



**WMFRA**  
West Midlands Fire and  
Rescue Authority

**WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND  
RESCUE AUTHORITY**

**24 November 2025**

**BEST VALUE INSPECTION – NOVEMBER UPDATE**  
**For INFORMATION**

**Principal Officer: Chief Fire Officer**  
**Report of the Head of Strategy**  
**Author: Interim Clerk to the Authority**

**1. PURPOSE**

- 1.1. To provide members with an update on the Best Value Inspection process.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NOTING**

- 2.1. That members note the content of the report.

**3. OBJECTIVES & EXPECTED OUTCOMES**

- 3.1. To ensure members remain aware of the progress of the Best Value Inspection, and the steps taken by officers to ensure a transparent and comprehensive inspection process.

**4. BACKGROUND**

- 4.1. The then Fire Minister Dame Diana Johnson MP first confirmed a Best Value Inspection in November 2025. This was welcomed by the Vice-Chair and DCFO on behalf of WMFRA and WMFS in correspondence with the Minister. The full detail of the inspection, including the appointed lead and assistant inspectors, was confirmed by the then Fire Minister Alex Norris MP on 8 July 2025 in a ministerial statement made to the House of Commons.

- 4.2. Inspectors have met with a number of officers and fire authority members throughout October and November, both in person and remotely. There may be further follow up meetings later in November and into early December.
- 4.3. The WMFS Inspection Project team continue to provide information and documentation as requested by the team.
- 4.4. Inspection team members have also been attending all Fire Authority and Committee meetings, as well as meetings of the Corporate Governance Improvement Board throughout September, October and November 2025.
- 4.5. Throughout all aspects of the inspection process so far and moving forward, the service and authority are committed to delivering a transparent and constructive approach, including being frank in our assessments of areas for improvement. This will include regular public updates such as this paper, and through our website and internal communications channels as the inspection progresses.

## 5. **STRATEGY ALIGNMENT**

- 5.1. Effective support to and delivery of the Best Value Inspection is a key priority for the service and authority, and important to ensuring that the service can learn lessons and deliver against its commitments to continuous improvement. This is essential to the delivery of all aspects of the Authority's strategy.

## 6. **IMPACT ASSESSMENTS**

- 6.1. This is an update report, so no initial EIA has been undertaken.

## 7. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1. Local authorities in England, including fire and rescue authorities, have a statutory duty to "make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness". This is known as the Best Value Duty and is defined in Part 1 of the

Local Government Act 1999 (the 1999 Act).

- 7.2. The Government provides statutory guidance to Best Value authorities and while not a requirement it is regarded as good practice for all Best Value authorities to be mindful of the principles set out in that guidance in order to ensure they deliver the Best Value Duty. This same guidance also sets out how the Secretary of State can utilise their powers of inspection and statutory intervention under the 1999 Act.
- 7.3. The Secretary of State has powers under section 10 of the 1999 Act to appoint a person to carry out an inspection into an authority's compliance with the Best Value Duty.
- 7.4. Under section 11 of the 1999 Act, a Best Value inspector has wide ranging powers to access premises and information necessary to undertake their work. A person who without reasonable excuse obstructs the exercise of any power conferred by this section or fails to comply with a requirement of an inspector under this section is guilty of an offence and liable on summary conviction and a fine. The Authority is also Audited as a Best Value Authority under its external Auditing arrangements.

## 8. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1. As per the 1999 act, the costs of the inspector's time, travel and expenses are met by the Fire Authority. The agreed daily fee for the lead inspector, as confirmed by MHCLG is capped at £1200, and £1100 for assistant inspectors. Based on estimated future hours provided by MHCLG at this midway point, total costs by the end of process are estimated at £205,000 plus related expenses.
- 8.2. Total costs invoiced for the period up to the end of September stood at £33,894.
- 8.3. The Authority and Service are committed to positive engagement with the inspection process. The inspection is under the direction of MHCLG and as such the cost, and the resultant impact on our ability to fund services, is beyond our control.

## 9. **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1. There are no environmental implications arising from the content of this update report.

## 10. **BACKGROUND PAPERS & APPENDICES**

- [WMFS News Item – Confirmation of Best Value Inspection process, 14 November 2024](#)
- [Ministerial Statement - Fire and Rescue Best Value 8 July 2025](#)
- [West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority Meeting – Best Value Inspection Update – 29 September 2025](#)
- [Local Government Act 1999](#)

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