

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

23 MAY 2022

1. **ANNUAL REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2021/22**

Report of the Chair of the Scrutiny Committee.

RECOMMENDED

- 1.1 That the Committee gives consideration to the content and format of its Annual Report 2021/22 for submission to the Annual General Meeting of the Authority on Monday 27 June 2022.

2. **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 2.1 This report is submitted to Members to seek approval of the Annual Report of the Scrutiny Committee 2021/22.

3. **BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The Scrutiny Committee was established in line with 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.
- 3.2 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 (defined as 'pre-scrutiny' and 'post-scrutiny' within the associated Terms of Reference). In doing so this further enables:
- informing of policy development and/or
 - holding the Authority to account
 - scrutinising performance of specific issues and/or
 - holding officers to account.

- 3.3 Further information on the role of the committee including its full Terms of Reference are included within the Appendix A of the draft Annual Report.
- 3.4 The draft Annual Report for 2021/22 has been prepared in liaison with the Chair of the Scrutiny Committee and is attached for comments by the Committee in preparation for submission of the report to the Annual General Meeting of the Authority (27 June 2022).
- 3.5 It should be noted that meetings of the Scrutiny Committee were put on hold when the Authority implemented business continuity arrangements in March 2020 in response to the then emerging Covid 19 Pandemic. Meetings of the committee were reconvened as of 1 November 2021. This is reflected within the draft Annual Report.

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 There are no particular legal requirements for the Authority to establish a Scrutiny Committee; it is however, considered good practice for authorities to have a means through which monitoring and review of the Authority's policies and practices can be undertaken.

6. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 Advice may be provided internally by Officers at no direct cost to the Authority, supporting the Committee in its work. The Scrutiny Committee can, if required, access resources to be able to engage external professional advice where applicable.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Authority and Scrutiny Committee Reports
Minutes of the Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Sybil Spence
Chair of the Scrutiny Committee

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE SERVICE

**Annual Report of the Scrutiny
Committee
2021/22**

1. Background

In line with expectations set out in the Fire and Rescue National Framework the Authority has established a Scrutiny Committee to support it in achieving its strategic objectives. The committee ensures that its policy and budgetary framework is followed and developed to reflect the changing needs and demands in meeting its statutory obligations.

Effective scrutiny frameworks will be in place for both the scrutiny of strategic policy, as well as performance. Aligned to the role of the Fire Authority and Chief Fire Officer (CFO) as set out within the Constitution of the Authority, the scrutiny function should scrutinise decisions made or to be made, on the basis of 'public safety' aligned to the following definitions:

Pre scrutiny enables changes proposed to strategic policy decisions to be scrutinised. These are decisions which if implemented, would change the strategic priorities and outcomes agreed by the Fire Authority (for example, matters contained in Authority 'forward plan' for approval). Pre scrutiny can:

- i) Inform policy development and/or
- ii) Hold the Authority to account

Post scrutiny enables the Fire Authority to seek assurance around operational decisions already made by the CFO and other officers in the delivery of strategic priorities and outcomes (for example: training, partnership working). Post scrutiny can:

- i) Scrutinise performance of specific issues and/or
- ii) Hold officers to account

The key benefits of the Committee can be seen as:

- Complementing the strategic and policy formulation and development work of the Authority and Service.
- Developing the skills of Members to enable them to investigate below the surface of policies, strategies and processes.

- Providing a useful oversight and an element of ‘challenge’ to performance improvement processes and continuous improvement.
- Encouraging public involvement in the policy process.
- Supporting the development of an environment that stimulates a more reflective, evaluative, and evidence-based culture within the Authority and Service.

The Terms of Reference for the Committee can be found at Appendix A of this report.

2. Meetings

Meetings of the Scrutiny Committee were put on hold when the Authority implemented business continuity arrangements in March 2020 in response to the then emerging Covid 19 Pandemic.

Meetings of the committee were reconvened as of 1 November 2021. During 2021/22, the Committee met on the following dates:

• 1 November 2021
• 14 February 2022
• 23 May 2022

3. Members & Attendance Record

	01/11/21	14/02/22	23/05/22
Councillor Barlow	√	√	
Councillor Barrie	√	√	
Councillor Dehar	√	√	
Councillor Locke	√	√	
Councillor Singh	X	X	
Councillor Spence	√	√	
Councillor Young	√	√	
S Middleton (co-optee)	N/A	X	

Officers from the Authority are also present at meetings as appropriate.

Working Groups are also appointed to consider scrutiny reviews. The Committee are to undertake a maximum of two such reviews each year. Each Working Group is to have a minimum of three Members allocated to it.

4. Business

During the year the Committee conducted the following business:

- Diversity, Inclusion Cohesion and Equality Updates
- Dispute Resolution Monitoring
- Progress Update on the Review of Safeguarding in West Midlands Fire Service
- Consideration of Scrutiny Reviews leading to a Scrutiny Review of Safe and Well
- Fire Control Performance Reports
- Work programme selection

5. The Committee's main achievements

The Committee believes its key achievements during the year include:

- The refresh of scrutiny arrangements upon the reconvening of the schedule of meetings of the Committee, including appraisal of previously refined terms of reference.
- The consideration of performance related information covering the period from when business continuity arrangements were implemented to date, thus enabling the continued robust monitoring of the Service's performance in the areas of:
 - Diversity, Inclusion, Cohesion and Equality,
 - Workforce profile indicators,
 - Dispute resolutions,
 - Operational performance of Fire Control.
- The Committee received an update on the progress made to date by the Service in implementing the recommendations

that had resulted from the outcomes of the Review of Safeguarding in West Midlands Fire Service, providing assurances regarding the work undertaken to improve safeguarding arrangements and practice within the Service.

- As part of the overview of its Work Programme for the year, the Committee considered themes for Scrutiny reviews, including taking into account reviews and business undertaken by the Committee prior to the implementation of business continuity arrangements. This has resulted in the Committee approving to undertake the Scrutiny Review of Safe and Well. Members and Officers have actively engaged and discussed the review, understanding rationale, purpose and outcomes, with the formation of a working group to oversee and participate in the review as well as the submission of a scoping document to the full Committee. The working group is comprised of nominated Members plus Officers of the Service as and when applicable, with progress to be reported to the full Committee.
- Full details of the review are outlined within the respective reports submitted to the Committee:
 - Scrutiny Review of Safe and Well (February 2022)
 - Scrutiny Review of Safe and Well – Scoping Document (May 2022)
- It is to be noted that this is a Scrutiny review that is ongoing at the time of writing this report with the review expected to be undertaken over a six-month timeframe. As a result, findings of the review are anticipated to be provided during 2022/23 municipal year and will be subsequently reported to the Authority.

Terms of Reference for the Scrutiny Committee

Scrutiny Committee

To carry out a maximum of two scrutiny reviews per annum selected by the Committee. Such reviews will be member-led and evidence based, and will produce SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and timely) recommendations to the Authority.

To track and monitor the implementation of review recommendations that are accepted by the Authority.

To summon any officer or member of the Authority to give account in respect of reviews or any other relevant matter.

To manage, in consultation with the Strategic Enabler for Finance and Resources, a specific budget for the purpose of buying in any necessary external advice and support in connection with the reviews.

To receive and scrutinise performance information including progress against the Community Safety Strategy and 'The Plan', the Service's objectives and corporate performance indicators and review performance targets.

To have responsibility for scrutiny of Diversity, Inclusion, Cohesion and Equality and diversity throughout the West Midlands Fire Service and to review policies and monitor performance in relation thereto.

To monitor and scrutinise as appropriate the Authority's HR policies.

To monitor and scrutinise sickness levels, promotion policies and employee exit information.

To receive information and statistics on grievance monitoring and to report outcomes to the Joint Consultative Panel.

To ensure that the Authority is meeting its duties under Health & Safety and environmental and other relevant legislation.

To deal with any matters referred to it by the full Authority, the Policy Planning Forum, the Chief Fire Officer, Clerk, Monitoring Officer or Treasurer, not within its work programme.

To refer any matter for consideration by the Authority, another Committee or an officer where considered appropriate.

To submit its minutes and an Annual Report to the Authority.

In order to allow for separation of the Scrutiny and decision-making functions, findings and recommendations of Scrutiny reviews will be presented to the Authority by the Chair of the Scrutiny Committee. Members (excluding substitutes) of the Scrutiny Committee shall not vote on matters arising from Scrutiny reviews.

The Committee will sit in public with minimum exceptions. In addition to its programmed meetings, the Committee will hold additional meetings, as and when required, in order to efficiently manage its workload.