

Annual Report of the Scrutiny Committee
2013/14

1. Background

The Scrutiny Committee was established by the Fire Authority at its Annual General Meeting in 2012. Its purpose is to:

- inform policy development
- hold officers and the Service to account
- conduct reviews into specific issues

The key benefits of the Committee can be seen as:

- Complementing the strategic and policy formulation and development work of the Authority and Service.
- Developing the skills of members to enable them to investigate below the surface of policies, strategies and processes.
- Providing a useful oversight and an element of 'challenge' to performance improvement processes and continuous improvement.
- Encouraging public involvement in the policy process.
- Supporting the development of an environment that stimulates a more reflective, evaluative and evidence based culture within the Authority and Service.

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

2. Meetings

During 2013/14 the Committee met on the following dates:

• 22 July 2013
• 16 September 2013
• 21 October 2013
• 4 November 2013
• 9 December 2013
• 21 January 2014
• 31 March 2014
• 2 June 2014

3. Members & Attendance Record

	22/07/13	16/09/13	21/10/13	04/11/13	09/12/13	21/01/14	31/03/14	02/06/14
Councillor Chambers	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Councillor Spence	√	√	√	X	√	√	√	√
Councillor Delaney	X	√	X	√	X	√	√	X
Councillor Eustace	√	√	√	X	X	√	X	X
Councillor Hogarth	√	√	X	√	√	√	√	√
Councillor Tranter	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Councillor Wright	√	√	√	X	X	√	X	-
Councillor Young	X	X	√	√	√	√	X	√

Senior Officers from the Authority are also present as appropriate.

Working Groups are also appointed to consider scrutiny reviews. The Committee must undertake a minimum of two such reviews each year. Each Working Group has four or five members allocated to it.

4. Business

During the year the Committee conducted the following business:

- Quarterly Analysis of Corporate Performance against 'The Plan'
- Workforce Profile Indicators
- Quarterly Equality and Diversity Updates
- Monitoring of Dispute Resolution
- Workforce Profile Indicators 2012/13
- Operational Assessment - Improvement Register Progress Update
- Review of Non-Uniformed Sickness
- Overview of the Prevention Strategy

- Working Group Review of Firefighter Recruitment Processes
- Working Group Public Consultation Review of the Community Safety Strategy 2013-2016

5. The Committee's main achievements

The Committee believes its key achievements during the year included:-

- A number of gaps had been identified in the consultation process applied to the Community Safety Strategy. In order to address the gaps that had been identified the Committee had extended the timeline for completion of the review to the spring 2014. This would enable a more meaningful and fit for purpose process to be established for the next consultation process undertaken by the Service.
- Issues, such as details of the Reaction and Attendance Time Project 'Seconds Count,' which justified the setting of shorter reaction times by fire and rescue authorities, had been reported to the Policy Planning Forum in order for their further justification to be explored.
- The robust monitoring of the Service's performance in the areas of Equality and Diversity, analysis of Corporate Performance against 'The Plan', workforce profile indicators and the Prevention Strategy.
- The completion of Firefighter Recruitment Processes Review.

Terms of Reference for the Scrutiny Committee

Scrutiny Committee

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

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

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

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

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

To have responsibility for scrutiny of equality and diversity throughout the West Midlands Fire Service and to review policies and monitor performance in relation thereto.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

In order to allow for separation of the scrutiny and decision making functions, members of the Scrutiny Committee shall not sit on the Executive Committee.

The Committee will sit in public with minimum exceptions.

In addition to its programmed meetings, the Committee will hold additional meetings, as and when required, in order to efficiently manage its workload.