



WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

Monday, 13 December 2021 at 11:00

**To be held at Fire Service HQ and digitally via
Microsoft Teams**

Distribution of Councillors	
<u>Birmingham</u>	D Barrie Z Iqbal M Locke S Spence
<u>Coventry</u>	C Miks S Walsh
<u>Dudley</u>	N Barlow P Miller
<u>Sandwell</u>	C Padda K Singh
<u>Solihull</u>	P Hogarth MBE
<u>Walsall</u>	K Ferguson A Young
<u>Wolverhampton</u>	G Brackenridge J Dehar
<u>Police & Crime Commissioner</u>	S Foster
<u>Representative - Assistant PCC</u>	Wasim Ali
<u>Co-opted Members</u>	Professor S Brake TBC by ABCA
<u>Independent Member</u>	Mr M Ager
<u>Observers</u>	M Carter, UNISON
	R Merker, Fire Officer's Association
	S 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, 13 December 2021 at 11:00

At Fire Service Headquarters, 99 Vauxhall Road, Nechells,
Birmingham B7 4HW

and digitally via Microsoft Teams

for the purpose of transacting the following business:

Agenda – Public Session

- 1 To receive apologies for absence (if any)
- 2 Declarations of interests
- 3 Chair's announcements
- 4 Chief Fire Officer Announcements
- 5 Minutes of the Fire and Rescue Authority held on 04 October 2021 5 - 14
- 6 Statement of Assurance 2020-21 15 - 30
- 7 Financial Regulations 31 - 90
- 8 Monitoring of Finances 91 - 98
- 9 Analysis of Progress of Quarterly Performance Against 'Our Plan' - Quarter 2 2021-22 99 - 126
- 10 Minutes of the Collaboration and Transformation Committee held on 06 September 2021 127 - 130
- 11 Minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee meeting held on 27 September 2021 131 - 138

12	<u>Notes of the Joint Consultative Panel held on 27 September 2021</u>	139 - 140
13	<u>Minutes of the Scrutiny Committee held on 01 November 2021</u>	141 - 148

Agenda prepared by Kirsty Tuffin

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 Committee Management Information System](#)

This meeting of the West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority will be held at Fire Service Headquarters. However, please note that although the meeting will be open to the public, there will be limited capacity due to ongoing social distancing measures.

The meeting will also be held digitally via Microsoft Teams allowing observers to access remotely. To access the meeting, please contact a member of the 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) or provide guidance if you wish to attend in person at HQ.

Clerk Name:	Karen Gowreesunker
Clerk Telephone:	0121 380 6678
Clerk Email:	Karen.Gowreesunker@wmfs.net

West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority

04 October 2021 at 1100 hours

Conducted as a public meeting at Headquarters and digitally via
Microsoft Teams

Present: Councillor Brackenridge (Chair),
Councillor Iqbal (Vice Chair),
Councillor Barrie, Councillor Barlow, Councillor Dehar,
Councillor Hogarth, Councillor Spence, Councillor Padda and
Councillor Young

Virtual: Councillor Ferguson, Councillor Locke, Councillor Miller,
Councillor Miks, Councillor Singh and Councillor Walsh

Mr Wasim Ali (Representative of the Police and Crime
Commissioner)

Professor S Brake, co-opted member – health

Mike Ager – Independent Member (Audit and Risk)

Maurice Carter (Unison) and Steve Price Hunt (Fire
Brigade's Union)

34/21 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Richard Merker, Fire Officers'
Association.

35/21 Declarations of Interest

The Chair declared a personal non-pecuniary interest item in item
8, 9 and 10 as per the agenda, due to being a member of the
Firefighters Pension Scheme(s).

36/21 **Chairs Announcements**

The Chair welcomed all attendees to the meeting of the full Fire Authority.

The Chair advised that Councillor Neil Eustace, a former member and Vice-Chair of West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority (WMFRA), has sadly passed away at the age of 65. Councillor Eustace was elected to WMFRA in July 2004 and served for just under 14 years until his retirement in June 2018. He participated across a wide variety of committees during his time.

The funeral took place on 20 September at St Edburgha's Church in Yardley and the family asked for donations to be made to The Salvation Army or Marie Curie, so Members may wish to consider this in Councillor Eustace's Memory.

Our thoughts and condolences go to his family and friends at this very difficult time and to all those who knew him and worked alongside him. A minute silence was held.

The Fire Authority would continue to use a hybrid approach to meetings and committee's where this is a decision-making forum. PPF and JCP can continue take place digitally as these are not decision-making forums. This would be reviewed every 30 days.

Praise was given on the successful implementation of the first phase of Oracle. This had been the result of significant commitment of a number of members of staff across the Service, led by Prakash (Kash) Singh.

37/21 **Chief Fire Officer's Announcements**

The Chief Fire Officer (CFO) welcomed all attendees to the meeting.

The CFO advised that Councillor Hogarth's 80th Birthday had taken place, a few days prior to the meeting, and wished him a belated Happy Birthday on behalf of the service. A Happy 60th Birthday message on behalf of the service was also given to Mike Griffiths, Treasurer to the Authority.

Best wishes were extended to Roy Wilsher OBE QFSM who had been newly appointed as Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS).

Kirsty Tuffin, Democratic Services Officer, was introduced and welcomed by the CFO on behalf of the Service.

HMICFRS would be reviewing the Marauding Terrorist Attacks (MTA) and issuing a letter that would be shared with the Authority, once received. Both CFO and Mike Griffiths had also extended their membership for a further year on the Metropolitan Joint Council.

Praise was given to the three West Midlands Fire Service (WMFS) teams that participated in this year's National Breathing Apparatus Challenge. Out of 20 teams, 2 of the WMFS teams finished first and second in the challenge, displaying both skills and great knowledge. In the individual awards, Firefighters from WMFS came first place in the Best Entry Control Officer and Best Fireground Operative. A huge congratulations and thanks were given to those who participated.

Following the excitement of the Commonwealth Games, hosted in Birmingham in 2022, the WMFS would be hosting the UK Rescue Organisation's 2022 Festival of Rescue. This is a great opportunity to showcase WMFS as a service at the heart of our communities, whilst demonstrating how we make the West Midlands Safer, Stronger and Healthier. Tyne & Wear recently hosted the 2021 event in Newcastle that had great political involvement and encouraged Members to be involved as much as possible.

38/21 **Minutes of the Fire and Rescue Authority 21 June 2021**

Resolved:

1. That the minutes of the Fire Authority meeting held on 21 June 2021 be confirmed as a correct record.

39/21 **Community Risk Management Plan Objectives**

Karen Gowreesunker, Clerk to the Authority, provided an overview of the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) Objectives Report that outlined the progress made with the development and delivery of the strategic CRMP objectives through the WMFS 3-year rolling strategy.

Karen Gowreesunker advised the Authority that following the Authority's approval on the CRMP proposals in February 2021, and further updates in August and September 2021, the Strategic Enabling Team (SET) had developed each proposal into the following 5 objectives:

1. Survivability
2. Review of our approach to responding to Automatic Fire Alarms
3. Establishing a blended approach to the use of our fleet, incorporating reviewing our approach to responding to road traffic collisions and secondary fires
4. Emerging risks
5. Reducing health inequalities

These objectives had been incorporated using the principles outlined within the report and focused on how WMFS would continue to evolve and improve its services to communities. Alternative options to support the delivery of the CRMP objectives had been considered however, some were not aligned to the principles, as per the report, and it had been agreed that these were not viable or desirable options.

Representatives from the Fire Brigade's Union, re-assured Members that the trade unions and WMFS were working and engaging with one another on the CRMP work. The CFO echoed this and advised that all engagements with stakeholders and trade unions on this work had been/would be, conducted in line with the services policies and excel this expectation.

Resolved:

1. That the progress of the evidence-based Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) objectives as a key platform for the delivery of the 3-year rolling Strategy, be noted.

40/21 **Decision taken under 'Matters of Urgency' – Retention of Retired Employees**

The CFO advised Members that the amendments made to the policy had incorporated key actions that WMFS had already been conducting. These changes provided the ability to take into consideration the skill set etc, of an individual. These changes are going through the internal consultation process. Both the Chair of the Authority and Leader of the main opposition had been consulted prior to being implemented.

Resolved:

1. That the decision taken and approved under 'Matters of Urgency', whereby the new Retention Policy be adopted, be noted.

41/21 **Audit Findings Report 2020-2021**

Mike Griffiths, Treasurer to the Authority, provided an overview of the Audit Findings 2020-2021 Report submitted by Grant Thornton. The report outlined the key messages arising from the external audit work undertaken during the year.

Mike Griffiths advised the Authority that although a substantial amount of the audit had been completed and no audit adjustments had arisen from the audit work so far, the report was not finalised for reasons outlined in Appendix 1 of the report. It was anticipated that the Auditors Annual Report would be issued by 31 December 2021, as a result of the value for money work being in-complete. It was anticipated that the final report would be presented back to the Fire Authority at a later date.

Resolved:

1. That the contents of the Audit Findings Report be noted.

42/21 **Statement of Accounts 2020-2021**

Mike Griffiths provided an overview of the Statement of Accounts 2020-2021 report that provided the Statement of Accounts for the financial year ending 31 March 2021.

Mike Griffiths advised the Authority that the draft Statement of Accounts had been taken to the Audit and Risk Committee in July 2021, where a thorough review of the accounts took place. Minor changes were made, and the final Statement of Accounts were approved by the Audit and Risk Committee on 27 September 2021.

The Authority were advised that there had been an increase in both general reserves and earmarked reserves for the 2020-2021 financial year. There had been an increase of £0.015m for general reserves and an increase of £6.780m for earmarked reserves, which included Government funding for Covid-19 and business rates relief grants. The long-term liabilities of the services pension position were also highlighted.

No long-term borrowing was undertaken during 2020-2021. The Authority had a total long term borrowing of £33.7m at the end of the 2019-2020 which had decreased to £31.5m at the end of 2020-2021. This position was expected to improve further during 2021-2022 as no long-term borrowing was anticipated. Members were re-assured that the value of the services long-term assets, partially funded by loans, had a value of £135.2m.

Resolved:

1. That the Statement of Accounts for 2020-2021, as set out in Appendix A, be noted.
2. That the statement of Accounts summary for 2020-2021, set out in appendix B, be noted.

43/21 **Monitoring of Finances**

Mike Griffiths presented the Monitoring of Finances report that outlined the monitoring of the Authorities finances for the current

financial year up to August 2021, for the revenue budget and the Capital Programme.

Mike Griffiths advised the Authority that the revenue budgeted to the end of August 2021 had been compared to the actual figure as per appendix A of the report. The actual spend of the Authority up to August 2021 had been £42.597m compared to the projected budget of £42.825m therefore a favourable variance of £228K was shown.

The Authority were advised that the monitoring statement included the 1.5% pay award for Grey Book Staff, implemented in July 2021. No pay award for Green Book Staff was reflected within the report and if/when approved, would need to be considered in the budget.

The Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee wished to thank members of the committee, the internal and external auditors, and all officers including all members of the WMFS finance team for their continued contributions and support.

Resolved:

1. That the contents of the Monitoring of Finances report, be noted.

44/21 Contracts Awards Summary for Period to 30 September

Mike Griffiths presented the Contract Awards Summary for the period to 30 September. The report summarised the contracts in excess of £250,000 that had been awarded since April 2021.

The Committee were advised that as agreed by the Authority, the 6-month summary report of the tender contract awards had been submitted to the Authority for information purposes. The total spend for each contract was also included in the report as per appendix 1.

Resolved:

1. That the attached appendix summarising the contracts in excess of £250,000 that have been awarded since April 2021, be noted.

45/21 Minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee held on 07 June 2021

Resolved:

1. That the minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee held on 7 June 2021 were received.

46/21 Minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee held on 19 July 2021

Mike Griffiths advised the Authority that following the Chief Fire Officer's recommendation, a revised report had been submitted to Audit and Risk Committee, held on 27 September 2021, to reverse the decision, as per item 25/21 of the minutes, that in line with the legal advice received, the Scheme Administrator continued to apply guidance issued by the Home Office in August 2020 and subsequently updated in June 2021.

The Authority were advised that following the decision in July 2021 to implement the Home Office Guidance, the Chief Fire Officer had recommended the reversion of this decision as the guidance would result in members who have had a contributions holiday being treated differently to other members that fall within the Immediate Detriment category. This could result in the view aligned to the Equality Act that they are receiving less favourable treatment. Other Fire Authorities/Pension Boards were processing contribution holiday scheme members as immediate detriment cases and not further delaying the outcome of remedy.

Steven Price Hunt, Fire Brigade's Union, thanked the Audit and Risk Committee for making the Immediate Detriment decision, as they believed it could have been discriminatory towards members.

Resolved:

1. That the minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee held on 19 July were received.

47/21 Minutes of the Appointments, Standards and Appeals Committee held on 12 July 2021

Resolved:

1. That the minutes of the Appointments, Standards and Appeals Committee held on 12 July 2021 were received.

48/21 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 paragraph 3 of the Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006 for the reasons stated below:

Included information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

49/21 Planned Procurement Exercise for 2021-2022

Mike Griffiths presented a planned procurement report for 2021-2022 that outlined the planned tender exercises and planned routes to market/funding provision as per Procurement Policy 1/8.

Mike Griffiths advised the Authority that in line with the Authority's procurement procedure, all planned procurement exercises over the value of £250k were outlined as per the appendices attached to the report.

[Email correspondence had been circulated by the Clerk to Members providing information on the supply of fire alarms and fuel, with an update report scheduled to be taken to the Policy Planning Forum on 18 October. Mike and his team were corresponding with the suppliers for WMFS fire alarms and talks were underway with other existing suppliers to help mitigate any impact to the WMFS. Members were re-assured that WMFS had been well positioned in light of the fuel crisis.

Following discussions of food banks and referrals for vulnerable people, the Chair recommended that Members visit their fire

stations who would be able to advise on how the Members could assist them and feedback to their Councils. It was agreed that dates would be circulated to Members for them to participate in site visits.

Resolved:

1. That the following tender exercises for the provision of various works, goods and services to West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority during 2021-2022, be approved:
 - A. Doors and Windows
 - B. Energy
 - C. BA Radios
2. That it be agreed that dates be circulated to Members for them to participate in site visits.

The meeting ended at 12.09 hours.

Kirsty Tuffin Strategic Hub 0121 380 6906 Kirsty.tuffin@wmfs.net

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

13 DECEMBER 2021

1. STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE 2020-2021

Joint report of the Chief Fire Officer, the Clerk to the Authority, and the Monitoring Officer.

RECOMMENDED

- 1.1 THAT the Authority approves the Statement of Assurance 2020-21.

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 2.1 This report is submitted to seek approval for the Statement of Assurance 2020-21 which the Authority are legally obliged to produce and review on an annual basis under the Fire and Rescue National Framework.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Fire and Rescue National Framework for England published in May 2018 sets out a requirement for Fire and Rescue Authorities to review and publish a 'Statement of Assurance' on an annual basis. The requirement is contained within Chapter 4 of the Framework which focuses on governance.
- 3.2 In line with this expectation, the Authority's Statement of Assurance (attached as Appendix 1) has been reviewed for the year 2020-21 and is submitted for approval.
- 3.3 The 'Guidance on Statements of Assurance for Fire and Rescue Authorities in England' issued by the Government in May 2013 remains current. The guidance stipulates the content of a Statement of Assurance.

The following three key areas must form part of any Statement of Assurance:

- Financial
- Governance
- Operational

3.4 Additionally, the guidance states that Fire and Rescue Authorities may wish to include a section on any potential improvements they have identified across their accounting, governance, or operational responsibilities to communities. These have been included in the three main areas above to assist the contextual flow of the statement; reflecting work to continuously improve our Service Delivery Model through the integration of Prevention, Protection and Response activity to deliver our vision of 'Making West Midlands safer, stronger and healthier'.

3.5 With regard to our arrangements the following are all part of West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority's (WMFRA) assurance process.

3.5.1 **Financial**

The Authority publishes its Statement of Accounts, pay policy, transparency data, internal and external audit information. Each year the auditors discharge pre-agreed audit plans and are invited to the Fire Authority and Audit and Risk Committee to give their findings. Additionally, the outcomes are published via Fire Authority meetings, the internet and contained within the Annual Report.

3.5.2 **Governance**

Each year the Authority produces its Annual Governance Statement in support of its accounts. This statement expresses the measures undertaken to ensure propriety. In addition, the Fire Authority maintains a level of scrutiny of the Service through its governance framework, the reports of which are all publicly available.

3.5.3 **Operational**

The Fire Authority publishes and consults on its Community Safety Strategy (Community Risk Management Plan) on at least a three-yearly basis. This process of consultation is robust and is in line with the Fire Authority's own consultation strategy which is based on government guidance.

- 3.6 It is reassuring to note that the majority of the information required as part of the Statement of Assurance is established within the organisation and the vast majority of the documents are already within the public domain. We do acknowledge the benefits of bringing our key financial, governance and operational assurances together within a single document in terms of providing transparency and assurance to our staff, communities, partners and the Government. The Statement of Assurance also ensures compliance with our specific data transparency requirements, for example the Local Government Transparency Code.
- 3.7 The Authority is required to review this document annually to reflect the previous year's activity.

4. **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

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

5. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The preparation of the Statement of Assurance document is a legal requirement as part of the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England.
- 5.2 There are no matters arising out of this report that are required to be brought to the attention of the Monitoring Officer.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The Statement of Assurance will be a web-based publication. No hard copies will be produced and as such there are no direct financial implications.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Fire and Rescue National Framework for England, Home Office, 2018.

Guidance on statements of assurance for Fire and Rescue Authorities in England, DCLG, May 2013.

Report by the Home Secretary on Fire and Rescue Authorities' progress with the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England (July 2018).

Firefighter fitness: addendum to the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England

The contact name for this report is Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Gary Taylor, Strategic Enabler – Process, telephone number 0121 380 6914.

PHIL LOACH
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

KAREN GOWREESUNKER
CLERK TO THE AUTHORITY

SATINDER SAHOTA
MONITORING OFFICER

Appendix 1

Item 6

Statement of Assurance 2020/21

Introduction

Fire and Rescue Authorities must provide annual assurance on financial, governance and operational matters and show how they have had due regard to the expectations set out in their Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) and the requirements included in the Framework.

The West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority is required to publish an annual Statement of Assurance as part of the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England. The Statement of Assurance for West Midlands Fire and Rescue Service is published annually, to provide an easy and accessible way for communities, government, local authorities, and partners to assess the Authority's performance and governance arrangements.

National guidance on the content of Statements of Assurance published in May 2013 suggests that where Authorities have already set out relevant information that is clear, accessible and user friendly within existing documents, they may wish to include extracts or links to these documents within their Statement of Assurance. This Statement includes extracts or links to key documents where relevant. This document sets out the approach taken to ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place in terms of governance and operational delivery. It is intended to provide transparent information about its financial, governance and operational affairs.

Foreword – Chairman & CFO

Welcome to the annual Statement of Assurance from Councillor Greg Brackenridge, Chair of West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority (WMFRA), and Phil Loach, Chief Fire Officer, West Midlands Fire Service (WMFS).

This Statement of Assurance provides the reassurance that in 2020/21 your Fire and Rescue Service contributed to our vision of 'Making the West Midlands, Safer, Stronger and Healthier'.

As we emerge from the devastating impact of the coronavirus pandemic, there has never been a more poignant time to reflect on that journey over the last 12 months. 2020/2021 has undoubtedly been one of the most challenging and transformational years WMFS has ever faced.

Whilst our outstanding emergency response continued as normal throughout the pandemic, and the majority of serious incidents were attended in under five minutes, all other areas of the Service had to swiftly flex and adapt ways of working. Evolving government guidance and announcements meant staff had to meet challenges head on, ensuring the most vulnerable were front and centre to every decision made. This was later reflected in Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) report that praised our new ways of working and our 'innovative' use of technology which enabled

flexible and efficient home working and allowed for the continuation and adaptation of critical prevention and protection activities.

As Chair of the WMFRA and Chief Fire Officer of WMFS, we can say that although we don't fully know what lies beyond the pandemic, what we can say with certainty is that WMFS will continue to put its communities front and centre to ensure we deliver our vision.

We are also satisfied that during 2020/21 the business of the service has been conducted in accordance with good standards and that public money has been accurately accounted for.

Finance

The WMFRA places significant importance in ensuring that its financial management arrangements are in line with the expectations of a public body. As a public service the Authority are responsible for ensuring that public money is properly accounted for and spent in a way that provides value for money.

Statement of Accounts

The Authority's 2020/2021 Statement of Accounts is prepared in accordance with CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom, under International Financial Reporting Standards. The Authority's accounts for the financial year 2020/21 consist of the following:

- The Comprehensive Income and Expenditure statement, the Authority's main revenue account, covering income and expenditure on all services
- The Movement in Reserves Statement, which shows movement in the year on different reserves held by the Authority
- The Balance Sheet, which sets out the financial position of the Authority at the 31 March 2021
- The Cash Flow Statement, showing movements in cash and cash equivalents during the year and the cash position at the end of the year
- The Pension Fund Account, which summarises the movements relating to the firefighters' pension schemes

The majority of the net cost of Fire Service expenditure relates to the cost of services, £118.277m. The total Provision of Services in 2020/2021 shows a deficit of £55.211m. Within this deficit is total expenditure of the Authority which for 2020/2021 was £170.715m.

The total income of the Authority in 2020/2021 was £115.504m.

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government provided £4.137 million of additional funding to support Covid-19 related service delivery. Two grants were received during 2020/21 to cover the cost of additional and essential services, offset income losses and provide financial support to local business. Further details of the grants provided by central government are contained in the Authority's Statement of Accounts 2020/21.

Governance

The Authority is required to produce an “Annual Governance Statement” which is published in July each year at the same time as the “Annual Statement of Accounts”. The Governance Statement is based on an ongoing process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of the Authority’s policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised, and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.

It explains how our service manages its governance and internal control arrangements and measures the effectiveness of those arrangements.

Governance Assurance

WMFRA is a Joint Authority established under the Local Government Act 1985, amended “The Fire and Rescue Authority (Membership) Order 2017”. It is a supervisory body that ensure that WMFS perform efficiently and in the best interests of the public and the community it serves.

- WMFRA have statutory responsibilities laid down in legislation including the:-
- Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004
- Civil Contingencies Act 2004
- Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
- Fire and Rescue Services (Emergencies) (England) Order 2007
- Localism Act 2011
- Fire and Rescue National Framework for England 2018
- The Policing and Crime Act 2017
- The Health and Safety Work Act 1974

WMFRA is led by its Chair, Councillor Greg Brackenridge and it comprises of fifteen elected Members who represent the seven local authorities that make up the West Midlands, the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner and two co-opted Members (one representing health and one representing business).

The seven local authorities are:- Birmingham, Coventry, Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull, Walsall, and Wolverhampton councils.

WMFRA have a Constitution that outlines how it carries out its affairs. It explains how decisions are made and brings together in one document the detailed rules and procedures that govern the behaviour of those who work for or represent the Authority.

The Authority Members have developed and adopted a local Code of Corporate Governance document which incorporates how the Authority meets the seven principles of good governance. The Fire Authority ensures that its governance structures comply with the seven core principles and sub-principles of the CIPFA/SOLACE – ‘Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework 2016’.

These principles are adhered to via the processes outlined in the Constitution.

To enable the authority to carry out its duties effectively, in addition to the Fire Authority meetings there are several committees and regular forums that include

- Appointments, Standards and Appeals Committee
- Audit and Risk Committee
- Collaboration and Transformation
- Joint Consultative Panel
- Pensions Board
- Policy Planning Forum
- Scrutiny Committee

You can find out more about the Fire Authority and its Members on the website, www.wmfs.net. In addition, there is a Committee Management Information System (CMIS) which provides details of all Authority and Committee meetings, reports, minutes, and records of decisions.

External Audit

The accounts are audited by independent external auditors (Grant Thornton UK LLP) who in addition to auditing the accounts, also provide assurance that the Authority has the correct arrangements in place for securing economy, efficiency, and effectiveness in its use of resources. The full external audit work programme and the risk-based approach are explained in Grant Thornton's Audit Plan. Their findings and their opinion on the Authority's accounts and the value for money is included within the Audit Findings Report. As a result of the external audit work in 2020/21, there were no significant matters arising that required the Authority to implement an action for improvement. The Annual Audit Letter summarises the key findings for the 2020/2021 year.

Internal Audit

Our Internal Audits are carried out by Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council, the outcomes of which are reported to the WMFRA Audit and Risk Committee. The Annual Audit Plan is agreed by the Committee and progress reported on a quarterly basis. The 2020/21 annual Audit Plan included the following nine areas of review: Absence Management, Accounts Receivable and Payable, Budgetary Control, Data Protection, Fixed Asset Accounts, Governance, Payroll and Risk Management. Of these, eight were rated with Substantial Assurance and one Limited Assurance.

Each audit assesses

- The level of risk to the Authority assigned to each auditable area (high, medium, or low)
- The number and type of recommendations accepted by management
- The level of assurance given to each system under review (substantial, satisfactory or limited)

Other sources of assurance on which the Authority may rely include:-

- The work of the External Auditors (currently Grant Thornton)
- The result of any quality accreditation
- The outcome of visits by HM Revenue & Customs
- Other pieces of consultancy or third-party work designed to alert the Authority to areas of improvement
- Other external review agencies

Data Transparency & Accountability

In preparing this Statement of Assurance, the Authority has considered the principles of transparency, promoting openness and accountability through reporting on local decision making, public spending and democratic processes.

All relevant information is published on the West Midlands Fire Service website in line with the Local Government Transparency Code 2015, including information on how the Authority has spent its public money, demonstrating the Authority's commitment to transparency and accountability.

The audit of Governance during 2020/21 sought the objective of assurance on the adoption, adequacy and application of the Local Government Transparency Code by the Authority. The outcome provided **substantial assurance** over the adequacy of the controls reviewed as part of the process to mitigate risks to an acceptable level.

OPERATIONAL

Community Risk Management Plan

WMFS has adopted the title Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) in replacement of the Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) previously reported upon. The Service has been in the forefront of the development of a CRMP framework nationally, through its contribution and engagement with the National Fire Chief Council (NFCC) project. WMFS implements its CRMP in conjunction with its medium-term financial plan and Annual Plan which together comprise our three-rolling strategy for implementing our Service Delivery Model.

In late 2020, following the previously reported delay due to the General Election and subsequently Covid-19 pandemic, the Service undertook a public consultation on its next CRMP. There were 9,569 respondents to the consultation, which was conducted in accordance with the professional requirements of the Consultation Institute. The outcomes of the consultation are subject to a project and pilot evaluation of evidence and options, for the approval of a new CRMP in early 2022 by the Fire and Rescue Authority. Details of the

project and its process for realisation will be reported in the 2021/22 Statement of Assurance.

Mutual Aid Arrangements

WMFRA has mutual assistance arrangements in place with all the Fire and Rescue Services that surround the West Midlands – Hereford and Worcester, Shropshire, Staffordshire, and Warwickshire. Arrangements are in place to support the neighbouring Fire Services in the event of a large-scale incident or where the resources of our neighbouring Fire Services were greatly reduced.

The Authority is a partner in the West Midlands Conurbation Local Resilience Forum (LRF), the statutory multi-agency partnership set up to ensure the local authorities, emergency services and environment agency in partnership with other services including utility companies fulfil their duties under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. The forum enables the planning to be in place in preparation for localised incidents and disastrous emergencies which may impact on the communities within the West Midlands.

In parallel the Police and Crime Act 2017 places a duty on Fire, Police and Ambulance services to collaborate to improve the efficiency and the effectiveness of emergency services. WMFS work with partners to optimise multi-agency response and resilience through enhanced working relationships, in line with the Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Programme (JESIP).

During 2020/21 these arrangements were significantly drawn upon to co-ordinate and manage the evolving impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. WMFS was represented as joint Chair of the Strategic Co-ordination Group (SCG) for the West Midlands region following the declaration of Covid-19 as a major incident in March 2020. The group comprised the principal public sector agencies for liaison on response and prevention activity to assist the communities across the breadth of the region. The HMICFRS Covid-19 inspection drew reference to the effective influence of the Service within the SCG during the period of its standing.

In support of National Resilience and enabled through Central Government funding, the service has enhanced its capability to respond to major emergencies such as terrorist attacks, industrial and domestic accidents, and natural disasters. WMFS are also a partner in the Multi-Agency Specialist Assessment Team (MASAT) which provides an initial assessment of potential Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear or Explosive (CBRNE) incidents.

The Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) and International Search and Rescue (ISAR) teams are on call 24/7 providing the ability to rapidly respond to incidents locally, nationally, and internationally, assisting and undertaking search and rescue operations.

Health Safety & Wellbeing

The Service is committed to complying with its duties under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and associated legislation for health, safety, and well-being. In line with delivering

a “safer, stronger and healthier West Midlands”, it is important to maintain focus on ensuring that the service continues to develop a positive approach to employee health, safety and wellbeing and to protect others from harm from its activities. To this end, the aim is for an assertive, effective, and safe approach when responding to emergencies.

The national tripartite agreement between the NFCC, NJC, and the FBU to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic, introduced a framework of activities additional to the role map. These ranged from delivery of food and medical parcels, ambulance service assistance and mass casualty movement of bodies. WMFS ensured that all additional activity was comprehensively risk assessed and process for delivery approved by local partners to the agreement. The Coronavirus Act 2020 was at the forefront of consideration and adherence in both core and additional activities.

The Service adopts an assertive, effective and safe approach to its activities. In support of this approach, service delivery was amended for the safety of both employees and communities. The Safe and Well/Safe and Strong programmes were digitally enabled through mobile phone technology, ensuring risk management was appropriate to the level of vulnerability. Each WMFS site was limited to essential access only and core teams retained and transferable cover by significant service need only.

The Service established a Scientific Cell comprising senior leaders from the medical community and WMFS to advise a framework within which all employees would work. The ‘three domains’ of health, safety and well-being across the Service was health surveillance, infection protection control and safe systems of work. The communication of these domains was through a bespoke intranet site and staff briefings; their application and assurance were via managerial oversight and personal accountability of all to the risk assessments in situ. A series of professional development objectives were introduced to supplement engagement.

The Occupational Health Team composed a comprehensive programme of emotional health and well-being support for all employees. These sought to provide specialist expertise to assist the personal and professional resilience of staff in the changing working environment and circumstances of service delivery.

Effective safeguarding is integral to the delivery of WMFS strategic objectives, specifically Prevention and Protection. A review of safeguarding in WMFS was completed during 2019 by a consultant from the West Midlands Association of Directors of Adult Social Services. A significant outcome of the review was the appointment in late 2020 of a Safeguarding Manager within the People Support Team of the Service.

The role was appointed to progress the action plan arising from the safeguarding review. In so doing, the role holder acts as the Delegated Designated Safeguarding Officer as defined in legislation and on behalf of the Strategic Enabler for People, leading and managing safeguarding responsibilities across WMFS. The Safeguarding Manager engages and works with key stakeholders and employees to embed a safeguarding culture based upon robust policies and procedures.

External Operational Assurance

Our Plan forms part of the WMFS rolling three-year strategy. The operational year of 2020/2021 has undoubtedly been one of the most challenging and transformational years WMFS has ever faced. While our outstanding emergency response continued as normal throughout the pandemic, all other areas of the Service had to swiftly flex and adapt ways of working.

Evolving government guidance and announcements led to staff meeting new challenges head on, ensuring the most vulnerable were front and centre to every decision made. A significant project was our teams assisting in the commissioning the NHS Nightingale Hospital Birmingham. It was the second of the temporary hospitals set up by NHS England to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic, constructed inside the National Exhibition Centre, Solihull, and opened on 16 April 2020

This collaborative contribution was reflected in [Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services](#) (HMICFRS) report that praised our new ways of working and our 'innovative' use of technology which enabled flexible and efficient home working and allowed for the continuation and adaptation of critical prevention and protection activities.

The West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority (WMFRA) governance of the Service was amended during the year in accordance with emerging legislation and with due regard to the WMFRA Constitution. During the period 03 April 2020 – 07 May 2021, the Local Authorities (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority Meetings) (England) Regulations 2020 were applied to all WMFRA business. The impact was the maintenance of informed, effective and timely governance, together with safe working relationships of all contributors to the governance process.

During the period above, the Authority invoked Decisions under Matters of Urgency (Section 17.1 Authority Standing Orders), enabling the continuity of decision making by the Chief Fire Officer in consultation with the Chair of the Authority on items of strategic importance. These items were subsequently reported to the Authority when it re-convened.

Internal Operational Assurance

In order to continue to deliver our services as effectively as possible during the pandemic, there were several of our practices that were amended to support the new approach to working. These were enacted through our Business Continuity Plan. The senior leadership established themselves as a Business Continuity Management Team, supported by a Business Continuity Planning Team of middle managers and specialist roles. The alignment of activity was delivered via a bespoke Covid-19 risk assessment framework and project, in conjunction with a meeting and reporting structure.

Over the last 12 months, we've utilised every hurdle, success and experience in order to adapt, learn, evolve and plan more effectively for the future. This informs not only our role locally to communities but also our influence within the NFCC to develop CRMP and adopt digital transformation throughout the fire sector. While we don't fully know what lies

beyond the pandemic, what we can say with certainty is that WMFS will continue to put its communities front and centre to ensure we deliver an assertive, effective and safe service.

The performance of WMFS during 2020/21

Staff skills competency, values and behaviours are at the very core of our service delivery. Regardless of role, we want all staff to understand how significant their contribution is and how it fits in to the bigger picture in terms of helping us to achieve our response, prevention and protection priorities. Embracing awareness of value for money and progression of a digital approach to working underpins our service improvements and cultural development.

Response

WMFS know that its five-minute response is based on evidence and knowledge of risk and that it saves lives, homes, and businesses. In our last national inspection by [Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services](#), our response delivery among our communities was graded as 'Outstanding'. We have continued to deliver within our defined response times throughout the 2020/21 and the period of the pandemic.

During 2020/21 our Fire Control handled 45,027 calls, in an average of 76 seconds per call. Our firefighters attended 25,216 incidents and they arrived at the most serious in an average of just 4 minutes 32 secs.

People who use their smartphone to call us on 999 could now also be asked to send photos or videos of what they can see. We came up with the idea of '999Eye' and developed it with Capita. It has been used more than 9,245 times to help operators in our Fire Control ensure that the most appropriate resources are sent to incidents.

Prevention

The prevention work focuses on reducing people's vulnerability to the type of emergencies to which the service responds. WMFS also have specialist prevention and partnership teams who support its firefighters in reducing anti-social behaviour, including arson, and improving road safety

We carried out over 18,422 Safe & Well visits in 2020/21, of which 8,746 originated from partner referrals.

We have handed out 14,674 pieces of equipment such as smoke alarms, hearing impaired alarms, mailbox protectors and fire-retardant bedding, which has contributed to a 7.7% reduction in the number of casualties.

Although 944 people were killed or seriously injured on West Midlands roads in 2020/21 this was down nearly 10.9% from 2018/19. Our firefighters and Road Casualty Reduction Team engaged digitally with 3,599 children and young people, delivering key road safety messages.

Protection

The protection work focuses on helping businesses to thrive, making the West Midlands stronger. WMFS advises companies how best to comply with fire safety legislation, to keep its staff and customers safe.

In 2020/21 we recorded 326 accidental fires in non-domestic properties.

We have three vehicles and a team dedicated to bringing down the number of 'unwanted fire signals' from automatic fire alarms.

We attended 5,629 false alarms caused by fire alarm systems.

How WMFS do it?

WMFS aspires to continually manage delivery of risk reduction in our communities in the most relevant, effective and efficient ways available to us. As with every year, our achievements have been made possible by an exceptional and agile workforce, a blended fleet of vehicles, innovative approaches to digital communication and our ability to implement our contingency plans. We have maintained our core service provision whilst the whole world has struggled to maintain normality with Covid 19, and within the on-going financial challenges for the public sector.

During 2020/21 WMFS has adapted to the variance in activity, whilst also progressing reform to service delivery resultant of influences external and internal to the service. There was a decrease in the number of fires and road traffic collisions during the year, predominantly correlated to the pandemic, however there was an increased severity generally in these incidents.

Fire Safety Inspecting officers continued to work on progressing a Building Risk Review (BRR). On-site inspections continued to focus on high-risk premises with cladding, whilst the processing of data continued in conjunction with Response crews and Data Governance Team to establish a repository of Site Specific Risk Information (SSRI) that could be more readily accessed by all stations and Fire Control. This enabled the on-going development of SSRI management into a digitised format embracing the needs of both Protection and Response teams. A review of procedural guidance for fire safety was included to this work and approved within the Joint Consultative Committee.

Ready Willing & Able campaign

WMFS was proud to be part of the #ReadyWillingAble campaign, initiated in conjunction with the NFCC.

Launched in April 2020, the 12-week initiative threw a spotlight on extra activities carried out by fire and rescue services in response to the COVID-19 pandemic – made possible by an agreement between the NFCC, the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) and Fire and Rescue Employers.

Members of our staff who volunteered to help ensured that some of our most vulnerable residents received food and medical deliveries. We worked with various organisations

including local councils, volunteer groups and charities to identify and help those most in need.

Sadly, others were also involved in the movement of the bodies of some virus victims. We were also #ReadyWillingAble to support with the fitting of face masks and driving ambulances if needed.

Firefighters and WMFS staff across the West Midlands took to this social media campaign to share stories and videos about how they used their wide range of skills to offer community reassurance and help, in response to the national crisis whilst keeping core prevention, protection and response services operating as usual.

Statement of Assurance 2021/22

The next reporting year will feature how the Service sought to deliver within an environment of 'living with Covid-19', as a long-term feature of everyday life. The CRMP proposals will have been developed to advise revision of the three-year rolling strategy, together with the impacts of continued public sector financial efficiencies. The adoption of an agile working policy and on-going resource transformation, will illustrate how the Service continues to represent a genuine commitment to embrace continuous service development to the benefit of the communities it represents and serves.

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

13 DECEMBER 2021

1. FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

Joint Report of the Chief Fire Officer and Treasurer.

RECOMMENDED

- 1.1 THAT the Authority approve the revised Financial Regulations attached as Appendix A.

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 2.1 This report is submitted to revise the Authority's Financial Regulations.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 To conduct its business efficiently, the Authority needs to ensure that it has sound financial management policies in place and that they are strictly adhered to. Part of this process is the establishment of Financial Regulations that set out the financial policies of the Authority.
- 3.2 Financial Regulations provide the framework for managing the Authority's financial affairs. They apply to every member and officer of the Authority, and anyone acting on its behalf.
- 3.3 The Regulations identify the financial responsibilities of the Authority, the Monitoring Officer, the Chief Financial Officer and Other Chief Officers.
- 3.4 The Treasurer is responsible for maintaining a continuous review of the Financial Regulations and submitting any additions or changes necessary to the Authority for approval.

- 3.5 In most instances, the revised Financial Regulations reflect the Authority's current financial processes, policies and regulations. The proposed changes reflect updates to the Authority's Constitution and Committee structures and relevant accounting regulations.

4. **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 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**

- 5.1 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**

- 6.1 These are contained in the body of the report and the attached Appendix.

7. **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 There are no direct Environmental Implications arising from this report.

The contact name for this report is Treasurer, Mike Griffiths, Strategic Enabler – Finance and Resources, telephone number 0121 380 6919.

MIKE GRIFFITHS
TREASURER



FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

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Introduction

- 1.1 To conduct its business efficiently, a Fire Authority needs to ensure that it has sound financial management policies in place and that they are strictly adhered to. Part of this process is the establishment of financial regulations that set out the financial policies of the Authority.
- 1.2 Financial regulations provide the framework for managing the Authority's financial affairs. They apply to every Member and officer of the Authority and anyone acting on its behalf.
- 1.3 The regulations identify the financial responsibilities of the Fire Authority, the Chief Financial Officer ^(see note 1) and the Chief Fire Officer ^(see note 2). The Chief Fire Officer/Chief Financial Officer should maintain a written record where decision making has been delegated to members of their staff, including seconded staff. Where decisions have been delegated or devolved to other responsible officers, references to the Chief Fire Officer in the regulations should be read as referring to them.
- 1.4 All Members and staff have a general responsibility for taking reasonable action to provide for the security of the assets under their control, and for ensuring that the use of these resources is legal, is properly authorised, provides value for money and achieves best value.
- 1.5 The Chief Financial Officer is responsible for maintaining a continuous review of the financial regulations and submitting any additions or changes necessary to the Authority. The Chief Financial Officer is also responsible for reporting, where appropriate, breaches of the financial regulations to the Fire Authority.
- 1.6 The Chief Fire Officer is responsible for ensuring that all staff within the Fire Service are aware of the existence and content of the Authority's financial regulations and other internal regulatory documents and that they comply with them. He must also ensure that copies are available for reference within the Service.
- 1.7 The Chief Financial Officer is responsible for issuing advice and guidance to underpin the financial regulations that Members, officers and others acting on behalf of the Fire Authority are required to follow.

Note 1 Reference is made throughout the financial regulations to the responsibilities of the Chief Financial Officer. The title is used as a standard for the officer with section 151 responsibilities (currently held by the Treasurer to the Fire Authority) and is included in recognition that section 151 responsibility may be transferred to another officer who is a qualified accountant.

Note 2 The Chief Fire Officer's responsibility may also be transferred to other Brigade Managers (i.e. Deputy Chief Fire Officer & Assistant Chief Officers) and the Strategic Enabler of Finance and Resources (SEF&R).

Financial management

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT STANDARDS

Why is this important?

- 1.01** All staff and Members have a duty to abide by the highest standards of probity in dealing with financial issues. This is facilitated by ensuring everyone is clear about the standards to which they are working and the controls that are in place to ensure that these standards are met. At the same time, staff and Members should ensure that any financial arrangements represent value for money to the organisation and should strive to identify efficiency savings when the opportunity exists.

Key Controls

- 1.02** The key controls and control objectives for financial management standards are:
- (a) their promotion throughout the Authority; and
 - (b) a monitoring system to review compliance with financial standards that is reported to the Strategic Enabling Team and the Fire Authority.

Responsibilities of the Chief Financial Officer

- 1.03** To ensure the proper administration of the financial affairs of the Authority.
- 1.04** To set the financial management standards and to monitor compliance with them.
- 1.05** To ensure proper professional practices are adhered to and to act as head of profession in relation to the standards, performance and development of finance staff in the Authority.
- 1.06** To advise on the key strategic controls necessary to secure sound financial management.
- 1.07** To ensure that financial information is available to enable accurate and timely monitoring and reporting of comparisons of national and local financial performance indicators.

Responsibilities of the Chief Fire Officer

- 1.08** To promote the financial management standards set by the Chief Financial Officer and to monitor adherence to the standards and practices, liaising as necessary with the Chief Financial Officer.
- 1.09** To promote sound financial practices in relation to the standards, performance and development of staff within the Fire Service.

MANAGING EXPENDITURE

Scheme of Virement

Why is this important?

- 1.10** The scheme of virement is intended to enable the Chief Fire Officer and his/her staff to manage budgets with a degree of flexibility within the overall policy framework determined by the Authority, and therefore to optimise the use of resources.

Key Controls

- 1.11** Key controls for the scheme of virement are:

- (a) It is administered by the Chief Financial Officer within guidelines set by the Authority. Any variation from this scheme requires the approval of the Fire Authority.
- (b) The overall budget is agreed by the Strategic Enabling Team and approved by the Fire Authority. Budget Managers are therefore authorised to incur expenditure in accordance with the estimates that make up the budget. The rules below cover virement; that is, switching resources between approved estimates or heads of expenditure. For the purposes of this scheme, a budget head is considered to be a line in the approved budget report, or, as a minimum, at an equivalent level to the standard service sub-division as defined by CIPFA's Service Expenditure Analysis.
- (c) Virement does not create additional overall budget liability. Budget Managers are expected to exercise their discretion in managing their budgets responsibly and prudently. For example, they should aim to avoid supporting recurring expenditure from one-off sources of savings or additional income, or creating future commitments, including full-year effects of decisions made part way through a year, for which they have not identified future resources. Budget Managers must plan to fund such commitments from within their own budgets.

Responsibilities of the Chief Financial Officer

- 1.12** To ensure arrangements are in place to monitor the Authority's scheme of virement.

Responsibilities of the Chief Fire Officer

- 1.13** The Chief Fire Officer may exercise virement on budgets under his/her control for amounts up to **£250,000** on any one budget head during the year, following notification to the Chief Financial Officer, subject to paragraph 1.17 below.
- 1.14** Virements up to **£250,000** may be exercised between budgets managed by different Budget Managers subject to the approval of all Budget Managers affected by the virement. Written confirmation of the agreed virement should be forwarded to the Chief Financial Officer who will ensure such amended figures are included in future monitoring reports.

- 1.15** Amounts greater than **£250,000** require the approval of the Authority, following a joint report by the Chief Financial Officer and the Chief Fire Officer, which must specify the proposed expenditure and the source of funding, and must explain the implications in the current and future financial year. The Chief Fire Officer can exceed the **£250,000** expenditure limit in exceptional circumstances. These exceptional circumstances would align specifically to operational decisions which require immediate approval, to ensure the Authority is effectively managing risk to its communities and ensuring public safety. A risk-based assessment will be undertaken which to support the need for this exemption to be applied in a timely manner. The CFO will retrospectively agree reporting requirements with the Chair to the Authority and Vice Chair.
- 1.16** Virement that is likely to impact on the level of service activity of another Budget Manager should be implemented only after agreement with the relevant Budget Manager.
- 1.17** No virement relating to a specific financial year should be made after 31st March in that year.
- 1.18** Where an approved budget is a development budget or contingency intended for allocation during the year, its allocation will not be treated as a virement, provided that:
- (a) the amount is used in accordance with the purpose for which it has been established; and
 - (b) the Fire Authority has approved the basis and the terms, including financial limits, on which it will be allocated.

Treatment of Year-End Balances

Why is this important?

- 1.19** The Authority's scheme of virement sets out the treatment of year-end balances on devolved budgets. It is administered by the Chief Financial Officer within guidelines set by the Fire Authority. Any variation from the scheme of virement (as set out above) requires the approval of the Fire Authority.
- 1.20** The rules below cover arrangements for the transfer of resources between accounting years, i.e. a carry-forward relating to devolved budgets. For the purposes of this scheme, a budget heading is a line in the budget report, or, as a minimum, at an equivalent level to the standard service sub-division as defined by CIPFA in its Service Expenditure Analysis.

Key Controls

- 1.21** Appropriate accounting procedures are in operation to ensure that carried-forward totals are correct.

Responsibilities of the Chief Financial Officer

- 1.22** To administer the scheme of carry-forward within the guidelines approved by the Authority.
- 1.23** To report all overspendings and underspendings on service estimates carried forward to the Strategic Enabling Team and the Fire Authority.

Responsibilities of the Chief Fire Officer

- 1.24** Any overspending on service estimates in total on budgets which have been devolved under the control of the Chief Fire Officer must be carried forward to the following year, and will constitute the first call on service estimates in the following year. The Chief Financial Officer will report the extent of overspendings carried forward to the Strategic Enabling Team and the Fire Authority. The requirement to meet overspend from future year budget allocations can be waived by the Strategic Enabling Team if the circumstances of the overspend warrant this course of action.
- 1.25** Net underspendings on service estimates under the control of the Chief Fire Officer which have been devolved may be carried forward, subject to the approval by the Strategic Enabling Team and the Fire Authority of a report presented jointly by the Chief Fire Officer and the Chief Financial Officer regarding the source of underspending or additional income and the proposed application of those resources.

ACCOUNTING POLICIES

Why is this important?

- 1.26** The Chief Financial Officer is responsible for the preparation of the Authority's statement of accounts, in accordance with proper practices as set out in the format required by the *Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom: (the Code)* (CIPFA/LASAAC), for each financial year ending 31st March.

Key Controls

- 1.27** The key controls for accounting policies are:

- (a) systems of internal control are in place that ensure that financial transactions are lawful;
- (b) suitable accounting policies are selected and applied consistently;
- (c) proper accounting records are maintained; and
- (d) financial statements are prepared which present a true and fair view of the financial position of the Authority and its expenditure and income.

Responsibilities of the Chief Financial Officer

- 1.28** To select suitable accounting policies and to ensure that they are applied consistently. The accounting policies are set out in the statement of accounts, which is prepared at 31st March each year, and covers such items as:

- (a) General principles;
- (b) Accruals of income and expenditure;
- (c) Acquisitions and discontinued operations;
- (d) Cash and cash equivalents;
- (e) Prior period adjustments, changes in accounting policies and estimates and errors;
- (f) Charges to revenue for non-current assets;
- (g) Council tax and non-domestic rates;
- (h) Employee benefits;
- (i) Events after the reporting period;
- (j) Financial instruments;
- (k) Government grants and contributions;
- (l) Heritage assets;
- (m) Intangible assets;
- (n) Interests in companies and other entities;
- (o) Inventories and long-term contracts;
- (p) Investment property;
- (q) Joint operations;

- (r) Leases;
- (s) Overheads and support services;
- (t) Property, plant and equipment;
- (u) Private finance initiatives and similar contracts;
- (v) Provisions, contingent liabilities and contingent assets;
- (w) Reserves;
- (x) Revenue expenditure funded from capital under statute;
- (y) Value Added Tax; and
- (z) Fair value measurement of non-financial assets.

Responsibilities of the Chief Fire Officer

- 1.29** To adhere to the accounting policies and guidelines approved by the Chief Financial Officer.

ACCOUNTING RECORDS AND RETURNS

Why is this important?

- 1.30** Maintaining proper accounting records is one of the ways in which the Authority discharges its responsibility for stewardship of public resources. The Fire Authority has a statutory responsibility to prepare its annual accounts to present a true and fair view of its operations during the year. These are subject to external audit. This audit provides assurance that the accounts are prepared properly, that proper accounting practices have been followed and that quality arrangements have been made for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness in the use of the Authority's resources.

Key Controls

- 1.31** The key controls for accounting records and returns are:
- (a) all Budget Managers and finance staff operate within the required accounting standards and timetables;
 - (b) all the Authority's transactions, material commitments and contracts and other essential accounting information are recorded completely, accurately and on a timely basis;
 - (c) procedures are in place to enable accounting records to be reconstituted in the event of systems failure;
 - (d) reconciliation procedures are carried out to ensure transactions are correctly recorded; and
 - (e) prime documents are retained in accordance with legislative and other requirements.

Responsibilities of the Chief Financial Officer

- 1.32** To determine the accounting procedures and records for the Fire Authority.
- 1.33** To arrange for the compilation of all accounts and accounting records under his/her direction.
- 1.34** To comply with the following principles when allocating accounting duties:
- (a) separating the duties of providing information about sums due to or from the Authority and calculating, checking and recording these sums from the duty of collecting or disbursing them; and
 - (b) employees with the duty of examining or checking the accounts of cash transactions must not themselves be engaged in these transactions.
- 1.35** To make proper arrangements for the audit of the Authority's accounts in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.
- 1.36** To ensure that all claims for funds including grants are made by the due date.

- 1.37** To prepare and publish the audited accounts of the Authority for each financial year, in accordance with the statutory timetable and with the requirement for the Authority to approve the statement of accounts before 31st July.
- 1.38** To administer the Authority's arrangements for under and overspendings on devolved budgets to be carried forward to the following financial year.
- 1.39** To ensure the proper retention of financial documents in accordance with the legislative and operational requirements.

Responsibilities of the Chief Fire Officer

- 1.40** To consult and obtain the approval of the Chief Financial Officer before making any changes to accounting records and procedures.
- 1.41** To comply with the principles outlined in paragraph 1.34 when allocating accounting duties.
- 1.42** To maintain adequate records to provide a management trail leading from the source of income/expenditure through to the accounting statements.
- 1.43** To supply information required to enable the statement of accounts to be completed in accordance with guidelines issued by the Chief Financial Officer.

THE ANNUAL STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS

Why is this important?

- 1.44** The Fire Authority has a statutory responsibility to prepare its own accounts to present a true and fair view of its operations during the year. The Fire Authority is responsible for approving the statutory annual statement of accounts.

Key Controls

- 1.45** The key controls for the annual statement of accounts are:

- the Authority is required to make arrangements for the proper administration of its financial affairs and to secure that one of its officers has the responsibility for the administration of these affairs. In this Authority, that officer is the Treasurer to the Authority; and
- the Authority's statement of accounts must be prepared in accordance with proper practices as set out in the *Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom: (the Code)* (CIPFA/LASAAC).

Responsibilities of the Chief Financial Officer

- 1.46** To select suitable accounting policies and to apply them consistently.
- 1.47** To make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent.
- 1.48** To comply with the Code.
- 1.49** To sign and date the statement of accounts, stating that it presents a true and fair view of the financial position of the Authority at the accounting date and its income and expenditure for the year ended 31st March.
- 1.50** To draw up the timetable for final accounts preparation and to advise staff and external auditors accordingly.

Responsibilities of the Chief Fire Officer

- 1.51** To comply with accounting guidance provided by the Chief Financial Officer and to supply the Chief Financial Officer with information when required.

Financial Planning

CORPORATE PLANS

Why is this important?

- 2.01** The Authority publishes an annual Corporate Plan called 'Our Plan' highlighting priorities and objectives and Statement of Accounts detailing past performance. In line with the Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, the Authority must still take into account and demonstrate the principles of best value and this is done through the ongoing development and review of the Corporate Plan and performance across the Authority. The Corporate Plan is a key element in the Authority's programme of engaging with the public.

Key Controls

- 2.02** The key controls for performance plans are:
- (a) to ensure that all relevant plans are produced and that they are consistent;
 - (b) to produce plans in accordance with statutory requirements;
 - (c) to meet the timetables set;
 - (d) to ensure that all performance information is accurate, complete and up to date; and
 - (e) to provide improvement targets which are meaningful, realistic and challenging.

Responsibilities of the Chief Financial Officer

- 2.03** To advise and supply the financial information that needs to be included in performance plans in accordance with statutory requirements and agreed timetables.
- 2.04** To contribute to the development of corporate and service targets and objectives and performance information.
- 2.05** To ensure that systems are in place to measure activity and collect accurate information for use as performance indicators.
- 2.06** To ensure that performance information is monitored sufficiently frequently to allow corrective action to be taken if targets are not likely to be met.

Responsibilities of the Chief Fire Officer

- 2.07** To contribute to the development of performance plans in line with statutory requirements.
- 2.08** To contribute to the development of corporate and service targets and objectives and performance information.

BUDGETING

Format of the Budget

Why is this important?

- 2.09** The format of the budget determines the level of detail to which financial control and management will be exercised. The format shapes how the rules around virement operate, the operation of cash limits and sets the level at which funds may be reallocated within budgets.

Key Controls

- 2.10** The key controls for the budget format are:

- (a) the format complies with all legal requirements;
- (b) the format complies with CIPFA's *Service Reporting Code of Practice*; and
- (c) the format reflects the accountabilities of service delivery.

Responsibilities of the Chief Financial Officer

- 2.11** To advise the Strategic Enabling Team on the format of the budget that is approved by the Fire Authority.

Responsibilities of the Chief Fire Officer

- 2.12** To comply with accounting guidance provided by the Chief Financial Officer.

Revenue Budget Preparation, Monitoring and Control

Why is this important?

- 2.13** Budget management ensures that once the budget has been approved by the Authority, resources allocated are used for their intended purposes and are properly accounted for. Budgetary control is a continuous process, enabling the Authority to review and adjust its budget allocations during the financial year. It also provides the mechanism that calls to account managers responsible for defined elements of the budget.
- 2.14** By continuously identifying and explaining variances against budgetary targets, the Authority can identify changes in trends and resource requirements at the earliest opportunity. The Authority itself operates within an annual cash limit, approved when setting the overall budget. To ensure that the Authority in total does not overspend, each functional area is required to manage its own expenditure within the cash-limited budget allocated to it.
- 2.15** For the purposes of budgetary control by managers, a budget will normally be the planned income and expenditure for a functional area or cost centre. However, budgetary control may take place at a more detailed level if this is required by the Chief Fire Officer's scheme of delegation.

Key Controls

2.16 The key controls for managing and controlling the revenue budget are:

- (a) there is a nominated budget manager for each cost centre or account code heading;
- (b) budget managers accept accountability for their budgets and the level of service to be delivered and understand their financial responsibilities;
- (c) budget managers follow an approved certification process for all expenditure;
- (d) income and expenditure are properly recorded and accounted for; and
- (e) performance levels/levels of service are monitored in conjunction with the budget and necessary action is taken to align service outputs and budget.

Responsibilities of the Chief Financial Officer

2.17 To establish an appropriate framework of budgetary management and control that ensures that:

- (a) budget management is exercised within annual cash limits;
- (b) The Chief Fire Officer has available timely information on receipts and payments on each budget which is sufficiently detailed to enable managers to fulfil their budgetary responsibilities;
- (c) expenditure is committed only against an approved budget head;
- (d) all officers responsible for committing expenditure comply with relevant guidance, and the financial regulations;
- (e) each cost centre or account code has a single named manager, determined by the relevant Budget Manager. As a general principle, budget responsibility should be aligned as closely as possible to the decision-making processes that commits expenditure; and
- (f) significant variances from approved budgets are investigated and reported by Budget Managers regularly.

2.18 To administer the Authority's scheme of virement.

2.19 To submit reports to the Strategic Enabling Team and to the Fire Authority, in consultation with the Chief Fire Officer, where a Budget Manager is unable to balance expenditure and resources within existing approved budgets under his/her control.

2.20 To prepare and submit reports on the Authority's projected income and expenditure compared with the budget on a regular basis to the Fire Authority.

Responsibilities of the Chief Fire Officer

- 2.21** To maintain budgetary control within the Fire Service, in adherence to the principles in 2.17, and to ensure that all income and expenditure are properly recorded and accounted for.
- 2.22** To ensure that an accountable budget manager is identified for each item of income and expenditure under the control of the Chief Fire Officer (grouped together in a series of cost centres). As a general principle, budget responsibility should be aligned as closely as possible to the decision-making that commits expenditure.
- 2.23** To ensure that budgets are set on a value for money basis to support the service delivery level required.
- 2.24** To ensure that spending remains within the Service's overall cash limit, and that individual budget heads are not overspent, by monitoring the budget and taking appropriate corrective action where significant variations from the approved budget are forecast.
- 2.25** To ensure that a monitoring process is in place to review performance levels/levels of service in conjunction with the budget and is operating effectively.
- 2.26** To prepare and submit to the Fire Authority reports on the Fire Service's projected expenditure compared to its budget, in consultation with the Chief Financial Officer.

To ensure prior approval by the Authority for new proposals, of whatever amount, that:
 - (a) create financial commitments in future years;
 - (b) change existing policies, initiate new policies or cease existing policies; and
 - (c) materially extend or reduce the Authority's services.
- 2.27** To ensure compliance with the scheme of virement.
- 2.28** To determine with the relevant Budget Manager where it appears that a budget proposal, including a virement proposal, may impact materially on another functional area or Budget Manager's level of service activity.

BUDGETS AND MEDIUM-TERM PLANNING

Why is this important?

- 2.29** The Authority is a complex organisation responsible for delivering a wide variety of services. It needs to plan effectively and to develop systems to enable scarce resources to be allocated in accordance with carefully weighed priorities. The budget is the financial expression of the Authority's plans and policies.
- 2.30** The revenue budget must be constructed so as to ensure that resource allocation properly reflects the service plans and priorities of the Authority. Budgets (spending plans) are needed so that the Authority can plan, authorise, monitor and control the way money is allocated and spent. It is illegal for an authority to budget for a deficit.
- 2.31** Medium-term planning (or a three to five-year planning system) involves a planning cycle in which managers develop their own plans. As each year passes, another future year will be added to the medium-term plan. This ensures that the Authority is always preparing for events in advance.

Key Controls

- 2.32** The key controls for budgets and medium-term planning are:
- (a) specific budget approval for all expenditure;
 - (b) budget managers are consulted in the preparation of the budgets for which they will be held responsible and accept accountability within delegations set by the Strategic Enabling Team for their budgets and the level of service to be delivered; and
 - (c) a monitoring process is in place to review regularly the effectiveness and operation of budget preparation and to ensure that any corrective action is taken.

Responsibilities of the Chief Financial Officer

- 2.33** To prepare and submit reports on budget prospects to the Strategic Enabling Team and the Fire Authority, including resource constraints set by the Government. Reports should take account of medium-term prospects, where appropriate.
- 2.34** To determine the detailed form of revenue estimates and the methods for their preparation, consistent with the budget approved by the Authority, and after consultation with the Strategic Enabling Team.
- 2.35** To prepare and submit reports to the Fire Authority on the spending plans of the Fire Service and on the resources available to fund them, identifying, where appropriate, the implications for the level of council tax to be levied.
- 2.36** To advise on the medium-term implications of spending decisions.
- 2.37** To encourage the best use of resources and value for money by working with the Chief Fire Officer to identify opportunities to improve economy, efficiency and effectiveness, and by encouraging good practice in conducting financial appraisals of development or savings options, and in developing financial aspects of service planning.

- 2.38** To advise the Fire Authority on Strategic Enabling Team proposals in accordance with his/her responsibilities under section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972.

Responsibilities of the Chief Fire Officer

- 2.39** To prepare estimates of income and expenditure, in consultation with the Chief Financial Officer, to be submitted to the Strategic Enabling Team and the Fire Authority.
- 2.40** To prepare budgets that are consistent with the Authority's annual budget cycle and any relevant cash limits. The format should be prescribed by the Chief Financial Officer in accordance with the Fire Authority's general directions.
- 2.41** To integrate financial and budget plans into service planning, so that budget plans can be supported by financial and non-financial performance measures.
- 2.42** In consultation with the Chief Financial Officer and in accordance with the laid-down guidance and timetable, to prepare detailed draft revenue and capital budgets for consideration by the Fire Authority.
- 2.43** When drawing up draft budget requirements, to have regard to:
- (a) spending patterns and pressures revealed through the budget monitoring process;
 - (b) legal requirements;
 - (c) policy requirements as defined by the Authority in the approved policy framework;
 - (d) initiatives already under way; and
 - (e) efficiency targets.

RESOURCE ALLOCATION

Why is this important?

- 2.44** A mismatch often exists between available resources and required resources. A common scenario is that available resources are not adequate to fulfil need/desire. It is therefore imperative that needs/desires are carefully prioritised and that resources are fairly allocated, in order to fulfil all legal responsibilities. Resources may include staff, money, equipment, goods and materials.

Key Controls

- 2.45** The key controls for resource allocation are:

- (a) resources are acquired in accordance with the law and using an approved authorisation process;
- (b) resources are used only for the purpose intended, to achieve the approved policies and objectives, and are properly accounted for;
- (c) resources are securely held for use when required; and
- (d) resources are used with the minimum level of waste, inefficiency or loss for other reasons.

Responsibilities of the Chief Financial Officer

- 2.46** To advise on methods available for the funding of resources, such as grants from central government and borrowing requirements.
- 2.47** To assist in the allocation of resources to budget managers.

Responsibilities of the Chief Fire Officer

- 2.48** To work within budget limits and to utilise resources allocated, and further allocate resources, in the most efficient, effective and economic way to ensure value for money.
- 2.49** To identify opportunities to minimise or eliminate resource requirements or consumption without having a detrimental effect on service delivery, thereby contributing to Fire Service efficiency targets.

Capital Programmes

Why is this important?

- 2.50** Capital expenditure involves acquiring or enhancing non-current assets with a long-term value to the Authority, such as land, buildings, and major items of plant, equipment or vehicles. Capital assets shape the way services are delivered in the long term and create financial commitments for the future in the form of financing costs and revenue running costs.
- 2.51** The Government places strict controls on the financing capacity of the Authority. This means that capital expenditure should form part of an investment strategy and should be carefully prioritised in order to maximise the benefit of scarce resources.

Key Controls

2.52 The key controls for capital programmes are:

- (a) specific approval by the Fire Authority for the programme of capital expenditure;
- (b) expenditure on any capital scheme, irrespective of funding stream (i.e. borrowing approval, grant, revenue), is subject to the approval of the Strategic Enabling Team and the Fire Authority;
- (c) a capital scheme appraisal, including project plan, objective, capital costs and intended funding, progress targets and associated revenue expenditure is prepared for each capital project, for approval by the Strategic Enabling Team and Fire Authority;
- (d) the development and implementation of asset management plans;
- (e) accountability for each proposal is accepted by a named Manager; and
- (f) monitoring of progress in conjunction with expenditure and comparison with approved budget.

Responsibilities of the Chief Financial Officer

- 2.53** To prepare capital estimates jointly with the Chief Fire Officer and to report them to the Strategic Enabling Team for approval. The Strategic Enabling Team will make recommendations on the capital estimates and on any associated financing requirements to the Fire Authority.
- 2.54** To prepare and submit reports to the Strategic Enabling Team and Fire Authority on the projected income, expenditure and resources compared with the approved estimates.
- 2.55** To issue guidance concerning capital schemes and controls, for example, on project appraisal techniques. The definition of 'capital' will be determined by the Chief Financial Officer, having regard to government regulations and accounting requirements.
- 2.56** To prepare regular reports reviewing the capital programme for the Authority as a whole, highlighting any associated financial issues and remedial action required.

Responsibilities of the Chief Fire Officer

- 2.57** To comply with guidance concerning capital schemes and controls issued by the Chief Financial Officer.
- 2.58** To ensure that all capital proposals have undergone a project appraisal in accordance with guidance issued by the Chief Financial Officer.
- 2.59** To prepare regular reports reviewing the capital programme provisions for the Fire Service and also prepare a monthly return of estimated final costs of schemes in the approved capital programme for submission to the Chief Financial Officer.
- 2.60** To ensure that adequate records are maintained for all capital contracts.

- 2.61** To proceed with projects only when there is adequate provision in the capital programme and with the agreement of the Chief Financial Officer.
- 2.62** To prepare and submit reports, jointly with the Chief Financial Officer, to the Authority of any variation in contract costs greater than the approved limits.
- 2.63** To prepare and submit reports, jointly with the Chief Financial Officer, to the Authority, on completion of all contracts where the final expenditure exceeds the approved contract sum by more than the specified amount.
- 2.64** To ensure that credit arrangements, such as leasing agreements, are not entered into without the prior approval of the Chief Financial Officer and, if applicable, approval of the scheme through the capital programme.
- 2.65** To consult with the Chief Financial Officer and to seek Authority approval where the Chief Fire Officer proposes to bid for capital grant funding to be issued by government departments to support expenditure that has not been included in the current year's capital programme.

MAINTENANCE OF RESERVES

Why is this important?

- 2.66** The Fire Authority must decide the level of general reserves it wishes to maintain before it can decide the level of council tax. Reserves are maintained as a matter of prudence. They enable the Authority to provide for unexpected events and thereby protect it from overspending, should such events occur. Reserves for specific purposes may also be maintained, such as the purchase or renewal of capital items.

Policy on the Level and Nature of Reserves

- 2.67** The level of general reserves should not be allowed to fall below the lower of 2.5% of the Authority's annual net revenue budget or £2.5 million. The Chief Financial Officer, in considering the corporate risks facing the Authority, will make particular reference to the forecast level of general reserves during the Authority's annual budget setting process and report on the actual level of balances during the closedown of accounts process.

Earmarked reserves will be maintained to meet specific purposes as determined by the Chief Financial Officer and reported to the Authority as part of the closedown of accounts process.

Key Controls

- 2.68** To maintain reserves in accordance with the *Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom: (the Code)* (CIPFA/LASAAC) and agreed accounting policies.
- 2.69** For each reserve established, the purpose, usage and basis of transactions should be clearly identified.
- 2.70** Authorisation and expenditure from reserves by the Chief Fire Officer in consultation with the Chief Financial Officer.

Responsibilities of the Chief Financial Officer

- 2.71** To advise the Strategic Enabling Team and the Fire Authority on prudent levels of reserves for the Authority, and to take account of the advice of the external auditor in this matter.

Responsibilities of the Chief Fire Officer

- 2.72** To ensure that resources are used only for the purposes for which they were intended.

Audit, Risk Management and Internal Control

RISK MANAGEMENT

Why is this important?

- 3.01** All organisations, whether private or public sector, face risks to people, property and continued operations. Risk is the chance or possibility of loss, damage, injury or failure to achieve objectives caused by an unwanted or uncertain action or event. Risk management is the planned and systematic approach to the identification, evaluation and control of risk. Its objectives are to secure the assets of the organisation and to ensure the continued financial and organisational wellbeing of the organisation. In essence it is, therefore, an integral part of good business practice. Risk management is concerned with evaluating the measures an organisation already has in place to manage identified risks and then recommending the action the organisation needs to take to control these risks effectively.
- 3.02** It is the overall responsibility of the Audit and Risk Committee to approve the Authority's risk management arrangements, and to promote a culture of risk management awareness throughout the authority.

Key Controls

- 3.03** The key controls for risk management are:
- (a) procedures are in place to identify, assess, prevent or contain material known risks, and these procedures are operating effectively throughout the Authority;
 - (b) a monitoring process is in place to review regularly the effectiveness of risk reduction strategies and the operation of these controls. The risk management process should be conducted on a continuing basis;
 - (c) managers know that they are responsible for managing relevant risks and are provided with relevant information on risk management initiatives;
 - (d) provision is made for losses that might result from the risks that remain;
 - (e) procedures are in place to investigate claims within required timescales;
 - (f) acceptable levels of risk are determined and insured against where appropriate; and
 - (g) the Authority has identified business continuity plans for implementation in the event of a disaster that results in significant loss or damage to its resources.

Responsibilities of the Chief Financial Officer

- 3.04** To contribute to and promote the Authority's risk management arrangements.
- 3.05** To develop risk management controls in conjunction with the Chief Fire Officer.
- 3.06** To effect corporate insurance cover, through external insurance and internal funding, and to negotiate all claims in consultation with other officers, where necessary.
- 3.07** To provide for the provision of a professional advisory and co-ordinating services to the Chief Fire Officer on the management of risk within the Fire Authority. The Chief Fire Officer should provide the Chief Financial Officer with such information as is required for the carrying out of this responsibility.
- 3.08** To effect all insurance cover in a manner he determines and shall carry out all negotiations and pay claims in consultation with the Chief Fire Officer where necessary. Such insurance will include suitable fidelity guarantee insurance.

Responsibilities of the Chief Fire Officer

- 3.09** In accordance with the Authority's own Corporate Risk Management arrangements, to take responsibility for the identification, assessment and management of risk within the Fire Service, with a view to ensuring that all threats to the Services' objectives are minimised and controlled, leading to the reduction of costs associated with risk and the continuance of service provision.
- 3.10** To prepare and maintain a risk register, identifying each risk, its likelihood of occurrence and the impact on service delivery/resources.
- 3.11** To ensure that there are regular reviews of risk within their service areas and to include the management of risk specifically within the Service Business Planning process, so that risk related threats/weaknesses are addressed within action plans.
- 3.12** To notify the Chief Financial Officer immediately of any loss, liability or damage that may lead to a claim against the Fire Authority, together with any information or explanation required by the Chief Financial Officer or the authority's insurers.
- 3.13** To ensure that sound arrangements for the security and continuity of service in the event of disaster are in place.
- 3.14** To ensure that the recommendations of the Risk Manager are actioned within the Fire Service and will ensure that support is given to the Chief Financial Officer in the role of furthering the Risk Management arrangements of the Fire Authority.
- 3.15** To ensure that claims information is passed to the Chief Financial Officer within a reasonable time.
- 3.16** To ensure that the Chief Financial Officer is notified promptly of all new risks, property, vehicle and other assets which require to be insured and of any alterations or deletions affecting insurance cover.
- 3.17** To ensure that records are properly maintained and securely held.
- 3.18** To prepare and maintain a record of all assets under their control in accordance with procedures laid down by the Chief Financial Officer, and shall supply such

information as required to enable the Chief Financial Officer to fulfil his/her responsibilities to effect necessary insurance arrangements.

- 3.19** To consult the Chief Financial Officer on the terms of any indemnity that the Fire Authority is requested to give.
- 3.20** To ensure that employees, or anyone covered by the Authority's insurances, do not admit liability or make any offer to pay compensation that may prejudice the assessment liability in respect of any insurance claim.

INTERNAL CONTROLS

Why is this important?

- 3.21** The Authority is complex and beyond the direct control of individuals. It therefore requires internal controls to manage and monitor progress towards strategic objectives.
- 3.22** The Authority has statutory obligations, and therefore requires internal controls to identify, meet and monitor compliance with these obligations.
- 3.23** The Authority faces a wide range of financial, administrative and commercial risks, both from internal and external factors, which threaten the achievement of its objectives. Internal controls are necessary to manage these risks.
- 3.24** The system of internal controls is established in order to provide measurable achievement of:
 - (a) efficient and effective operations;
 - (b) reliable financial information and reporting;
 - (c) compliance with laws and regulations; and
 - (d) risk management.

Key Controls

- 3.25** The key controls and control objectives for internal control systems are:
 - (a) key controls should be reviewed on a regular basis and the Authority should make a formal statement annually to the effect that it is satisfied that the systems of internal control are operating effectively;
 - (b) managerial control systems, including defining policies, setting objectives and plans, monitoring financial and other performance and taking appropriate anticipatory and remedial action. The key objective of these systems is to promote ownership of the control environment by defining roles and responsibilities;
 - (c) financial and operational control systems and procedures, which include physical safeguards for assets, segregation of duties, authorisation and approval procedures and information systems; and
 - (d) an effective internal audit function that is properly resourced. It should operate in accordance with the principles contained in the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards and with any other statutory obligations and regulations.

Responsibilities of the Chief Financial Officer

- 3.26** To assist the Authority to put in place an appropriate control environment and effective internal controls which provide reasonable assurance of effective and efficient operations, financial stewardship, probity and compliance with laws and regulations.
- 3.27** To prepare and complete the annual Governance Statement and report within the Statement of Accounts to comply with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.

Responsibilities of the Chief Fire Officer

- 3.28** To manage processes to check that established controls are being adhered to and to evaluate their effectiveness, in order to be confident in the proper use of resources, achievement of objectives and management of risks.
- 3.29** To review existing controls in the light of changes affecting the Authority and to establish and implement new ones in line with guidance from the Chief Financial Officer.
- 3.30** To ensure staff have a clear understanding of the consequences of lack of control.

AUDIT REQUIREMENTS

Internal Audit

Why is this important?

- 3.31** The requirement for an internal audit function for authorities is implied by section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972, which requires that authorities “make arrangements for the proper administration of their financial affairs”. The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, more specifically require that a “relevant body must maintain an adequate and effective system of internal audit of its accounting records and of its system of internal control in accordance with proper practice in relation to internal controls”.
- 3.32** Accordingly, internal audit is an independent and objective appraisal function established by the Authority for reviewing the system of internal control. It examines, evaluates and reports on the adequacy of internal control as a contribution to the proper, economic, efficient and effective use of resources.

Key Controls

- 3.33** The key controls for internal audit are:
- (a) that it is independent in its planning and operation;
 - (b) the head of internal audit has direct access to all levels of management and to elected Members; and
 - (c) the internal auditors comply with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards.

Responsibilities of the Chief Financial Officer

- 3.34** To carry out an internal audit on whatever basis he determines of the financial and related operations of the Authority and its Services and Officers. In determining the manner in which the Audit is undertaken, the chief financial officer will have regard to his/her statutory responsibilities under section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 and the Accounts and Audit Regulations as delegated, and any guidelines issued by C.I.P.F.A.
- 3.35** To ensure that internal auditors have the authority to:
- (a) access Authority premises at reasonable times;
 - (b) access all assets, records, documents, correspondence and control systems;
 - (c) receive any information and explanation considered necessary concerning any matter under consideration;
 - (d) require any employee of the Authority to account for cash, inventories or any other Authority asset under his/her control;
 - (e) access records belonging to third parties, such as contractors, when required; and
 - (f) directly access the Chief Fire Officer and the Fire Authority.

- 3.36** To approve the strategic and annual audit plans prepared by the internal Audit Services Manager (Sandwell MBC), which take account of the characteristics and relative risks of the activities involved.
- 3.37** To ensure that effective procedures are in place to investigate promptly any fraud or irregularity.
- 3.38** To prepare reports to the Chief Fire Officer setting out the audit work carried out in the relevant service areas during the previous financial year. To prepare an annual report covering the audit work carried out in all service areas for submission to the Audit and Risk Committee.

Responsibilities of the Chief Fire Officer

- 3.39** To ensure that internal auditors are given access at all reasonable times to premises, personnel, documents and assets that the auditors consider necessary for the purposes of their work.
- 3.40** To ensure that auditors are provided with any information and explanations that they seek in the course of their work.
- 3.41** To consider audit reports promptly and reply to recommendations, unless otherwise requested within four weeks of the date of the audit report.
- 3.42** To ensure that agreed audit recommendations are implemented, including the identification of an appropriate officer responsible for implementation and the timescale required.
- 3.43** To notify the Chief Financial Officer immediately of any suspected fraud, theft, irregularity, improper use or misappropriation of the Authority's property or resources. Pending investigation and reporting, the Chief Fire Officer should take all necessary steps to prevent further loss and to secure records and documentation against removal or alteration.
- 3.44** To ensure that new systems for maintaining financial records, or records of assets, or changes to such systems, are discussed with and agreed by the audit services Manager and Chief Financial Officer prior to implementation.

EXTERNAL AUDIT

Why is this important?

- 3.45** The Local Government Finance Act 1982 set up the Audit Commission, which is responsible for appointing external auditors to each local authority in England and Wales. The external auditor has rights of access to all documents and information necessary for audit purposes.
- 3.46** The basic duties of the external auditor are defined in the Audit Commission Act 1998 and the Local Government Act 1999. In particular, section 4 of the 1998 Act requires the Audit Commission to prepare a code of audit practice, which external auditors follow when carrying out their duties. The code of audit practice sets out the auditor's objectives to review and report upon:
- (a) the financial aspects of the audited body's corporate governance arrangements;
 - (b) the audited body's financial statements; and
 - (c) Whether the audited body has put in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources – this conclusion is the VFM conclusion.
- 3.47** The Authority's accounts are scrutinised by external auditors, who must be satisfied that the statement of accounts 'presents a true and fair view of' the financial position of the Authority and its income and expenditure for the year in question and complies with the legal requirements.

Key Controls

- 3.48** External auditors are appointed by the Audit Commission normally for a minimum period of five years. The Audit Commission prepares a code of audit practice, which external auditors follow when carrying out their audits.

Responsibilities of the Chief Financial Officer

- 3.49** To ensure that external auditors are given access at all reasonable times to premises, personnel, documents and assets that the external auditors consider necessary for the purposes of their work.
- 3.50** To ensure there is effective liaison between external and internal audit.
- 3.51** To work with the external auditor and advise the Members and the Chief Fire Officer on their responsibilities in relation to external audit.

Responsibilities of the Chief Fire Officer

- 3.52** To ensure that external auditors are given access at all reasonable times to premises, personnel, documents and assets which the external auditors consider necessary for the purposes of their work.
- 3.53** To ensure that all records and systems are up to date and available for inspection.

PREVENTING FRAUD AND CORRUPTION

Why is this important?

- 3.54** The Authority is totally committed to creating an environment where fraud and corruption are not tolerated whether from inside or outside the Authority and has approved an Anti-Fraud and Corruption policy. Where fraud or corruption are found firm action will be taken against the instigator(s).
- 3.55** The Authority's expectation of propriety and accountability is that Members and staff at all levels will lead by example in ensuring adherence to legal requirements, rules, procedures and practices.
- 3.56** The Authority also expects that individuals and organisations (e.g. suppliers, contractors, service providers) with whom it comes into contact will act towards the Authority with integrity and without thought or actions involving fraud and corruption.

Key Controls

- 3.57** The key controls regarding the prevention of financial irregularities are that:
- (a) the Authority has an effective anti-fraud and anti-corruption policy and maintains a culture that will not tolerate fraud or corruption;
 - (b) all Members and staff act with integrity and lead by example;
 - (c) Senior managers are required to deal swiftly and firmly with those who defraud or attempt to defraud the Authority or who are corrupt;
 - (d) high standards of conduct are promoted amongst Members by the Standards Committee;
 - (e) the maintenance of a register of interests in which any hospitality or gifts accepted must be recorded;
 - (f) whistle blowing procedures are in place and operate effectively; and
 - (g) legislation including the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 is adhered to.

Responsibilities of the Chief Financial Officer

- 3.58** To develop and maintain an anti-fraud and anti-corruption policy.
- 3.59** To maintain adequate and effective internal control arrangements.
- 3.60** To ensure that all irregularities are reported to the Audit Services Manager, the Chief Fire Officer, and the Fire Authority.
- 3.61** To ensure that where financial impropriety is discovered and where sufficient evidence exists to believe that a criminal offence may have been committed, the police are called in to determine with the Crown Prosecution Service whether any prosecution will take place. The Chief Financial Officer shall inform the Chief Fire Officer of the decision to involve the police in any investigation.

Responsibilities of the Chief Fire Officer

- 3.62** To ensure that all suspected irregularities are reported to the Audit Services Manager.
- 3.63** To instigate the Authority's disciplinary procedures where the outcome of an audit investigation indicates improper behaviour.
- 3.64** To maintain a register of interests.

ASSETS

Security and Control

Why is this important?

- 3.65** The Authority holds assets in the form of property, vehicles, equipment, furniture and other items worth many millions of pounds. It is important that assets are safeguarded and used efficiently in service delivery, and that there are arrangements for the security of both assets and information required for service operations. An up-to-date asset register is a prerequisite for proper non-current assets accounting and sound asset management.

Key Controls

- 3.66** The key controls for the security of resources such as land, buildings, fixed plant machinery, equipment, software and information are:
- (a) resources are used only for the purposes of the Authority and are properly accounted for;
 - (b) resources are available for use when required;
 - (c) resources no longer required are disposed of in accordance with the law and the regulations of the Authority so as to maximise benefits;
 - (d) an asset register is maintained for the Authority. Assets are recorded when they are acquired by the Authority and this record is updated as changes occur with respect to the location and condition of the asset;
 - (e) all staff are aware of their responsibilities with regard to safeguarding the Authority's assets and information, including the requirements of the Data Protection Act and software copyright legislation; and
 - (f) all staff are aware of their responsibilities with regard to safeguarding the security of the Authority's computer systems, including maintaining restricted access to the information held on them and compliance with the Authority's computer and internet security policies.

Responsibilities of the Chief Financial Officer

- 3.67** To ensure that an asset register is maintained in accordance with good practice for all non-current assets with a value in excess of £10,000. The function of the asset register is to provide the Authority with information about non-current assets so that they are:
- safeguarded
 - used efficiently and effectively
 - adequately maintained.
- 3.68** To receive the information required for accounting, costing and financial records from each chief officer.
- 3.69** To ensure that assets are valued in accordance with the *Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom*: (the Code) (CIPFA/LASAAC).

Responsibilities of the Chief Fire Officer

- 3.70** The appropriate Budget Manager shall maintain a property database in a form approved by the Chief Financial Officer for all land and buildings currently owned or used by the Authority. Any use of property by a service or establishment other than for direct service delivery should be supported by documentation identifying terms, responsibilities and duration of use.
- 3.71** To ensure that lessees and other prospective occupiers of land owned by the Authority are not allowed to take possession or enter the land until a lease or agreement, in a form approved by the Chief Fire Officer in consultation with the Chief Financial Officer, has been established as appropriate.
- 3.72** To ensure the proper security of all buildings and other assets under their control.
- 3.73** Where land or buildings are surplus to requirements, a recommendation for sale should be the subject of a joint report by the Chief Fire Officer and the Chief Financial Officer.
- 3.74** To pass title deeds to the appropriate Budget Manager who is responsible for custody of all title deeds.
- 3.75** To ensure that no Authority asset is subject to personal use by an employee without proper authority.
- 3.76** To ensure the safe custody of vehicles, equipment, furniture, inventories and other property belonging to the Authority.
- 3.77** To ensure that the service maintains a register of moveable assets in accordance with arrangements defined by the Chief Financial Officer.
- 3.78** To ensure that assets are identified, their location recorded and that they are appropriately marked as Fire Brigade property and insured.
- 3.79** To consult the Chief Financial Officer in any case where security is thought to be defective or where it is considered that special security arrangements may be needed.
- 3.80** To consult the Chief Financial Officer in any case where security of cash is concerned and to ensure cash holdings on premises are kept within limits agreed with the Chief Financial Officer.
- 3.81** To ensure that keys to safes and similar receptacles are kept secure at all times; loss of any such keys must be reported to the Chief Financial Officer as soon as possible.
- 3.82** To ensure the disposal of assets is normally by competitive tender or public auction, unless, following consultation with the Chief Financial Officer, the Strategic Enabling Team agrees otherwise.
- 3.83** To arrange for the valuation of assets for accounting purposes to meet requirements specified by the Chief Financial Officer.

- 3.84** To ensure that all employees are aware that they have a personal responsibility with regard to the protection and confidentiality of information, whether held in manual or computerised records. Information may be sensitive or privileged, or may possess some intrinsic value, and its disclosure or loss could result in a cost to the Authority in some way.

Responsibilities of the Chief Fire Officer – Stocks and Stores Inventories

- 3.85** To make arrangements for the care, custody, physical control and security of stocks and stores in the service and for the maintenance of a proper stores control system and stores records.
- 3.86** To ensure stocks are maintained at reasonable levels and are subject to a regular independent physical check. All discrepancies should be investigated and pursued to a satisfactory conclusion. Records of stocks checked and discrepancies found are to be kept.
- 3.87** To certify the quantity and value of the stocks and stores in his/her service and forward a copy of the certification to the Chief Financial Officer at least annually.
- 3.88** To investigate and remove from the Authority's records (i.e. write off) discrepancies as necessary, or to obtain Authority approval if they are in excess of a predetermined limit. The Chief Financial Officer is to be notified of discrepancies written off.
- 3.89** To authorise or write off disposal of redundant stocks and equipment. Procedures for disposal of such stocks and equipment should be by competitive quotations or auction, unless, following consultation with the Chief Financial Officer, approved otherwise in a particular case.
- 3.90** To keep all stores accounts and records in connection with the accounting stocks in such a manner and form as may be approved by the Chief Financial Officer.
- 3.91** The Chief Financial Officer, in collaboration with the appropriate officers, is to:
- determine the method to be followed in the valuation of stores for the purposes of charging out stores for evaluating stock in hand at the end of the financial year; and
 - determine and review the appropriate rate(s) of overhead charge arising from stocks and stores.
- 3.92** To supply the Chief Financial Officer with such returns about stocks and stores under his/her control as the Chief Financial Officer may require.
- 3.93** To designate suitable officers who shall be responsible for:
- (a) custody of stocks and stores;
 - (b) the maintenance of stores and accounting records;
 - (c) authorising the issue of stocks and stores; and
 - (d) carrying out the stocktaking of all stores.

Except with the agreement of the Chief Financial Officer, no officer shall be responsible for more than one of the functions of (a), (b), (c) or (d) above.

Responsibilities of the Chief Fire Officer – Other Inventories

- 3.94** To maintain inventories in a manner agreed with the Chief Financial Officer. Inventories are to record an adequate description (including serial number where possible) above £500 in value per item of any office equipment, any equipment or moveable plant and machinery and any equipment collectively of a non-operational nature. Items below this value may be included where it is felt that they are particularly attractive or desirable.
- 3.95** To carry out an annual check of all items on the inventory in order to verify location, review, condition and to take action in relation to surpluses or deficiencies, annotating the inventory accordingly. Attractive and portable items such as computers, cameras and video recorders should be identified with security markings as belonging to the Authority.
- 3.96** Any surplus or deficiency revealed by the annual inventory check shall be notified to the SEF&R who shall take such action as is deemed necessary.
- 3.97** To make sure that property is only used in the course of the Authority's business, unless the Chief Fire Officer has given permission otherwise.
- 3.98** To ensure obsolete items are disposed of in accordance with Authority's Regulations as per section 3.107.

Intellectual Property

Why is this important?

- 3.99** Intellectual property is a generic term that includes inventions and writing. If these are created by the employee during the course of employment, then, as a general rule, they belong to the employer, not the employee. Various acts of Parliament cover different types of intellectual property.
- 3.100** Certain activities undertaken within the Authority may give rise to items that may be patentable, for example, software development. These items are collectively known as intellectual property.

Key Controls

- 3.101** In the event that the Authority decides to become involved in the commercial exploitation of inventions, the matter should proceed in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Policy.

Responsibilities of the Chief Financial Officer

- 3.102** To develop and disseminate good practice through the Authority's intellectual property procedures.

Responsibilities of the Chief Fire Officer

- 3.103** To ensure that controls are in place so that staff do not carry out private work in Authority time and that staff are aware of an employer's rights with regard to intellectual property.

ASSET DISPOSAL

Why is this important?

- 3.104** It would be uneconomic and inefficient for the cost of assets to outweigh their benefits. Obsolete, non-repairable or unnecessary resources should be disposed of in accordance with the law and the regulations of the Authority.

Key Controls

- 3.105** Assets for disposal are identified and are disposed of at the most appropriate time, and only when it is in the best interests of the Authority, and best price is obtained.
- 3.106** Procedures protect staff involved in the disposal from accusations of personal gain.

Responsibilities of the Chief Financial Officer

- 3.107** To issue advice/guidelines representing best practice for disposal of assets.
- 3.108** To ensure appropriate accounting entries are made to remove the value of disposed assets from the Authority's records and to include the sale proceeds if appropriate.

Responsibilities of the Chief Fire Officer

- 3.109** Assets that are no longer required should be disposed of to avoid unnecessary maintenance, risk and insurance costs. Before disposal the Budget Manager must make a judgement as to whether the asset can be reused elsewhere in the Service. Assets that are no longer functional, are not fit for purpose or are beyond economical repair must be disposed of in accordance with the disposal of goods procurement policy. All sales must be reported to the Chief Financial Officer to enable an invoice to be raised.
- 3.110** To ensure that income received for the disposal of an asset is properly banked and coded.

Trust Funds and Funds held for Third Parties

Responsibilities of the Chief Fire Officer

- 3.111** To have overall responsibility for the financial management and investment of all monies of Trust Funds in the name of the Authority, including instances where the day to day management of a fund is devolved to other Brigade Managers or SEF&R.
- 3.112** To maintain the accounting records of all Trust Funds in the name of the Authority and make arrangements for the safe custody of cash, stock certificates and other documents of title issued in connection with the investment of funds.
- 3.113** To ensure that trust funds are operated within any relevant legislation and the specific requirements for each trust.

Imprest Accounts**Responsibilities of the Chief Financial Officer**

- 3.114** To provide employees of the Authority with cash or bank imprest accounts to meet minor expenditure on behalf of the Authority and to prescribe rules for operating these accounts.
- 3.115** To determine the petty cash limit and to maintain a record of imprests issued, and periodically to review the arrangements for the safe custody and control of these imprests.
- 3.116** To reimburse imprest holders as often as considered appropriate to restore the imprests.

Responsibilities of the Chief Fire Officer

- 3.117** To ensure that employees operating an imprest account:
- (a) limit payments from the account to such minor items of expenditure as the Chief Financial Officer may approve and obtain and retain receipted vouchers to support each payment from the imprest account. Where appropriate, an official receipted VAT invoice must be obtained;
 - (b) make adequate arrangements for the safe custody of the account (cash and records);
 - (c) produce upon demand by the Chief Financial Officer cash and all vouchers to the total value of the imprest amount;
 - (d) record transactions promptly;
 - (e) reconcile and balance the account at least monthly; reconciliation sheets to be signed and retained by the imprest holder;
 - (f) provide the Chief Financial Officer with a certificate of the value of the account held at 31st March each year;
 - (g) ensure that the float is never used to cash personal cheques or to make personal loans and that the only payments into the account are the reimbursement of the float and change relating to purchases where an advance has been made;
 - (h) on leaving the Authority's employment or otherwise ceasing to be entitled to hold an imprest advance, an employee shall account to the Chief Financial Officer for the amount advanced to him or her;
 - (i) no income received on behalf of the Authority is to be paid into the imprest without the specific authorisation of the Chief Financial Officer; and
 - (j) statement of imprest account shall be certified as correct and forwarded with all vouchers to the Chief Financial Officer with a claim for reimbursement.

- 3.118** Where the Chief Financial Officer considers it appropriate, an account shall be opened with the Authority's bankers or suitable alternative Bank/Building Society for use by an imprest holder who shall not cause such an account to be overdrawn.

Treasury Management

- 3.119** Investments and borrowing shall be made by the Fire Authority in accordance with the approved Treasury Management Strategy and Service Level Agreement with Sandwell MBC.

Financial Systems and Procedures

GENERAL

Why is this important?

- 4.01** The Fire Service has many systems and procedures relating to the control of the Authority's assets, including purchasing, costing and management systems. The Service is increasingly reliant on computers for its financial management information. The information must therefore be accurate and the systems and procedures sound and well administered. They should contain controls to ensure that transactions are properly processed and errors detected promptly.
- 4.02** The Chief Financial Officer has a professional responsibility to ensure that the Authority's financial systems are sound and should therefore be notified of any new developments or changes.

Key Controls

- 4.03** The key controls for systems and procedures are:
- (a) basic data exists to enable the Authority's objectives, targets, budgets and plans to be formulated;
 - (b) performance is communicated to the appropriate managers on an accurate, complete and timely basis;
 - (c) early warning is provided of deviations from target, plans and budgets that require management attention;
 - (d) operating systems and procedures are secure; and
 - (e) appropriate division of duties.

Responsibilities of the Chief Financial Officer

- 4.04** To make arrangements for the proper administration of the Authority's financial affairs, including to:
- (a) issue advice, guidance and procedures for officers and others acting on the Authority's behalf;
 - (b) determine the accounting systems, form of accounts and supporting financial records;
 - (c) establish arrangements for audit of the Authority's financial affairs;
 - (d) approve any new financial systems to be introduced; and
 - (e) approve any changes to be made to existing financial systems.

Responsibilities of the Chief Fire Officer

- 4.05** To ensure that financial and accounting records are properly maintained and held securely in accordance with arrangements approved by the Chief Financial Officer.
- 4.06** To ensure that vouchers and documents with financial implications are not destroyed, except in accordance with arrangements approved by the Chief Financial Officer. No prime documents or records should be disposed of until the completion of the audit of the Authority's accounts by the external auditor for the year to which the records relate.

Generally, all accounting and financial records shall be retained for 6 complete financial years.

These arrangements are subject to any overriding statutory or government requirement and any alternative arrangements agreed with the Chief Financial Officer.

- 4.07** To ensure that a complete management trail, allowing financial transactions to be traced from the accounting records to the original document, and vice versa, is maintained.
- 4.08** To incorporate appropriate controls to ensure that, where relevant:
- (a) all input is genuine, complete, accurate, timely and not previously processed;
 - (b) all processing is carried out in an accurate, complete and timely manner; and
 - (c) output from the system is complete, accurate and timely.
- 4.09** To ensure that the organisational structure provides an appropriate division of duties to provide adequate internal controls and to minimise the risk of fraud or other malpractice.
- 4.10** To ensure there is a documented and tested disaster recovery plan to allow information system processing to resume quickly in the event of an interruption.
- 4.11** To ensure that systems are documented and staff trained in operations.
- 4.12** To consult with the Chief Financial Officer before changing any existing system or introducing new systems.
- 4.13** To establish a scheme of delegation identifying officers authorised to act upon the Chief Fire Officer's behalf in respect of payments, income collection and placing orders, including variations, and showing the limits of their authority.
- 4.14** To ensure that effective contingency arrangements, including back-up procedures, exist for computer systems. Wherever possible, back-up information should be securely retained in a fireproof location, preferably off site or at an alternative location within the building.
- 4.15** To ensure that, where appropriate, computer systems are registered in accordance with data protection legislation and that staff are aware of their responsibilities under the legislation.
- 4.16** To ensure that relevant standards and guidelines for computer systems issued by the Chief Fire Officer are observed.

- 4.17** To ensure that computer equipment and software are protected from loss and damage through theft, vandalism, etc.
- 4.18** To comply with the copyright, designs and patents legislation and, in particular, to ensure that:
- (a) only software legally acquired and installed by the authority is used on its computers;
 - (b) staff are aware of legislative provisions; and
 - (c) in developing systems, due regard is given to the issue of intellectual property rights.
- 4.19** To ensure employees are aware of the national code of conduct for local government employees.

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

Income

Why is this important?

- 4.20** Income can be a vulnerable asset and effective income collection systems are necessary to ensure that all income due is identified, collected, receipted and banked properly. It is preferable to obtain income in advance of supplying goods or services as this improves the Authority's cashflow and also avoids the time and cost of administering debts.

Key Controls

- 4.21** The key controls for income are:

- (a) all income due to the Authority is identified and charged correctly, in accordance with an approved charging policy, which is regularly reviewed;
- (b) all income is collected from the correct person, at the right time, using the correct procedures and the appropriate stationery;
- (c) all money received by an employee on behalf of the Authority is paid without delay to the Chief Financial Officer or, as he or she directs, to the Authority's bank, and is properly recorded. The responsibility for cash collection should be separated from that:
 - for identifying the amount due; and
 - for reconciling the amount due to the amount received.
- (d) effective action is taken to pursue non-payment within defined timescales;
- (e) formal approval for debt write-off is obtained;
- (f) appropriate write-off action is taken within defined timescales;
- (g) appropriate accounting adjustments are made following write-off action;
- (h) all appropriate income documents are retained and stored for the defined period in accordance with the document retention schedule; and
- (i) money collected and deposited is reconciled to the bank account by a person who is not involved in the collection or banking process.

Responsibilities of the Chief Financial Officer

- 4.22** To agree arrangements for the collection of all income due to the Authority and to approve the procedures, systems and documentation for its collection.
- 4.23** To order and supply to services all receipt forms, books or tickets and similar items and to satisfy himself or herself regarding the arrangements for their control. To approve all other documents which acknowledge the receipt of money.
- 4.24** To arrange for bank reconciliation statements to be regularly prepared for all bank accounts and for all matters arising from the reconciliations to be cleared as soon as practicable.

- 4.25** To approve all debts to be written off in consultation with the relevant Budget Manager and to keep a record of all sums written off up to the approved limit and to adhere to the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.
- 4.26** To obtain the approval of the Authority in consultation with the relevant Budget Manager for writing off debts in excess of the approved limit.
- 4.27** To ensure that appropriate accounting adjustments are made following write-off action.
- 4.28** To establish and initiate appropriate recovery procedures, including legal action where necessary, for debts that are not paid promptly.

Responsibilities of the Chief Fire Officer

- 4.29** To establish a charging policy for the supply of goods or services, including the appropriate charging of VAT, and to review it regularly, in line with corporate policies.
- 4.30** To designate, in respect of all income arising from services under his/her control, suitable officers who shall be responsible for:
 - (a) determining and recording all amounts due;
 - (b) the collection, custody and deposit of cash including the preparation of an accurate and chronological account of all monies received and deposited; and
 - (c) the maintenance of accounting records.

Except with the express authority of the Chief Financial Officer, no officer shall be responsible for more than one of the functions, (a), (b) or (c) above.

- 4.31** To establish and initiate where so approved by Chief Financial Officer, appropriate recovery procedures, including legal action where necessary, for debts that are not paid promptly.
- 4.32** To ensure that every sum received by an officer of the Fire Service is immediately acknowledged by the issue of an official receipt or voucher, or other authorised record except where other arrangements are agreed with the Chief Financial Officer. All receipts (other than those issued by receipting machines) shall be signed by the officer issuing them in his/her own name as on behalf of the Chief Financial Officer.
- 4.33** Where payment is received by cheque and the payer does not require a receipt, such special arrangements as are approved by the Chief Financial Officer shall operate.
- 4.34** To hold securely receipts, tickets and other records of income for the appropriate period.
- 4.35** To lock away all income to safeguard against loss or theft, and to ensure the security of cash handling.
- 4.36** To ensure that income is paid fully and promptly into the appropriate Authority bank account in the form in which it is received. To provide an audit trail each officer who banks cheques shall record name of debtor, cheque number, amount and appropriate details. Money collected and deposited must be reconciled to the bank account on a regular basis.

- 4.37** To ensure income is not used to cash personal cheques or other payments.
- 4.38** To supply the Chief Financial Officer with details relating to work done, goods supplied, services rendered or other amounts due, to enable the Chief Financial Officer to record correctly the sums due to the Authority and to ensure accounts are sent out promptly. The Chief Fire Officer has a responsibility to assist the Chief Financial Officer in collecting debts that they have originated, by providing any further information requested by the debtor, and in pursuing the matter on the Authority's behalf. Only up to approved levels of cash can be held on the premises.
- 4.39** To keep a record of every transfer of money between employees of the Authority. The receiving officer must sign for the transfer and the transferor must retain a copy.
- 4.40** To recommend to the Chief Financial Officer all debts to be written off and to keep a record of all sums written off up to the approved limit. Once raised, no bona fide debt may be cancelled, except by full payment or by its formal writing off. A credit note to replace a debt can only be issued to correct a factual inaccuracy or administrative error in the calculation and/or billing of the original debt.
- 4.41** To ensure that income and Value Added Tax are correctly coded to the appropriate head of account in accordance with arrangements approved by the Chief Financial Officer.
- 4.42** To notify the Chief Financial Officer of outstanding income relating to the previous financial year as soon as possible after 31st March in line with the timetable determined by the Chief Financial Officer and not later than 30th April.

Ordering and Paying for Work, Goods and Services

Why is this important?

- 4.43** Public money should be spent with demonstrable probity and in accordance with the Authority's policies. The Authority has a statutory duty to achieve best value in part through economy and efficiency. The Authority's procedures should help to ensure that services obtain value for money from their purchasing arrangements. These procedures should be read in conjunction with the Authority's code of practice on tenders and contracts as specified in Brigade Procurement Policies.

General

- 4.44** Every officer and Member of the Authority has a responsibility to declare any links or personal interests that they may have with purchasers, suppliers and/or contractors if they are engaged in contractual or purchasing decisions on behalf of the Authority, in accordance with appropriate codes of conduct.
- 4.45** Official Orders must be in a form approved by the Chief Financial Officer. Official orders must be issued for all work, goods or services to be supplied to the Authority, except for supplies of utilities, periodic payments such as rent or rates, petty cash purchases or other exceptions specified by the Chief Financial Officer. Orders shall show the quantities and terms of the transaction. Copy Orders shall also show quoted or estimated prices and details of any discounts available. Copy orders shall be retained in safe custody and kept available for audit and record purposes. Goods and services obtained urgently by telephone or verbal Orders shall be confirmed by an Official Order marked "confirmation" within four working days.

- 4.46** Each order must conform to the guidelines approved by the Authority on central purchasing and the standardisation of supplies and materials. Standard terms and conditions must not be varied without the prior approval of the Chief Financial Officer.
- 4.47** Apart from petty cash, the normal method of payment from the Authority shall be by BACS Transfer, cheque or other instrument or approved method, drawn on the Authority's bank account by the Chief Financial Officer. The use of direct debit shall require the prior agreement of the Chief Financial Officer.
- 4.48** Official Orders must not be raised for any personal or private purchases, nor must personal or private use be made of Authority contracts.

Key Controls

- 4.49** The key controls for ordering and paying for work, goods and services are:
- (a) all goods and services are ordered only by appropriate persons and are correctly recorded;
 - (b) all goods and services shall be ordered in accordance with the Authority's code of practice for tenders and contracts unless they are purchased from sources within the Authority;
 - (c) goods and services received are checked to ensure they are in accordance with the Order. Goods should not be received by the person who placed the Order;
 - (d) payments are not made unless goods have been received by the Authority to the correct price, quantity and quality standards;
 - (e) all payments are made to the correct person, for the correct amount and are properly recorded, regardless of the payment method;
 - (f) all appropriate evidence of the transaction and payment documents are retained and stored for the defined period, in accordance with the document retention schedule;
 - (g) all expenditure, including VAT, is accurately recorded against the right budget and any exceptions are corrected; and
 - (h) in addition, the effect of e-business/e-commerce and electronic purchasing requires that processes are in place to maintain the security and integrity of data for transacting business electronically.

Responsibilities of the Chief Financial Officer

- 4.50** To ensure that all the Authority's financial systems and procedures are sound and properly administered.
- 4.51** To approve any changes to existing financial systems and to approve any new systems before they are introduced.
- 4.52** To approve the form of Official Orders and associated terms and conditions.

- 4.53** To make payments from the Authority's funds on the Chief Fire Officer's authorisation that the expenditure has been duly incurred in accordance with financial regulations and procedures.
- 4.54** To make payments, whether or not provision exists within the estimates, where the payment is specifically required by statute or is made under a court order.
- 4.55** To make payments to contractors on the certificate of the appropriate Budget Manager which must include details of the value of work, retention money, amounts previously certified and amounts now certified.
- 4.56** To provide advice on making payments by the most economical means to ensure that all payments are despatched direct to creditors unless specific alternative arrangements are agreed by an authorised officer.
- 4.57** To ensure that a budgetary control system is established that enables commitments incurred by placing orders to be shown against the appropriate budget allocation so that they can be taken into account in budget monitoring reports.

Responsibilities of the Chief Fire Officer

Ordering

- 4.58** To ensure the requirements of the Policy for Contracts shall be observed in respect of all orders. Competitive tenders or quotations are to be obtained for goods and services in accordance with the Authority's Procurement Procedures.
- 4.59** To utilise the services provided by central purchasing that have been established by the Chief Financial Officer in putting purchases out to competitive tender/quotations.
- 4.60** To ensure that uniquely pre-numbered Official Orders are used for all goods and services, other than the exceptions specified in 4.45.
- 4.61** To ensure that orders are only used for goods and services provided to the service. Individuals must not use Official Orders to obtain goods or services for private use.
- 4.62** To ensure that only those staff authorised by the Chief Fire Officer authorises orders in line with the Authority's Procurement procedures. The authoriser of the order should be satisfied that the goods and services ordered are appropriate and needed, that there is adequate budgetary provision and that quotations or tenders have been obtained if necessary.
- 4.63** Orders are to be approved by an authorised officer on behalf of the Chief Fire Officer. Facsimile signature stamps should not be used on Official Orders.

Delivery

- 4.64** To ensure that a delivery note is obtained for every delivery of goods, wherever possible, and all practical steps are taken to ensure that the delivery note is available at the time of delivery. All goods are checked as regards quantity at the time of delivery and goods are inspected as regards quality and compliance with specification as soon as practicable after delivery. Non-delivery, shortages, or damage to goods listed on a delivery note must be reported in writing to the appropriate supplier as soon as practicable. This check is to be carried out by a different officer from the person who authorised the order. Goods received records

should be maintained where considered appropriate by Chief Financial Officer and entries made in inventory records.

Payment

- 4.65** To ensure that the service maintains and reviews periodically staff approved to certify invoices.
- 4.66** To ensure that invoices for payment are approved by an authorised officer on behalf of the Chief Fire Officer.
- 4.67** Before certifying an invoice, the certifying officer shall, save to the extent the Chief Financial Officer may otherwise determine, have satisfied himself or herself that:
- (a) the goods have been received and are satisfactory in respect of quantity, quality and compliance with specification;
 - (b) the work done or services rendered have been satisfactorily performed and comply with specification;
 - (c) grants, awards, allowances and gratuitous payments are in accordance with official scales and the authority for payment given by the Authority;
 - (d) the prices, extensions, totals, calculations, trade discounts, other allowances, credits and value added tax are correct;
 - (e) the expenditure has been properly incurred and is within the estimated provision;
 - (f) appropriate entries have been made in inventories, stores records or stock books as required;
 - (g) the invoice has been cross-referenced to the Official Order and has not previously been passed for payment and is a proper legal liability of the Authority;
 - (h) the expenditure and value added tax have been correctly coded to the appropriate head of account; and
 - (i) all payments to sub-contractors in the construction industry have the appropriate category for Income Tax indicated on the purchase order and the income tax deduction shown where appropriate.
- 4.68** To arrange for two separate members of staff to be involved in the ordering, receiving and payment process to ensure an adequate division of duties. If possible, a different officer from the person who authorised the order should authorise the invoice.
- 4.69** To ensure, in collaboration with the Chief Financial Officer, that arrangements are made for the division of duties arising from the certification and processing of invoices to provide an adequate internal check on each payment authorised. In particular:
- (a) divide between designated officers the responsibilities for the various acts of certification set out in 4.67.

- (b) divide between designated officers the following functions of the on-line invoice process:
 - (i) input of invoices; and
 - (ii) creation of creditor reference numbers.
 - (c) maintain subsidiary records and retain in safe custody all delivery notes, goods received sheets, etc.
- 4.70** To ensure that all requests for the payment of monies is processed on a form approved by the Chief Financial Officer. The form should contain a standard grid completed to indicate that the various acts of certification set out in 4.67 have been completed. Requests for payment must not be made, otherwise than with the express consent of the Chief Financial Officer, where only one officer has been involved in the acts of certification set out in 4.67. Payment vouchers, costing and authorisation documents shall be obtained from the Chief Financial Officer. All other documents used for the payment of money shall be in a form approved by the Chief Financial Officer.
- 4.71** Under no circumstances should the amount of VAT be altered on an invoice. Where the VAT element is incorrect adjusted invoices or credit notes should be obtained from the supplier.
- 4.72** To ensure that where it is necessary to pass a copy invoice for payment a thorough check is carried out to ensure the original invoice has not previously been paid.
- 4.73** To encourage suppliers of goods and services to receive payment by the most economical means for the Authority. It is essential, however, that payments made by direct debit have the prior approval of the Chief Financial Officer.
- 4.74** To ensure that loans, leasing or rental arrangements are not entered into without prior agreement from the Chief Financial Officer. This is because of the potential impact on the Authority's borrowing powers, to protect the Authority against entering into unapproved credit arrangements, correct accounting treatment and to ensure that value for money is being obtained.
- 4.75** To notify the Chief Financial Officer of outstanding expenditure relating to the previous financial year as soon as possible after 31st March in line with the timetable determined by the Chief Financial Officer.
- 4.76** To notify the Chief Financial Officer immediately of any expenditure to be incurred as a result of statute/court order where there is no budgetary provision.
- 4.77** To arrange for all payment documents, once processed, to be securely retained to prevent re-use. Payment records are to be retained and stored for a defined period, in accordance with legislative and operations requirements.
- 4.78** To maintain, in a form agreed by the Chief Financial Officer:
- (a) a Periodical Payments Register recording the amounts paid by the Authority at recurring intervals under contracts, leases and other agreements; and
 - (b) a Property Payments Register recording the amounts paid by the Authority for gas, electricity and water.

- 4.79** To arrange after certification for the processing of invoices and payment requests on-line to the creditor payments system on the mainframe computer. In order to take account of the Fire Authority's cashflow needs, invoices should be processed so that payment is made on the contract settlement date. Where no settlement date is stated, it is to be assumed the date is 30 days after the invoice date.

Payments to Employees and Members

Why is this important?

- 4.80** Staff costs are the largest item of expenditure for most Authority services. It is therefore important that payments are accurate, timely, made only where they are due for services to the Authority and that payments accord with individuals' conditions of employment. It is also important that all payments are accurately and completely recorded and accounted for and that Members' allowances are authorised in accordance with the scheme adopted by the Authority.

Key Controls

- 4.81** The key controls for payments to employees and Members are:
- (a) proper authorisation procedures are in place and that there is adherence to corporate timetables in relation to:
 - starters;
 - leavers;
 - variations;
 - enhancements; and
 - and that payments are made on the basis of contracts or claims.
 - (b) frequent reconciliation of payroll expenditure against approved budget and bank account;
 - (c) all appropriate payroll documents are retained and stored for the defined period in accordance with the document retention schedule;
 - (d) that all statutory legislation relating to payroll and pension regulations is complied with; and
 - (e) Proper Division of Duties.

Responsibilities of the Chief Financial Officer

- 4.82** To arrange and control secure and reliable payment of salaries, wages, compensation or other emoluments to existing and former employees, in accordance with procedures prescribed by him/her, on the due date.
- 4.83** To record and make arrangements for the accurate and timely payment of tax, superannuation and other deductions.
- 4.84** To make arrangements for payment of all travel and subsistence claims or financial loss allowance upon receiving the prescribed claim, duly completed and authorised.
- 4.85** To make arrangements for paying Members travel or other allowances upon receiving the prescribed claim, duly completed and authorised.

- 4.86** To provide advice and encouragement to secure payment of salaries and wages by the most economical means.
- 4.87** To ensure that there are adequate arrangements for administering superannuation matters on a day-to-day basis.

Responsibilities of the Chief Fire Officer

- 4.88** To ensure appointments are made in accordance with the regulations of the Authority and approved establishments, grades and scale of pay and that adequate budget provision is available.
- 4.89** To notify the Chief Financial Officer of all appointments, terminations or variations which may affect the pay or pension of an employee or former employee, in the form and to the timescale required by the Chief Financial Officer.
- 4.90** To ensure that adequate and effective systems and procedures are operated, so that:
- payments are only authorised to bona fide employees;
 - payments are only made where there is a valid entitlement;
 - conditions and contracts of employment are correctly applied; and
 - employees' records listed on the payroll are checked at regular intervals to verify accuracy and completeness.
- 4.91** Pay claims are to be approved by the authorised officer on behalf of the Chief Fire Officer. The certification of the pay claims shall mean that:
- the person has worked the period stated on the claims;
 - the rates of pay and other emoluments shown on the claims are correct; and
 - any other matters affecting entitlement to pay is correct.
- 4.92** To ensure that payroll transactions are processed only through the payroll system. Budget Managers should give careful consideration to the employment status of individuals employed on a self-employed consultant or subcontract basis. HM Revenues and Customs applies a tight definition for employee status and, in cases of doubt, advice should be sought from the Chief Financial Officer.
- 4.93** To certify travel and subsistence claims and other allowances. Certification is taken to mean that journeys were authorised and expenses properly and necessarily incurred, and that allowances are properly payable by the Authority, ensuring that cost-effective use of travel arrangements is achieved. Due consideration should be given to tax implications and that the Chief Financial Officer is informed where appropriate.
- 4.94** To ensure that the Chief Financial Officer is notified of the details of any employee benefits in kind, to enable full and complete reporting within the income tax self-assessment system.
- 4.95** To ensure that all appropriate payroll documents are retained and stored for the defined period in accordance with the document retention schedule.
- 4.96** To ensure all pay documents and records are in a form approved by the Chief Financial Officer.

- 4.97** To ensure that all staff are aware of procedures and entitlement to payment for subsistence, travelling and incidental expenses. The Chief Fire Officer should ensure that his/her staff have access to personnel policy guidelines and the procedures for the claiming of car allowances etc.
- 4.98** To ensure that all claims for payment of subsistence, travelling and incidental expenses are submitted to the Chief Financial Officer duly certified on Oracle Fusion, except for those categories of officers and types of travelling expenses for which alternative arrangements are approved by the Chief Financial Officer.
- 4.99** To ensure salaries and wages in advance is not made except in the case of persons leaving the service before the day on which their salary or wage is normally paid or at the discretion of the Chief Financial Officer.

Responsibilities of Members

- 4.100** To submit claims for Members' travel and subsistence allowances on a monthly basis and, in any event, within one month of the year end.

TAXATION

Why is this important?

4.101 Like all organisations, the Fire Authority is responsible for ensuring its tax affairs are in order. Tax issues are often very complex and the penalties for incorrectly accounting for tax are severe. It is therefore very important for all officers to be aware of their role.

Key Controls

4.102 The key controls for taxation are:

- (a) budget managers are provided with relevant information and kept up to date on tax issues;
- (b) budget managers are instructed on required record keeping;
- (c) all taxable transactions are identified, properly carried out and accounted for within stipulated timescales;
- (d) records are maintained in accordance with instructions; and
- (e) returns are made to the appropriate authorities within the stipulated timescale.

Responsibilities of the Chief Financial Officer

4.103 To complete all HM Revenue and Customs returns regarding PAYE and NI.

4.104 To complete a monthly return of VAT inputs and outputs to HM Revenue and Customs.

4.105 To provide details to HM Revenues and Customs regarding the construction industry tax deduction scheme.

Responsibilities of the Chief Fire Officer

4.106 To ensure that the correct VAT liability is attached to all income due and that all VAT recoverable on purchases complies with HM Revenue and Customs regulations.

4.107 To ensure that, where construction and maintenance works are undertaken, the contractor fulfils the necessary construction industry tax deduction requirements.

4.108 To ensure that all persons employed by the Authority are added to the Authority's payroll and tax deducted from any payments, except where the individuals are bona fide self-employed or are employed by a recognised staff agency.

External Arrangements

PARTNERSHIPS

Why is it important?

- 5.01** Partnerships are likely to play a key role in delivering community strategies and in helping to promote and improve the well-being of the area. Authorities are working in partnership with others – public agencies, private companies, community groups and voluntary organisations. Authorities still deliver some services, but their distinctive leadership role is to bring together the contributions of the various stakeholders. They therefore need to deliver a shared vision of services based on user wishes.
- 5.02** Authorities will mobilise investment, bid for funds, champion the needs of their areas and harness the energies of local people and community organisations. Authorities will be measured by what they achieve in partnership with others.

General

- 5.03** The main reasons for entering into a partnership are:
- (a) to provide new and better ways of delivering services;
 - (b) the desire to find new ways to share risk;
 - (c) the ability to access new resources; and
 - (d) to forge new relationships.
- 5.04** A partner is defined as either:
- (a) an organisation (private or public) undertaking, part funding or participating as a beneficiary in a project;
- or
- (b) a body whose nature or status give it a right or obligation to support the project.
- 5.05** Partners participate in projects by:
- (a) acting as a project deliverer or sponsor, solely or in concert with others;
 - (b) acting as a project funder or part funder; and
 - (c) being the beneficiary group of the activity undertaken in a project.
- 5.06** Partners have common responsibilities:
- (a) to be willing to take on a role in the broader programme appropriate to the skills and resources of the partner organisation;
 - (b) to act in good faith at all times and in the best interests of the partnership's aims and objectives;
 - (c) be open about any conflict of interests that might arise;
 - (d) to encourage joint working and promote the sharing of information, resources and skills between public, private and community sectors;

- (e) to hold confidentially any information received as a result of partnership activities or duties that is of a confidential or commercially sensitive nature; and
- (f) to act wherever possible as ambassadors for the project.

Key Controls

5.07 The key controls for Authority partners are:

- (a) if appropriate, to be aware of their responsibilities under the Authority's financial regulations and the code of practice on tenders and contracts;
- (b) to ensure that risk management processes are in place to identify and assess all known risks;
- (c) to ensure that project appraisal processes are in place to assess the viability of the project in terms of resources, staffing and expertise;
- (d) to agree and accept formally the roles and responsibilities of each of the partners involved in the project before the project commences;
- (e) to communicate regularly with other partners throughout the project so that problems can be identified and shared to achieve their successful resolution; and
- (f) To undertake evaluation to determine the effectiveness of the project.

Responsibilities of the Chief Financial Officer

5.08 To advise on effective controls that will ensure that resources are not wasted.

5.09 To advise on the key elements of funding a project. They include:

- (a) a scheme appraisal for financial viability in both the current and future years;
- (b) risk appraisal and management ;
- (c) resourcing, including taxation issues;
- (d) audit, security and control requirements; and
- (e) carry-forward arrangements.

5.10 To ensure that the accounting arrangements are satisfactory.

Responsibilities of the Chief Fire Officer

5.11 To maintain a register of all contracts entered into with external bodies in accordance with procedures specified by the Chief Financial Officer.

5.12 To ensure that, before entering into agreements with external bodies, a risk management appraisal has been prepared for the Chief Financial Officer.

5.13 To ensure that such agreements and arrangements do not impact adversely upon the services provided by the Authority.

- 5.14** To ensure that all agreements and arrangements are properly documented.
- 5.15** To provide appropriate information to the Chief Financial Officer to enable a note to be entered into the Authority's statement of accounts concerning material items.

EXTERNAL FUNDING

Why is this important?

- 5.16** External funding is potentially a very important source of income, but funding conditions need to be carefully considered to ensure that they are compatible with the aims and objectives of the Authority. Fire Authorities are increasingly encouraged to provide seamless service delivery through working closely with other agencies and private service providers. Funds from external agencies such as the National Lottery provide additional resources to enable the Authority to deliver services to the local community.

Key Controls

- 5.17** The key controls for external funding are:
- (a) to ensure that key conditions of funding and any statutory requirements are complied with and that the responsibilities of the accountable body are clearly understood;
 - (b) to ensure that funds are acquired only to meet the priorities approved in the policy framework by the Authority; and
 - (c) to ensure that any match-funding requirements are given due consideration prior to entering into long-term agreements and that future revenue budgets reflect these requirements.

Responsibilities of the Chief Financial Officer

- 5.18** To ensure that all funding notified by external bodies is received and properly recorded in the Authority's accounts.
- 5.19** To ensure that the match-funding requirements are considered prior to entering into the agreements and that future revenue budgets reflect these requirements.
- 5.20** To ensure that audit requirements are met.

Responsibilities of the Chief Fire Officer

- 5.21** To ensure that all claims for funds are made by the due date.
- 5.22** To ensure that Members are informed how the proposed external funding fulfils the Authority's policies and desires prior to any bid being submitted for external funding.
- 5.23** To ensure that the project progresses in accordance with the agreed project and that all expenditure is properly incurred and recorded.
- 5.24** To comply with the rules of the funding body, especially re documentation of grant claims.

WORK FOR THIRD PARTIES

Why is this important?

- 5.25** Current legislation enables the Authority to provide a range of services to other bodies. Such work may enable a unit to maintain economies of scale and existing expertise. Arrangements should be in place to ensure that any risks associated with this work is minimised and that such work is intra vires.

Key Controls

- 5.26** The key controls for working with third parties are:
- (a) to ensure that proposals are costed properly in accordance with guidance provided by the Chief Financial Officer;
 - (b) to ensure that contracts are drawn up using guidance provided by the Chief Financial Officer and that the formal approvals process is adhered to; and
 - (c) to issue guidance with regard to the financial aspects of third party contracts and the maintenance of the contract register.

Responsibilities of the Chief Financial Officer

- 5.27** To issue guidance with regard to the financial aspects of third party contracts and the maintenance of the contract register.

Responsibilities of the Chief Fire Officer

- 5.28** To ensure that the approval of the Authority is obtained before any negotiations are concluded to work for third parties.
- 5.29** To maintain a register of all contracts entered into with third parties in accordance with procedures specified by the Chief Financial Officer.
- 5.30** To ensure that appropriate insurance arrangements are made.
- 5.31** To ensure that the Authority is not put at risk from any bad debts.
- 5.32** To ensure that no contract is subsidised by the Authority.
- 5.33** To ensure that, wherever possible, payment is received in advance of the delivery of the service.
- 5.34** To ensure that the service/unit has the appropriate expertise to undertake the contract.
- 5.35** To ensure that such contracts do not impact adversely upon the services provided for the Authority.
- 5.36** To ensure that all contracts are properly documented.
- 5.37** To provide appropriate information to the Chief Financial Officer to enable a note to be entered into the statement of accounts.

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

13 DECEMBER 2021

1. MONITORING OF FINANCES

Report of the Treasurer.

RECOMMENDED

- 1.1 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 £45.038 million and the revenue budget is £101.749 million.

- 3.1.2 Appendix A compares the revenue budgeted to the end of October 2021 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 October 2021, including commitments, was £58.518 million compared to a projected budget of £58.765 million, an overall favourable variance of £0.247 million.

- 3.1.4 The most significant variances relate to an overall adverse variance within Organisational Learning & People Development due to

additional staff costs. This is offset by an overall favourable variance due to vacancies within Community Safety and Children & Young People and Fire Safety.

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 2021/2022 is £8.100 million. A scheme analysis is shown on Appendix C. Expenditure to the end of October 2021 is shown as £2.624 million.

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

- Vehicle Replacement Programme – delayed purchase to 2022/23 of the:
 - Command Support Vehicle,
 - Water Units,
 - Toilet Trailers,
 - Demountable Lounge Fire Unit (Community Fire Safety demonstration unit),
 - Toolcat.
- Roof replacement at Transport Engineering Workshops has been delayed due to the need to retender.

4. **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

4.1 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**

5.1 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**

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

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Authority's Budget and Precept Report – February 2021
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 OCTOBER 2021

	LATEST BUDGET 2021/2022 £'000	PROFILED BUDGET £'000	ACTUALS + COMMIT -MENTS £'000	VARIANCE TO PROFILED BUDGET £'000
DEVOLVED BUDGETS				
Corporate Management	1,135	668	634	-34
Strategic Hub	598	355	333	-22
Portfolio & Organisational Intelligence	1,035	630	645	15
Ops North, Preparedness & Response	2,159	1,174	1,183	9
Ops South & Fire Control	2,466	1,430	1,403	-27
Prevention	2,138	1,230	1,106	-124
Protection	4,724	2,739	2,632	-107
Resourcing	6,020	3,852	3,920	68
Digital & Data	5,550	3,415	3,518	103
Policy & Organisational Assurance	770	481	484	3
Communications & Engagement	1,017	617	621	4
People Support Services	538	317	335	18
Employee Relations	246	166	176	10
Organisational Development	58	34	35	1
Organisational Learning & People Development	4,221	2,490	2,655	165
Health, Safety & Wellbeing	2,518	1,615	1,517	-98
CORPORATE BUDGETS				
Ops North, Preparedness & Response	-116	24	30	6
Prevention	24	14	10	-4
Protection	28	-32	-66	-34
Resourcing	15,313	7,635	7,585	-50
Digital & Data	232	244	244	-
People Support Services	2,230	1,331	1,334	3
Employee Relations	105	75	72	-3
Organisational Learning & People Development	106	52	45	-7
Health, Safety & Wellbeing	47,035	27,474	27,328	-146
Other Income & Expenditure	1,599	735	739	4

OFFICIAL

Appropriation to Reserves	-	-	-	-
TOTAL (NET BUDGET REQUIREMENT)	101,749	58,765	58,518	-247
Core Funding	-56,711	-35,466	-35,466	-
TOTAL (COUNCIL TAX REQUIREMENT)	45,038	23,299	23,052	-247

OFFICIAL

FIREFIGHTERS' PENSION SCHEMES**NON-FINANCIAL
INFORMATION**

	2021/22 PROJECTION				ACTUAL POSITION AS AT OCTOBER 2021			
	1992 FPS	2006 FPS	2015 FPS	TOTAL	1992 FPS	2006 FPS	2015 FPS	TOTAL
Members of FPS at 1st April 2021	76	6	1,169	1,251	76	6	1,169	1,251
New Members	-	-	82	82	-	-	32	32
Opt-In (including net auto-enrolment)	-	-	10	10	-	-	2	2
Transitional Members during year	-32	-	32	-	-1	-1	2	-
Transfers from Other Pension Schemes	-	-	4	4	-	-	-	-
Transfers to Other Pension Schemes	-	-	-4	-4	-	-	-	-
Retirements	-44	-6	-26	-76	-23	-2	-14	-39
Opt-Out			-5	-5	-	-1	-3	-4
Leavers			-5	-5	-	-	-1	-1
Ill-Health Retirements			-2	-2	-	-	-	-
Members of the Fire Pension Schemes as at 31 October 2021	52	2	1,187	1,241				

CAPITAL MONITORING STATEMENT 2021/22

Scheme	Year 2021/22	Latest Budget £'000	Actuals October 21 £'000	Forecast £'000	Variance £'000
<u>LAND & BUILDINGS</u>					
Boiler Replacement Programme	Ongoing	285	232	280	-5
Roof Replacements	Ongoing	892	2	377	-515
Windows/Door Replacement	Ongoing	677	0	681	4
Rewires	Ongoing	399	133	399	-
Drill Tower and Burn Facility	1 of 2	689	324	689	-
Other Building Modifications	2 of 2	59	24	59	-
Security Works	3 of 3	73	26	41	-32
Occupational Health Relocation	3 of 3	36	26	36	-
Aston Fire Station	7 of 7	97	13	80	-17
Health & Safety Works (COVID)	2 of 2	320	307	307	-13
<u>VEHICLES</u>					
Vehicle Replacement Programme	Ongoing	4,423	1,536	3,673	-750
<u>ICT & EQUIPMENT</u>					
C&C Upgrade-Vision 4/ESMCP	4 of 4	150	1	150	-
Grand Total		8,100	2,624	6,772	-1,328
<u>Funded By</u>					
Prudential Borrowing		0		0	-
Capital Grants / Contributions		74		74	-
Capital Receipts to be Applied		0		0	-
Revenue Financing / Earmarked Reserves		8,026		6,698	-1,328
TOTAL		8,100		6,772	-1,328
SURPLUS(-)/DEFICIT(+)					

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**13 DECEMBER 2021****1. AN ANALYSIS OF PROGRESS OF QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE AGAINST 'OUR PLAN' – QUARTER TWO 2021/22**

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 2021/22 (Appendix 1).
- 1.2 THAT the Committee note the progress made in delivering the three strategic priorities contained in 'Our Plan' 2021-2024 (Appendix 1).

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 2.1 This report is submitted to provide Members with an analysis of the organisation's performance against 'Our Plan' for 2021-2024.

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 November 2021. 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'.
- 3.3 It should be noted that the first two quarters of 2021/22 saw the Service continue to adapt its approaches to the delivery of prevention and protection services due to the ongoing effects of the COVID pandemic.

4. **PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

4.1 Appendix 1 details the performance against our:

- Performance Indicators covering:
 - Response, Prevention and Protection
 - People
 - Health, Safety and Wellbeing
 - Finance and Resources
- 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 42 seconds in quarter two, resulting in a median of 4 minutes 42 seconds year to date.
- Average attendance times for Category 2, 3 and 4 Incident Types remain well within their respective targets:
 - Category 2 Incident Type: 5 minutes 17 seconds (target of 7 minutes)
 - Category 3 Incident Type: 5 minutes 2 seconds (target of 10 minutes)
 - Category 4 Incident Type: 6 minutes 30 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 2 The number of accidental dwelling fires.
 - PI 10 The number of deliberate vehicle fires.

- PI 11 The number of deliberate rubbish fires. 778 Accidental Dwelling Fires (ADF) were recorded across the Service year to date, 7.8% fewer than the target of 844 and also significantly fewer than both the three-year average of 844.3 and the same period in 2020/21.
- The performance indicators for the following areas demonstrate performance is within the tolerance levels (green):
 - PI 8 The number of deliberate fires in dwellings.
 - PI 9 The number of deliberate fires in non-domestic premises.
- The performance indicators for the following areas demonstrate under performance against the tolerance levels (red):
 - PI 3 Injuries from accidental fires in dwellings, taken to hospital for treatment.
 - 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.
 - PI 12 The number of deliberate fires in derelict buildings.

It is anticipated that partner referrals will increase as we move forward from the impact of Covid. Additionally, although the number of Safe and Well points remain below target, a significant increase in performance has been observed in line with the easing of Covid related restrictions.

The introduction and transition of recording Safe and Wells via Tymly will have an impact on 'PI 6 The number of Safe Well points' as it is not directly comparable to the previous approach which utilised Activity Assistant, for example, the inclusion of a new risk model and scoring methodology as well as the addition of a risk mitigation score.

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

4.3 People 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.

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 18 – The average number of working days/shifts lost due to sickness (all staff).
- PI 19 – The average number of working days/shifts lost due to sickness (uniformed and Fire Control staff).

4.3.4 The figures for sickness absence cannot currently be reported from Oracle. As a result, this report only contains data regarding sickness absence for quarter one. This issue is being addressed and Quarter 2 analysis will be provided in future reports.

4.3.5 It should be noted that the figures reported for the performance indicators related to sickness do not include COVID related absences due to the affect that such absences will have on the performance indicators and the specific focus this has required to manage these absence types. Regular updates regarding Covid absence were reported to Members via COVID briefings throughout the COVID pandemic. However, figures including Covid absences have been included within the comments for each performance indicator to provide further context.

4.4 Health, Safety and Wellbeing Performance Indicators

4.4.1 As part of the target setting process for 2021/22, it was agreed that targets and tolerances would no longer be applied to the performance indicators for the total number of injuries or the total number of RIDDOR injuries, and as such, this is reflected within this report.

4.5 Finance and Resources Performance Indicators

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

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

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

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

4.5.3 PI25: electricity use has been above target for the full first 6 months year to date. Only Command Development Centre, Technical Rescue Unit and Workshops have reported performance within or below the tolerance levels over the two quarters. When compared to previous years, even allowing for the impact of the COVID pandemic, electricity usage appears higher and there has been an increase in the frequency of the figures being over target.

5. **PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM**

5.1 The 'Organisational Performance' Power BI App went live as of 1 April 2021 and its use continues to be embedded within the Service, with the provision of continual support and engagement with staff and key stakeholders.

- 5.2 In developing the App, it has enabled a more bespoke performance management system to be developed, reflecting the requirements of key stakeholders, end users, and the Service as a whole.
- 5.3 The App is updated daily, placing key performance indicators as current real-time data and information available within 24 hours. This enables Officers the ability to identify any trends or patterns and to implement the required solutions in an even more timely manner. As such, the App data and information not only supports the reporting of retrospective performance but can also support the potential for forecasting.

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**

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

8. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 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 2021/2022 budget setting process which established a total revised net budget requirement of £101.749 million. As at the end of September 2021 actual expenditure was £49.299 million compared to a profiled budget of £49.475 million resulting in a £0.176 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 2021/2022 is £326,600. Actual expenditure as at the end of September 2021 was £77,100. Expenditure to the second quarter is below the profiled budget and an underspend of approx. £46k is forecast for 2021/22.

10. **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 There are no environmental implications arising from this report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

‘Our Plan 2021-24’ Strategic Objectives.

Corporate Action Plan updates.

Corporate Risk Update Quarter 1 and 2 2021/22 (exception report).

The contact name for this report is Karen Gowreesunker, Clerk to the Authority and Strategic Enabler – Strategy, telephone number 0121 380 6678.

PHIL LOACH
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS STATUS – QUARTER TWO 2021/22


Item 9

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:


- we aim to get to incidents within our attendance standards across all categories; with five minutes in high-risk areas, to save life, reduce harm and protect homes and businesses
- we will, through our highly trained firefighters, deliver an assertive, effective and safe response to all incidents to make the biggest difference for our communities
- we will lead rescue operations and work collaboratively with partners to deliver an effective response
- we will deliver a local, national and international response to major incidents, new risks and humanitarian situations, through our firefighters and specialist teams.

PI 1		The Risk Based Attendance Standard Target: under 5 minutes Actual: 4 minutes 42 seconds Over performance against the tolerance levels
<p>The median high-risk (Cat 1) attendance time was 4 minutes 42 seconds, marginally slower (1 second) than for Q1. Overall, 57.6% of Cat 1 incidents were in target and in high-risk areas this was 65.8%. All Commands were also in target.</p> <p>Attendance times for Category 2, 3 & 4 incidents remain significantly below the respective targets:</p> <p>Category 2 – 5 minutes 17 seconds (target of 7 minutes) Category 3 – 5 minutes 2 seconds (target of 10 minutes) Category 4 – 6 minutes 30 seconds (target of 20 minutes)</p>		

Prevention

Our prevention priorities focus on making safer, healthier communities:

- we will work with our partners to reduce fire related risks faced by the most vulnerable in our communities
- we will improve the safety, health and well-being of the most vulnerable people in our communities, through targeted prevention activities directly linked to vulnerability from fire
- we will educate to prevent arson related incidents, supporting safer and stronger communities through our partnership working
- we will reduce the number of people killed or seriously injured on our roads through education and prevention, working with strategic partners
- we will work in partnership to support and protect the most vulnerable in our communities throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

PI 2		The number of accidental dwelling fires Target YTD: 844 (802 – 860) Actual to date: 778 Over performance against the tolerance levels
<p>For the year-to-date (Apr-Sep inclusive), a total of 778 Accidental Dwelling Fires (ADF) were recorded across the Service. This is 66 (7.8%) fewer than the target of 844 and is also significantly fewer than both the three-year average of 844.3 and the same period in 2020/21. During Q2, a total of 385 ADF's were recorded across the Service, 1.8% (7 incidents) below target but within the overall target levels. Breakdown of incidents via Command Area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Year-to-date (YTD), Black Country North recorded a total of 127 ADF's, 24% below the target of 167 and the Command is therefore below target and tolerance for this period. The current YTD ADF figure is also significantly lower than the three-year average of 167.3 and the number recorded for the same period during 2020/21 which was 169. During Q2 Black Country North recorded a total of 63 ADF's which was 14.9% (11 incidents) below the target of 74 and hence is below tolerance. Walsall borough has recorded a YTD figure of 55 ADF's, 33 of which were recorded during Q2. Wolverhampton Borough has recorded a YTD figure of 72 ADF's of which 30 were recorded during Q2. • YTD Black Country South recorded a total of 168 ADF's against the target level of 186 incidents. For the YTD, the Command is therefore within target. The Command should continue to monitor ADF levels as the current YTD figure is above both the three-year average (167.7) and the same period in 2020/21 		

(155). During Q2, the command was 8.9% above the target level of 79 ADF's having recorded a total of 86 incidents. This is due to Dudley borough being above target and tolerance for the quarter having recorded a total of 43 incidents compared to the target of 34. By contrast Sandwell has remained within target having recorded 43 ADF's against a target of 46.

- YTD Birmingham North is within target having recorded a total of 164 ADF's which is 5.2% below the target of 173. For Q2, however, Birmingham North was below target and tolerance having recorded 74 ADF's which is 10 below the target of 84.
- YTD Birmingham South is below target and tolerance, having recorded a total of 177 ADF's which is 11.5% fewer than the target of 200. This is also below the three-year-average of 200 and the same period in 2020/21 when 219 incidents were recorded. For Q2, Birmingham South was slightly over target having recorded 98 ADF's against the target of 92, however this remains within overall target levels.
- YTD Coventry and Solihull Command is within target having recorded a total of 142 ADF's which is 4.4% over the target of 136 incidents. This is slightly above the three-year-average of 136.3 incidents and marginally under the 143 recorded during the same period in 2020/21. However, Coventry borough is above tolerance levels for the YTD having recorded 98 ADF's which is 8.9% above the target of 90. Solihull borough is within target for the YTD having recorded a total of 44 ADF's which is 4.3% below the target of 46 incidents. For Q2 the Command was within target despite recording 64 incidents against the target of 62. Coventry recorded 43 ADF's against a target of 41 and Solihull recorded 21 against a target of 22 ADF's.

The following provides further analysis of the reasoning behind why Dudley and Coventry are in exception:

Black Country South Accidental Dwelling Fires are in exception due to the underperformance of Dudley borough (Sandwell borough is within target/tolerance for the quarter). During Q2 45 ADF incidents were recorded within Dudley Borough against a target of 34. For the same period during 2020/21 a total of 27 ADF incidents were recorded for the borough.

- During July Dudley borough recorded 13 incidents against a target of 12. Six incidents caused by unattended cooking equipment (chip pans accounted for four of these).
- During August Dudley borough recorded 20 incidents against a target of 13. Seven incidents caused whilst cooking. Faults in equipment or fuel supplies accounted for eight incidents.
- During September Dudley borough recorded 12 incidents against a target of 9. Five incidents resulted from faulty equipment/appliances, two were cooking related (one involved a chip pan), two resulted from careless handling, two

resulted from combustible materials too close to source of heat/fire, and one resulted from negligent use of equipment.

For quarter two, Coventry borough is in exception due to being over target/tolerance for the months of July and September.

- During July Coventry borough recorded 17 ADF incidents against a target of 15. Six incidents were caused by unattended cooking equipment (three were chip pans). Five resulted from careless handling (four were due to careless disposal).
- During September Coventry borough recorded 15 ADF incidents against a target of 12. Nine incidents resulted from cooking of which eight were unattended. Three incidents were caused by careless handling (careless disposal).

NB: there are still workbooks outstanding, and the April issue in Vision has still not been corrected therefore the workbooks for the affected incidents cannot be completed yet.

PI 3



Injuries from accidental fires in dwellings (taken to hospital for treatment)

Target YTD: 23 (19 – 25)

Actual to date: 29

Under performance against the tolerance levels

For the year-to-date (Apr-Sep inclusive), a total of 29 injuries in accidental dwelling fires were recorded across the Service, 26.1% above the target of 23. Incidents are therefore above tolerance for the YTD. Incidents increased significantly during Q2 when 20 injuries at accidental fires were recorded, compared to a target of 11.

Breakdown of incidents via Command Area:

- Year-to-date (YTD) Black Country North recorded a total of 7 injuries in accidental dwelling fires which is 133.3% above the target of 3. The Command is therefore currently above tolerance for the YTD. During Q2 6 injuries were recorded with July as the peak month. Walsall has recorded a YTD total of 5 injuries in accidental dwelling fires all of which were during Q2, and the borough is above tolerance. Wolverhampton has recorded a YTD total of 2 such injuries (one during Q2) and is currently within target.
- YTD Black Country South recorded a total of 8 injuries in accidental dwelling fires which is 33.3% above the target of 6. The Command is therefore currently above tolerance for the YTD. During Q2 6 injuries were recorded with July as the peak month when 4 of these were recorded. Sandwell borough recorded a YTD total of 3 injuries in accidental dwelling fires one of which was during Q2, and the borough is within target. Dudley borough recorded a YTD total of 5 such injuries all of which occurred during Q2 (peak month was July with 4) and the borough is currently above tolerance.


- YTD Birmingham North has recorded a total of 3 injuries in accidental dwelling fires which is 40.0% below the target of 5 and is below tolerance for the YTD. During Q2 only one injury of this type was recorded (September).
- YTD Birmingham South has recorded a total of 4 injuries in accidental dwelling fires which is 33.3% below the target of 6 and is below tolerance for the YTD. Three injuries of this type were recorded during Q2 with no month emerging as key.
- YTD Coventry and Solihull has recorded a total of 7 injuries in accidental dwelling fires which is 133.3% above the target of 3 and is therefore currently above tolerance for the YTD. During Q2 4 injuries in accidental fires were recorded, with two each in August and September. Coventry borough recorded 5 injuries in accidental dwelling fires for the YTD, four of which occurred during Q2, and the borough is currently above tolerance. Solihull borough recorded 2 injuries in accidental fires of which one occurred during Q2, and the borough is currently within target.

The following provides further analysis including the nature of the injuries recorded during the period:

During quarter two a total of 20 PI injuries were recorded. During the same period in 2020/21 a total of 8 PI injuries were recorded.

- During July eight PI injuries were recorded against a target of three. Six injuries resulted from three separate incidents (two per incident). Injuries were all smoke inhalation. Two of these incidents were within Dudley borough and one within Walsall borough.
- During August five PI injuries were recorded against a target of three. Two injuries resulted from one incident within Solihull borough. Both injuries were burns.
- During September seven PI injuries were recorded against a target of 5. No incident resulted in more than one PI injury. Three PI injuries were burns, two were smoke inhalation with the remaining two being overcome by fumes/smoke, and a fracture.

NB: there are still workbooks outstanding, and the April issue in Vision has still not been corrected therefore the workbooks for the affected incidents cannot be completed yet.

PI 4		The number of deaths from accidental dwelling fires Target YTD: N/A Actual to date: 6
For the year-to-date (Apr-Sep inclusive), a total of 6 fatalities were recorded at accidental non-domestic fires. This represents an increase of two fatalities from the same period in 2020/21. The YTD three-year average is approximately 5 fatalities.		

Breakdown of incidents via Command Area:

- YTD, Black Country South have recorded a total of four fatalities with three being recorded within Sandwell borough. Two fatalities were recorded during Q2.
- Black Country North has recorded one fatality at accidental non-domestic fires which was during Q1.
- Coventry & Solihull also recorded one fatality which was recorded during Q2.

PI 5

The percentage of Safe and Well visits referred by our partners

Target YTD: 45% (45% - 47.25%)

Actual to date: 41.6%

Under performance against the tolerance levels

The percentage of Safe and Well visits completed because of a referral from a partner was 41.6% at the end of quarter 2, compared to 39.8% for the same period in 2020-21, and is below the target of 45%.

PI 6

The number of Safe & Well points achieved by the Brigade

Target YTD: 155,267 (151,480 – 159,054)

Actual to date: 144,676

Under performance against the tolerance levels

The target for the total Safe and Well points is 259,650 for the year. During quarters 1 and 2 the Service achieved 144,676 points in total, 63,197 of which were in quarter 2. This represents a significant increase on the same period last year when the total points achieved at the end of quarter 2 was just 44,996. The total points for the period up to the end of September 2021 were achieved through the delivery of 18,009 Safe and Well assessments either remotely or face to face. This is a significant improvement on the same time last financial year when the number of assessments stood at 5,928 in total.

Average Safe and Well assessment points remain below the quality marker of 8.5 at 6.88.

Use of Activity Assistant to record both types of assessments means that it has been unable to report the numbers of each type of assessment individually. With effect from Monday 15th November 21, Tymly has been introduced for remote Safe and Well assessments. This means that it will be able to provide a breakdown of the number of each type of assessment from quarter 3 onwards.

The average number of Safe and Wells completed per appliance per 24 hours has also improved from an average of 0.74 in quarter 2 last year to 1.88 in quarter 2 of the current financial year.

PI 7
The number of people killed or seriously injured (KSI) in road traffic collisions

Target YTD: Not applicable

Actual to date: 123

Please note that the following is West Midlands Police data provided by Transport for West Midlands. The data covers the Q1 period 01/04/21 to 30/06/21. 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.

During Q1 a total of 120 fatal and serious RTC's resulted in a total of 123 people killed or seriously injured (KSI). Of these injuries, 7 were fatal and 116 were serious. For the same period in 2020, a total of 136 fatal or serious RTC's resulted in a total of 143 serious or fatal injuries.

- During April there were 46 fatal and serious RTC's resulting in 47 KSI's (2 fatal, 45 serious).
- During May there were 45 fatal and serious RTC's resulting in 47 KSI's (2 fatal, 43 serious).
- During June there were 29 fatal and serious RTC's resulting in 47 KSI's (3 fatal, 28 serious).
- Drivers or riders accounted for 65 KSI injuries, 13 were passengers and 45 were pedestrians.
- Of those killed or seriously injured 31 were aged 0-19 years, 44 were aged 20-39 years, 32 were aged 40-59 years, 12 were aged 60-79 years, 3 were aged 80 years and older. 1 person's age could not be determined.
- Males accounted for all fatalities and 78 serious injuries.

Breakdown of incidents via Command Area:

- Black Country North: during Q1 there were 31 fatal and serious RTC's resulting in 33 KSI's (3 fatal, 30 serious). This is an increase in KSI's within the command as compared to the same period in 2020 there were 23 fatal and serious RTC's resulting in 23 KSI's (1 fatal, 22 serious).
- Black Country South: during Q1 there were 29 fatal and serious RTC's resulting in 30 KSI's (1 fatal, 29 serious). This is a slight increase in total KSI's within the command as compared to the same period in 2020 there were 28 fatal and serious RTC's resulting in 29 KSI's (3 fatal, 26 serious).
- Birmingham: during Q1 there were 40 fatal and serious RTC's resulting in 40 KSI's (2 fatal, 38 serious). This is a significant reduction in total KSI's within the command as compared to the same period in 2020 there were 61 fatal and serious RTC's resulting in 66 KSI's (2 fatal, 64 serious).
- Coventry and Solihull: during Q1 there were 19 fatal and serious RTC's resulting in 19 KSI's (1 fatal, 18 serious). This is a reduction in total KSI's within the command as compared to the same period in 2020 there were 24 fatal and serious RTC's resulting in 25 KSI's (2 fatal, 23 serious).

PI 8

The number of deliberate fires in dwellings

Target YTD: 103 (93 – 108)

Actual to date: 93

Performance is within the tolerance levels

For the year-to-date (Apr-Sep inclusive), a total of 93 deliberate dwelling fires have been recorded across the Service which is 9.7% below the target of 103 and within the tolerance levels.

Breakdown of incidents via Command Area:

- Black Country North is within target having recorded a total of 18 deliberate dwelling fires against a target of 22. During Q2 a total of 9 incidents were recorded within the command which is the same as in Q1. Walsall is over tolerance for the YTD. During Q2 6 deliberate dwelling fires were recorded within the borough which is two over target. Wolverhampton, by contrast, is under tolerance for the YTD having recorded a total of 6 deliberate dwelling fires which is 50% under the target of 12. During Q2 the borough recorded three incidents of this type.
- Black Country South is under tolerance having recorded a total of 10 deliberate dwelling fires against a target of 14. During Q2 a total of 5 incidents were recorded within the command which is the same as in Q1. Sandwell has recorded a total of 6 deliberate dwelling fires for the YTD, with only one being recorded during Q2. The borough is therefore currently under tolerance. Dudley is within target for the YTD having recorded a total of 4 deliberate dwelling fires against the target of 5. All incidents were recorded during Q2.
- Birmingham North is within tolerance having recorded a total of 23 deliberate dwelling fires against the target of 24. Despite currently being within target, incidents increased during Q2 when a total of 14 were recorded. Incidents were particularly elevated during August and September (11 recorded incidents) and were therefore over tolerance.
- Birmingham South is within tolerance having recorded a total of 24 deliberate dwelling fires against the target of 28. During Q2 a total of 11 incidents were recorded against a target of 17. Incidents were particularly low during August and September when 2 incidents per month were recorded.
- Coventry & Solihull is currently over tolerance having recorded a total of 18 deliberate dwelling fires against the target of 15. During Q2 a total of 7 incidents were recorded against the target of 8. No incidents were recorded during August. At borough level, Coventry recorded a total of 5 deliberate dwelling fires during Q2 and is within tolerance for the YTD, however despite only recording two incidents during Q2 and three incidents in total, Solihull is over tolerance for the YTD.

NB: there are still workbooks outstanding, and the April issue in Vision has still not been corrected therefore the workbooks for the affected incidents cannot be completed yet.

PI 9
The number of deliberate fires in non-domestic premises

Target YTD: 72 (65 – 75)

Actual to date: 68


Performance is within the tolerance levels

For the year-to-date (Apr-Sep inclusive), a total of 68 deliberate non-domestic fires have been recorded across the Service which is 5.6% below the target of 72, and within target for the YTD. Of note, however, is that deliberate non-domestic fires were particularly high during August when a total of 20 incidents were recorded across the Service.

Breakdown of incidents via Command Area:

- Black Country North is over tolerance. A total of 19 deliberate non-domestic fires have been recorded which is 58.3% above the target of 12. The command was hit particularly hard during Q2 when 12 incidents were recorded. August was the key month when 7 of the 12 incidents occurred. Drilling down, Wolverhampton is over tolerance for the YTD with 10 incidents recorded within the borough during Q2. Walsall is under tolerance for the YTD having only recorded five incidents, two of which were during Q2.
- Black Country South is within target. A total of 16 deliberate non-domestic fires have been recorded which is 5.9% below the target of 17. During Q2 5 incidents were recorded across the command compared to the target of 9. During Q2 Sandwell recorded 4 incidents and Dudley recorded just a single incident. Both boroughs are therefore within target for the YTD.
- Birmingham North has recorded a total of 14 deliberate non-domestic fires which is 26.3% below the target of 19 and is therefore under tolerance. During Q2 7 incidents were recorded of which 6 occurred during August.
- Birmingham South has recorded a total of 10 non-domestic fires which is 41.2% below the target of 17 and is therefore under tolerance. During Q2 7 incidents were recorded of which 5 occurred during August.
- Coventry & Solihull is currently within target for deliberate non-domestic fires despite a total of 9 incidents having been recorded compared to the target of 8. All YTD incidents have been recorded by Coventry (which actually puts the borough over tolerance) and during Q2 three incidents were recorded, all of which occurred during September.

NB: there are still workbooks outstanding, and the April issue in Vision has still not been corrected therefore the workbooks for the affected incidents cannot be completed yet.

PI 10		The number of deliberate vehicle fires Target YTD: 367 (331 –385) Actual to date: 267 Over performance against the tolerance levels
<p>For the year-to-date (Apr-Sep inclusive), a total of 267 deliberate vehicle fires have been recorded across the Service which is 27.2% below the target of 367. Incidents are therefore below tolerance for the YTD. During Q2 132 deliberate vehicle fires were recorded which is 3 less than during Q1.</p> <p>Breakdown of incidents via Command Area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Black Country North recorded a total of 63 deliberate vehicle fires which is 3.1% below the target of 65. The command is therefore currently within tolerance for the YTD. During Q2 incidents increased to 38 (compared to 25 in Q1) with August emerging as the peak month when 14 deliberate vehicle fires were recorded. Walsall has recorded a YTD total of 41 incidents (23 were recorded during Q2) and Wolverhampton has recorded a YTD total of 22 (15 were recorded during Q2). Both boroughs are currently within target. • Black Country South recorded a total of 60 deliberate vehicle fires which is 28.6% below the target of 84. The command is therefore currently below tolerance for the YTD. During Q2 incidents decreased to 27 (compared to 33 in Q1). Sandwell has recorded a YTD total of 35 incidents (17 were recorded during Q2) and is currently below tolerance. Dudley has recorded a YTD total of 25 (10 were recorded during Q2) and is within target. • Birmingham North recorded a total of 40 deliberate vehicle fires which is 20.0% below the target of 50 and is therefore currently within target for the YTD. During Q2 incidents decreased to 17 (compared to 23 in Q1). • Birmingham South recorded a total of 64 deliberate vehicle fires which is 34.4% below the target of 98 and is therefore currently below tolerance for the YTD. During Q2 incidents decreased to 31 (compared to 33 in Q1). • Coventry & Solihull recorded a total of 39 deliberate vehicle fires which is 45.1% below the target of 71 and is therefore currently below tolerance for the YTD. During Q2 incidents decreased to 19 (compared to 20 in Q1). Coventry has recorded the majority of deliberate vehicle fires with a YTD total of 36 (19 during Q2) compared to just 3 within Solihull. Both boroughs are currently below target/tolerance. <p>NB: there are still workbooks outstanding, and the April issue in Vision has still not been corrected therefore the workbooks for the affected incidents cannot be completed yet.</p>		

PI 11

The number of deliberate rubbish fires

Target YTD: 880 (836 – 897)

Actual to date: 719


Over performance against the tolerance levels

For the year-to-date (Apr-Sep inclusive), a total of 719 deliberate rubbish fires have been recorded across the Service which is 18.3% below the target of 880. Incidents are therefore below tolerance for the YTD. During Q2 337 deliberate rubbish fires were recorded which is 45 less than during Q1.

Breakdown of incidents via Command Area:

- Black Country North recorded a total of 194 deliberate rubbish fires which is 3.4% over the target of 187 but within tolerance. During Q2 83 incidents were recorded which is 28 fewer than Q1. Walsall is over tolerance for the YTD having recorded a total of 134 deliberate rubbish fires of which 53 occurred during Q2. Wolverhampton is below target and tolerance having recorded a YTD total of 60 deliberate rubbish fires of which 30 occurred during Q2.
- Black Country South recorded a total of 170 deliberate rubbish fires which is 22.7% under the target of 222. The command is therefore below target and tolerance for the YTD. During Q2 69 incidents were recorded which is 32 fewer than in Q1. Sandwell has recorded a YTD total of 87 deliberate rubbish fires, 37 of which were during Q2. Dudley has recorded a YTD total of 83 deliberate rubbish fires, 32 of which were during Q2. Both boroughs are under target and tolerance.
- Birmingham North recorded a total of 120 deliberate rubbish fires which is 6.3% below the target of 128 but is within tolerance. During Q2 63 deliberate rubbish fires were recorded which is marginally more than the 53 recorded during Q1.
- Birmingham South recorded a total of 108 deliberate rubbish fires which is 33.7% less the target of 163 and is therefore below tolerance. During Q2 58 deliberate rubbish fires were recorded which is marginally more than the 50 recorded during Q1.
- Coventry & Solihull recorded a total of 127 During Q2 63 deliberate rubbish fires which is 29.8% less the target of 181 and is therefore below tolerance. During Q2 64 deliberate rubbish fires were recorded which is one more than the number recorded during Q1. Coventry has recorded the majority of deliberate rubbish fires with a YTD total of 115 (64 during Q2) compared to just 12 within Solihull. Both boroughs are currently below target/tolerance.


NB: there are still workbooks outstanding, and the April issue in Vision has still not been corrected therefore the workbooks for the affected incidents cannot be completed yet.

PI 12		The number of deliberate fires in derelict buildings Target YTD: 67 (61 – 70) Actual to date: 87 Under performance against the tolerance levels
<p>For the year-to-date (Apr-Sep inclusive), a total of 87 deliberate derelict building fires have been recorded across the Service which is 29.9% over the target of 67. Incidents have fallen from 55 in Q1 to 32 during Q2, but despite the decrease the Service remains over tolerance for the YTD. Incidents of this type also are currently significantly higher than both the three-year average and the same period in 2020/21.</p> <p>Breakdown of incidents via Command Area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Black Country North is over tolerance with a total of 40 deliberate derelict building fires against the target of 21. During Q2 incidents within the command fell from 27 to 13, however this number is still over target and tolerance. Drilling to borough level shows Walsall to have recorded 11 incidents during the quarter against a target of 9; whereas Wolverhampton has recorded just two incidents, but this is still twice the target level of one. Black Country South is also over tolerance having recorded 29 deliberate derelict building fires compared to the target of 23. This is despite incidents of this kind falling during Q2 from 20 to the target level of 9. At borough level Dudley is over tolerance with a YTD total of 17 deliberate derelict building fires of which five were recorded during Q2. By contrast Sandwell is below target and tolerance for both the YTD and for Q2, with respective totals of 17 and 4 incidents. Birmingham North is below tolerance having recorded 10 deliberate derelict building fires against the target of 13. Four incidents were recorded during Q2, which is a decrease from the six recorded during Q1. Birmingham South is within target having recorded 4 deliberate derelict building fires against the target of 5. However, incidents have increased during Q2 to 3 which is over the target of 2 and over tolerance for the quarter. Coventry & Solihull is within target having recorded 4 deliberate derelict building fires against the target of 4. This is despite incidents increasing for the command during Q2 to 3 which is over the target of 2 and over tolerance for the quarter. <p>NB: there are still workbooks outstanding, and the April issue in Vision has still not been corrected therefore the workbooks for the affected incidents cannot be completed yet.</p>		

Protection


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

- we will protect life and property by targeting high-risk buildings and vulnerable businesses through an advice, compliance and enforcement approach to fire safety legislation, with a focus on residential tall buildings
- we will continuously improve our community safety outcomes by implementing the learning from independent and sector-led reviews
- we will improve community safety through innovative and smarter approaches, using digital technology to enhance the delivery of protection activities
- we will assist in the restoration of economic growth through prevention, education and support to businesses, including collaboration with other regulators and partner agencies
- we will develop and adopt innovative approaches to reduce disruption to businesses, communities and West Midlands Fire Service caused by unwanted fire signals.

PI 13		<p>The number of accidental fires in non-domestic premises</p> <p>Target YTD: 210 (186 – 220)</p> <p>Actual to date: 207</p> <p>Performance is within the tolerance levels</p>
<p>For the year-to-date (Apr-Sep inclusive), a total of 207 accidental non-domestic fires have been recorded across the Service which is within target levels. All commands are within target or tolerance except for Black Country North which is currently above tolerance. The YTD performance is 3 (1.4%) under the YTD target of 210 but is slightly more than the three-year average of 206 and significantly more than the same period in 2020/21 when 162 incidents were recorded. The increase over last year may be due to the easing of social and business restrictions and more people returning to pre-covid activities.</p> <p>Breakdown of incidents via Command Area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Black Country North is above tolerance having recorded a total of 47 accidental non-domestic fires which is 38.2% over the YTD target of 34. Drilling down, Walsall borough is over tolerance for YTD and has recorded 25 accidental non-domestic fires which is 66.7% over the target of 15. By contrast, Wolverhampton is within target for the YTD despite having recorded 22 accidental non-domestic fires against a target of 19. For Q2 it's an identical situation: Walsall is over tolerance having recorded 14 incidents against a target of 7, whereas Wolverhampton is within target having recorded 11 incidents against the target of 11. 		

- Black Country South is within target having recorded a total of 46 accidental non-domestic fires which is 11.5% below the target of 52. Sandwell is within target for the YTD despite having recorded a total of 32 incidents compared to the target of 31. Dudley is below tolerance for the YTD having recorded 14 accidental non-domestic fires which is 33.3% under the target of 21. For Q2 Walsall is over tolerance and recorded 20 accidental non-domestic fires which is 4 over the target of 16 incidents. By contrast Dudley is below tolerance having recorded just 5 incidents against the target of 11.
- Birmingham North is below tolerance having recorded 40 accidental non-domestic fires which is 23.1% below the target of 52. During Q2 Birmingham North recorded 16 accidental non-domestic fires which is 7 fewer than the target of 23.
- Birmingham South is within target for accidental non-domestic fires having recorded 36 incidents which is 7.7% under the target of 39. During Q2 Birmingham South recorded 21 accidental non-domestic fires which is the same as the target of 21.
- Coventry & Solihull are within target levels having recorded 38 accidental non-domestic fires which is 15.2% above the target of 33. Drilling down, Coventry is within target for the YTD whereas Solihull is over tolerance. For Q2 Coventry is above tolerance having recorded 12 accidental non-domestic fires compared to the target of 9 incidents. Solihull is also over tolerance for Q2 recording 8 accidental non-domestic fires against the target of 5.

NB: there are still workbooks outstanding, and the April issue in Vision has still not been corrected therefore the workbooks for the affected incidents cannot be completed yet.


PI 14		<p>The number of false alarm calls due to fire alarm equipment in dwellings and non-domestic premises</p> <p>Target YTD: 3025 (2874 – 3085)</p> <p>Actual to date: 2951</p> <p>Performance is within the tolerance levels</p>
<p>For the year-to-date (Apr-Sep inclusive), a total of 2,951 false alarms due to equipment have been recorded across the Service which is 2.4% below the target of 3,025. Incidents are therefore within target for the YTD. Monthly incidents have shown a steady increase since the start of the financial year with 1,651 recorded during Q2 (compared to 1,300 recorded during Q1). Peak month thus far was September with 574 incidents.</p> <p>Breakdown of incidents via Command Area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Black Country North has recorded a total of 592 false alarms due to equipment which is 5.4% below the target of 626. The command is therefore currently within tolerance for the YTD. During Q2 incidents increased to 324 (compared to 268 in Q1). Walsall has recorded a YTD total of 212 false alarms due to equipment (119 were recorded during Q2) and is below tolerance. 		




Wolverhampton has recorded a YTD total of 380 (205 were recorded during Q2) and is currently within target.




- Black Country South has recorded a total of 591 false alarms due to equipment which is 10.5% above the target of 535 and the command is therefore currently above tolerance for the YTD. During Q2 incidents increased to 336 (compared to 255 in Q1). Sandwell has recorded a YTD total of 276 false alarms due to equipment (148 were recorded during Q2) and is within target. Dudley has recorded a YTD total of 315 (188 were recorded during Q2) and is currently above target (by 24.5%) and over tolerance.
- Birmingham North has recorded a total of 769 false alarms due to equipment which is 2.1% above the target of 753 but is within tolerance for the YTD. Monthly incidents have increased steadily since April 2021 and during Q2 417 false alarms due to equipment were recorded (compared to 325 during Q1).
- Birmingham South has recorded a total of 483 false alarms due to equipment which is 24.4% below the target of 639 and is therefore currently below tolerance for the YTD. Monthly incidents have increased steadily since April 2021 and during Q2 268 false alarms due to equipment were recorded (compared to 215 during Q1).
- Coventry & Solihull has recorded a total of 516 false alarms due to equipment which is 9.3% above the target of 472 and is therefore currently above tolerance for the YTD. During Q2 incidents increased to 306 (compared to 210 in Q1). Coventry has recorded the majority of false alarms due to equipment with a YTD total of 339 (206 during Q2) and is above tolerance for the YTD. Solihull has recorded a YTD total of 177 (100 during Q2) and is within target for the YTD.

NB: there are still workbooks outstanding, and the April issue in Vision has still not been corrected therefore the workbooks for the affected incidents cannot be completed yet.



People




PI 15		<p>The percentage of employees that have disclosed their disabled status</p> <p>Target: 100% (95% - 100%)</p> <p>Actual to date: 92%</p> <p>Under performance against the tolerance levels</p>
<p>Declaration rates remain high with 92% of all employees having made a declaration regarding disability. 3% of our employees have stated that they have a disability. A new staff engagement group for Neurodiversity has been established and research is underway to provide an eLearning module for all staff on Neurodiversity, working with an external subject matter expert.</p>		

PI 16		The number of female uniformed staff Target: 175 (166 – 183) Actual to date: 163 Under performance against the tolerance levels
<p>Since April 2021, the Service has employed 32 new entrant firefighters, of these 5 (15%) are women. Whilst activity has been restricted due to the pandemic, a range of positive action initiatives continue for female candidates being delivered virtually. We have seen a decline in the number of females who are successful during recruitment, and this has been attributed to our inability to provide physical training sessions during the pandemic restrictions. Now that restrictions are easing, female recruitment courses that were facilitated in 2018 and 2019 will be re-introduced. Our positive action activity has been enhanced to encompass internal positive action for progression. During the attraction phase of promotion selection activity, candidates from under-represented groups will be actively engaged to encourage and support participation in selection activity. Advertisements are actively reviewed to ensure the language used is inclusive and 'masculine' words avoided.</p>		
PI 17		The percentage of all staff from BAME communities Target: 13.7% (13.0% – 14.3%) Actual to date: 13.8% Performance is within the tolerance levels
<p>Since April 2021, the Service has employed 32 new entrant firefighters, of these 12 (38%) are from a black, Asian, minority, ethnic (BAME) background. BAME candidates are offered online group workshops for preparation information and advice. These include an overview of the Service, the wider role, as well as general interview techniques and effective communication. Our positive action activity has been enhanced to encompass internal positive action for progression. During the attraction phase of promotion selection activity, candidates from under-represented groups will be actively engaged to encourage and support participation in selection activity.</p>		
PI 17a		The percentage of uniformed staff from BAME communities Target: 13.0% (12.3% – 13.6%) Actual to date: 13.0% Performance is within the tolerance levels
<p>13.0% of uniformed staff are from black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) communities, which is exactly the same as per the target. See PI 17 for further information.</p>		

PI 18		The average number of working days/shifts lost due to sickness – all staff Target: 1.39 (1.25 - 1.5) Actual to date: 1.7 Under performance against the tolerance levels
<p>An average of 1.7 working days/shifts per person were lost due to sickness during quarter one, above the quarterly target and upper tolerance level, although representing a 13% reduction compared to the same period in 2020/21. A similar reduction is observed when Covid sickness is included (2.03 working days/shifts per person compared to 1.8 for the same period in 2020/21).</p> <p>Note: only data for quarter one is available, and no further analysis has been able to be provided at the time of writing.</p>		
PI 19		The average number of working days/shifts lost due to sickness – uniformed and Fire Control staff Target: 1.24 (1.1 - 1.4) Actual to date: 1.9 Under performance against the tolerance levels
<p>An average of 1.9 working days/shifts per person were lost due to sickness during quarter one, above the quarterly target and upper tolerance level, and represents an increase of 38% when compared to the same period in 2020/21. It is an increase of 39% if Covid sickness is included (2.24 working days/shifts compared to 1.61 for the same period in 2020/21).</p> <p>Note: only data for quarter one is available, and no further analysis has been able to be provided at the time of writing.</p>		
PI 20		The average number of working days/shifts lost due to sickness – non-uniformed staff Target: 1.9 (1.7 - 2.1) Actual: 1.2 Over performance against the tolerance levels
<p>An average of 1.2 working days/shifts per person were lost due to sickness during quarter one, below the quarterly target and lower tolerance level, and represents a decrease of 42% compared to the same period in 2020/21. It is a reduction of 46% when Covid sickness is included (1.31 working days/shifts compared to 2.44 for the same period in 2020/21).</p> <p>Note: only data for quarter one is available, and no further analysis has been able to be provided at the time of writing.</p>		

Health, Safety and Wellbeing, and Finance and Resources

PI 21		The total number of injuries Target YTD: n/a Actual to date: 73
<p>There were 38 injuries during quarter 2 compared to 35 during quarter 1, representing another slight increase in injuries across the Service in quarter 2. The reason of injury is evenly spread across several different types, however Q2 has shown a significant increase in Slips/Trips. Further investigation shows that injuries occurred to 2 trainees and 5 operational staff, three involving hose, and two dismounting the appliance.</p>		
PI 22		The total number of RIDDOR injuries Target YTD: n/a Actual to date: 9
<p>There were six RIDDOR reports during quarter 2, following three reports during quarter 1.</p> <p>There were two reports relating to manual handling:</p> <p>Pain in lower back when tried to reposition 13.5m ladder when it slipped during restowing onto appliance and pulled back injury whilst moving a 9m ladder into the property at an incident, stepped onto a child's plastic step-up toy which rocked and injured person slipped.</p> <p>There were two reports relating to slips, trips and falls:</p> <p>While undertaking Trainee Firefighter Development Programme training, the injured party turned their ankle over and sustained a fractured ankle (Cuboid bone). This occurred whilst running to pass on a message to the pump operator to turn water on and manhole cover flipped as injured person walked over it.</p> <p>There was one report relating to work equipment: injured back using suction wrench.</p> <p>There was one report relating to an injury from no accident: injury to thumb, opening near side middle locker.</p> <p>Accident investigations have taken place with suitable learning being identified.</p>		

PI 23		To reduce the Fire Authority's carbon emissions Forecast YTD: Not Available Actual to date: Not Available
Reported annually. Information is not available for this PI.		
PI 24		To reduce gas use of Fire Authority premises Forecast YTD: 3,666,493MWh (3299844 – 3849817) Actual to date: 1,348,536MWh Over performance against the tolerance levels
No further information available.		
PI 25		To reduce electricity use of Fire Authority premises Forecast YTD: 2,643,498MWh (2379149 – 2775672) Actual to date: 3,226,781MWh Under performance against the tolerance levels
No further information available.		

Minutes of the Collaboration and Transformation Committee
06 September 2021

**Conducted as a public meeting at Headquarters and digitally via
Microsoft Teams**

Present: Councillor Dehar (Chair), Councillor Singh (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Locke, Councillor Hogarth

Virtual: Councillor Barlow, Councillor Iqbal, Assistant PCC Wasim Ali

Officers: Phil Loach (CFO), Mike Griffiths, Phil Fellows, Stephen
Timmington, Kirsty Tuffin

01/21 **Apologies**

Please note: The meeting was postponed for 15 minutes and resumed at 10:45 am, due to technical difficulties.

Apologies were received from Cllr Catherine Miks.

02/21 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest received.

03/21 **Minutes of the Collaboration and Transformation
Committee held on 27 January 2020**

Resolved: That the minutes of the Collaboration and Transformation Committee held on 27 January 2020 were noted as no attendees were present at the last meeting.

04/21 **Collaboration and Transformation – Review of
Committee Terms of Reference, Strategic Definition and
Framework**

The Committee received a report, that outlined the Collaboration and Transformation Terms of Reference, as per appendix A of the report and the Strategic Definition and Framework, as per appendix B of the report.

It was recommended that Members review the Terms of Reference, approved at Fire Authority on 21 June 2021. No changes were requested, and it was agreed that the Terms of Reference for the Collaboration and Transformation Committee be approved.

Members were recommended to review the Strategic Definition and Framework, approved by the Committee on 11 November 2019, as part of the review for the Committee and its continued suitability.

Discussions were held on the collaboration work between the Fire Service and the Ambulance sector. Members recognised the immense pressure that the Ambulance sector was under however, raised concerns upon the perceived lack of engagement for collaboration work that had been received. The Chief Fire Officer (CFO) advised that the Ambulance's operate under two sections: Community Hubs and Paramedic Hubs. A review was conducted on the use of their hubs and the sector felt they did not require the assistance of the Fire Service resources. The CFO reassured Members that he had regular dialogue with Anthony Marsh, Chief Executive of West Midlands Ambulance Service NHS Trust, and it was agreed that he would make contact regarding the potential for future collaboration work taking place between the Ambulance and Fire Service.

A Member recommended that Councillors should also raise their concerns to their Local Authorities through their Health Scrutiny Committees.

No changes were requested to the Strategic Definition and Framework for the Committee and it was agreed that it be approved.

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that the terms of reference for the Collaboration and Transformation Committee, as per appendix A, be approved.
2. That it be agreed that the Strategic Definition and Framework for the Committee, be approved.

3. That it be agreed that the CFO would correspond with the Chief Executive of West Midlands Ambulance Service NHS Trust regarding the potential for future collaboration work taking place between the Ambulance and Fire Service.

05/21

Collaboration and Income Generation

The Chair of the Committee advised Members that West Midlands Fire Service had a minimal number of buildings unoccupied and asked for recommendations for future usage that would help generate an income for the Service.

Mike Griffiths, Treasurer (151 Section Officer), advised Members that some of the sites were integrated into fire stations and therefore any potential tenancy would have to be carefully selected. As part of the collaboration work with West Midlands Police, a lease agreement with them for part of the ground floor of Headquarters was being explored, as currently they occupy five other Service sites. A report would be taken to Audit and Risk Committee by the end of 2021, that would provide an update on all unoccupied properties in the Service's possession.

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that the verbal discussion be noted.

The meeting finished at 11:08 hours.

Kirsty Tuffin Strategic Hub 0121 380 6906

Minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee

Item 11

27 September 2021 at 10.30 hours

Conducted as a public meeting at Headquarters and digitally via Microsoft Teams

Present: Councillor Catherine Miks (Chair), Councillor Chadda, Councillor Spence, Councillor Ferguson.

Virtually: Councillor Miller, Mr Ager, John Mathews (Internal Audit), Avtar Sohal (Grant Thornton)

Officers: Gary Taylor, Mike Griffiths, Satinder Sahota, Kal Shoker, Paul Gwynn, Martina Doolan, Karen Gowreesunker Phil Fellows, Kirsty Tuffin.

30/21 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Barrie and Neil Chamberlain (West Midlands Police and Chair of WMFS Pension Board).

31/21 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest registered.

32/21 **Minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee held on 19 July 2021**

Resolved:

1. That the minutes of the previous meeting, held on 19 July 2021, be approved as a correct record of proceedings.

33/21 **Audit and Risk Committee Terms of Reference 2021-2022**

Karen Gowreesunker, West Midlands Fire Service (WMFS) Clerk, presented the Audit and Risk Committee Terms of Reference 2021-2022 report that outlined the Audit and Risk Committee Terms of Reference for 2021-2022, as per appendix 1 of the report.

It was recommended that Members noted the Terms of Reference, approved at Fire Authority on 21 June 2021. No amendments were requested, and the Audit and Risk Committee Terms of Reference 2021-2022 were noted.

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that the Audit and Risk Committee Terms of Reference for 2021-2022 be noted.

34/21 **Immediate Detriment – Contribution Holidays**

Mike Griffiths, (WMFS) Section 151 Officer, presented the Immediate Detriment – Contribution Holidays report, that sought approval to reverse the decision at the last Committee held on 19 July 2021, specifically that the 10th June 2021 Home Office guidance is not followed for cases where a member is eligible for a “contribution holiday” under the rules of the 1992 Scheme and relevant cases are to be treated in the same way as they were prior to the updated guidance issued on 10th June 2021.

The Committee were advised that following the decision in July 2021 to implement the Home Office Guidance, the Chief Fire Officer had recommended the reversion of this decision as the guidance would result in members who have had a contributions holiday being treated differently to other members that fall within the Immediate Detriment category. This could result in the view aligned to the Equality Act that they are receiving less favourable treatment. Other Fire Authorities/Pension Boards were processing contribution holiday scheme members as immediate detriment cases and not further delaying the outcome of remedy.

The Service had received 3 appeals so far, with the expectation of more, if the decision was not reversed. From a local employee perspective, it had been identified that some employees who are pension scheme members were postponing their retirement. This had been incurring a financial pension detrimental impact. Therefore, the request to reverse the decision to implement the Home Office Guidance had been for the benefit of its members. Satinder Sahota, (WMFS) Monitoring Officer, provided the Committee with legal reassurance that non-Statutory guidance would typically be implemented unless there was a valid reason

as to not and given the reasons outlined to the Committee, the decision would be justifiable.

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that in consideration of the Court of Appeal interim order entitling claimants to be treated as members of the FPS 1992 and the unresolved pensions issues, the scheme administrator does not apply the updated Home Office guidance issued on 10th June 2021 in its entirety to all future retirement case.
2. That it be agreed that the Scheme administrator revises the treatment to any cases affected since the last Audit and Risk Committee on 19th July 2021.
3. That it be agreed that the 10th June 2021 Home Office guidance is not followed for cases where a member is eligible for a “contribution holiday” under the rules of the 1992 Scheme and relevant cases are to be treated in the same way as they were prior to the updated guidance issued on 10th June 2021.

35/21 **Internal Audit – Progress Report**

John Mathews, internal auditor, presented the Internal Audit – Progress report that detailed the matters arising from internal audit work undertaken so far in the current year and provided a progress update on the delivery of the 2021/22 Internal Audit Plan issued at the year end.

The Committee were advised that following CIPFA guidance moving forward, where appropriate, reports issued would include an overall opinion based upon criteria outlined in Appendix 1 of the report. These opinions were categorised into the following 4 areas:

1. No assurance
2. Limited
3. Reasonable
4. Substantial

The Committee were advised that some audits had now been completed, as per appendix 1 of the report, and work had started with the Environment Protection Targets. John Mathews re-assured Members that although the key financial audits had not

started, the team had been working with the Fire Service financial team on the new financial system to provide the Committee with a level of assurance. Feedback would be provided to the Committee on the Service Quality Questionnaire (SQQ), once received. The two issues highlighted within the report included:

1. Data Protection
2. Management of Fuel

Following questions on data protection, Martina Doolan, Data and Governance Manager, reassured the Committee that the Fire Service was working within the Government and the national cyber security issued guidance. A work plan, incorporating this guidance, had been in development, to ensure that these standards were being met. A move to Microsoft 365 had also provided the Service with further protection. Phil Fellows advised that all pension files for active and non-active Members had now been digitised onto a secure system.

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that the Internal Audit Progress Report be noted.

36/21 **Annual Report from Sandwell Audit in Respect of Information Governance**

Gary Taylor, SIRO – Assistant Chief Fire Officer, and Martina Doolan, presented the Annual Report from Sandwell Audit in Respect of Information Governance that provided the assurance from internal audit at Sandwell MBC in relation to how the organisation discharges its duties and responsibilities in relation to information governance.

The Committee were advised that with the assistance of Sandwell's Audit Team, the theme for the financial year 2020-2021 had been focused upon the handling of subject access requested under the Data Protection Act 2018. Although, the audit had been delayed as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic and the availability of staff at Sandwell MBC and West Midlands Fire Service, the audit was conducted between April 2020 and September 2020. Overall, the Service had received a rare

recording of 'substantial assurance', with only the two following areas for improvement identified:

1. Response times for some subject access requests.
2. Monthly reporting of requests to the Strategic Enabling Team (SET).

The Committee were reassured that although some response times for requests had been outside the 30-calendar day statutory limit, the Service was trialling an automated e-discovery tool to help mitigate this issue with a pilot scheduled to take place in September. The issue around the monthly reporting to SET had already been rectified with the implementation PowerBi dashboard for SET members to see requests in real time instead of monthly reports.

The Committee thanked Gary Taylor, Martina Doolan and the team for all their hard work.

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that the Annual Report from Sandwell Audit in Respect of Information Governance be noted.

37/21 **Audit Findings 2020-2021**

Avtar Sohal, representative from Grant Thornton, presented the Audit Findings 2020-2021 report, that outlined the key messages arising from the external audit work undertaken during the year to support the Auditor's opinions and conclusions.

The Committee were advised that a substantial amount of the audit had been completed and no audit adjustments had arisen from the audit work so far. Grant Thornton had not been aware of any matters that would require modification of their audit opinion or material changes to the financial statements, subject to the outstanding matters, as per Appendix 1, being completed. It was anticipated that the Auditors Annual Report would be issued by 31 December 2021, as a result of the value for money work being incomplete. This deadline would be in line with the National Audit Office's revised deadline, which required the report to be issued no more than three months after the date of the opinion on the financial statements.

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that the content of the Audit Findings 2020-2021 be noted.

38/21 **Statement of Accounts 2020-2021**

Mike Griffiths presented the Statement of Accounts 2020-2021 report, that outlined the Authority's Statement of Accounts for the financial year ended 31 March 2021.

The Committee were advised that the Statement of accounts had received minimal descriptive changes and no changes had been made to the core figures within the financial statements since the 19 July Committee meeting whereby, the draft version was approved.

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that the Statement of Accounts for 2020-2021 as set out in appendix A be approved.
2. That it be agreed that the Statement of Accounts Summary for 2020-2021 set out in appendix B be noted.

39/21 **Annual Report of the Pension Board 2020-2021**

Kal Shoker, WMFS Finance Manager, presented the Annual Report of the Pension Board 2020-2021 that outlined the key work of the Pension Board throughout 2020-2021.

The Committee were advised that Pension Board maintained its functioning throughout the Coronavirus pandemic meeting virtually to ensure business continuity of its role and reported to the Audit and Risk Committee as a Standing Committee of the Authority. The attendance of Pension Board Members and the Terms of Reference was also included within the annual report.

The Committee thanked the Pension Board for their hard work.

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that the Annual Report of the Pension Board 2020-2021 be approved.

40/21 **Audit and Risk Committee Work Plan 2021-2022**

Karen Gowreesunker presented the Audit and Risk Committee Work Plan for 2021-2022. It was agreed that as a result of Coronavirus related delays the Annual SIRO Report be moved from 25 October to the December meeting. It was agreed that a detailed report be provided on vacant properties held by the Fire Service at the December meeting.

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that the Audit and Risk Committee Work Plan for 2020-2021 be approved.
2. That it be agreed that the Annual SIRO report be brought to the December Audit and Risk Committee meeting.
3. That it be agreed that an update report on vacant properties held by the Fire Service be provided at the December meeting.

41/21 **Exclusion of press and public**

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that the press and public be excluded from the rest of the meeting to avoid the possible disclosure of exempt information.

42/21 **CIPFA Audit Committee Update No35**

John Mathews presented the CIPFA Audit Committee Update (No35) Report that outlined the publication and contents of issue 35 of CIPFA's Audit Committee Update.

The Committee were advised that the latest edition focused upon three key areas:

- A focus on risk management and the support that audit committees can provide for improving local arrangements,
- A review of the differences between the work of an audit committee and scrutiny and opportunities to work together,
- An update on the new consultation launched by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government on local audit and audit committees.

Following questions upon training, the Committee were advised that training could be provided by CIPFA themselves and would be held virtually, if Members wish to attend.

Resolved:

1. That the contents of the latest CIPFA Audit Committee update be noted.

The meeting closed at 11.08 hours.

Kirsty Tuffin
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Notes of the Joint Consultative Panel

Item 12

27 September 2021

Conducted digitally via Microsoft Teams.

Present:

Councillors:

Councillor Young (Chair),

Councillor Brackenridge (Vice-Chair),

Councillor Padda

Councillor Ferguson

Employee's:

Maurice Carter – Unison

Billy Holland – Fire Brigade Union

Steven Price-Hunt - Fire Brigade Union

Philippa Smith - Fire Brigade Union

Officers: Sarah Warnes – Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Karen Gowreesunker – Clerk - Strategic Enabler for Strategy, Kamla Devi-Ahir – Business Partner, Wendy Browning-Sampson – People Support Manager, Shirley Haines – Senior Business Partner, Stephen Timmington - Strategic Hub Support Officer, Kirsty Tuffin – Democratic Services Officer.

01/21 **Apologies**

There were no apologies for absence received.

02/21 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest submitted.

03/21 **Notes of the Joint Consultative Panel held on 03 February 2020**

As per item 3 of the notes of the previous meeting, it was agreed that an update would be provided on the Cultural Review at the next Policy Planning Forum.

Resolved:

1. That the notes of the Joint Consultative Panel held on 03 February 2020 were noted.
2. That it be agreed that an update would be provided on the Cultural Review at the next Policy Planning Forum.

04/21 **Dispute Resolution Report**

Wendy Browning-Sampson, People Support Manager, presented the Dispute Resolution Report, that outlined the number, type and outcomes of discipline and grievance hearings and other dispute

resolution including Employment Tribunal activity that have occurred during the period of 1 July 2019 to 31 March 2020.

The Panel were advised that as a result of the coronavirus pandemic and the cancellation of meetings, the report had not been provided to JCP for noting therefore, the report was submitted retrospectively for the period 1 July 2019 to 31 March 2020 and highlighted the following:

- 11 grievances took place at a formal hearing
- 14 disciplinary cases (8 were gross misconduct and 6 misconduct)
- 3 Employment Tribunal claims received.

The Panel were advised that significant progress had been made over the last 18 months which included changes to the Disciplinary Policy and the Grievance Policy. All changes to the policies were jointly reviewed with the trade unions whereby consultation occurred that enabled any feedback to be provided. In support of the discipline policy the service is providing crucial conversations training for all managers. The team will be communicating the changes to the Grievance Policy and providing mediation training from January 2022. Investigation Training for management at all levels and trade unions had occurred and received a good level of attendance.

The Panel were advised that the next report brought to JCP, scheduled to take place on Monday 29 November, would be taken to Scrutiny Committee on 1 November and be focused upon the period of 1 April 2020-March 2021. Following this, all reports would include a 6-month reporting on data.

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that the contents of the Dispute Resolution be noted.

The meeting finished at 14:21 hours.

Kirsty Tuffin Strategic Hub 0121 380 6906 Kirsty.tuffin@wmfs.net

Minutes of the Scrutiny Committee

01 November 2021

Conducted as a public meeting at Headquarters and digitally via
Microsoft Teams

Present: Councillor Spence (Chair), Councillor Locke (Vice-Chair),
and Councillor Barrie.

Virtual: Councillor Barlow, Councillor Dehar, Councillor Young

Officers: Joanne Simmons, Kamla Devi-Ahir, Karen Gowreesunker,
Kirsty Tuffin, Michael Wood, Phil Fellows, Sarah Warnes,
Satinder Sahota, Stephen Timmington and Wendy Browning-
Sampson.

01/21 **Apologies**

There were no apologies received.

02/21 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest received.

03/21 **Minutes of the Scrutiny Committee held on 24 February 2020**

Resolved: That the minutes of the Scrutiny Committee held on 24 February 2020 were agreed as a correct record of proceedings.

04/21 **Scrutiny Committee –Terms of Reference 2021-2022**

Karen Gowreesunker, Clerk to the Authority, presented the Scrutiny Committee – Terms of Reference 2021-2022 report, that outlined the Committee's Terms of Reference, as per appendix 1 of the report.

The Committee were advised that the Committee's' terms of reference were submitted to Fire Authority on 21 June 2021 whereby, the addition of pre-scrutiny and post-scrutiny was approved. Pre-scrutiny would enable proposed changes to strategic policy decisions to be scrutinised. Post-scrutiny

would enable the Authority to seek assurance on operational decisions already made by the Chief Fire Officer/Officers.

No changes were requested, and it was agreed that the Terms of Reference for the Scrutiny Committee be noted.

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that the terms of reference for the Scrutiny Committee, as per appendix 1, be noted.

05/21

Diversity Inclusion Cohesion & Equality Update

Joanne Simmons, People Support Manager, presented the Diversity Inclusion Cohesion and equality update report that outlined the ongoing progress made by the service in relation to Diversity, Inclusion, Cohesion and Equality (DICE) since January 2020 to date.

The Committee were advised that as part of the Leadership, Partnership and Organisational commitments of the service, a series of 'Brave Space' talks had periodically taken place and had been open any member of staff voluntarily, with an average attendance of 50 people. Each session covered subjects in relation to DICE such as women's safety, Religion and Belief, Neurodiversity and Positive Action. To ensure the continuation of training opportunities, the following training sessions had been adapted to be delivered virtually:

- Recruitment & Selection (25 virtual training sessions completed within the last 12 months)
- Unconscious Bias Training (scheduled to take place between February - May 2022)
- Neurodevelopmental Disorder workshop (scheduled to take place in February 2022)

A toolkit for Managers had also been in development, with the support of the Staff Engagement Groups, to support managers and their development. The toolkit would provide a 'one-stop shop' for DICE information.

The Committee were advised that the nationally recognised league table for the 'Top 50 UK Inclusive Employers' was published in December 2020 whereby, the service had been

ranked 6th place, up by 28 places from the previous year. In November 2019, the service attended the Asian Fire Service Association (AFSA) Conference, whereby the service employees were among the award winners for, Outstanding Endeavour, Outstanding Charitable Award and Outstanding Charity Innovation. Fire Authority Members were also recognised in the Shining Light Executive Team award. The service was also announced the winners in the Guardian Public Service Awards for the 'Workplace Diversity Category', with a member of staff also being recognised in the category of 'Unsung Hero' in the Excellence Fore Awards.

The Committee were advised that the welfare review, that sought to review the current welfare and training provisions for managers, in line with health safety and wellbeing provisions, had commenced in May 2021. An update would be provided to the Committee at a future meeting. Data on the service's employees, as per the report, were also highlighted.

Following questions around the services employees and their religious commitments, Sarah Warnes, Assistant Chief Fire Officer, confirmed that the national discussion on Fire Fighters and their capacity to wear turbans had been on-going and the service would continue to contribute to this discussion moving forward.

The Chair of the Committee, Members and Sarah Warnes thanked the DICE team for all their hard work and commended them for being at the forefront of change.

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that the ongoing progress made by the service in relation to Diversity, Inclusion, Cohesion and Equality (DICE), be noted.

06/21

Dispute Resolution Report – July 2019 to March 2020

Wendy Browning-Sampson, People Support Manager, presented the Dispute Resolution Report, that outlined the number, type and outcome of disciplines, grievance hearings

and other dispute resolutions for the period July 2019 to March 2020.

The Committee were advised that the dispute resolution report had been taken to the Joint Consultative Panel meeting held on 27 September 2021 and had been submitted to Committee to ensure they were brought up to date with the key data that could not be presented to the Committee as a result of the pandemic preventing meetings taking place.

The Committee were advised that for the period July 2019 to March 2020, the service had a total of 11 grievances that went to a formal hearing. The reason for these grievances were outlined as per the report. For the same period, the service had a total of 14 disciplinary cases, 8 of these being gross misconduct, 6 being misconduct.

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that the contents of the Dispute Resolution Report for the period 1 July 2019 to 31 March 2020, be noted.

07/21

Dispute Resolution Report – April 2020 to September 2021

Wendy Browning-Sampson, People Support Manager, presented the Dispute Resolution Report, that outlined the number, type and outcome of disciplines, grievance hearings and other dispute resolutions for the periods April 2020 – March 2021 (period 1) and April 2021 - September 2021 (period 2).

The Committee were advised of the key figures for grievances and disciplinaries within the Service, for periods 1 and 2, as per the report. The reason for these grievances were also outlined.

The Committee were advised that significant changes, outlined within the report, had been made to the Disciplinary and Grievance policies, whereby a stakeholder group consisting of managers, trade union representatives, people support services and HR, were consulted and engaged with.

Following feedback from the stakeholder group, the following external training was provided by ASCAS and Achievement by Design Coaching Consulting Training (ABDCCT):

- Disciplinary Investigations
- Disciplinary Commissioning and Appeals
- Crucial Conversations.

It was confirmed that these training sessions had been open to managers and trade union representatives to attend.

The Committee were advised that the Grievance Policy and toolkit had been in draft stages and would be finalised in January 2022. Mediated training would be provided to managers and all new managers joining the service thereafter.

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that the contents of the Dispute Resolution Report for the following two periods be noted:
 - 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021
 - 1 April 2021 to 30 September 2021
2. That it be agreed that the Dispute Resolution Report, noted by the Scrutiny Committee, be submitted to the Joint Consultative Panel.

08/21

Scrutiny Committee Progress Report on Review of Safeguarding in WMFS

Michael Wood, Safeguarding Manager, presented the Scrutiny Committee Progress Report on the Review of Safeguarding in the West Midlands Fire Service (WMFS). The report outlined the work to improve safeguarding arrangements and practice in WMFS.

The Committee were advised that Michael Wood had been appointed as the Safeguarding Manager in December 2020, following the safeguarding review conducted by Alan Lotinga, to assist with the implementation of its recommendations for improvement, as outlined within the report.

Since the review, a Safeguarding Oversight and Assurance Group had been established whereby terms of reference and an action plan had been created, as per appendix 1 of the report. Significant changes had been made to the Ecademy safeguarding awareness eLearning as part of the services supervision framework and safeguarding competency.

The Committee were advised that the 7 Safeguarding Adult Boards within the West Midlands Metropolitan region would receive a single self-assessment and annual report from WMFS starting from April 2022. The Committee were reassured that a good level of engagement with staff with the development of the Safeguarding Policy and procedures had taken place, with 3 focus groups taking place throughout March and April 2021. Each focus group covered the following 4 areas:

- Recognising and Responding to Abuse and Neglect
- Reporting, Recording and Referring
- People in a Position of Trust Policy
- Staff Competency and Supervision Framework

The Committee were advised that a safeguarding toolkit would be developed and implemented to assist with the implementation of good practice. A full equality impact assessment had been conducted for these changes, outlined in appendix 2 of the report.

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that the progress made to date on the implementation of the recommendations made as part of the review of safeguarding, be noted.

09/21

Scrutiny Reviews for Consideration

Karen Gowreesunker presented the Scrutiny Review report that outlined the proposed scrutiny reviews for the Committees consideration.

The Committee were advised that as a result of the pandemic and the service operating under business continuity arrangements, some of the themes from the 24 March 2020 committee meeting had been included within the

proposed work for consideration including the Prevention - Safe and Well. Members were re-assured that, if approved, the review on Safe and Well would consider their involvement throughout/post the pandemic and its future development to ensure that the needs of the vulnerable continued to be met.

It was agreed that virtual workshops for Members of the Committee be arranged to assist with the Prevention – Safe and Well review.

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that the Scrutiny Committee next themes be considered.
2. That it be agreed that the Scrutiny Committee considered and approved prevention – Safe and Well as the next theme for review, in light of discussions and resolutions at previous meetings of the Committee. That it be agreed that the review be added within the Committees work programme.
3. That it be agreed that the Scrutiny Committee considered the approach to engaging with Members to refresh themes for future scrutiny reviews.
4. That it be agreed that virtual workshops for Members of the Committee be arranged to assist with the Prevention – Safe and Well review.

10/21

Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2021-2022

Karen Gowreesunker presented the Scrutiny Committee Work Plan for 2021-2022. It was agreed that the Safe and Well Report and the additional workshops be added to the work programme.

The Chair of the Committee commended Officers for the work they had provided within the work programme.

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that the Scrutiny Committee Work Programme 2021-2022 be approved.
2. That it be agreed that the Safe and Well Report be added to the work programme.

The meeting finished at 11:30 hours.

Kirsty Tuffin Strategic Hub 0121 380 6906
