

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

15 FEBRUARY 2010

1. **ANNUAL AUDIT LETTER**

Joint report of the Chief Fire Officer and Treasurer

RECOMMENDED

THAT the Authority note the content of the Annual Audit Letter (AAL), attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

2. **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

This report is submitted to inform Members of the findings from the Audit Commission's 2008/09 audit work detailed within the AAL.

3. **BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The AAL includes findings arising from the audit of the Authority's financial statements and the results of work undertaken to assess arrangements which are in place to secure value for money in the use of resources.
- 3.2 The Service has been fully involved and was consulted in the development of this letter. This has been facilitated by regular communication between the Deputy Chief Fire Officer and the Audit Commission. The contents of the AAL were presented to and noted by the Audit Committee on 11th January 2010.

The report includes sections dealing with:

- key findings;
- financial statements and annual governance statement;
- value for money and use of resources;
- managing performance and organisational assessment;
- closing remarks.

3.3 The Authority has been given a '**performs well**' rating for its organisational performance during 2008/09. It is recognised that West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority (WMFRA) has continued the progress made in 2007/08 and has performed credibly against a new and more demanding assessment. Some key successes were:

- providing good value for money;
- a good track record of operating within budget;
- improved service performance whilst delivering efficiencies;
- promoting and demonstrating the values of good governance;
- the West Midlands is becoming safer from fire;
- being well prepared to respond to emergencies.

3.4 The areas for improvement highlighted by the Audit Commission have been included in Departmental/Command Area action plans (where appropriate). Some key areas for improvement were:

- development of a detailed 3 year financial plan which includes scenario planning and links to strategy and service plans;
- development of a detailed workforce plan setting out staffing needs and links to strategy and service plans;
- improvement in understanding of the cost base and value for money provided by individual services;
- ensuring that plans are in place to deliver against the 2013 recruitment targets.

3.5 An Action Plan detailing the recommendations and officer responsibility is contained within Appendix 1 of the AAL. This Action Plan will be built into the WMFRA improvement programme.

4. **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

In preparing this report an initial Equality Impact Assessment is not required and has not been carried out. The matters raised in this report do not relate to a change in policy or of function.

5. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

There is a legal requirement for the Authority to consider the Audit Commission's Audit and Inspection Letter under Statutory Instrument 2006 No. 564 – The Accounts and Audit (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2006.

6. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Statutory Instrument 2006 No. 564 – The Accounts and Audit
(Amendment) (England) Regulations 2006

VIJ RANDENIYA
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

STUART KELLAS
TREASURER