be reduced through our commitment to operational excellence, enabling an assertive, effective and safe emergency response to all incidents whilst supporting firefighter safety
- At all incidents attended, rescue operations will be led and co-ordinated by WMFS whilst working collaboratively with other agencies to deliver an excellent response and meet public expectations
- National resilience will be enhanced through delivery of a local, national and international response to major incidents, new risks and humanitarian situations through our specialist response teams



PI 1		<p>The Risk Based Attendance Standard Target: under 5 minutes Actual: 4 minutes 32 seconds Over performance against the tolerance levels</p>
<p>The median attendance time to high-risk (Cat 1) incidents in quarter two was 4 minutes 32 seconds, a 6 second increase compared to the previous quarter. All Commands were below the 5-minute attendance target. Attendance times for both quarters one and two are low, reflected in the year to date average of 4 minutes 29 seconds.</p> <p>Attendance times for Category 2, 3 & 4 incidents remain significantly below the respective targets:</p> <p>Category 2 – 5 minutes 15 seconds (target of 7 minutes) Category 3 – 4 minutes 39 seconds (target of 10 minutes) Category 4 – 6 minutes 31 seconds (target of 20 minutes)</p>		




Prevention

Our prevention priorities focus on making safer, healthier communities:

- The number of people killed or seriously injured by fire-related incidents will reduce as we focus, with our partners, on reducing the risks faced by the most vulnerable people in our communities
- The safety, health and well-being of the most vulnerable people in our communities will improve by targeting 'radical prevention' interventions that are directly linked to vulnerability from fire
- Arson-related incidents will fall, supporting safer and stronger communities, as a result of our partnership working
- Fewer people will be killed or seriously injured on West Midlands roads, and we will keep our transport networks moving, as we work with the West Midlands Combined Authority and other organisations to develop and deliver interventions that support the West Midlands Regional Road Safety Strategy.

PI 2		<p>The number of accidental dwelling fires Target YTD: 816 (726 – 881) Actual to date: 833 Performance is within the tolerance levels</p>
<p>There have been 833 Accidental Dwelling Fires for the year to date (YTD), 1.8% over target and remaining within the tolerance levels. 389 incidents were recorded during the quarter compared to the quarterly target of 382. The number of incidents recorded in quarter two remains consistent with the same period in previous years.</p> <p>Breakdown of incidents via Command Area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Black Country North Command is within target for the year to date despite having recorded 165 ADF's against a target of 159. However, vigilance should be maintained as Wolverhampton borough is currently above tolerance having recorded 97 ADF's, although Walsall borough is within target. • Black Country South Command is within target for the year to date having recorded 153 ADF's against a target of 173 (-11.5%). Sandwell Borough with a YTD total of 91 ADF's is currently within target, however Dudley Borough is below tolerance having recorded a YTD total of 62 ADF's against a target of 89 (-30.4%). • Birmingham North is within target for the YTD, having recorded 184 ADF's against a target of 192 (-4.0%). By contrast, Birmingham South is over tolerance for the YTD having recorded 191 ADF's against a target of 166 (14.8% over). • Coventry and Solihull Command is over tolerance for the YTD having recorded 138 ADF's against a target of 127 (8.6%). Whilst Solihull Borough is within target, Coventry Borough is currently over tolerance having recorded 93 ADF's which is 10 incidents (12.0%) over target. 		

<p>PI 3</p>		<p>Injuries from accidental fires in dwellings (taken to hospital for treatment) Target YTD: 26 (9 – 23) Actual to date: 18 Performance is within the tolerance levels</p>
<p>There have been 18 injuries from accidental fires in dwellings recorded year to date, eight below target.</p> <p>Seven injuries were recorded during quarter 2, 47.0% (6 casualties) below target, and within tolerance levels.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Five injuries were sustained in kitchens with cooking appliances as the source of ignition. • Three injuries took place between 10:00 and 13:00hrs and three between 21:00 and 01:00hrs. • Alcohol or drugs was indicated as a factor in three injuries. • Four of the seven persons injured were female. • Four were between the ages of 47 and 59 years and a further two were 70+ years. • Five of those injured were defined as 'White British' and one as 'Caribbean' • There were no incidents with multiple PI injuries. <p>All Commands are within target or tolerance, with the exception of Black Country South which continues to record the greatest number of PI injures across the Service. However, it should be noted that the numbers are very small; the Command is currently above tolerance with eight year to date PI injuries against a target of four. During quarter 2 Black Country South recorded four PI injuries which were all within Sandwell Borough. All other Commands each recorded one PI injury.</p>		
<p>PI 4</p>		<p>The number of deaths from accidental dwelling fires Target YTD: N/A Actual to date: 4</p>
<p>There have been four fatalities in accidental dwelling fires this year to date. Two fatalities were recorded during quarter two, both within Birmingham Command and both occurring in September.</p> <p>The first fatality was in the Birmingham North Borough and involved a 74-year-old male that was overcome by smoke which resulted from a fire caused by a faulty toaster.</p> <p>The second fatality was in the Birmingham South Borough and involved a 72-year-old male. The fire was caused by a cooking appliance being left on; however, it is not yet known if the cause of death was fire related or linked to a pre-existing medical condition.</p>		

PI 5		<p>The percentage of Safe and Well visits referred by our partners</p> <p>Target YTD: 45% (45% - 47%)</p> <p>Actual to date: 44.2%</p> <p>Under performance against the tolerance levels</p>
<p>The percentage of Safe and Well visits referred by our partners for quarter two was 44.2%, marginally below the target of 45%.</p>		
PI 6		<p>The number of Safe & Well points achieved by the Brigade</p> <p>Target YTD: 137,500</p> <p>Actual to date: 44,430</p> <p>Under performance against the tolerance levels</p>
<p>The lockdown and Business Continuity arrangements have had a significant impact on performance. During this quarter the guidance has remained constant whereby under Business Continuity arrangements face-to-face Safe and Well visits were prioritised to high risk households where the Covid status would allow access. Remote Safe and Well visits were also delivered which are counted as part of this return.</p> <p>The target for the total Safe and Well points is 259,690 for the year. During quarter two, we achieved 27,221 points were achieved during quarter two, below the quarterly target of 68,750 points and resulting in 44,430 points year to date.</p> <p>3560 Safe and Well visits were carried out this quarter (up from 2279 during quarter one), equating to 0.67 per appliance per 24 hours (based on 58 appliances being available 24/7).</p> <p>It should be noted that the Tymly system was not used during this quarter.</p>		
PI 7		<p>The number of people killed or seriously injured (KSI) in road traffic collisions</p> <p>Target YTD: Not applicable</p> <p>Actual to date: 136</p>
<p>Please note that the following is West Midlands Police data provided by Transport for West Midlands. The data covers the quarter one period 01/04/20 to 30/06/20. Due to the nature of road traffic collision (RTC) incidents and the time they take to be finalised, the figures provided in this report may be subject to revision in future time periods.</p> <p>During quarter one there were 10 fatal and 119 serious RTC's that resulted in 10 fatalities and 126 serious injuries. This compares favourably to the same period in 2019 (when there were 12 fatal and 211 serious RTC's resulting in 13 fatalities and 229 serious casualties) and to Q4 of 2019/20 (when there were 13 fatal and 168 serious RTC's resulting in 13 fatalities and 182 serious casualties). The reductions are likely to be due to the Covid-19 'lockdown' when travel restrictions were in force and vehicle usage was significantly less.</p>		

- Black Country North recorded 1 fatal 22 serious incidents, resulting in 1 fatality and 22 serious injuries.
- Black Country South recorded 3 fatal 24 serious incidents, resulting in 3 fatalities and 25 serious injuries.
- Birmingham recorded 2 fatal 56 serious incidents, resulting in 2 fatalities and 61 serious injuries.
- Coventry & Solihull recorded 4 fatal 17 serious incidents, resulting in 4 fatalities and 18 serious injuries.
- Nearly half (48.4%) of all those killed or seriously injured in RTC's during Q1 were between the ages of 20 and 39, and just over a quarter (27.0%) were between the ages of 40 and 59.
- Drivers or riders of vehicles accounted for 8 fatal and 84 serious injuries, whereas pedestrians accounted for 2 fatal and 28 serious injuries, and passengers accounted for 14 serious injuries.

PI 8






The number of deliberate fires in dwellings
Target YTD: 108 (84 – 126)
Actual to date: 89
Performance is within the tolerance levels

The number of Deliberate Dwelling Fires recorded year to date were 19 below target and within the tolerance levels. 45 deliberate dwelling fires were recorded during quarter two, 16.2% below the quarterly target of 54 incidents, and within the tolerance levels. This figure represents the lowest number of incidents of this type recorded during a second quarter of any year.

For the year to date, all Commands are below the respective lower tolerance levels except for Birmingham which is within the tolerance levels:

- Black Country North (YTD) performance is 9 incidents (39.0%) below target of 23.
- Black Country South (YTD) performance is 7 incidents (45.4%) below target of 16.
- Birmingham North (YTD) performance is one incident (1.9%) above target level of 27 but within tolerance.
- Birmingham South (YTD) performance is one incident (4.4%) above target level of 26 but within tolerance.
- Coventry & Solihull (YTD) performance is 4 incidents (26.0%) below target of 15.


PI 9		<p>The number of deliberate fires in non-domestic premises Target YTD: 76 (59 – 89) Actual to date: 65 Performance is within the tolerance levels</p>
<p>There have been 65 deliberate fires in non-domestic premises for the year to date, 11 (14.7%) below target and performance within the tolerance levels. There were 38 incidents recorded during quarter two, 3.2% above the quarterly target of 37.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Black Country North (YTD) has recorded 7 incidents which is 36.7% below the target of 11 and is below tolerance. Both Walsall and Wolverhampton are below tolerance. • Black Country South (YTD) has recorded 17 incidents which is 9.1% below the target of 19. Sandwell is below tolerance, whereas Dudley is currently above tolerance. • Birmingham North (YTD) has recorded 18 incidents which is 33.8% below the target of 27 and is below tolerance. • Birmingham South (YTD) has recorded 20 incidents which is 72.2% above the target of 12 and is above tolerance. • Coventry & Solihull (YTD) has recorded 3 incidents (all within Coventry Borough) which is 60.8% below the target of 8 and is below tolerance. 		
PI 10		<p>The number of deliberate vehicle fires Target YTD: 389 (303 – 454) Actual to date: 312 Performance is within the tolerance levels</p>
<p>There have been 312 deliberate vehicle fires during this year to date, 77 (19.9%) below target and within the tolerance levels. There were 182 incidents recorded during quarter two, 7.7% below the quarterly target.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Black Country North (YTD) has recorded 60 incidents which is 1.5% below the target of 61 and is within target and tolerance. Both Walsall and Wolverhampton Boroughs are within target. • Black Country South (YTD) has recorded 78 incidents which is 4.4% below the target of 82. Sandwell is within target, whereas Dudley is currently below tolerance. • Birmingham North (YTD) has recorded 58 incidents which is 37.4% below the target of 98 and is below tolerance. • Birmingham South (YTD) has recorded 68 incidents which is 12.1% below the target of 77 but is within tolerance. • Coventry & Solihull (YTD) has recorded 47 incidents which is 60.8% below the target of 76 and is below tolerance. Both Coventry and Solihull Boroughs are below tolerance. 		

PI 11		<p>The number of deliberate rubbish fires Target YTD: 982 (874 – 1060) Actual to date: 746 Over performance against the tolerance levels</p>
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There have been 746 deliberate rubbish fires for the year to date, 236 (24.3%) below the target and below the lower tolerance level. 360 incidents were recorded during quarter two, which is the lowest number of such incidents recorded during the second quarter of any year. The figure was 24% below the target and below the lower tolerance level.

- Black Country North (YTD) has recorded 182 incidents which is 13.2% below the target of 210 and is within target and tolerance. Whilst Walsall Borough is below tolerance, Wolverhampton Borough is above tolerance.
- Black Country South (YTD) has recorded 203 incidents which is 9.1% below the target of 223 but is within tolerance. Dudley is within target, whereas Sandwell is currently below tolerance.
- Birmingham North (YTD) has recorded 141 incidents which is 17.4% below the target of 171 and is below tolerance.
- Birmingham South (YTD) has recorded 88 incidents which is 50.4% below the target of 177 and is below tolerance.
- Coventry & Solihull (YTD) has recorded 130 incidents which is 35.5% below the target of 201 and is below tolerance. Both Coventry and Solihull Boroughs are below tolerance.

The main property types recorded during quarter two were 'loose refuse/rubbish', 'Rubbish bin/small refuse container' and 'Other rubbish item (e.g. dumped / discarded sofa or mattress)'. Together these accounted for over three quarters (76.9%) of all deliberate rubbish fires. Incidents were higher on Mondays and Tuesdays and peak times were between 19:00 and 22:00.

PI 12		<p>The number of deliberate fires in derelict buildings Target YTD: 77 (60 – 90) Actual to date: 51 Over performance against the tolerance levels</p>
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There have been 51 deliberate fires in derelict buildings recorded year to date, 26 incidents (33.7%) below target, and below the lower tolerance level. There were 32 incidents recorded during quarter two, against the quarterly target of 32.


- Black Country North (YTD) has recorded 19 incidents which is 7.1% below the target of 20 and is within target and tolerance. Whilst Wolverhampton Borough is below tolerance, Walsall Borough is above tolerance.
- Black Country South (YTD) has recorded 18 incidents which is 35.1% below the target of 28 but is within tolerance. Dudley is within target, whereas Sandwell is currently below tolerance.


- Birmingham North (YTD) has recorded 5 incidents which is 50.0% below the target of 10 and is below tolerance.
- Birmingham South (YTD) has recorded 7 incidents which is 42.7% below the target of 12 and is below tolerance.
- Coventry & Solihull (YTD) has recorded 2 incidents (all within Coventry Borough) which is 69.7% below the target of 7 and is below tolerance.

Protection



Our protection priorities focus on protecting life and property to make businesses stronger and communities safer:




- Life and property will be protected by targeting high-risk buildings and vulnerable businesses, including residential high-rises, to ensure compliance and enforcement of fire safety legislation
- Improved community safety through implementing outcomes of the Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety
- Improved community safety through innovative and contemporary approaches to the delivery of protection activities and working cohesively with partners at local, regional and national levels to influence the development of new and enabling legislation
- Prosperity and economic growth are enhanced by educating and supporting businesses, including collaboration with other regulators and partner agencies
- Disruption to businesses, communities and West Midlands Fire Service caused by unwanted fire signals from fire alarms will be reduced.



PI 13		<p>The number of accidental fires in non-domestic premises Target YTD: 216 (168 – 252) Actual to date: 166 Over performance against the tolerance levels</p>
<p>There have been 166 Accidental Fires at Non-Domestic Properties this year to date, 50 incidents (23.2% below the target, and below the lower tolerance level. There have been 85 incidents recorded during quarter two, 16.6% below the quarterly target of 102.</p> <p>In line with performance observed during quarter one, the number of incidents recorded is likely to be due (in part) to Covid-related restrictions that were, and remain in force, including a significant number of people continuing to work from home where able to do so. This is reflected in the premises types most recorded during the year to date which were ‘shops’ (27.7%) and ‘factories/warehouses’ (27.1%). By contrast only 7.2% of all accidental non-domestic fires took place within offices.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Black Country North (YTD) has recorded 27 incidents which is 20.6% below the target of 34 and is within target. Whilst Wolverhampton Borough is within target, Walsall Borough is below tolerance.		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Black Country South (YTD) has recorded 47 incidents which is 2.4% below the target of 48 and is within tolerance. Both Sandwell and Dudley Boroughs are within target. Birmingham North (YTD) has recorded 42 incidents which is 43.7% below the target of 75 and is below tolerance. Birmingham South (YTD) has recorded 24 incidents which is the target level. Coventry & Solihull (YTD) has recorded 26 incidents which is 26.4% below the target of 35 and is below tolerance. Coventry Borough is currently within target whilst Solihull Borough is below tolerance. 		
PI 14		<p>The number of false alarm calls due to fire alarm equipment in dwellings and non-domestic premises</p> <p>Target YTD: 2970 (2644 – 3208)</p> <p>Actual to date: 2924</p> <p>Performance is within the tolerance levels</p>
<p>There have been 2924 False Alarms due to Equipment (FAE) this year to date, which is below target and within the tolerance levels. There were 1558 incidents recorded during quarter two, 2.1% below the quarterly target.</p> <p>During the quarter 1,204 incidents were within dwellings. Of these, 446 incidents were due to cooking or burnt toast and a further 368 were due to faulty alarms. Of the remaining 352 incidents (which were at non-domestic premises), once again faulty alarms caused 107 incidents and cooking/burnt toast caused 60.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Black Country North (YTD) has recorded 577 incidents which is 7.2% below the target of 622 and is within target. Whilst Wolverhampton Borough is within target, Walsall Borough is below tolerance. Black Country South (YTD) has recorded 543 incidents which is 5.2% above the target of 516 but is within tolerance. Sandwell Borough is currently within target whereas Dudley Borough is above tolerance. Birmingham North (YTD) has recorded 792 incidents which is 3.0% below the target of 816 and is within tolerance. Birmingham South (YTD) has recorded 545 incidents which is 0.3% below the target of 547 and within tolerance. Coventry & Solihull (YTD) has recorded 464 incidents which is 1.1% below the target of 469 and is within tolerance. Both Coventry and Solihull Boroughs are within target. 		

People Support Services

PI 15		<p>The percentage of employees that have disclosed their disabled status</p> <p>Target: 100% (95% - 100%)</p> <p>Actual to date: 94%</p> <p>Under performance against the tolerance levels</p>
<p>The percentage of employees disclosing their disability status remains high at 94% (although a slightly lower percentage than previously seen). 4% of employees have stated that they do have a disability.</p> <p>98% of all employees have declared their ethnicity, and 86% have made a declaration regarding their sexual orientation. It should be noted that 12% of employees have declared that they 'prefer not to say'.</p>		
PI 16		<p>The number of female uniformed staff</p> <p>Target: 161 (153 – 169)</p> <p>Actual to date: 149</p> <p>Under performance against the tolerance levels</p>
<p>There are 149 female uniformed staff.</p> <p>Since April 2020 to September 2020, 28 new entrant firefighters have been recruited of which 5 (18%) are women.</p> <p>During October to December 2019 a female recruitment programme was conducted and 16 women completed this programme. 50% went on to be successful during the selection process. A further programme commenced in February 2020 and those candidates are currently undergoing selection activity. The programme was adapted and delivered virtually due to the restrictions of the Covid pandemic. There are some early indications that the inability for us to deliver face to face fitness sessions for female candidates has had an impact on the success rates of women at the practical tests. Plans are now being put in place to deliver fitness sessions again once BCMT have approved a Covid 19 risk assessment.</p> <p>The Kit familiarisation sessions prior to the Trainee Firefighter Development programmes were put on hold during the pandemic, however, these will recommence towards the latter part of this calendar year ahead of the course due to commence in January 2021.</p> <p>41% of uniformed posts are Crew Commander or above. 24% of female Uniformed staff, and 43% of male Uniformed staff are in these posts.</p>		

PI 17		<p>The percentage of all staff from BAME communities Target: 12.9% (12.2% – 13.5%) Actual to date: 12.8% Performance is within the tolerance levels</p>
<p>The percentage of all staff from black and minority ethnic (BAME) communities is 12.9%.</p> <p>Since April 2020 to September 2020, 28 new entrant firefighters have been recruited of which 9 (32%) are BAME.</p> <p>The recruitment programme scheduled for BAME candidates was cancelled due to the Covid pandemic. Positive action sessions have continued to be delivered virtually.</p> <p>The Kit familiarisation sessions prior to the Trainee Firefighter Development programmes were put on hold during the pandemic, however, these will recommence towards the latter part of this calendar year ahead of the course due to commence in January 2021.</p> <p>41% of Uniformed posts are Crew Commander or above. 24% of BAME Uniformed staff, and 44% of White Uniformed staff are in these posts.</p>		
PI 17a		<p>The percentage of uniformed staff from BAME communities Target: 11.9% (11.4% – 12.4%) Actual to date: 11.9% Performance is within the tolerance levels</p>
<p>11.9% of Uniformed staff are from BAME communities, which is exactly on target.</p> <p>See PI17 for further information on recruitment year to date.</p>		
PI 18		<p>The average number of working days/shifts lost due to sickness – all staff Target: 1.68 (1.60 – 1.76) Actual to date: 1.68 Performance is within the tolerance levels</p>
<p>An average of 1.68 working days/shifts per person were lost due to sickness during quarter two, exactly on target and within the tolerance levels.</p> <p>An average of 3.19 working days/shifts per person were lost due to sickness year to date, below the target of 3.61 days. This figure represents a 19% decrease compared to the same period in 2019/20 (an 8% reduction when Covid sickness figures are included).</p>		


PI 19		<p>The average number of working days/shifts lost due to sickness – uniformed and Fire Control staff</p> <p>Target: 1.70 (1.62 – 1.78)</p> <p>Actual to date: 1.87</p> <p>Under performance against the tolerance levels</p>
<p>An average of 1.87 working days/shifts per person were lost due to sickness during quarter two, above the target and above the upper tolerance level. This figure increases to 1.96 when Covid sickness figures are included.</p> <p>Although the PI is not on target when compared to quarter two 2019/20, looking at the six months April to September 2020 together there has been a 19% reduction compared to the same period in 2019. The reduction is 10% when Covid sickness figures are included.</p>		
PI 20		<p>The average number of working days/shifts lost due to sickness – non-uniformed staff</p> <p>Target: 1.60 (1.52 – 1.68)</p> <p>Actual: 1.02</p> <p>Over performance against the tolerance levels</p>
<p>An average of 1.02 working days/shifts per person were lost due to sickness during quarter two, below the target and below the lower tolerance level.</p> <p>In the six months April to September 2020 there has been a 19% reduction in non-uniformed sickness compared to the same period in 2019. The reduction is 3% when Covid sickness figures are included.</p>		

Health, Safety and Wellbeing, and Finance and Resources

PI 21		<p>The total number of injuries</p> <p>Target YTD: 64 (60 – 70)</p> <p>Actual to date: 62</p> <p>Performance is within the tolerance levels</p>
<p>There were 31 injury reports received for quarter two against a quarterly target of 32. 62 injury reports have been recorded year to date compared to a combined target of 64.</p> <p>The main trends identified were manual handling (7), injury no accident (7), work equipment use (5), slips and trips (4), and struck against (3). In terms of activity, 12 occurred during operational activity, 11 of which were incident related, five during routine activity for uniformed staff, two during fitness training, and one during support staff activity.</p> <p>There were 56 near hit reports were reported during quarter two, 31 of which occurred</p>		

during routine activity, 19 were incident related, and six related to related to operational training. The main types of near hit were premises (10), appliance (10), personal protective equipment (7), and Breathing Apparatus (6).

32 violence reports were recorded during the quarter, 31 of which were incident related. The majority (24) involved verbal abuse, three were weapons related, two involved threatening behaviour, two involved missiles being thrown, and one report involved some form of physical contact.


PI 22		The total number of RIDDOR injuries Target YTD: 7 (6 – 8) Actual to date: 10 Under performance against the tolerance levels
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Five RIDDOR reports were reported during quarter two, ten reports for the year to date.


The reports during quarter two were as following:

- One was at an incident and involved assisting an ambulance crew move a casualty and a pulled back muscle occurred.
- Three reports occurred during operational training and involved handling elements and back injuries - loosening the straps on a BA set whilst walking, hose running and starting a Holmatro pump.
- The fifth report was during routine activity and opening a locker on an appliance which was stiff.


Accident investigations have taken place and confirmed control measures are in place. There will be a manual handling project commenced to review and refresh manual handling assessments once it is safe to do so (COVID).

PI 23		To reduce the Fire Authority's carbon emissions Forecast YTD: Not Available Actual to date: Not Available
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Information is not available for this PI.

PI 24		To reduce gas use of Fire Authority premises Forecast YTD: 557,387MWh (501,649 – 585,256) Actual to date: 397,931MWh Over performance against the tolerance levels
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Performance is below target and below the lower tolerance level.

PI 25		<p>To reduce electricity use of Fire Authority premises Forecast YTD: 768,956MWh (692,061 – 807,403) Actual to date: 447,349MWh Over performance against the tolerance levels</p>
<p>Performance is below target and below the lower tolerance level.</p>		

**Minutes of the Appointments, Standards and Appeals
Committee**

21 September 2020 at 1500 hours
held digitally via Microsoft Teams

Present: Councillor Edwards (acting Chair)
Councillors Barlow, Dehar, Hogarth, Iqbal, Miks

Apologies: Councillors Brackenridge and Walsh

1/20 **Minutes of the Appointments, Standards and Appeals
Committee held on 21 September 2020**

Resolved that the minutes of the Appointments, Standards and Appeals Committee held on 21 September 2020 be confirmed as a correct record.

2/20 **Exclusion of the Public and Press**

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

3/20 **Submission of Internal Disputes Resolution Procedure (IDRP) for the Firefighters' Pension Scheme**

In accordance with the Authority's procedures, the Committee considered an appeal received under stage two of the IDRP of the Firefighters' Pension Scheme.

The meeting was attended by the Strategic Enabler of Finance and Resources, and the Payroll and Pensions Manager. Additionally, the appellant attended the meeting as an observer.

Members reviewed the information submitted to the Committee and following deliberations, the Committee made the following decision at stage two of the IDRPs:

- All five Members in attendance voted to uphold the provision of compensation to the appellant.
- All five Members in attendance voted to vary the recommended level of compensation put forward by the Strategic Enabler of Finance and Resources, increasing the amount from £500 to £1000.

Resolved that the level of compensation to be awarded to the appellant be increased.

(Proceedings ended at 15.39 hours)

Contact Officer: Stephen Timmington Strategic Hub 0121 380 6680
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Minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee
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26 October 2020 at 10.30hrs

Conducted as an online virtual meeting

Present: Councillor Catherine Miks (Chair), Councillor Gill (Vice Chair) Councillors Barrie, Miller, Spence, Mr Ager, Richard Percival (Grant Thornton) and John Matthews (Sandwell MBC)

Apologies: Mike Griffiths (WMFS) Neil Chamberlain (West Midlands Police and Chair of WMFS Pension Board)

Officers in attendance: Karen Gowreesunker, Paul Gwynn, Kal Shoker, Gary Taylor

27/20 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest registered.

28/20 **Minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee held on 27 July 2020**

Resolved that the minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee held on 27 July 2020 be approved as a correct record of proceedings.

29/20 **Audit and Risk Committee Terms of Reference**

Karen Gowreesunker presented the report detailing the Terms of Reference for the Audit and Risk Committee. The confirmation of Terms of Reference for each West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority (WMFRA) Committee are presented at the first meeting of each municipal year. It was confirmed that neither Committee membership nor its Terms had changed for 2020-21.

The Committee **noted** the content of the report and appendix.

30/20 **Treasury Management Mid-Year Review 2020-21**

Kal Shoker presented the report, confirming WMFRA approved the Treasury Management Strategy within the Budget Setting Report at its meeting of 17 February 2020. WMFRA is required to produce a mid-year review report of its Treasury Management activities. The Committee was advised and updated on the three principal Treasury indicators.

1. Capital Expenditure - the WMFRA approved £6.6m capital programme for the current financial year, has been updated to reflect the subsequent outturn position and financing decisions for 2019/20. The Capital Programme has been increased to £8.1m, primarily due to activity slippage from the previous financial year and was reported to the 06 October 2020 meeting of WMFRA. The forecast outturn as at 30 September 2020 for 2020/21 is £5.9m, a variance of £2.2m.

The context of the variance within the capital programme for the current year relates to the Vehicle Replacement Programme (£1.6m) with the delayed purchase of a number of vehicles, most notably six Pump Rescue Ladders (PRL) slipping into 2021/22. Also, the replacement of windows and doors (£0.5m) at seven Fire Stations has been re-phased to 2021/22 due to supplier lockdown during the Covid-19 pandemic.

It was confirmed no borrowing has been undertaken to finance any capital expenditure during the first half of the current financial year.

A Member enquired if the delay in PRL purchase would impact upon service delivery and financial performance. It was confirmed that vehicle maintenance and fleet availability were assured, whilst vehicle depreciation was factored into the Statement of Accounts.

2. Debt – WMFRA total external debt as at 30 September 2020 was £34.9m of which £32.3m is in respect of borrowing undertaken with the Public Works Loans Board and the balance of £2.6m is in respect of WMFRA share of the ex-West Midlands County Council debt. The estimated average rate of interest payable on this debt in the current financial year is 5.25%.

The Chair enquired if debt re-scheduling opportunities had been impacted due to the Covid-19 pandemic. It was confirmed that liaison with Sandwell MBC was a pre-requisite for monitoring financial performance of the wider economy and significant forecasted changes that would impact on WMFRA treasury management would be advised as a matter of urgent notification.

3. Investment - as at 30 September 2020, WMFRA investments totalled £61m invested with Sandwell MBC. Interest received on investments is based on the average return achieved by Sandwell MBC plus 10 basis points, which for the first six months of 2020/21 was 0.327%. This compares favourably to the average three-month LIBID rate of 0.11%.

It was advised that interest to be received this financial year will be considerably less than the £0.3m budget following the reduction in the Bank of England Base Rate to 0.1%, which occurred to help control the economic impact of Covid-19. The loss of income has been reflecting in the WMFRA return to the Home Office (sent via the National Fire Chiefs Council) against the additional government grant allocation of £2.8m received by WMFRA.

A Member commented it was pleasing that WMFRA was able to continue investing during these challenging times.

The Committee **noted** the report and appendices and **approved** the prudential and treasury indicators.

31/20 **Request from Dependant for the Reinstatement of a Widows Pension**

The Chair summarised the context of the previous report on this item presented to the Committee on 27 July 2020. The Committee had deferred decision pending further clarity and detail on the request. Paul Gwynn was invited to update Members on progress, the content of this report and options placed for their decision.

Members engaged in discussion upon the entitlement for reinstatement, consideration of potential hardship and precedence of such a request either past or into the future. The

four options available to the Committee were considered regarding these subject areas. Paul Gwynn confirmed to the Committee of this being the third request during an approximate ten-year period, for which in this case, the rules of the Firefighters' Pension Scheme 1992 provide no specific guidance to advise discussion on the items being considered.

The conclusion of the Committee was the request to reinstate the pension could not be upheld. The Widow was in receipt of pension from a second marriage, which superseded the receipt of that from the Firefighters Pension Scheme upon re-marriage; the case for hardship was insufficient to the request and; the precedent for such a request was not set but may do so if upheld in this instance. The Chair and Paul Gwynn confirmed to the Committee the appeals process as referenced in the Legal Implications section of the report.

The Committee **decision** was to reject the application.

32/20 **The Remedy Report**

Paul Gwynn advised the Committee of a proposed withdrawal of the report. There had been further legal guidance received by the Home Office upon the progression of immediate detriment cases arising from the McCloud/Sargeant ruling. Upon notification on 23 October 2020, the Service had referred details to the WMFRA legal advisors for their subsequent review. Until receipt of an updated legal opinion, the Committee cannot be advised of a final or fully informed recommendation.

The Chair acknowledged this development and the Committee **agreed** to the withdrawal of the report.

33/20 **Audit Progress and Sector Update**

In advance of presenting the report, Richard Percival provided an update on progress of the West Midlands Fire Service (WMFS) audit for 2019/20. He confirmed that assurance of the West Midlands Pension Fund audit remained incomplete, however was anticipated imminently. Upon that receipt, the WMFS audit could be finalised, for which additional peer review would be completed given the recent consultation

announcements regarding the McCloud/Sargeant judgement on Fire Fighter pension remedy.

A contextual overview of the Redmond Review on Public Audit and its outcome was provided. The purpose of the review was to assess the effectiveness of audit in local authorities and the transparency of financial reporting. The background was of an external audit market requiring a system of audit that guaranteed coherence and public accountability, a current local audit market that is very fragile, together with a current fee structure that does not enable auditors to fulfil the role in an entirely satisfactory way. These factors combined to a significant risk that the firms currently holding local audit contracts will withdraw from the market.

The recommendations of the review are; to establish a new regulator; revise the audit fee structure (i.e. increase) to ensure that adequate resources are deployed to meet the full extent of local audit requirements; return to a 30 September deadline (from 31 July) for publishing audited local authority accounts each year; simplify the presentation of statutory accounts; recognise the role of authorities in improving governance and reporting and; development of audited and reconciled accounts summaries.

Richard Percival confirmed Grant Thornton are supportive of the review and its recommendations, aspects of which have been discussed with the Committee during previous meetings, by example market capacity and skills therein, fee structures, reporting deadlines and account formats.

A Member enquired why the publication deadline should be set back to September. Richard Percival explained the complexity and scope of an audit was challenging for completion by 31 July, which was a short period of four months since closure of accounts on 31 March each year. The extension would enable the provision of resources and skills to cover all aspects of an audit.

The Chair stated an appreciation of the work undertaken by Officers of WMFS and Grant Thornton to meet the required deadlines and quality of audit. Richard Percival confirmed the audit for 2020/21 would be completed within the existing audit system and that remote email sign off for the current audit year was permissible given the Covid-19 situation.

A contextual overview of the Revised Value for Money Audit Arrangements was provided to the Committee. The National Audit Office (NAO) will adopt from 2021 a new Code of Audit Practice comprising three main changes; a new set of key criteria, covering governance, financial sustainability and improvements in economy, efficiency and effectiveness; more extensive reporting, with a requirement on the auditor to produce a commentary on arrangements across all of the key criteria, rather than the current 'reporting by exception' approach and; the replacement of the binary (qualified / unqualified) approach to value for money conclusions, with more sophisticated judgements on performance and key recommendations on any significant weaknesses in arrangements identified during the audit. Attention of Members was drawn to the detail of these broad areas being contained within the report, concluding with reference to the Auditor's Annual Report being replaced with an Annual Audit Letter to be published at the same time as the Auditor's Report on the Financial Statements.

Richard Percival confirmed that Grant Thornton intend to work closely with the NAO and other audit firms to ensure consistency of application of the new guidance. He stated the new approach will potentially be more challenging, as well as rewarding, for audited bodies involving discussions at a wider and more strategic level. The reporting, planning and risk assessment which underpins the approach will require more audit time, requiring delivery through a wider skill mix than in previous years. Grant Thornton estimate an increased fee of £6,500 for the WMFS audit in 2021/22, an increase that is line with those proposed for their other public sector audits.

A Member enquired if the revised approach enabled the Committee to be sighted of draft reports in advance as is current

practice. Richard Percival confirmed affirmatively and draft reports would not be withheld.

The Committee **noted** the content of the report and appendices.

34/20 **Internal Audit – Progress Report**

John Matthews of Sandwell MBC presented the report. The definitions, context and activities for completion within the Internal Audit Plan and how they advise overall Audit Opinion were summarised for the Committee. He explained the purpose of Internal Audit is to give an opinion on the adequacy of the Service system control measures and risk management processes.

The Committee were advised of Covid-19 related staff re-deployments delaying progress of the annual plan for this municipal year. There were six audits in progress and six to be commenced, however it was assured that historically most audit activity with WMFS was completed during the second half of a year. The Chair expressed reassurance on progress of the audit plan.

A Member sought clarification on what constituted ad-hoc training, that being confirmed by John Matthews as mainly Counter Fraud and the roles and responsibilities of Members in fulfilling their duties on the Committee. In follow up the Member enquired should training be a continuous cycle for Members. The Chair commented to Members that Internal Audit were also reliant on being advised of their training needs. John Matthews affirmed the Committee receives Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Audit updates for general issues awareness, which can advise potential training requirements.

The Committee **noted** the content of the report.

35/20 **Update on Topical, Legal and Regulatory Issues**

The Committee **noted** there were no further updates arising.

36/20 **Verbal Update on Audit and Risk Work Programme 2020-21**

The Committee **noted** the progress to develop its work programme for 2020-21 and proposed presentation at its meeting scheduled for 07 December 2020.

The meeting closed at 11.50 hours.

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