West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority

Collaboration and Transformation Committee

You are summoned to attend the meeting of Collaboration and Transformation Committee **to be held on** Monday, 05 September 2022 at 10:30
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

Item No.

Distribution:
Gurdial Atwal - Member, Jasbinder Dehar - Chair of the Collaboration and Transformation Committee, Simon Foster - Police and Crime Commissioner, Peter Hogarth - Member, Zahir Hussain - Vice Chair of Collaboration and Transformation Committee, Zafar Iqbal - Member, Ian Kettle - Member, Catherine Miks - Member

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.

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Agenda prepared by Kirsty Tuffin
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This agenda and supporting documents are also available electronically on the
West Midlands Fire Service Committee Management Information System

Item 3

Minutes of the Collaboration and Transformation Committee

18 July 2022

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

Present: Councillor Dehar (Chair), Councillor Hussain (Vice-Chair), Councillor Atwal, Councillor Barrie, Councillor Brackenridge, Councillor Hogarth.

Virtual: Councillor Iqbal, Councillor Miks, Prof Simon Brake, APCC Wasim Ali

Officers: Mike Griffiths, Phil Loach, Tom Embury, Kirsty Tuffin.

06/22 **To receive apologies for absence (if any)**

No apologies for absence were received.

The Chair of the Committee advised the Committee that Councillor Seamus Walsh had sadly passed away. All Members passed on their condolences and a minute silence was held.

07/22 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest received.

08/23 **Minutes of the Collaboration and Transformation Committee held on 25 April 2022**

Resolved:
1. That the Minutes of the Collaboration and Transformation Committee held on 25 April 2022 were approved as a correct record of proceedings.

09/22 **Authority White Paper Consultation Response**

Tom Embury, Deputy Clerk to the Authority, presented the Authority White Paper Consultation Response Report that provided an overview of the Fire Reform White Paper and

draft response to the consultation on behalf of the West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority (WMFRA).

The Committee were advised that the Fire Reform White Paper had been published on 18 May 2022 and set out plans from the government to reform three key areas: people, professionalism and governance. Both political parties had met prior to discuss their response and the final draft had been drafted with consultation of the Chair of the Authority and the Local Government Association (LGA). The final draft response had been attached as appendix A. It was highlighted the impact of the ongoing change of Prime Minister would need to be monitored as this could impact the implementation of any changes.

The Chair of the Authority thanked all those involved in drafting the response. He advised that there had been little disagreement between the Conservative Group, the LGA's and the Labour Group's responses. The Police Crime Commissioner, Simon Foster, had also attended the Labour Group's meeting and had provided input into the response.

The Committee were advised that to take into account the Conservative Groups response, question 22 had been changed from 'Neither Agree/Disagree' to 'Disagree'. Councillor Hogarth agreed that there had been little difference with the LGA's response and Labour/Conservative Group responses and felt appendix A had taken into account the Conservatives response. There had been consensus in the room by members that there had been no need to change the current governance approach as it worked efficiently and effectively.

Prof Simon Brake expressed support for the response, as per appendix A of the report.

The Chair of the Authority advised the Committee that it had been suggested to make these changes mandatory however, the LGA had been pushing against this. All members agreed that any changes should not be mandatory and should be left to local determination.

Councillor Hogarth expressed sympathy for the Chief Fire Officer with regards to proposed governance change. He felt that the Chief ran the Service effectively and had done and was doing a great job. He felt that the CFO had thorough knowledge on what was needed to operate the Service effectively and efficiently and expressed concerns over the lack of knowledge and understanding with regard to fire services that a Mayor/PCC may have.

The Chair of the Authority advised that that officers were able to submit their own response, although acknowledged it could be tricky around their approach with the governance aspects of their response. He re-enforced that appendix A had then been the response of the WMFRA and not the Service/Officers.

Resolved:

1. That it be agreed that the draft Fire Authority response to the Fire Reform White Paper Consultation, as per appendix A of the report, be approved.

The meeting finished at 10:47 hours.

Kirsty Tuffin
Strategic Hub
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WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

COLLABORATION AND TRANSFORMATION COMMITTEE

5th SEPTEMBER 2022

1. **FIRE REFORM WHITE PAPER – CONSULTATION RESPONSES**

    Report of the Clerk to the Authority

    RECOMMENDED

1.1 THAT Committee members note the content of responses to the Fire Reform White Paper consultation from other key stakeholders.

2. **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

2.1 To provide Collaboration and Transformation Committee with an overview of local and national responses to the Fire Reform White Paper, ahead of an anticipated government response later this year.

3. **BACKGROUND**

3.1 **Fire Reform White Paper Consultation**

    The consultation on the "Reforming Our Fire and Rescue Service" White Paper was held between 18 May and 26 July. It covered three main areas:

    - Professionalism
    - People
    - Governance

    A briefing was provided to all elected members of the Fire and Rescue Authority summarising the key policy proposals within the White Paper.

    Government is now considering the responses and will respond themselves in due course. It is not currently known what impact

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the change in Prime Minister (and potentially, change in Cabinet) will have on the timeline.

3.2 **WMFRA Response**

West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority submitted their response on Tuesday, 26 July 2022. The response had been agreed unanimously by the Collaboration and Transformation Committee and was supported by the Police and Crime Commissioner for the West Midlands, and the leaders of Birmingham, Coventry, Sandwell, Solihull and Wolverhampton Councils.

The full response has been circulated to members.

3.3 **WMFS Response**

Officers also submitted a response on behalf of the operational leadership of the service. This was restricted to commenting on the proposals from an operational perspective and did not offer a view on political matters.

The full response is attached in **Appendix A**.

4. **OTHER RESPONSES**

4.1 **Local Government Association**

The LGA response to the White Paper, while broadly supportive of the government's ambition for improvement in the service, raise concerns about a number of the policy proposals, and highlight areas not covered by the White Paper where they believe there is further scope for improvement. In particular, they highlight the work undertaken between the LGA, NFCC and National Employers on Fit for the Future.

Key points made include:

- Any decisions regarding governance should be determined locally, with no central imposition of governance change in fire. Business cases for contested transfers of governance should be assessed by an independent panel.

- Other options for governance should also be considered, such as greater delegation to existing fire authority chairs, stronger

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cabinet and scrutiny arrangements or creation of smaller management committees.

- A balanced approach to leadership, recognising the role of both operational and political leaders is important. Political/strategic leaders should continue to have involvement in decisions such as crewing or senior officer appointments.

- Chief Fire Officers do not need to be made Corporations Sole as Operational Independence can be achieved by other means.

- The NJC retains the LGA's support, and any alternative would still require negotiation with representative bodies at the local level by individual chief fire officers, which risks fragmentation and further delay.

- Flexibility in services is important, but fire and rescue service staff can only be asked to undertake work that is permitted within their contracts of employment.

- The LGA is supportive of direct talent and management schemes to ensure the service is open to a broad range of talent. Care must be taken when considering entrance requirements not to impact unintentionally on equality, diversity and inclusion.

- The 21st Century Leadership course should take in the whole range of leadership and management issues likely to face fire and rescue leaders.

- The Code of Ethics should continue to be embedded regardless of whether it is placed on a statutory footing, and any decision to do so should not conflict with existing codes in a county council context.

- The Oath may be challenging to introduce for existing staff, and will add little beyond what is already being introduce through the CCoE.

- Welcoming of the College of Fire

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The LGA also raised a number of further issues not covered within the White Paper, including;

- The need to ensure greater resilience within the sector to periods of high demand such as the recent spate of wildfires, which placed a number of services under strain.

- The need to consider and support the Fit for the Future programme developed by the LGA, NFCC and National Employers as a means to drive improvement in the sector.

- How Sector Led Improvement can be incorporated into the reform agenda.

- Resolving various issues relating to pensions which are impacting firefighters and senior officers.

The full response can be found here.

4.2 **National Fire Chiefs Council**

The NFCC welcomed the intent of the White Paper, and like the LGA highlighted the importance of considering the sector-led Fit for the Future project.

In their response they specifically highlighted the following areas:

- Strongly agreed with the need to flexibly deploy resources to face new threats and risks, highlighting terrorism, rioting, wildfires and flooding as examples of increasingly complex risks. Similarly supportive of a wider role in health and public safety, including in medical emergencies.

- Highlight concerns that current business continuity arrangements in the event of strike action, arguing that a base level of operational cover is required.

- Argue in favour of significant reform of current pay negotiation structures, highlighting the fall in FRS staff pay in real terms, and the need to include all stakeholders in negotiations over pay and conditions.

- Urging caution with expanding direct entry while the current direct entry scheme is still in its formative stages.

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- Welcoming of a 21st Century Leadership Programme but urging an "end-to-end" approach to development and support within the service and seeking to ensure that such a programme goes beyond command training. Fundamentally disagrees that such a programme should be mandatory for ACFO ranks.

- Welcomes reform on data and research and highlight existing work by the NFCC in both areas.

- Holds no strong view on making the CCoE statutory, believing this will not be the most important factor in embedding it within the service. Opposes the introduction of a FF Oath.

- Supportive of the development of a College of Fire and Rescue, but keen to understand how this will be funded and how it will sit along the role of existing bodies such as the NFCC.

- Welcome and supports proposals to place Operational Independence on a statutory footing and would welcome greater engagement on this issue. Feel that existing relationships mean greater clarity is not needed in terms of the divide between operational and strategic leadership.

The full response can be accessed here.

4.3 **Fire Brigades' Union**

The FBU response opposes most the policy proposals within the White Paper, describing itself as "extremely disappointed" with the White Paper and urging the government to "think again".

The areas of greatest concern are that, in their view:

- It contains no provisions to improve the service firefighters provide to our communities

- It promises no new investment in firefighters or equipment needed to improve the service

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- It threatens the legal rights of firefighters to collectively bargain with our employers over pay, conditions, safety and other vital contractual matters

- If implemented, it would cut firefighters' pay, increase hours, roles and the intensity of work, introduce unsafe practices and all while stretching the service to breaking point

- It threatens the right of firefighters to take lawful industrial action when we are attacked by employers and governments

- It seeks to give chief fire officers powers to dictate firefighters' pay, conditions, duty systems, safety and other matters – even though they have no knowledge, training or experience of these matters.

They describe the creation of a fire service oath or a statutory code of ethics as "gimmicks".

They are willing to discuss some proposals, subject to further information. These include:

- Proposed College of Fire and Rescue
- Professional standards for entry and officers
- Research and data

The full response can be found here.

4.4   **West Midlands Mayor – Andy Street**

Andy Street's response was in an individual capacity as Mayor. No response was sent by the West Midlands Combined Authority.

Within his response, he outlined his support for a single elected official taking responsibility for governance of fire and rescue service. In the context of the West Midlands, he states his belief that this would best sit within the WMCA. He accepts however that the WMCA board remains unsupportive of such a move and therefore believes that a change can only occur where the mechanism for transfer mirrors that laid out in the Levelling-Up and Regeneration Bill in respect of policing functions.

He also outlines his support for Operational Independence for the Chief Fire Officer. The full response can be found in **Appendix B.**

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5. **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

5.1 In preparing this report an initial Equality Impact Assessment is not required and has not been carried out.

6. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 There are no direct legal implications.

7. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 There are no direct financial implications.

8. **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 There are no direct environmental implications.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- [Reforming Our Fire and Rescue Service](#)

- WMFRA White Paper Consultation Response

The contact for this report is Tom Embury, Deputy Clerk.

Karen Gowreesunker
CLERK TO THE AUTHORITY

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Appendix A

People

Q1: **To what extent do you agree/disagree that fire and rescue services should have the flexibility to deploy resources to help address current and future threats faced by the public beyond core fire and rescue duties?**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
X				

The National Framework is quite clear on the role of an FRS and therefore every employee. This is to reduce/mitigate risk to fire and other related incidents. The risks that sit within the area an FRS covers will differ and therefore guided by the three core services of Prevention, Protection and Response, each FRS should be able to through its CFO adapt its service provision aligned to the risk set out in its CRMP and how this will be addressed through its strategy/plan.

Our vision is to make our communities safer, stronger and healthier. It is our professional view that services should be able to deploy their resources flexibly to address whichever risks are identified within the Community Risk Management Plan, and to allow us to deliver that vision. Our public consultation in winter 2020 found that 93% of respondents from our local area agreed we should continue to take a flexible approach to managing our resources.

We believe the description of "Core" fire and rescue duties is itself unhelpful, as it implies a limited range of functions, when in reality the powers granted by the 2004 Fire and Rescue Service Act make it clear that authorities not only have powers to respond to fires, road traffic collisions and emergencies but also any other eventuality in order to prevent death, injury or damage to the environment.

Q2: **To what extent do you agree/disagree that fire and rescue services should play an active role in supporting the wider health and public safety agenda?**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
X				

We are fully supportive of a wide role for the FRS but believe this must be aligned to our CRMP and our responsibilities to reduce risk from fire and other emergencies which may cause harm. There are clearly areas where we can support a wider health agenda by addressing health inequalities that increase a person's risk of fire, and this is something we have actively pursued through our own Reducing Health Inequalities work, drawing on lessons from the Marmot review.

There will be challenges in expanding our prevention role beyond this, especially if that involves delivering services on behalf of others. Our 2020 consultation found 74% public support for "tackling social issues that make people more vulnerable to fire and other risks".

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Q3: **To what extent do you agree/disagree that the business continuity requirements set out in the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 provide sufficient oversight to keep the public safe in the event of strike action?**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
			X	

The act is clear on the overall requirements of the responsible individual or body, but there is no specific definition of what this may look like. We know that the Home Office has broadly defined an expectation of 30% availability in terms of resources, but this can be arrived at in different ways for FRSs. Consistency of expectation though the Home Office and NFCC matched with the independent review and assurance could create a stronger basis for different approaches to ensuring business continuity. However, through a national approach FRSs need to be able to plan for what is realistic and most value to its delivery of services recognising each CRMP will present different Business as Usual and Business Continuity risks.

Q4: **To what extent do you agree/disagree that the current pay negotiation arrangements are appropriate?**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
			X	

Q5: **Please provide the reasons for your response.**

While we recognise the benefits of an approach that involves representative bodies and employers in negotiating pay and conditions, the current process lacks transparency and slows efforts to modernise our services and allow firefighters to do more for their community even within the confines of the current roles and responsibilities of a firefighter. Often, unfortunately, progress is made by services at a local level despite the NJC, rather than because of it.

We would welcome changes that provide greater openness and limit the NJC's capacity to require any change to working practices, however small, to be negotiated nationally through an often complicated and slow process. We saw that the approach taken during the COVID-19 pandemic, with firefighter roles negotiated through the tripartite agreement, preventing firefighters and services from responding as effectively as they could have done to a national emergency. This should not be the case in future.

We strongly support the need to provide firefighters with fair compensation for their work, and to be provided with annual pay increases that address the cost of living. The NJC also has an important role to play in ensuring the health and safety of firefighters, but this should not come at the expense of reasonable flexibility to respond to new and changing risks facing communities.

Q6: **To what extent do you agree/disagree that consistent entry requirements should be explored for fire and rescue service roles?**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	X			

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Q7:   **Please provide the reasons for your response.**

We agree that entry requirements for the service should be consistent, but not at the expense of local flexibility or in such a way that might restrict some parts of the community from considering the fire and rescue service as a career. All services are making efforts to improve the diversity and inclusion of our services but are all starting from very different positions and seeking to reflect different communities.

Services already enable development paths for their staff which supports achievement of entry requirements into different roles within their services - this enables diversity from a representative perspective, as well as diversity and inclusion from other perspectives such as profession backgrounds.

It is vital that any attempt to ensure consistency in entry requirements does not close the door to the types of individuals who are currently underrepresented within our services. Any change must be enabling, not disabling when it comes to changing the shape and diversity of our workforce.

Q8:   **To what extent do you agree/disagree that other roles, in addition to station and area managers, would benefit from a direct entry and talent management scheme?**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	X			

We agree that it would be beneficial to consider means of expanding the specific direct entry scheme developed by the NFCC to services. However, it is important that we do not run before we can walk, and that time is taken to embed the relatively new process for direct entry at station manager and area manger level, to ensure that it is achieving its aim of introducing a wider range of experiences and backgrounds to services.

It is also important to recognise that other approaches, such as transfer from non-uniformed to uniformed roles (or vice versa) exist, and that these approaches also need to be supported. As mentioned above, a consistent approach needs to be used to direct entry, talent management and other mechanisms which will diversify the professional background of employees.

The costs associated with introducing direct entry needs to also be considered, as this would currently be a significant barrier to many services adopting this approach, especially when it is significantly more expensive than existing routes to fill these roles.

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Professionalism

Q9: **To what extent do you agree/disagree with the proposed introduction of a 21st century leadership programme?**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	X			

Q10: **Please provide reasons for your response.**

We agree that there would be benefit of providing a consistent and comprehensive leadership programme for senior officers. However, there needs to be a recognition that the proposed length of the current scheme would be a significant resource commitment for any service. It may be helpful to consider whether a modular approach could be taken which would recognise training and qualifications already undertaken by service leaders.

It will be important that this programme does not limit Area Managers and Assistant Chief Fire Officers from also undertaking wider training and development at a key time in their careers, given the wide range of competencies already expected of senior managers.

We would argue that the government's current impact assessment estimates of the number of staff who may need to undertake this course and the expected cost are too conservative. This is particularly true where we might expect a significant number of retirements from senior officer positions in the next few years.

Q11: **To what extent do you agree/disagree that completion of the proposed 21st century leadership programme should be mandatory before becoming an assistant chief fire officer or above?**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
			X	

A mandatory approach would be too restrictive, and as mentioned above, may fail to take account of existing qualifications and professional experience. The approach should be person-centred, able to adapt to provide training based on the needs of individual candidates, which may not require all aspects of the training to be delivered. It is important that any approach does not limit people from a range of backgrounds able to fulfil these roles, including, for example, through direct entry (see above).

Q12: **To what extent do you agree/disagree that each of the activities outlined above are high priorities for helping improve the use and quality of fire and rescue service data?**

- A national data analytics capability.
- Data-focused training.
- Consistent approaches to structuring data
- Clear expectations for data governance
- Securing data-sharing agreements.

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Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	X			

Q13: **What other activities, beyond those listed above, would help improve the use and quality of fire and rescue service data? Please give the reasons for your response.**

We agree that there are significant benefits to improving the data capabilities of the fire and rescue service nationally. This is vital to appropriate understanding of risk which should inform community risk management planning. Data-sharing agreements are of course require support not only from the FRS but from partners, so a government-wide expectation of this approach will be vital.

We are already leaders within the sector in areas such as data analytics, structing and governance, and played a key role in delivering data services for NFCC during the pandemic, and for other services. We believe we could play an important role in delivering elements of these national functions, given our past success and sector knowledge, and understanding.

Q14: **To what extent do you agree/disagree that each of the activities outlined above are high priorities for improving the use and quality of fire evidence and research?**

- **Collaborating**
- **Commissioning**
- **Conducting**
- **Collating**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	X			

Q15: **What other activities, beyond those listed above, would help improve the use and quality of evidence and research on fire and other hazards? Please provide the reasons for your responses.**

We agree that fire service research should be better coordinated and support efforts to provide additional support in that area. This needs to be linked to a more consistent approach to community risk management planning, and the use of appropriate evidence and research to support risk analysis.

It will be important to ensure that any centrally organised approach to research does not limit the scope or scale of such research or reduce the capacity of academic institutions to undertake research which would be to the benefit of the sector or mean we do not learn from research from outside the UK.

Q16: **To what extent do you agree/disagree with the creation of a statutory code of ethics for services in England?**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
		X		

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We are committed to implementing and embedding the Core Code of Ethics within our service and ensuring all our staff understand their role in upholding it. We have already adopted the Code within our Values and spent considerable time ensuring understanding amongst all our staff. Strategic and operational leadership will be key to the successful embedding of the Core Code of Ethics, rather than placing it on a statutory footing, although we are not opposed to that approach.

Q17: **To what extent do you agree/disagree that placing a code of ethics on a statutory basis would better embed ethical principles in services than the present core code of ethics?**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
		X		

See above

Q18: **To what extent do you agree/disagree that the duty to ensure services act in accordance with the proposed statutory code should be placed on operationally independent chief fire officers?**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
X				

We agree that Chief Fire Officers, as professional and operational leaders of their services, should have responsibility for ensuring adherence to and understanding of the Core Code of Ethics within their services. We would argue that this is already the case within services without Operational Independence on a statutory footing.

Q19: **To what extent do you agree/disagree with making enforcement of the proposed statutory code an employment matter for chief fire officers to determine within their services?**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
X				

We would agree with this approach as this reflects the current approach taken within services. The alternative would be for breaches of the Code to be a criminal or externally enforced matter, which we do not believe is appropriate.

Q20: **To what extent do you agree/disagree with the creation of a fire and rescue service oath for services in England?**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
		X		

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Q21: **Please give the reasons for your response**

We remain to be convinced of the benefits of a fire service oath. Our concern is that this is drawn from experience in the police, where such an oath is already required. Firstly, there is little evidence that having such an oath guarantees or even improves behaviour and standards amongst police officers, as recent high-profile cases will attest.

Secondly, we believe it is important to distinguish between police officers, who are warranted Crown employees, and firefighters, who are local government staff. We would argue this reduces the impact and importance of an oath given the very different role of firefighters in the public eye.

We can foresee challenges with implementing an oath to existing staff who may feel the requirement to take such an oath implies they have not upheld these values in their work to date.

Q22: **To what extent do you agree/disagree that an Oath would embed the principles of the Code of Ethics amongst fire and rescue authority employees?**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
			X	

As above, we believe it will be the strategic and operational leadership of a service that embeds the principles of the Core Code of Ethics within a service, not an oath or statutory footing.

Q23: **To what extent do you agree/disagree with an Oath being mandatory for all employees?**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	X			

If the oath is to be introduced, it should be introduced for all staff.

Q24: **To what extent do you agree/disagree that breach of the fire and rescue service oath should be dealt with as an employment matter?**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	X			

We would agree for the reasons set out above – we do not believe a criminal or external process would be proportionate.

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Q25: **To what extent do you agree/disagree that the five areas listed above are priorities for professionalising fire and rescue services?**

- Leadership
- Data
- Research
- Ethics
- Clear Expectations

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	X			

Q26: **What other activities, beyond the five listed above, could help to professionalise fire and rescue services?**

A consistent and comprehensive approach to risk analysis needs to be at the heart of all fire service decision making and planning, and set out within a CRMP. As a result, all staff, and in particular senior managers, need to understand a risk-based approach and apply it consistently.

Important that efforts around professionalism considered all of the roles that exist within the service, not just those in uniformed firefighting roles. Talent recognition, development and management needs to be in place for everyone within the service.

Efforts to diversify the professional experience of the FRS would be positive - can be achieved through direct entry schemes but should not be limited to that. Efforts should continue to be made to encourage people from a diverse range of professional backgrounds to consider fire services as a career.

Q27: **To what extent do you agree/disagree with the creation of an independent College of Fire and Rescue to lead the professionalisation of fire and rescue services?**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	X			

Q28: **Please provide your reasons for your response**

We agree that there will be benefits to having an independent professional standards body for the fire and rescue service. The work of the Fire Standards Board and the NFCC in these areas has been important but would benefit from greater support and focus. We are clear that such a college would need to be truly independent to be successful and to secure the support and confidence of fire service leaders and employees.

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Governance

Q29: **To what extent do you agree/disagree that Government should transfer responsibility for fire and rescue services in England to a single elected individual?**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
		X		

As the operational leadership of the service, we offer no view on what form governance of the fire and rescue service should take, as this is a matter for political leadership. Our only perspective is that whatever form governance takes, it must provide suitable oversight and scrutiny of the service and Chief Fire Officer and act in the public interest.

Q30: **What factors should be considered when transferring fire governance to a directly elected individual?**

Please provide the reasons for your response.

This approach has been previously explored by our FRA. This transition was ultimately unsuccessful. We would argue there are lessons to be learned from this process and would be happy to provide a copy of our future governance working group report from 2017 and related reports.

Q31: **Where Mayoral Combined Authorities already exist, to what extent do you agree/disagree that fire and rescue functions should be transferred directly to these MCAs for exercise by the Mayor?**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
		X		

Q32: **To what extent do you agree/disagree that Government should transfer responsibility for fire and rescue services in England to police and crime commissioners?**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
		X		

Q33: **Apart from combined authority mayors and police and crime commissioners, is there anyone else who we could transfer fire governance that aligns with the principles set out above?**

Yes	No

Q34: **If yes, please explain other options and your reasons for proposing them**

No comment.

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Q35: **To what extent do you agree or disagree that the legal basis for fire and rescue authorities could be strengthened and clarified?**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
		X		

Q36: **Please provide the reasons for your response.**

Q37: **To what extent do you agree/disagree that boundary changes should be made so that fire and rescue service areas and police force/combined authorities (where present) areas are coterminous?**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
		X		

We are already coterminous with both our police force and combined authority.

Q38: **To what extent do you agree/disagree with ring-fencing the operational fire budget within fire and rescue services run by county councils and unitary authorities?**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	X			

Q39: **Please provide the reasons for your response.**

The budget for fire and rescue services should be protected in any future governance model, to ensure that the work of the service is not undermined by unrelated priorities that would see its budget used elsewhere. However, we do recognise the need for appropriate flexibility in budgets to meet community priorities, and to pool/combine budgets where this is appropriate.

We would also at this point advocate for a clear capital budget alongside the revenue budget, in recognition of the significant capital costs associated with running an FRS.

Q40: **To what extent do you agree with this proposed approach (as outlined in the table above)?**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	X			

Ref. AU/C&T/2022/Sept/91908223

Q41: **Do you have any other comments to further support your answer?**

We broadly agree with the proposed division of responsibility between operational and political leadership, although we also recognise that there will also be some degree of overlap – some "grey" areas.

The reality of how budgets, priorities and response standards are set need to be factored into how this model is developed. Whilst the governing body are accountable, the CFO and officers work to recommend these aligned to their local CRMP and are the 'professionals' who recommend to the governing body based on an assessment of risk through a CRMP.

For example, we understand that estates will remain a matter for the governance, but the crewing and resourcing of those buildings will remain an operational matter.

Q42: **Are there any factors we should consider when implementing these proposals?** *See above.*

The outcomes of the NJC review is going to be critical to the success of a balanced leadership model as well as earlier indications as to the role of a CFO. It can be the case that political pressures influence the direction of travel set out in an Authorities strategy/priority and these will then interfere with the 'tasks' of a CFO/CEx.

Scheme of delegations – cap on expenditure, which would limit the true operational independence of the chief fire officer.

Q43: **What factors should we consider when giving chief fire officers operational independence?**

Please provide the reasons for your opinions.

Within our service, the Chief Fire Officer already operates with some degree of operational independence, as determined through our constitution. However, we know in our case that this approach can fail to provide the clarity necessary to help differentiate between operational and strategic matters, and it can impact on the ability to make changes. A more consistent, legislated approach across services would help provide clarity and certainty for both governing bodies and operational leaders.

It will be important to ensure that there remains appropriate oversight and scrutiny of CFOs to ensure they are held accountable, but with a focus on post-scrutiny rather than pre-scrutiny of decisions so as not to limit flexibility and responsive decision making.

It is also worth considering that although Operational Independence will bring with it additional accountability for CFOs, they in effect operate in this model already. While legally speaking an Authority is accountable for the performance and failures of a service, it is officers, and specifically Chief Fire Officers, who will ultimately bear the consequences, and public expectation is that professional firefighters are accountable for their performance and actions.

Q44: **What factors should we consider should we make chief fire officers corporations sole?**

It will be important to consider what flexibility it is expected that Chief Fire Officers will have as employers – which will be dependent on other policy proposals contained within the white paper, such as reform of the NJC. We can foresee value in allowing Chief Fire Officers to become the employing entity. However, without other changes, such as to the NJC approach, CFOs as corporations sole will be limited in their capacity to make changes as the employer.

This includes around areas such as senior officer recruitment, although Corporation Sole does not currently prevent involvement from strategic governance in these matters. We see from the example of Police, where Chief Constables are corporations sole, that PCCs retain the right to be consulted on senior office appointments according to the Policing protocol.

It will be important to ensure that Chief Fire Officers are provided with support to understand their responsibilities as Corporations Sole – the outlined one day of training and transition in the Impact Assessment seems a conservative estimate of what will be a significant change.

Q45: **To what extent do you agree or disagree that the responsibility for strategic and operational planning should be better distinguished?**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
X				

Whatever model of governance exists and whether or not operational independence is placed on a statutory footing, there needs to be a clear division between strategy and operational planning. It is important that political leaders understand the limits of their strategic leadership and oversight role, without seeking to dictate operational plans.

Strategies set by political leaders should be focused on the broad aims and vision for the service and acting in the public interest, not on specific operational issues. We know from the current example of Police and Crime Commissioners that strategic plans (Police and Crime Plans) will include commitments and promises that clearly stray into operational decision making, such as promises of additional staff and areas of focus for police resources.

The Community Risk Management Planning Process must be the means by which operational decisions are made and operational priorities set – using evidence and risk analysis to determine the best approach to service delivery.

Q46: **To what extent do you agree or disagree that the strategic plan should be the responsibility of the fire and rescue authority?**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	X			

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Q47: **To what extent do you agree or disagree that the operational plan should be the responsibility of the chief fire officer?**

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	X			

Q48: **Please provide the reasons for your response.**

As described above, the operational plan, expected to be a CRMP, should be the responsibility of the operationally independent Chief Fire Officer, who has the professional understanding and sector competence to develop such a plan. The role of the authority/governance model must be to scrutinise and oversee the delivery of that plan in the public interest, rather than seek to set it themselves.

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Appendix B

**Mayor of the
West Midlands**

Fire Reform Consultation Fire
Strategy & Reform Unit 4th
Floor, Peel Building
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

26th July 2022

To whom it may concern,

Re: Fire Reform Consultation

Following the recent publication of the *Reforming Our Fire and Rescue Service* consultation, I am writing to set out my views on the questions raised - particularly those relating to governance.

Fire and rescue services perform a vital function for our communities, not only in terms of responding to emergencies but also their important preventative work. It is right, therefore, that communities have a say in how their local fire and rescue service is run. As is pointed out in the White Paper, public awareness of Fire and Rescue Authorities is low, whilst public awareness of directly-elected Police and Crime Commissioners is increasing - albeit with more work to do.

I am therefore firmly of the belief that a single elected individual taking responsibility for fire and rescue services is a positive step, and one that I would welcome. This reform would provide significant benefits for the public in terms of accountability and transparency of a service that not only performs a vital public function, but also places a levy on their council tax bills. Accountability and transparency in this context are hugely important.

It is important to note here, however, the unique political context in the West Midlands. You will no doubt be aware that in 2019 it was proposed that the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) take on the functions of the West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority (WMFRA). Extensive work was carried out on this, however the WMCA Board were ultimately unsupportive. This position has not changed, and indeed this position has recently been reiterated. This issue will not be brought back before the WMCA Board. Therefore, this matter could only be revisited if the mechanism for any proposed transfer mirrors that proposed in the Levelling-Up and Regeneration Bill in respect of policing functions.

Currently in the West Midlands there is a separate Police and Crime Commissioner and Metro Mayor, leaving two potential options for a change in fire governance. Should reforms be enacted to bring about a transfer to a single elected official, these reforms should be accompanied by a process for determining who that single elected official is.

My personal view is that the WMCA taking on the functions of the WMFRA would be a positive step. The WMCA's responsibilities include matters relating to housing, skills and health inequalities and therefore taking on fire and rescue responsibilities would provide significant opportunities for joint working, particularly in respect of the preventative work which is so important for safeguarding our region.

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Whilst I am supportive of a single elected individual taking responsibility for these functions, it is important that the Chief Fire Officer has operational independence. To this end I concur with the proposed demarcation between the executive leader and chief fire officer set out on page 31 of the White Paper.

Reform of fire governance provides us with an important opportunity to enhance public accountability and transparency in respect of a vital public service. This is an important part of the Levelling Up agenda and I sincerely hope that these opportunities are explored to their full potential.

Yours sincerely,

Andy Street
Mayor of the West Midlands

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Item 5

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

COLLABORATION AND TRANSFORMATION COMMITTEE

5TH September 2022

1. **PROGRESS UPDATE REDUCING HEALTH INEQUALITIES CRMP PROJECT**

   Report of the Chief Fire Officer

   RECOMMENDED

1.1 THAT Members note the progress that is being made in delivering the Reducing Health Inequalities CRMP Project.

2. **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

   To provide an update on the progress made so far with delivering the tasks and intended outcomes of the Reducing Health Inequalities CRMP Project.

3. **BACKGROUND**

3.1 The National Fire and Rescue Framework 2018 requires all FRS to produce an Integrated (Community) Risk Management Plan (CRMP). The plans analyse a wide range of data to assess all foreseeable risks and provide evidenced based strategy that demonstrates how Response, Prevention and Protection activities reduce and mitigate the impacts of fire and other emergency incidents.

3.2 The Reducing Health Inequalities (RHI) project is one of six projects that specifically support the delivery of the WMFS CRMP.

3.3 There is significant overlap between the health inequalities and social determinants that cause reduced mortality and those that increase the risk and vulnerability to fire and other emergencies. The aim of the RHI project is to develop a co-ordinate suite of Prevention activities, across the life course, that reduce health

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inequalities and therefore reduce risk and vulnerability to fire and other emergencies.

3.4   Building on the Prevention activities currently delivered and the and digital system transformation that has already started, the project aims to deliver outcomes across four thematic areas which are People, Digital, Data and Partnerships & Collaboration.

4.   **Project Progress and Update**

4.1   **General Updates**

In July 2022 there was a change of Project Manager and the project is now being managed by Station Commander Ryan Forrester. Ryan has the vulnerable persons reference within Coventry and Solihull Command. Ryan is passionate and knowledgeable about Prevention.

The project is being delivered using a collaborative approach across teams and functions within WMFS and with external partners. Teams made up of relevant stakeholders are being formed to undertake the tasks within the project.

To evaluate and evidence difference that the resources and activities within the project make, a comprehensive logic model and evaluation plan has been created. This sets out, the short and medium outcomes along with what and how we will measure the intended impact of the activities within the project.

4.2   **Digital Outcomes Update**

The digital outcomes of the project are:-

▪   Digital technology enables prevention activity to be accurately recorded and data collected which allows the impact and outcome of prevention activity to be measured, monitored, quality assured and evaluated.

▪   Education activities will become more effective through different ways of working utilising digital technologies.

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- Advances in assistive technology enable prevention activities to be delivered proactively or for the risk to be reduced by the technology itself.

- Improved access to diverse digital services allows the community to take actions that reduce health inequality and reduce their risk of fire and other emergencies.

Progress against the Digital outcomes from the project are detailed below:-

Service User evaluation of Safe & Well (SAW) is now integral to delivery of the service with surveys being sent to all service users who received a visit the end of each financial quarter. The results from the surveys are monitored and accessed through a Power Bi dashboard.

The data from the surveys indicates that SAW is improving people's health, wellbeing, and quality of life and reducing risk and vulnerability to fire. Some examples of what the data is telling include:

- 91% of the 2,278 respondents to date say that they have a greater understanding of the risks of falling

- 95% of those who smoke from the 2,278 respondents say they have a greater understanding of the risks of smoking

- Of those who smoke 145 people were referred to stop smoking services and 60 (41%) of those who were referred told us they have stopped smoking

- Just under a third of those who responded told us that they had been referred to services for further support for one or more of the following; smoking cessation, child safety, loneliness, winter warmth and alcohol services.

The development of the Tymly system to record SAW visits and innovate business processes to support delivery has been work in progress with the system being piloted in Black Country South Operations Command. At the start of lockdown in March 2020, this pilot was suspended to support business continuity arrangements.

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One such business continuity arrangement was remote SAW engagement which became a priority to ensure that the service was able to continue to engage with those in our communities who are at risk and vulnerable to fire. The outcome of which was the creation Remote SAW recording and business processes using the Tymly system.

Work to develop the Tymly system to innovate and transform the delivery Prevention activities continues with the further development of Tymly for SAW. This is being informed by learning from the pilot in Black Country South and the COVID pandemic.

Work to transform the way that Prevention Education is provided has commenced with the decommissioning of 'the chip pan demonstration unit' which was used to highlight to the community the impact of chip pan fires and tackling them incorrectly by creating a controlled chip pan fire.

The service has replaced the unit through the purchase of virtual reality headsets and commissioned the development of an 'oil pan fire' film. Individuals across the service have been trained to create video films so that the number of educational messages delivered using virtual reality can be increased over the coming months and years.

4.3 **Data Outcomes**

The data outcome is:

▪ Data is shared and governed between partner organisations and is used effectively to identify people at risk of fire and other emergency incidents.

Progress against the digital outcome to date:-

The service has developed Membership arrangements for SAW. These arrangements will support a collaborative approach to data sharing data and two-way referrals between WMFS and its partners.

Membership arrangements will ensure that data sharing is done in accordance with GDPR and will make clear to both parties the

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principle of 'SAW membership arrangements' have been introduced.

These arrangements set out the expectations and benefits for both parties and SAW service users and provide an efficient real time referral and feedback mechanism between the parties. They enable information gathered from SAW, recommendations, and outcomes to be shared by both parties for the purpose of minimising risk and evidencing the impact of the SAW for the service user.

Full benefit realisation from the Membership arrangements will take effect with the full implementation of Tymly for SAW. However, to date 5 partners have signed up to SAW membership. These partners are Housing and Social Care providers who refer high numbers of their tenants and service users for SAW.

4.4 **Partnership & Collaboration Outcomes**

The Partnership & Collaboration Outcomes are:-

- WMFS works effectively with partners across the wider health and social care sector to reduce health inequalities and the role of the fire service is valued by those partners.

- WMFS is commissioned to deliver activities that contribute to reducing health inequalities.

Progress against the Partnership & Collaboration outcomes to date:

WMFS is a member of the 3 new Integrated Care Partnerships (ICP) in our service area (Birmingham & Solihull, Black Country, and Coventry & Warwickshire).

ICPs bring together providers and commissioners of NHS services across a geographical area with local authorities and other local partners to collectively plan health and care services to integrate this across different organisations and settings to meet the needs of their population.

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As a result of the meetings, WMFS is a member of all three ICPs. WMFS were represented at the inaugural Birmingham & Solihull ICS on 19th July, where it was recognised. The service has been recognised for the success in our shift from response to prevention and opportunities for the service to be engaged in local 'place based' working arrangements that will help to embed Prevention activities to improve, health, wellbeing and quality of life whilst reducing fires and other emergencies.

Membership of the Coventry & Warwickshire ICP has required renewed collaboration between WMFS and Warwickshire FRS which will support both services to engage with partners that cross both service footprints.

In March 2022, a request for support from and discussions with University Hospitals Coventry & Warwickshire (UHCW), WMFS put a proposal forward to start a new pilot for Back Home Safe & Well (BHSAW).

BHSAW is a service, funded by UHCW. The objective is to avoid hospital admissions and re-admissions by conveying people from the Emergency Department at the Coventry site to their home, undertaking a SAW and connecting service users with local reablement services. The outcome for WMFS is to be able to maximise the opportunity to conduct SAWs for those who are at risk and vulnerable to fire.

UHCW were not able to take the proposal through there governance arrangements in time to secure finding from their 20/21 budget. The proposal did go through WMFS governance processes and therefore remains on the table for UHCW and we are hopeful that the hospital will review again as part of the preparedness for winter pressures in the Autumn.

4.5 **People Outcomes**

The People outcomes are:-

- All staff understand and appreciate that health inequalities impact on risk and vulnerability to fire and other

emergencies and see reducing health inequalities as an essential service delivery requirement.

- We attract and recruit staff that are skilled in the delivery of this work as a major part of the role.

- Staff delivering prevention activities are ready, willing, and able to have conversations with people about their health and wellbeing and understand when to refer on to other agencies for support.

- WMFS can evidence the impact it has on reducing health inequalities and subsequently on the risk and vulnerability to fire and other emergencies.

Progress against the people outcomes to date:-

The performance targets for SAW have been revised to improve the focus on and support crews to target their resources to those most at risk and vulnerable to accidental dwelling fires deaths and injuries.

Communication and engagement is ongoing to support these changes and includes regular improvement and update to the information and guidance available on the Prevention MESH pages. The latest update includes guidance to support the delivery of the NFCC Person Centred Framework (PCF) for Home Fire Safety Visits (HFSV).

The PCF supports all FRS to deliver a standardised and evidence-based approach to a person-centred HFSV. The PCF has been developed by the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) in consultation with UKFRS and with the support of the Home Office.

The service is also nearing the completion for the onboarding process for the online home fire safety check (OHFSC).

Available free of charge to all FRSs in England, this user-friendly resource has been developed in collaboration with Fire Kills and Safelincs under the NFCC's Prevention Programme.

The OHFSC has been developed to complement the PCF, which underpins the work of remote and face to face Home Fire Safety Visits and deliver a product available to households who may not reach the threshold for a physical visit, or to be used when and where physical visits are restricted or not possible. It has been designed to provide a person-centred self-assessment of fire risk for individuals that may have low or medium fire risk.

To ensure that those most at risk and vulnerable are not overlooked, the tool has a mechanism to flag a user to their local FRS where a physical visit would be recommended as a consequence of completing the self-assessment. It has been designed to be used by either the home occupant directly, a third party (police, social worker, paramedic etc) who may have concerns to an occupant's welfare or safety, or simply aid the FRS directly with home visits.

It supports the provision of universal home fire safety guidance proportionate to risk and vulnerability enabling WMFS to target its resources to provide face to face SAW to those who are at highest risk and vulnerability.

4.6 **Next Steps**

For **Digital outcomes** work continues to develop and build the Tymly system for SAW. This will see the PCF fully integrated in to SAW.

The next key area of focus will be the development of a Social Media Strategy for Prevention messages which will include the use of local influencers and geo targeting of messages to ensure maximum and targeted reach of the messages

For **Data outcomes** work continues to sign more partners up to the SAW Membership Arrangements.

For **People outcomes**, the next area of focus will be creating a proactive contact strategy and protocols to enable better use of and access to individuals that data sets indicate are at risk and vulnerable to fire and other emergencies.

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When available, the service will also onboard the e-learn package that the NFCC are making available to support the delivery of the PCF for home fire safety visits.

And

For **Partnerships & Collaboration** outcomes, work will continue to build our relationships, brand, and value with the ISPs. To support this work is commencing on developing a clear offer of what WMFS can contribute with health partners.

5.   EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

5.1   In preparing this report, an initial Equality Impact Assessment is not required and has not been conducted.

5.2   Throughout the life of the project, initial Equality Impact Assessments will be undertaken and where appropriate full Equality Impact Assessments will take place. WMFS Networking and working groups, will be engaged, and consulted to ensure that the outcomes are effective, fit for purpose and understood by all.

6.   LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1   There are no direct legal implications.

7.   FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1   There are no direct financial implications.

8.   ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1   Positive impact on the environment is being enabled through the digital outcomes in the project, including but not limited to the decommissioning of the chip pan demonstration and replacing it with virtual reality technology.

The contact for this report is Pete Wilson, Strategic Lead Prevention, telephone number 07973 810 262.

Phil Loach
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

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WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

COLLABORATION AND TRANSFORMATION COMMITTEE

5TH SEPTEMBER 2022

1. **DIGITAL, DATA AND INNOVATION UPDATE**

    Report of the Chief Fire Officer

    RECOMMENDED

    THAT Members of the Collaboration and Transformation Committee:

1.1 Note the embedding of digital ways of working across the service and acknowledge our investment in our staff to understand and support digital, data and innovation.

1.2 Note the ongoing developments and progress from continuing phases of Oracle Cloud, CRMP Projects, Digital Transformation on Stations. Introduce our new projects around Incident Command Transformation & Legacy Systems aligned to the feedback from our staff and the "Next Steps" outlined in the previous report.

1.3 Note the emerging opportunities for collaboration with new partner brigades to deliver better more efficient services to our communities and reduce risk nationally.

2. **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

2.1 To provide an update on progress aligned to the West Midlands Fire Service Digital, Data and Innovation Strategy.

2.2 To provide an update on projects that are already giving value to our communities and introduce the latest projects that will shape and support the fire service of the future.

2.3 To provide information on further collaboration opportunities and wider adoption of our Tymly system by other fire services across

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the country. Meeting our statutory responsibilities for collaboration as well as providing value for money for the public purse and reducing risk for communities.

3.   BACKGROUND

### 3.1   Digital, Data & Innovation Strategy

The digital, data and innovation strategy was introduced to the Authority in December 2021.

Since then, this has been communicated with the wider service and a Digital Leadership Skills course has been delivered to Middle Managers to embed this approach.

This has led to positive understanding as the strategy embodies our commitment to take our staff with us on this transformation journey. This has led to many new workstreams considering our "digital first" philosophy enabling us to be one of the most digitally enabled fire services in the UK. This has had the additional benefit of helping our teams to be more change ready for the newer digital initiatives now underway.

The digital, data and innovation strategy is focused on people first, using technology and data to improve our performance, efficiency, and service to our communities.

The strategy is delivered through 6 keys goals outlined in the following diagram.

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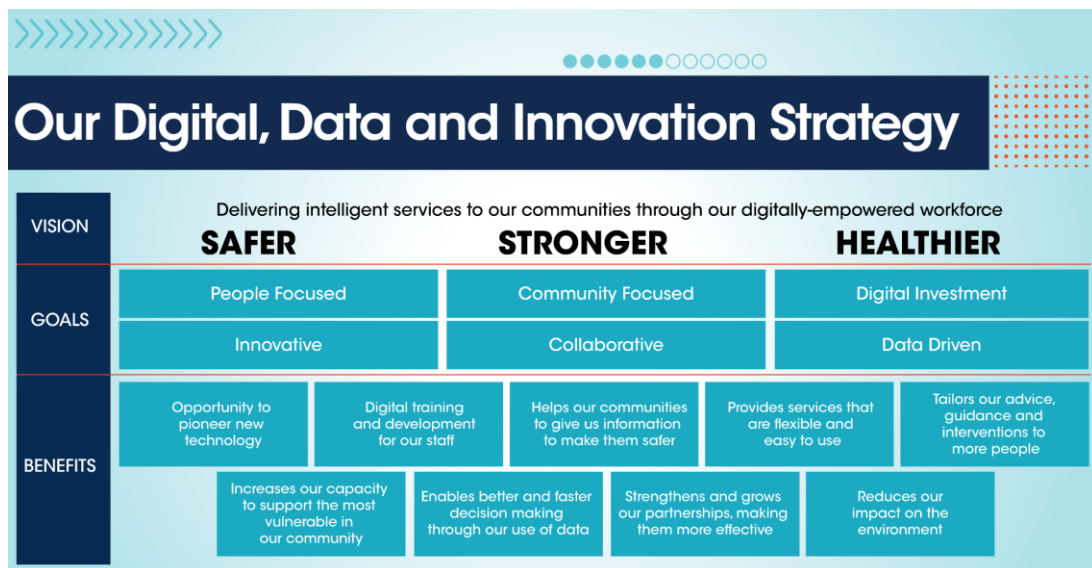
This might mean creating new systems or reimagining current processes to work in the digital world around us.

The intended outcome being that we have greater capability and capacity to spend time with the most vulnerable in our community, rather than teams spending hours entering information at computers at stations.

3.2 **Digital Inclusion in the West Midlands**

We recognise that it is important that our use of technology does not isolate members of our community. More than 1 in 5 people in the West Midlands do not use the internet, which is the highest rate in the UK.

This has an impact as the world around them becomes more technologically advanced and they become "digitally excluded."

Through the Digital Leadership Skills training, our ongoing projects and collaborative working with the West Midlands Combined Authority Coalition for Digital Inclusion we are working to ensure that we help all our communities.

This is not a problem we can solve in isolation, and collaboration with wider partners as well as increasing the offer the fire service can provide in this space are key to ending digital exclusion and poverty.

3.3 **National Impact and Collaboration**

We are continuing to work with partners that are part of the WMFS 5G testbed, Coventry Smart Cities, and leading suppliers on and new ways of gathering information to reduce risks.

Access to information such as CCTV, National Police Air Service Cameras and data collected from sensors will ensure that the communities and our staff are safer, stronger and healthier through an enhanced ability to respond.

We have always focused on collaboration and already deliver digital services to South Wales, Staffordshire and Shropshire fire and rescue services.

We are developing leading software in our protection area and there are a number of services that are contacting us to adopt our approach which is cutting edge and targets the highest risks. This

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is an area that has been highlighted by our recent HMICFRS inspection and is fully aligned to the Grenfell Tower Enquiry outcomes.

These fire–fire collaborations provide economies of scale and reduce costs for all involved and maximise public sector funding by spending it in the public sector twice.

The successes previously reported around National Data Collection through the COVID period mean we continue to have interest from the Home Office around national provision.

3.4 **Service Innovation**

Our "digital transformation on stations" working group continues to bring together a diverse team of operational firefighters to look at our working practices. We are awaiting delivery of our personal issued mobile devices and tablets.

As per our indicated next steps in the previous report to the Collaboration and Transformation Committee, we have widened the scope of the trial to include Incident Command, which will be trialled in Coventry and Solihull Area Command. This will transform our paper-based incident processes.

This will focus on providing flexible and more effective working for our crews and Fire Control teams. This will reduce the need to enter information multiple times and provide better information sharing at large incidents as well as an enhanced ability to manage incidents as they escalate.

This will improve firefighter safety and lead to better outcomes. Our approach to digital transformation of incident command will bring about new ways of working a project that is receiving a great deal of interest from other brigades.

This project has been delayed slightly due to the wider shortage of semiconductors, but this has provided a great opportunity for further engagement with our service around this change.

We are also working to include Virtual Reality as a delivery means for education as well as training. This immersive experience will mean that we can target a wider range of people as well as reduce the costs associated with physical delivery.

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Fire safety inspecting officers are now fully digital, using handheld devices to undertake critical protection activities.

The WMFS drone fleet continues to play a critical role in major incidents and can now be streamed to the incident room. This enables key decision making as well as providing a bird eye view of complex incidents.

Our digital CS10B which was a Grenfell Tower Enquiry Outcome has digitised how we work at high rise incidents.

We continue to deliver value from our investment in Surface Hubs post Covid, continuing our all-staff briefings and utilising them for training activities and communications between key stakeholders.

Our dedicated sustainability project focuses us on digital innovation to reduce risk for our communities and firefighters. This project also focuses on a sustainable fire service that limits its impact on future generations.

3.5 **Legacy Systems Transformation**

We continue to embed the notable change Oracle has brought for our service. Our updated processes continue to deliver value for the service with the latest planned deliveries to be focused on training and development of our staff.

We have successfully delivered an updated mobilising system prior to the commencement of the Commonwealth Games. This ensured that we had the best possible cyber security position heading into this event as well as providing additional functionality to our Fire Control teams.

We continue to look at options to further enhance our ways of working and further improve our mobilising systems and increase our ability to collaborate with other blue light agencies as part of this change.

We are now focusing on our Time & Attendance and Fleet systems; these replacements have been on our roadmap for some time. Support for our existing systems is being withdrawn by our suppliers and the replacements will give great functionality and be easier to use for our operational teams and be fully aligned to our Digital, Data & innovation Strategy.

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The implementation of newer systems in these areas will provide an enhanced level of reporting and allow us to use data more to make faster and better decisions.

3.6 **Next Steps**

We will continue to embed our systems transformation. This will include delivering additional elements in Oracle and ensuring we are delivering value for money from our investments.

We will deliver our mobile device and incident command trials and provide a sound evidence base for their wider rollout.

We will continue work towards the replacement of our last remaining legacy systems, improving our user experience for our staff as well as providing greater flexibility for our CRMP Projects.

We will continue to enhance our reporting and data capabilities to ensure we are making evidence-based decisions and information for wider auditing and scrutiny.

4. **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

4.1 In preparing this report, an initial Equality Impact Assessment is not required and has not been conducted.

4.2 Our progress in digital technology should be considered as having a positive effect on our neurodiverse staff and communities.

4.3 We are working with the neurodiversity working group to ensure our new digital ways of working are easily understood and ensuring that our new systems are effective and easy to understand for all.

4.4 The use of digital technology will also be providing opportunities to engage people that do not have English as their first language.

4.5 As we are looking to roll out more services to the public this will help with engagement but also enhance the quality of responses.

5. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 There are no direct legal implications.

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6.   **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

6.1   There are no direct financial implications.

7.   **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

7.1   There has been a positive shift towards our sustainability approach due to the digital investments and transformed ways of working.

7.2   Staff are now able to work in a hybrid way so they can be as effective if they are in the office or working remotely.

7.3   We have also been able to deliver services to our communities digitally which is much more efficient and has a positive impact on the environment for low risk

7.4   This has been enabled through technology but is supported by our agile working policy and our HQ Transformation pilot. This flexible work area brings together people from all over the service and allows them to work together and collaborate.

7.5   This also provides opportunities for the reduction of dedicated staff areas spaces in HQ providing more opportunities for use of the space.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Collaboration and Transformation – Digital, Data and Innovation 6 December 2021

The contact for this report is Kash Singh, Strategic Enabler for Digital and Data, telephone number 0121 380 6510.

Phil Loach
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

Ref. AU/C&T/2022/Sept/91908224

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

Collaboration and Transformation Committee

WORK PROGRAMME 2022/23

Date of Meeting	Item	Responsible Officer	Completed
2022			
5 Sept 2022	White Paper Consultation – Briefing on other responses	Deputy Clerk to the Authority	5th September 2022
	Digital Transformation Update	Strategic Enabler of ICT Digital and Data	5th September 2022
	CRMP - Health Inequalities Update	Strategic Lead for Prevention	5th September 2022
	Inclusion and Diversity – Innovation in firefighting equipment - Verbal Update	Deputy Clerk to the Authority	5th September 2022
	Minutes of the Collaboration and Transformation Committee held on 25 April 2022	Democratic Services Officer	5th September 2022
	Draft Collaboration and Transformation Committee Work Plan 2022/23	Democratic Services Officer	5th September 2022

12 December 2022	*White Paper – Government Consultation Response	Deputy Clerk to the Authority	
	Scrutiny Committee Inquiry – Safe and Wells	TBD	
	CRMP 2022 – Update/Outcomes/Health Check	CRMP Manager	
	Blue Light Collaboration – Ambulance	TBD	
	*HMICFRS Inspection Findings re Collaboration and Transformation	TBD	
	Trailblazing Devolution Deal - WMCA	Deputy Clerk to the Authority	
	Minutes of the Collaboration and Transformation Committee held on 5 September 2022	Democratic Services Officer	

2023			
27 February 2023	*White Paper – Government Consultation Response	Deputy Clerk to the Authority	
	Serious Violence Duty – Update and Impact	Deputy Clerk to the Authority/Strategic Lead for Prevention	
	CRMP 2023 Consultation and Engagement	CRMP Manager	

	ESG Approach – Environmental Sustainability Strategy	Strategic Lead for Innovation	
	Careers engagement with Schools	TBD	
	Minutes of the Collaboration and Transformation Committee held on 12 December 2022	Democratic Services Officer	
15 May 2023	CRMP 2023 Consultation Outcomes	CRMP Manager	
	Digital Transformation Update	Strategic Enabler of ICT Digital and Data	
	Flexible and Agile working impacts on the service	People Support Services	
	Minutes of the Collaboration and Transformation Committee held on 27 February 2023	Democratic Services Officer	
	Collaboration and Transformation Committee Work Plan 2023/24	Democratic Services Officer	

*Depending upon Government/HMICFRS publishing timelines