

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

4 NOVEMBER 2019

1. **SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORKING GROUP – BUSINESS CONTINUITY ARRANGEMENTS**

Report of the CLERK.

RECOMMENDED

- 1.1 THAT the Committee review the two options proposed to provide additional business continuity arrangements
- 1.2 THAT the Committee submits its recommendation to the Fire Authority

2. **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

This report is submitted to support the Committee in its review of the two options proposed to provide additional business continuity arrangements for the Service.

3. **BACKGROUND**

A Policy Planning Forum was held on 17 September 2019. At the meeting, a presentation on the Service's business continuity arrangements was delivered to Members.

Officers had assessed and updated corporate risk 6 'Business Continuity and Preparedness'. The presentation provided an overview of the Service's level of assurance regarding its business continuity arrangements and Members were informed of the options for revising its arrangements.

The Scrutiny Committee requested that the business continuity options be brought before the Committee for scrutiny.

An extra meeting of the Committee was convened on 26 September 2019 in which the business continuity options were considered in more detail including:

- Review of the business continuity information
- Working Group discussion, aligned to questions posed by Members
- Timeline for the review and next steps

The Committee agreed that:

- The proposed options for business continuity arrangements would be the subject of a review by the Scrutiny Committee
- The scope of the review would be to consider the two proposed options for the business continuity arrangements
- The report on the business continuity arrangements which was due to be submitted to the Fire Authority on 30 September 2019 was to be deferred to allow for the completion of the scrutiny review process

As a result of the above, the Scrutiny Committee Working Group met on 21 October 2019. Upon the request of the Committee, the following witnesses were called to provide information in answer to Members' questions:

- A representative of the Fire Brigade's Union
- Representatives of an external provider who could provide option two
- A Fire and Rescue Service who had implemented a contingent workforce (option one)
- A Fire and Rescue Service who had implemented the services of an external provider (option two)
- A Health and Safety Legal Advisor
- ACFO Sarah Warnes and Hannah Spencer, Senior Resilience Officer, in an advisory capacity to the Committee

4. **WORKING GROUP REVIEW OF BUSINESS CONTINUITY ARRANGEMENTS**

4.1 The Scrutiny Committee Working Group are asked to consider and review the two options proposed to provide additional business continuity arrangements for the Service, the two options being:

1. A contingent workforce
2. An external provider

It should be noted that option 2, the provision of an external provider, is the option recommended by the Chief Fire Officer to the Fire Authority.

- 4.2 Upon the request of the Committee, as agreed at the meeting held on 21 October 2019, further evidence will be gathered by Officers and by independent witnesses to provide information for consideration by Members during the Scrutiny Committee Working Group Session (as per the meeting agenda). This will include information and clarification on the expectations of the Home Office in terms of the level of assurance that is required.
- 4.3 A legal advisor and Officers of the Service continue to be available in an advisory capacity to provide information for consideration by Members.
- 4.4 It is considered that the information provided by the independent witnesses and Officers, in addition to the information already provided to Members via the Policy Planning Forum held on 17 September 2019 and the associated Fire Authority Report 'Business Continuity Arrangements', will provide the evidence base to enable the Committee to come to a decision on the two options that have been put forward by the Service.
- 4.5 Following agreement by Members, the Committee are to submit its recommendation regarding the two options to the Fire Authority at the next scheduled meeting of the Authority, 18 November 2019. The recommendation of the Committee will be submitted in addition to the report on the business continuity arrangements (which had been previously deferred on 30 September 2019).
- 4.6 Members should note that, in accordance with the Committee's terms of reference, 'In order to allow for separation of the scrutiny and decision-making functions, findings and recommendations of Scrutiny reviews will be presented to the Authority by the Chair of the Scrutiny Committee. Members (excluding substitutes) of the Scrutiny Committee shall not vote on matters arising from Scrutiny reviews.'

5. **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.

6. **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.

7. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

8. **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no environmental implications arising from this report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Policy Planning Forum 17.09.19 – presentation on Business Continuity Arrangements

Fire Authority 30.09.19 – Business Continuity Arrangements Report (report deferred)

Scrutiny Committee Terms of Reference

The contact name for this report is Karen Gowreesunker, Clerk to the Authority, telephone number 0121 380 6677.

KAREN GOWREESUNKER
CLERK TO AUTHORITY