

West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority

13 December 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 Barlow, Councillor Hogarth, Councillor Locke,
Councillor Padda and Councillor Young.

Virtual: Councillor Barrie, Councillor Dehar, Councillor Ferguson,
Councillor Miks, Councillor Miller, Councillor Singh and
Councillor Spence

Professor S Brake, co-opted member – health

Mike Ager – Independent Member (Audit and Risk)

Steve Price Hunt (Fire Brigade's Union), Richard Merker
(Fire Officers Association)

50/21 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Councillor Walsh, Gary Taylor,
Steve Ball and Neil Chamberlain.

51/21 **Declarations of Interest**

The Chair declared a personal non-pecuniary interest due to being a member of the Firefighters Pension Scheme(s). Councillor Iqbal, Professor Simon Brake, and Councillor Barlow declared a personal non-pecuniary interest as they were in receipt of state pension from the Government. Councillor Hogarth declared a personal non-pecuniary interest due to being in receipt of a pension from Solihull Council.

52/21 Chairs Announcements

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

The Chair wished to congratulate Deputy Chief Fire Officer Wayne Brown who had been awarded the Most Influential BAME Individual in Fire for his outstanding contribution to diversity and equality in the Fire and Rescue Service over the last two years. Congratulation was also given to Kris Darnley and Darryll Darkin on receiving Certificates of Merit at the Asian Fire Service Association (AFSA) awards. The Authority were advised that it had been a great achievement for the service to be nominated for the COVID-19 "going the extra mile" award, alongside so many other fantastic nominees. Congratulations was given to all of the nominees who joined DCFO Wayne Brown and Councillor Kirat Singh at the event.

The Asian Fire Service Association had circulated a letter to both the Chair of the Authority and the Chief Fire Officer (CFO) to formally pass on their recognition and thanks to Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Sarah Warnes who would be retiring at the end 2021, for her contribution to diversity, inclusion, cohesion, and equality. She had been an instrument in driving the DICE agenda within the Service but also nationally.

Following round one of the HMICFRS Inspections that took place throughout 2018-2019. Sector feedback had been positive with the effectiveness of fire safety policy and procedures and the promotion of values and ethics were highlighted. Our inspection (as part of round 2 tranche 3) would commence from January 2022, with the 6-week inspection scheduled to start from the 21st of March 2022. The inspection would continue to focus on the three pillars of: effectiveness, efficiency and people.

Following national changes announced by the Government last week, West Midlands Fire Authority (WMFRA) would continue to use a hybrid approach to meetings and committee's where this is a decision-making forum. Policy Planning Forum (PPF) and the Joint Consultative Panel (JCP) would continue to take place digitally as

these were not decision-making forums. A review would take place every 30 days.

COVID risk Assessments remained for FRA meetings and any changes to these would be considered aligned to national changes in government guidance/mandates. The Authority were reminded of the importance to regularly take Lateral Flow Tests and for hands, face, and space be observed as much as possible.

53/21 Chief Fire Officer's Announcements

The CFO welcomed all attendees to the meeting.

The CFO thanked Sarah Warnes on behalf of the service and the Strategic Enabling Team for all the hard work and dedication. The letter of recognition from the Asian Fire Service Association had been one of the many ways in which Sarah had moved the service forward. Congratulations was given to Simon Barry who would be temporarily overseeing the Assistant Chief Fire Officer role for a term of 6 months.

The Excellence in Fire and Emergency Services awards had taken place and the Chief had been proud to see the Deputy Chief Fire Officer Wayne Brown be awarded the Most Influential BAME Individual in Fire. Praise was given as the West Midlands Fire Service (WMFS) had been the most nominated service throughout the country. WMFS had also been ranked in the top 10 of the top 50 inclusive employees' awards that made the WMFS the top 2 ranked Fire Service in the country for inclusivity.

The Authority were advised that following the government announcement, WMFS had resorted back to its previous guidance around working from home where possible. For those that would find this difficult both mentally and for personal reasons would be provided support to access the best options for them and alternative measures could be put in place. Although, this guidance had been implemented, the service would continue to assess the situation against its 3 domains to ensure that there would be a resilience in resources.

Following farewell messages from Members, Sarah Warnes thanked everyone for their kind words and advised that it had been a privilege

and honour to work for WMFS. The People programme would now be in the capable hands of Simon Barry moving forward and wished him all the best in moving forward with the 'people' agenda.

The Chair advised the Authority that site visits to stations for Councillors would be postponed ensuring the health and safety of those on site and Members.

54/21 Minutes of the Fire and Rescue Authority 04 October 2021

Resolved:

1. That the minutes of the Fire Authority meeting held on 04 October 2021 be confirmed as a correct record.

55/21 Statement of Assurance 2020-21

Karen Gowreesunker, Clerk to the Authority, provided an overview of the Statement of Assurance 2020-21 report that outlined the revised statement of Assurance for 2020-21, as per appendix 1.

The Authority were advised that it had been a legal requirement under The Fire and Rescue National Framework for England published in May 2018 for Fire and Rescue Authorities to review and publish a 'Statement of Assurance' on an annual basis. The Statement of Assurance had the following 3 key areas:

1. Financial
2. Governance
3. Operational

Each of these areas included a section on any potential improvements identified. The publicly published documentation that formed part of the West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority's (WMFRA) assurance process highlighted were Statement of Accounts, Annual Governance Statement and the Community Safety Strategy (Community Risk Management Plan). The vast majority of other documentation referenced within the Statement of Assurance had already been published into the public domain.

Resolved:

1. That the Statement of Assurance 2020-2021 be approved.

56/21 **Financial Regulations**

Mike Griffiths, Treasurer to the Authority, provided an overview of the Financial Regulations report that outlined the proposed revised Financial Regulations that reflected the Authority's current financial processes, policies and regulations.

The Authority were advised that as a result of covid, the periodical review of the financial regulations had been delayed however, there had been no change in the core principle of the regulations. The proposed changes, as per appendix 1, reflected updates made to the Authority's Constitution and Committee structures and relevant accounting regulations.

Resolved:

1. That the revised Financial Regulations be approved.

57/21 **Monitoring of Finances**

Mike Griffiths provided an overview of the Monitoring of Finances report that outlined the monitoring of the Authorities finances for the current financial year up to October 2021, for the revenue budget and the capital programme.

The Authority were advised that the revenue budgeted to the end of October 2021 and the actual figure had been compared, as per appendix A of the report. The actual spend of the Authority up to October 2021, had been £58.518m compared to the projected budget of £58.765m therefore, had created a favourable variance of £247,000m. The table included in appendix B that included the full year of pension projections, was also highlighted.

Mike Griffiths advised that the Authority had approved its capital programme for 2020-21 and its expenditure to the end of October 2021 had been £2.624m. The main variance within the capital programme had been the result of delays with the Vehicle replacement programme and the roof replacement at Transport

Engineering Workshops, as per report. The anticipated spend had been £6.7m that would be funded from WMFS reserves.

Resolved:

1. That the content of the monitoring of finances report be noted.

58/21 Analysis of Progress of Quarterly Performance Against 'Our Plan' – Quarter 2 2021-22

Karen Gowreesunker presented the Analysis of Progress of Quarterly Performance Against 'Our Plan' – Quarter 2 2021-22 report that outlined the status of the Services key Performance Indicators for quarter 2 2021-22 and the progress that had been made in the delivery of the three strategic priorities contained within 'Our Plan' 2021-24.

The Authority were advised that the Key Performance Indicators allowed the Service to manage performance and provided reassurance around the on-going performance of 'Our Plan'. The service was collected data live to monitor its performance.

The Key Performance Indicators highlighted to Members were risk-based attendance, BAME indicators and the transition of Safe and Well Points. The Authority were advised that performance with risk-based attendance had remained positive with targets met for all four categories of incident types: 1,2,3 and 4. Performance with the Safe and Well points would continue to be impacted until the transition of recording point via Tymly is completed. Following queries on the increase in performance following the easing of COVID restrictions and the announcement made by Government on Omicron; re-assurance was provided by the CFO. He advised that the service would continue to deliver safe and wells away from the workplace or with Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and social distancing and therefore should not be impacted by the new strain.

Following comments on pressures of staff absence on the service, the CFO re-assured Members that the Service had been scenario planning against anticipated, significant impact on staffing.

Prevention, Protection and Response teams would be prioritising resources and measures had been put in place such as health surveillance and postponement of site visits. The Service would continue with its charity work and assisting with the vaccine roll out.

Resolved:

1. That the status of the Services key Performance Indicators for quarter 2 2021-22 be noted.
2. That the progress made in the delivery of the three strategic priorities contained with 'Our Plan' 2021-2024 be noted.

59/21 Minutes of the Collaboration and Transformation Committee held on 06 September 2021

The Chair of the Collaboration and Transformation Committee wished to thank all officers for their continued contributions and support.

Following discussions on technical issues experienced by Cllr Hogarth, it was agreed that Kirsty Tuffin, Democratic Services Officer, provide support to Cllr Hogarth following the meeting. It was agreed that a note be added to the Collaboration and Transformation minutes for the 6 December meeting, on Cllr Hogarth's availability for the meeting and the technical issues he had faced accessing the meeting.

Resolved:

1. That the minutes of the Collaboration and Transformation Committee held on 06 September 2021 were received.
2. That it be agreed that Kirsty Tuffin, Democratic Services Officer, provide support to Cllr Hogarth following the meeting following his technical issues accessing the Collaboration and Transformation Committee on 6 December.
3. That it be agreed that a note be added to the Collaboration and Transformation minutes for the 6 December meeting, on Cllr Hogarth's availability for the meeting and the technical issues he had faced accessing the meeting.

60/21 Minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee held on 27 September 2021

The Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee wished to thank all officers for their continued contributions, support and administration of documentation for committee meetings.

Resolved:

1. That the minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee held on 27 September 2021 were received.

61/21 Minutes of the Joint Consultative Panel held on 27 September 2021

Resolved:

1. That the minutes of the Joint Consultative Panel held on 27 September 2021 were received.

62/21 Minutes of the Scrutiny Committee held on 01 November 2021

The Chair of the Scrutiny Committee wished to thank all officers for their continued wonderful contributions and support.

Resolved:

1. That the minutes of the Scrutiny Committee held on 01 November 2021 were received.

The meeting ended at 11:47 hours.

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