



SCRUTINY COMMITTEE UPDATE REPORT NOVEMBER 2025

For NOTING

Principal Officer: DCFO Simon Barry

Report of the Chair of Scrutiny Committee

Authored: Chair of Scrutiny, Interim Clerk and Democratic Services Officer

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1. To provide the Authority an update on the work conducted by the Scrutiny Committee at its meeting held on Monday 27 October 2025.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1. That members **Note** the work of the Scrutiny Committee at its meeting held on Monday 27 October, as per the report.
- 2.2. That members **Note** the approved Scrutiny Committee minutes for the meeting held on Monday 21 July 2025, attached as **Appendix A**.
- 2.3. That members **Note** the Scrutiny Committee work plan for 2025-2026 attached as **Appendix B**.
- 2.4. That members **Note** the completed Scrutiny Review of Grievance and Disciplinary Processes linked, and recommendations outlined, in section 5.1.
- 2.5. That members **Note** the draft updates to the Committee's Terms of Reference in **Appendix C** discussed by the Committee on 27 October 2025 which will be submitted in final form as part of the Constitution Review for approval by Authority in February 2026.

3. **OBJECTIVES & EXPECTED OUTCOMES**

- 3.1. It was agreed that Committee Chairs will provide a quarterly update to each Authority meeting, to include an Annual Report at the end of each municipal year.

4. **BACKGROUND**

- 4.1. The Scrutiny Committee has been established to meet expectations set out in the Fire and Rescue National Framework. The Committee forms an integral part of the Authority's scrutiny framework, supporting the Authority in achieving its strategic objectives.
- 4.2. The Committee enables the scrutiny of decisions, made or to be made, on the basis of public safety, supporting the principles of pre-decision scrutiny and post-decision scrutiny. In doing so this further enables the committee to:
- inform policy development
 - hold the Authority to account
 - hold officers to account.
 - scrutinise performance of specific issues

The committee's Terms of Reference (TOR) can be accessed within the WMFRA Constitution as approved in June 2025. A deep dive review of the TOR and work programme is being undertaken with the Corporate Governance Improvement Board (CGIB) and will be brought to the Fire Authority meeting on Monday 24 November.

5. **OVERVIEW**

- 5.1. Since the Authority meeting on Monday 29 September, the Scrutiny Committee has held one formal, public meeting on Monday 27 October 2025.

Monday 27 October 2025

In attendance: Cllr(s) Lloyd, Bernasconi, Idrees, Miks, Dehar, Barrie, Ferguson. Co-Opted Member Prof Brake.

The full agenda pack can be accessed [here](#). Some of the key agenda items included:

- [Scrutiny Review of Grievance and Disciplinary Processes \(Full Report\)](#)

The findings of the review were presented to the committee. The recommendations outlined within the report included reviewing the disciplinary and grievance processes adopted by other fire services, particularly those that perform better in some areas.

Officers will also develop a full business case to understand the feasibility and potential costs of implementing a dedicated professional standards unit, as per Recommendation 4 of the HMICFRS Thematic Review.

Outcome: All recommendations as per report were approved.

- [Areas for Scrutiny Review](#)

Members were asked to agree priorities to be reviewed by Scrutiny Committee during the 2025/26 and 2026/27 municipal years based on the 18 Areas for Improvement (AFIs) developed by the HMICFS.

Outcome: Members were in agreement that the first topic to conduct a deep dive into would be workforce productivity (AFI 5).

Workforce promotion, development and talent management (AFIs 16, 17 and 18) would be reviewed after this, given it was a related area.

Delegation was given to the Interim Clerk to develop the Terms of Reference for the workforce productivity Scrutiny Review with a view to bring to the Scrutiny Committee meeting on January 26, 2026.

- [2026 CRMP Public Consultation](#)

The committee were provided with an overview of the draft public consultation regarding the fire service's Corporate Risk Management Plan (CRMP).

The process will contain three phases, the first of which will commence in January 2026 with a focus on engaging the public in the Service Delivery Model (SDM) Review. Phase Two will commence towards the end of 2026 and will be informed by the outcomes of phase one. The committee were given the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft questions and themes for the consultation.

The committee were informed that the fire service is working with a charity to support non-English speakers to complete the consultation and that there are plans for in-person events to support digitally excluded residents.

The committee suggested that officers contact the seven constituent local authorities to understand which foreign languages are most commonly spoken in each one. It was also suggested that the public could submit feedback into a post box at fire stations.

The Interim Clerk confirmed that the consultation would be promoted within the Section 41 reports that relevant members deliver to their local authorities.

Outcome: All recommendations as per report were approved.

- [Terms of Reference](#)

Members considered proposed amendments to the Terms of Reference which will inform the wider review of the WMFRA Constitution due to be approved by the Full Fire Authority in February 2026.

The committee were asked to consider the authority's approach to Scrutiny Call-in. They were informed that although the authority does not have to operate a Scrutiny Committee, if it chooses to do so it must follow statutory guidance – which requires such committees to have a Call-in function.

Members considered issues such as how much of the area covered by the authority would a decision have to impact in order for it to be subject to Call-in and how long members would get to call-in a decision before the time limit was reached. It was suggested that the committee reviews the Call-in process at the West Midlands Combined Authority as part of this piece of work.

Outcome: All recommendations as per report were approved, subject to;

- Section 7.3.11 of the Terms of Reference to specifically include information regarding the responsibilities of the committee on complaints handling and the requirement to submit an annual report to Fire Authority.

The Terms of Reference will be considered by Scrutiny Committee again in its January meeting, prior to the review of the Constitution in February. The Draft Terms of Reference is included in **Appendix C**.

- [Annual Performance Report – Fire Control](#)

The report provided the committee with an update on the operational performance of Fire Control for the period 1 September 2024 to 1 September 2025.

Staffordshire and West Midlands Fire Control received a total of 89,142 emergency calls over the reporting period compared to 75,561 the previous year (18% increase). Excluding the repeat calls to incidents, this leaves a total of 66,558 independent calls. Fire control mobilised to 43,283 (65%) of these incidents, following robust emergency call management and assessment.

The report makes clear that for the period covered, the proportion of incidents attended vs not attended in both West Midlands and Staffordshire demonstrates consistent performance by Fire Control in emergency call management, assessment and professional challenge. This ensures the fire service only mobilises to those incidents where attendance is required.

Members welcomed the figures but wanted to know what was driving the increase in call volumes. The committee was informed that call volumes were increasing across the sector, not just locally, and that more work needed to be undertaken to understand why this was the case.

It was agreed that the report will feature breakdowns showing the situation in each of the seven local authority areas in future reports.

Members also requested a further future report on performance indicators relating to prevention activities.

The FBU raised concerns around staffing levels in Fire Control. Officers agreed that steps would be taken to increase the staffing resources available to fire control.

Outcome: All recommendations as per report were approved.

Other agenda items included the [Complaint Handling Report \(Q1 and Q2 2025-26\)](#), the [Dispute Resolution Report](#) and an [update on Vetting Arrangements \(DBS\)](#).

6. **FUTURE WORK**

- 6.1 The approved Committee work programme can be accessed [here](#). A Scrutiny Review of workforce productivity will commence, as the committee chose to take this forward as the first area for a deep dive. The Terms of Reference for this review will be brought to the next Committee meeting in January. A deep dive on workforce promotion, development and talent management will follow this.

7. **IMPACT ASSESSMENTS**

- 7.1. No Initial EIA is required as this is an update report.

8. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1. There are no direct legal implications arising from this report or its appendices. All legal implications considered by the committee can be found within the reports pack taken to the committee (reports linked above).

9. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1. There are no financial implications arising from this report or its appendices. All financial implications considered by the committee can be found within the reports pack taken to the committee (reports linked above).

10. **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1. There are no environmental implications arising from this report or its appendices. All environmental implications considered by the committee can be found within the reports pack taken to the committee (reports linked above).

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