

West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority

Audit and Risk Committee

You are summoned to attend the meeting of Audit and Risk Committee to be held on Monday, 19 July 2021 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

- | | | |
|----|---|----------------------|
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| 2 | Declarations of interests | |
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Distribution:

David Barrie - Member, Catherine Miks - Chair, Peter Miller - Member, Charn Padda - Vice Chair, Sybil Spence - 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 Stephen Timmington

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This agenda and supporting documents are also available electronically on the West Midlands Fire Service website at www.wmfs.net

Minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee

07 June 2021 at 14.00hrs

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

Present: Councillor Catherine Miks (Chair), Councillors Barrie, Miller, Spence, Mr Ager, Avtar Sohal and Siobhan Barnard (Grant Thornton) Peter Farrow (Sandwell MBC)

Apologies: Neil Chamberlain (West Midlands Police and Chair of WMFS Pension Board

Officers in attendance: Karen Gowreesunker, Mike Griffiths, Kal Shoker, Gary Taylor

11/21 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest registered.

12/21 **Minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee held on 22 March 2021**

Resolved that the minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee held on 22 March 2021 be approved as a correct record of proceedings.

13/21 **Corporate Risk Update – Quarter 3 & 4 2020-21**

Gary Taylor (West Midlands Fire Service (WMFS) Assistant Chief Fire Officer) presented the report, detailing a six-month period covering Quarters 3 and 4, 2020/21. In addition, the report informed upon the management of Corporate Risk during the Business Continuity arrangements for Covid-19 operable since March 2020. The importance of this was emphasised to ensure Members remain informed about all aspects relating to the management of the Fire Authority's Corporate Risks.

It was reported that Corporate Risks continued to be effectively managed; they will continue to be submitted to the Strategic Enabling Team meetings on a quarterly basis and reported into the Audit and Risk Committee every six months whilst the Covid-19 pandemic continues.

Members attention was drawn to the two indicators that experienced an increase during the period reported. There were no decreases during the period.

During Quarter 3 in December 2020, Corporate Risk 7.2 increased its risk score to Likelihood 3, Impact 3, providing a risk score of 9 (an increase from 6). This has not changed the amber confidence opinion. It has remained at this level throughout Quarter 4. The increase in the risk score related to an ICT security breach by external source, ongoing forensic work is taking place.

During Quarter 4 in January 2021, Corporate Risk 4.1 increased to Likelihood 3, Impact 3, providing a risk score of 9 (an increase from 6). In March 2021 this reverted to an overall risk score of 6 with Likelihood 2 and Impact 3. Neither change altered the amber overall confidence opinion. The increase in the risk score in January 2021 was due to the limited level of activity being undertaken by Fire Safety Officers due to Covid-19 restrictions.

A Member sought clarification upon the anticipated timescale to rectify Corporate 6.1 from Red to Amber level of confidence. Gary Taylor confirmed that alternative capability was being evaluated, building upon a previous assessment within the past two years. He assured the Committee the Chief Fire Officer would present mitigation options for consideration by Members of the Fire Authority.

A Member enquired of Corporate Risk 4.1, specifically the actions to manage hydrant capacity. Gary Taylor confirmed the Service was working with Water Companies and Local Authority Planning/Building Development Teams to manage capacity and compatibility of resources and equipment.

The Chair sought reassurance that the issues referred in Corporate Risk 2.3 had been addressed. Gary Taylor confirmed improvement through the adaptation of practice and co-

ordinated implementation to three domains of health surveillance, infection prevention control and safe systems of work. The integrity of these has been cascaded into the Service through briefings and auditing.

The Committee **approved** the Corporate Risk Summaries (Quarter 3 and 4, 2020/21) and **noted** the management of corporate risk through the Business Continuity arrangements.

14/21 **Internal Audit Annual Report 2020 -21**

Peter Farrow (Sandwell Council) presented the report, explained as the annual composite of all periodic updates provided to the Committee during the period of 2020-21. Members were re-appraised of the contextual basis of the agreed audit plan, the definition of 'reasonable assurance' and of the different levels of assurance and definitions therein. It was confirmed there were no fundamental recommendations required on any audit.

Members were advised the Data Protection Audit was at draft stage and would be completed imminently.

It was confirmed that customer satisfaction was good. A revised customer satisfaction survey will be developed for 2021-22 to ensure the feedback provided is maximised to advise audit processes and development of audit plans.

There were no questions from Members.

The Committee **approved** the Annual Internal Audit report for 2020/21.

15/21 **Governance Statement 2020-21**

Mike Griffiths (WMFS Section 151 Officer) presented the report, summarising context of the statutory duty under the Local Government Act 1999 to ensure the business of the Fire Authority is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for and used economically, effectively and efficiently. The provision of a Governance Statement with audited Statement of Accounts is a requirement of this legislation.

Members were appraised in detail of each section of the Governance Statement. There were no questions or items for

consideration from Members; the Chair acknowledged the quality of content within the Governance Statement.

The Committee **approved** the Governance Statement for 2020/21.

16/21 **Audit Plan 2020- 21**

Avtar Sohal (Grant Thornton) presented the report. The appended Audit Plan was summarised providing details of the work to be undertaken by Grant Thornton in respect of the Authority's financial statements and delivery of its value for money conclusion for 202/21.

It was explained that the significant risks identified within the scope of the audit are applicable to all Fire and Rescue Services. Members attention was drawn to the level of materiality being marginally higher than the previous audit year, which also applied to the overall audit logistics cost. The deliverable date for the Audit was confirmed as 30 September 2021, together with affirmation of compliance to the Financial Council's Ethical Standard (revised 2019).

The Chair enquired if the audit plan accounted for potential additional work arising from review of land holdings and remedy of pension legislation; both of which featured in 2019/20 and will be on-going. Avtar Sohal stated that both may require more detail and earlier in the audit process than the previous year.

The Committee **approved** Grant Thornton's Audit Plan to enable the delivery of the audit of financial statements and the value for money conclusion 2021/22.

17/21 **Informing the Audit Risk Assessment – WMFRA 2020-21**

Avtar Sohal (Grant Thornton) presented for information an update on Grant Thornton's progress in delivering their responsibilities. It was explained that under International Standards on Auditing (UK) auditors have specific responsibilities to communicate with the Audit and Risk Committee and specifically items can include:

- Matters in relation to fraud;
- Matters in relation to law and regulations;
- Matters in relation to related parties; and
- Matters in relation to accounting estimate.

The content of the appended report was contextualised to the Committee, as a series of questions and responses received from the Authority's management to address the matters detailed above.

A Member enquired if the Auditor was content with the responses provided by the Service. The reply was affirmative, evidence of practice sufficient to each of the areas for questioning. There are no unusual gaps or differences from submissions of previous years.

The Committee **noted** the content of the Informing the Audit Risk Assessment – West Midlands Fire & Rescue Authority 2020/21.

18/21 **Annual Report of the Audit and Risk Committee 2020-21**

The Chair presented the Annual Report of the Audit and Risk Committee for 2020-21. There were no matters arising from Members.

The Committee **approved** the content and format of its Annual Report 2020/21 and agreed its submission to the next meeting of the Authority.

19/21 **Audit and Risk Committee Work Plan 2020-2021 March 21**

The Committee **noted and approved** progress of its work programme for 2020-21.

20/21 **Update on Topical, Legal and Regulatory Issues**

Mike Griffiths (WMFS Section 151 Officer) informed the Committee of release of the Spring update report detailing progress to implement recommendations of the Redmond

Review. Members were advised to access the link referenced in the letter within the agenda pack. Avtar Sohal (Grant Thornton) confirmed the company were supportive of the Redmond Review.

The Committee **noted** the content of the verbal report.

The meeting closed at 15.30 hours.

Phil Fellows Strategic Hub 0121 380 6717 philip.fellows@wmfs.net

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE

19 JULY 2021

1. **STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2020/2021**

Report of the Treasurer.

RECOMMENDED

- 1.1 THAT the draft Statement of Accounts for 2020/2021 (unaudited) as set out in Appendix A be approved.
- 1.2 THAT the draft Statement of Accounts summary for 2020/2021 set out in Appendix B be noted.

2. **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

This report is submitted for Members of the Audit and Risk Committee to approve the Authority's draft Statement of Accounts (unaudited) for the financial year ended 31 March 2021.

3. **BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The Accounts & Audit Regulations 2015 require that the accounts be submitted to Members for approval by the end of July. However, for 2020/21 and 2021/22 only the Regulations have been amended by the Accounts & Audit (Amendment) Regulations 2021. The deadline to publish the Authority's audited accounts for 2020/21 being pushed back from 31 July 2021 to 30 September 2021.
- 3.2 It is a further requirement of the Regulations that Members are informed of any material changes required by the external auditors. Audit work on the draft Statement of Accounts by Grant Thornton commenced on 12 July 2021 and the Audit Findings report will be submitted at the September meeting.
- 3.3 The draft Accounts show net cost of services in 2020/2021 of £118.277 million including an appropriation to Earmarked Reserves which have increased by £6.780 million to £36.917 million and General Reserves have increased by £0.015 million to £5.838

million.

- 3.4 The total Provision of Services in 2020/2021 shows a deficit of £55.211 million, after allowing for the required accounting treatment of pensions governed by International Accounting Standard – Nineteen (IAS19). Capital expenditure totalled £2.304 million.
- 3.5 The draft Statement of Accounts (unaudited) is attached as Appendix A and a draft Summary of Accounts is attached as Appendix B, both are also available on the Fire Service Internet and can be viewed at <https://www.wmfs.net/your-fire-service/openness/documents>.
- 3.6 A hard copy of the full draft Statement of Accounts can be supplied to individual Members on request.

4. **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

In preparing this report an initial Equality Impact Assessment is not required and has not been carried out because the matters contained in this report do not relate to a policy change.

5. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

The course of action recommended in this report will enable the Authority to meet its statutory obligations under the Accounts & Audit Regulations 2015 and Accounts & Audit (Amendment) Regulations 2021.

6. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are contained in the report and the draft Statement of Accounts.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Accounts & Audit Regulations 2015
Accounts & Audit (Amendment) Regulations 2021
Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting 2020/2021
Final Accounts Files – Finance Office

The contact officer for this report is Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Gary Taylor, telephone number 0121 380 6006.

MIKE GRIFFITHS
TREASURER

Ref. AU/AC/2021/Jul/90807212

OFFICIAL

(Draft Unaudited – July 2021)

Item 4

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE SERVICE

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY



Financial Statements & Notes to the Accounts

2020/2021

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Independent auditor's report to the members of West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority

NARRATIVE REPORT BY THE TREASURER

1. Introduction

The West Midlands Fire Service (WMFS) covers an area approaching 92,000 hectares (350 sq. miles) and provides a fire and rescue service to a population of approximately 3 million people living in a million dwellings. It covers the cities of Birmingham, Coventry and Wolverhampton and the Metropolitan Boroughs of Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull and Walsall.

WMFS is accountable to the public via the West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority (WMFRA), made up of 15 Councillors representing the local authorities. They are also joined by West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner and two co-opted Members. Headed by the Chair of the Fire Authority they set the direction for the Service in the best interests of the community. The Service is managed directly by four Brigade Managers – the Chief Fire Officer (CFO), Deputy CFO and two Assistant CFO's.

The Service's activities are governed by the Home Office and legislative responsibilities are set out in the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 and the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England.

WMFS works towards 'Making the West Midlands Safer, Stronger and Healthier'. The CFO together with the Strategic Enabling Team (SET) and Authority work towards achieving three priorities:

Prevention: Delivering interventions which support safer and healthier communities.

- We will, work with our partners to, reduce fire related risks faced by the most vulnerable in our communities.
- We will improve the safety, health and well-being of the most vulnerable people in our communities, through targeted prevention activities directly linked to vulnerability from fire.
- We will educate to prevent arson-related incidents, supporting safer and stronger communities through our partnership working.
- We will reduce the number of people killed or seriously injured on our roads through education and prevention, working with strategic partners.
- We will work in partnership to support and protect the most vulnerable in our communities throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

Protection: Protecting life and property to make businesses stronger and communities safer.

- We will protect life and property by targeting high-risk buildings and vulnerable businesses through an advice, compliance and enforcement approach to fire safety legislation, with a focus on residential tall buildings.
- We will continuously improve our community safety outcomes by implementing the learning from independent and sector-led reviews.

- We will improve community safety through innovative and smarter approaches, using digital technology to enhance the delivery of protection activities.
- We will assist in the restoration of economic growth through prevention, education and support to businesses, including collaboration with other regulators and partner agencies.
- We will develop and adopt innovative approaches to reduce disruption to businesses, communities and West Midlands Fire Service caused by unwanted fire signals.

Response: Dealing excellently with incidents.

- We aim to get to incidents within our attendance standards across all categories; with five minutes in high-risk areas, to save life, reduce harm and protect homes and businesses.
- We will, through our highly trained firefighters, deliver an assertive, effective and safe response to all incidents to make the biggest difference for our communities.
- We will lead rescue operations and work collaboratively with partners to deliver an effective response.
- We will deliver a local, national, and international response to major incidents, new risks and humanitarian situations, through our firefighters and specialist teams.

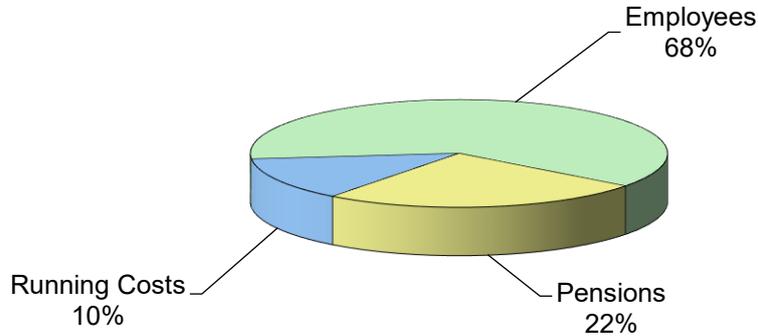
Further information can be found on our website www.wmfs.net

2. This narrative report provides a brief explanation of the financial aspects of the Authority's activities and draws attention to the main characteristics of the Authority's financial position.
3. The Authority's accounts for the financial year 2020/2021 are set out on the following pages and consist of:
 - The Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement (CIES), the Authority's main revenue account, covering income and expenditure on all services.
 - The Movement in Reserves Statement (MIRS), which shows the movement in the year on the different reserves held by the Authority.
 - The Balance Sheet, which sets out the financial position of the Authority at 31st March 2021.
 - The Cash Flow Statement, showing movements in cash and cash equivalents during the year and the cash position at the year-end.
 - The Pension Fund Account, which summarises the movements relating to the firefighters pension schemes (FPS).

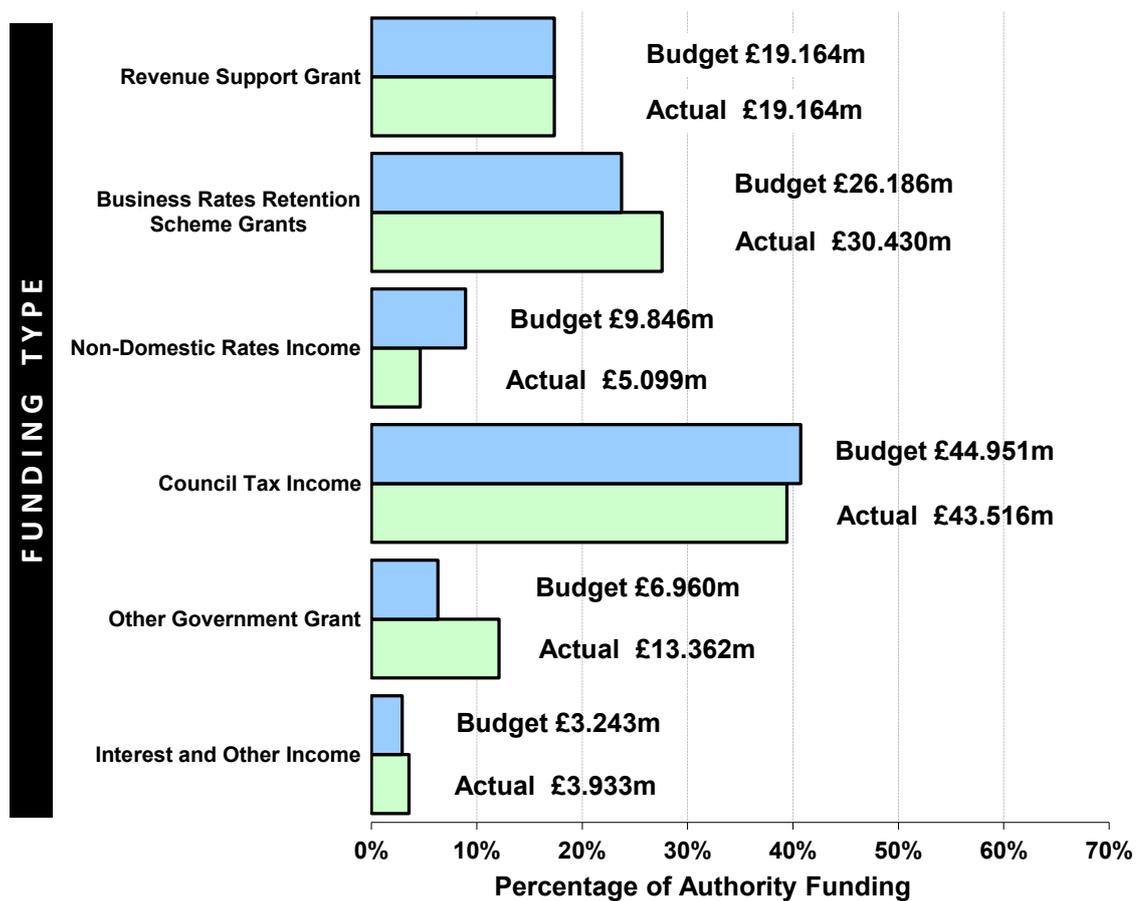
The accounts are supported by notes to the core financial statements.

4. The accounting policies adopted by the Authority comply with the relevant accounting standards except where indicated in notes to the accounts.

5. After statutory adjustments, such as the removal of depreciation and impairments and applying International Accounting Standard Nineteen (IAS19) entries in relation to pension costs, the CIES for the Authority shows a deficit on provision of services of £55.211m and an overall deficit of £173.614m.
6. The total expenditure of the Authority in 2020/21 was £170.715m. The types of costs incurred were:



7. The total income of the Authority to fund expenditure in 2020/21 was £115.504m, which came from:



8. In 2020/21 the Authority spent £2.304m on capital projects, the largest of these being £0.661m on Vehicle Replacements, £0.537m on Coventry Fire House and £0.396m on Boiler Replacements. The total expenditure on capital schemes was financed by Direct Revenue Financing. Note 33 provides details of capital expenditure and capital financing.
9. In 2020/21 appropriations of £6.780m were made to earmarked general fund reserves and £0.015m to un-earmarked general fund reserves.
10. The Authority, at its February 2020 meeting authorised the limit for external debt at £39m and the statutory limit for external debt at £43m. As at 31st March 2021, the Authority's actual long-term principal borrowing was £31.535m and short-term principal borrowing was £2.141m as per Note 18.3.
11. The 2020/21 accounts include the impact of IAS19. The effects of IAS19 are shown within the CIES and Balance Sheet. There is no effect on council tax from the implementation of this standard. The figures disclosed represent a snapshot in time. The accounts show that there is a significant shortfall between the forecast cost of pensions and the current level of assets built up in the pension fund. The Government Actuaries Department (GAD) review the defined benefit arrangements and appropriate levels of employer & employee contributions.

12. **Financial Outlook**

On 17 December 2020, the Secretary of State for Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) announced the provisional settlement for 2021/22 at £53.002m, resulting in a core funding increase of £0.106m (0.2%). The Government also proposed a Council Tax referendum threshold of 2% for Fire and Rescue Authorities. On 4 February 2021, MHCLG confirmed the Authority's 2021/22 total core funding.

The Authority set its 2021/22 budget on 15 February 2021, setting a council tax requirement of £45.038m which resulted in a council tax increase of (1.99%), £1.23 at Band D.

The Corporate Risk Register has identified a number of major risks that would seriously affect the Authority's ability to carry out its functions. The very nature of the risks have made it extremely difficult to quantify any funding impact that would arise were the risk to materialise and in the short term would result in a demand on the Authority's General Balances.

The funding settlement is a one year only arrangement. Whilst there have been indications that some public sector services may receive growth when the anticipated Comprehensive Spending Review process is clarified (circa October/November 2021), potentially for a three year funding settlement period, some Services, including the Fire Service, are anticipating reductions to core funding.

In addition, there are ongoing budget uncertainties, particularly Firefighter pension related issues, that have significant funding implications but at this stage still remain unclear in terms of ongoing cost and whether those costs will need to be found by Fire and Rescue Authorities and/or by Government funding.

Therefore, whilst the Government funding allocation in 2021/22 is marginally higher in cash terms compared to 2020/21, a high level of caution still needs to be applied

to future financial years as the funding position remains volatile for the Fire sector, not least because of anticipated reductions in Government funding allocations from 2022/23 onwards.

As part of the 2021/22 budget arrangements, the ongoing flexible appliance availability process will be required with a target saving of £3.8 million.

The Business Rates Retention Scheme was introduced in April 2013 and provides a direct link between business rates growth and the amount of money local authorities have to spend on local people and services. In September 2019, the Secretary of State for MHCLG announced that the implementation of changes to local government funding including business rates retention had been postponed. Authorities were notified that in order to provide certainty and stability for 2020/21, there would be a delay to the introduction of the scheme until 2021/22, a year later than planned. These plans have subsequently been deferred again, until at least 2022/23.

The Fair Funding Review will affect how funding is allocated and redistributed between local authorities and would set new funding baselines for every Fire and Rescue Authority. Further work is required to identify an appropriate approach to develop the new funding formula for the Fire Service. The Government has indicated it will sense-check the results of any analysis with experts in the sector, including the National Fire Chiefs Council. Subject to the outcome from consultations and additional analytical work, the Government will form a view on the best approach. It was originally proposed that the new arrangements would be introduced from 2021/22 but this has now been deferred until at least 2022/23. However, this review adds another complexity and volatility to long term financial planning.

13. COVID-19 Government Grants

The government has provided a range of financial support packages throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. These include additional funding to support the cost of services or offset other income losses and also grant packages to be paid out to support local businesses. A summary of the COVID-19 Government Grants for the Authority are shown below:

Type	Financial Year	Total (£)	Received
Emergency funding – 1 st Tranche	2019/20	594,079	March 2020
Emergency funding – 2 nd Tranche	2020/21	2,192,035	May 2020
Sales, fees and charges – 1 st Tranche	2020/21	45,863	November 2020
Sales, fees and charges – 2 nd Tranche	2020/21	81,000	March 2021
Emergency funding – Contingency fund (Round two)	2020/21	1,351,000	April 2021
Local tax income guarantee	2020/21	623,581 (Estimated)	By January 2022
Emergency funding – Contingency fund	2020/21	493,876	April 2021

(Round two)			
Sales, fees and charges – 3 rd Tranche	2020/21	31,500 (Estimated)	TBC 2021
Local council tax support	2021/22	1,419,159	May 2021

At 31 March 2021 the Authority's earmarked reserves of £36.917m includes £4.2m to be used in 2021/22 to offset the collection fund deficit which has arisen due to business rates relief granted by the Government in 2020/21 and also includes £0.6m which has been provided to cover 75% of the 2020/21 irrecoverable council tax and business rates losses which are to be spread over the 2021/22, 2022/23 and 2023/24 financial years in the collection funds.

14. **Public Service Pensions – Changes to the transitional arrangements to the 2015 schemes**

On 16 July 2020 Her Majesty's Treasury (HMT) published their Public service pension schemes consultation: changes to the transitional arrangements to the 2015 schemes. The consultation closed on 11th October 2020 and the Government's response was published on 4th February 2021.

The response proposes that scheme members with benefits in the legacy schemes, those that existed before 1st April 2015, should have the opportunity to have their benefits calculated as if their membership of those schemes had continued until 31st March 2022. From 1st April 2022 all employees will be moved into the reformed pension scheme. In the case of firefighters this will be the 2015 FPS. As each individual member will be able to select from a choice of benefits, the exact impact on the scheme as a whole is difficult to accurately forecast, though previous estimates have considered a potential figure of £1.5 million per annum. The estimated pension obligations from this matter have been captured within the defined pension liability. The shortfall in employer contributions will be captured in future scheme valuations as an unfunded, past service deficit and reflected in the employer contribution rates going forward.

As a result, for the purpose of setting the 2021/22 and medium-term budget requirements, pension budgets have been calculated based on the current regulations.

15. **Performance Indicators (PI)**

The Authority has an established Scrutiny Committee whose role is to scrutinise performance information including progress made against the 'The Plan'.

The setting of targets against operational and other performance indicators enables the Service to identify key areas for improvement which contribute to making the West Midlands safer, stronger and healthier. During 2020/21 the Scrutiny Committee received quarterly updates of the organisation's performance.

The five-minute attendance standard lies at the heart of the SDM which shows how staff based mainly at fire stations deliver the three strategic objectives of

prevention, protection and response.

A summary of the performance indicators for prevention, protection and response is provided below and further details of Authority's performance monitoring through the Scrutiny Committee can be found at <https://wmfs.cmis.uk.com/cmis5/>.

Key:
Blue
Green
Red

Over performance against the tolerance levels

Performance is within the tolerance levels

Under performance against the tolerance levels

Response

PI 1		<p>The Risk Based Attendance Standard Target: under 5 minutes Actual: 4 minutes 35 seconds Over performance against the tolerance levels</p>
		<p>Category 2 – 5 minutes 18 seconds (target of 7 minutes) Category 3 – 4 minutes 47 seconds (target of 10 minutes) Category 4 – 6 minutes 36 seconds (target of 20 minutes)</p>

Prevention

PI 2		<p>The number of accidental dwelling fires Target YTD: 1613 (1532 – 1645) Actual to date: 1607 Performance is within the tolerance levels</p>
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PI 3		<p>Injuries from accidental fires in dwellings (taken to hospital for treatment) Target YTD: 51 (42 – 56) Actual to date: 51 Performance is within the tolerance levels</p>
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PI 4		<p>The number of deaths from accidental dwelling fires Target YTD: N/A Actual to date: 9</p>
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<p>PI 5</p>		<p>The percentage of Safe and Well visits referred by our partners Target YTD: 45% (45% - 47%) Actual to date: 45.1% Performance is within the tolerance levels</p>
<p>PI 6</p>		<p>The number of Safe & Well points achieved by the Brigade Target YTD: 259,690 Actual to date: 131,201 Under performance against the tolerance levels</p>
<p>PI 7</p>		<p>The number of people killed or seriously injured (KSI) in road traffic collisions Target YTD: Not applicable Actual to date: 593</p>
<p>PI 8</p>		<p>The number of deliberate fires in dwellings Target YTD: 208 (187 – 218) Actual to date: 184 Over performance against the tolerance levels</p>
<p>PI 9</p>		<p>The number of deliberate fires in non-domestic premises Target YTD: 131 (119 – 137) Actual to date: 104 Over performance against the tolerance levels</p>
<p>PI 10</p>		<p>The number of deliberate vehicle fires Target YTD: 735 (662 – 771) Actual to date: 593 Over performance against the tolerance levels</p>
<p>PI 11</p>		<p>The number of deliberate rubbish fires Target YTD: 1596 (1517 – 1627) Actual to date: 1228 Over performance against the tolerance levels</p>

PI 12		<p>The number of deliberate fires in derelict buildings Target YTD: 121 (109 – 126) Actual to date: 89 Over performance against the tolerance levels</p>
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Protection

PI 13		<p>The number of accidental fires in non-domestic premises Target YTD: 431 (388 – 452) Actual to date: 326 Over performance against the tolerance levels</p>
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PI 14	 Fire alarm	<p>The number of false alarm calls due to fire alarm equipment in dwellings and non-domestic premises Target YTD: 5733 (5447 – 5848) Actual to date: 5629 Performance is within the tolerance levels</p>
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16. Further information about the accounts is available from:

Finance Manager,
West Midlands Fire Service Headquarters,
99 Vauxhall Road,
Birmingham. B7 4HW.

Telephone : 0121-380-6920
or E-Mail : kal.shoker@wmfs.net

17. Interested members of the public also have the right to inspect the accounts before the Audit is completed. The availability of the accounts for inspection is advertised on the Authority's website.

STATEMENT OF RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THE STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS

The Authority's Responsibilities

The Authority is required to:

- (i) make arrangements for the proper administration of its financial affairs and to secure that one of its officers has the responsibility for the administration of those affairs. In this Authority, that officer is the Treasurer.
- (ii) manage its affairs to secure economic, efficient and effective use of resources and safeguard its assets.
- (iii) approve the statement of accounts.

The Treasurer's Responsibilities

The Treasurer is responsible for the preparation of the Authority's statement of accounts in accordance with proper practices as set out in the C.I.P.F.A. / L.A.S.A.A.C. Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom (the Code).

In preparing this statement of accounts, the Treasurer has:

- (i) selected suitable accounting policies and then applied them consistently
- (ii) made judgements and estimates that were reasonable and prudent
- (iii) complied with the local authority Code.

The Treasurer has also:

- (iv) kept proper accounting records which were up to date.
- (v) taken reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

I certify that this statement of accounts gives a true and fair view of the financial position and expenditure and income of the WMFRA for the year ending 31 March 2021.



Mike Griffiths, C.P.F.A
Treasurer

Date: 9 July 2021

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**STATEMENT OF APPROVAL FOR THE
STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS**

The statement of accounts for the year 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021 was approved by the West Midlands Fire & Rescue Authority on xx September 2021.

Greg Brackenridge
Chair
West Midlands Fire & Rescue Authority

Date: xx September 2021

COMPREHENSIVE INCOME AND EXPENDITURE STATEMENT

This shows the accounting cost in the year of providing services in accordance with generally accepted accounting practices, rather than the amount to be funded from taxation. Authorities raise taxation to cover expenditure in accordance with statutory requirements; this may be different from the accounting cost. The taxation position is shown in both the MIRS and the Expenditure Funding Analysis (EFA).

2019/2020 * Restated				2020/2021		
Gross Exp. £000	Gross Income £000	Net Exp. £000		Gross Exp. £000	Gross Income £000	Net Exp. £000
1,565	-	1,565	Democratic Representation & Brigade Managers	1,659	-	1,659
5,338	(5,734)	(396)	Corporate Charges	1,439	(5,734)	(4,295)
1,785	(86)	1,699	Strategy & Organisational Intelligence	4,957	(145)	4,812
927	(53)	874	Communications	963	(69)	894
9,333	(1,117)	8,216	Finance & Resources	9,263	(1,204)	8,059
6,378	(298)	6,080	Digital & Data	6,747	(599)	6,148
1,123	(254)	869	People Services	1,116	(181)	935
* 6,955	* (340)	* 6,615	Training, Health & Wellbeing	6,962	(255)	6,707
* 4,554	* (684)	* 3,870	Prevention, Preparedness & Response	4,295	(592)	3,703
* 7,722	* (561)	* 7,161	Protection & Organisational Assurance	8,380	(1,262)	7,118
* 86,512	* (2,247)	* 84,265	Command Delivery, Fire Control & Workforce Planning	84,766	(2,229)	82,537
132,192	(11,374)	120,818	Cost of Services	130,547	(12,270)	118,277
329	(54)	275	Other Operating Expenditure (Note 13)	350	(88)	262
46,060	(426)	45,634	Financing and investment income & expenditure (Note 14)	39,818	(118)	39,700
		(98,359)	Taxation and non-specific grant income (Note 15)			(103,028)
		68,368	(Surplus)/Deficit on Provision of Services			55,211
5,897	(9,380)	(3,483)	Surplus or deficit on revaluation of Property, Vehicles, Plant and Equipment assets (Note 12.1)	10,768	(8,391)	2,377
		(175,255)	Re-measurements of the net defined benefit liability/(asset)			116,026
		(178,738)	Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure			118,403
		(110,370)	Total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure			173,614

MOVEMENT IN RESERVES STATEMENT

This shows the movement in the year on the different reserves held by the Authority, analysed into 'usable reserves' (i.e. those that can be applied to fund expenditure or reduce local taxation) and other 'unusable reserves'. The Statement shows how the movements in year of the Authority's reserves are broken down between gains and losses incurred in accordance with generally accepted accounting practices and the statutory amounts required to return to the amounts chargeable to council tax for the year. The Net Increase/Decrease line shows the statutory General Fund Balance movements in the year following those adjustments.

	Un-earmarked General Fund Reserves £000	Earmarked General Fund Reserves £000	General Fund Balance £000	Capital Receipts Reserve £000	Capital Grants Unapplied Account £000	Total Usable Reserves £000	Unusable Reserves £000	Total Authority Reserves £000
Balance at 31 March 2019	(6,914)	(33,380)	(40,294)	(2,249)	(157)	(42,700)	1,704,910	1,662,210
Movement in Reserves During 2019/20								
Total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure *	68,368	-	68,368	-	-	68,368	(178,738)	(110,370)
Adjustments between accounting basis and funding basis under regulations (Note 10)	(64,034)	-	(64,034)	-	83	(63,951)	63,951	-
Net (Increase)/Decrease before Transfers to Earmarked Reserves	4,334	-	4,334	-	83	4,417	(114,787)	(110,370)
Transfers to/from Earmarked Reserves (Note 11)	(3,243)	3,243	-	-	-	-	-	-
(Increase)/Decrease in 2019/20	1,091	3,243	4,334	-	83	4,417	(114,787)	(110,370)
Balance at 31 March 2020	(5,823)	(30,137)	(35,960)	(2,249)	(74)	(38,283)	1,590,123	1,551,840
Movement in Reserves During 2020/21								
Total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure *	55,211	-	55,211	-	-	55,211	118,403	173,614
Adjustments between accounting basis and funding basis under regulations (Note 10)	(62,006)	-	(62,006)	-	-	(62,006)	62,006	-
Net (Increase)/Decrease before Transfers to Earmarked Reserves	(6,795)	-	(6,795)	-	-	(6,795)	180,409	173,614
Transfers to/from Earmarked Reserves (Note 11)	6,780	(6,780)	-	-	-	-	-	-
(Increase)/Decrease in 2020/21	(15)	(6,780)	(6,795)	-	-	(6,795)	180,409	173,614
Balance at 31 March 2021	(5,838)	(36,917)	(42,755)	(2,249)	(74)	(45,078)	1,770,532	1,725,454

- * The total comprehensive income and expenditure is now shown as one line on the basis that the columnar analysis of the usable and unusable reserves automatically separates the movements between the surplus and deficit on the provision of services and other comprehensive income and expenditure.

OFFICIAL
BALANCE SHEET

The Balance Sheet shows the value as at the Balance Sheet date of the assets and liabilities recognised by the Authority. The net assets of the Authority (assets less liabilities) are matched by the reserves held by the Authority. Reserves are reported in two categories. The first category of reserves are usable reserves, i.e. those reserves that the Authority may use to provide services, subject to the need to maintain a prudent level of reserves and any statutory limitations on their use. The second category of reserves is those that the Authority is not able to use to provide services. This category of reserves includes reserves that hold unrealised gains and losses, where amounts would only become available to provide services if the assets are sold and reserves that hold timing differences shown in the MIRS line 'Adjustments between accounting basis and funding basis under regulations'.

31 March 2020 £000		Note	31 March 2021 £000
135,389	Property, Vehicles, Plant & Equipment	16	135,064
66	Heritage Assets		66
112	Intangible Assets	17	81
135,567	Long Term Assets		135,211
689	Inventories	19	983
14,660	Short Term Debtors	20	20,892
45,097	Cash and Cash Equivalents	21	36,614
60,446	Current Assets		58,489
(2,172)	Short Term Borrowing	18	(2,256)
(11,798)	Short Term Creditors	22	(18,497)
(2,311)	Grant Receipts in Advance – Revenue	32	-
(16,281)	Current Liabilities		(20,753)
(664)	Provisions	23	(664)
(33,675)	Long Term Borrowing	18	(31,535)
(1,697,233)	Other Long Term Liabilities	34	(1,866,202)
(1,731,572)	Long Term Liabilities		(1,898,401)
(1,551,840)	Net Assets		(1,725,454)
(38,283)	Usable Reserves		(45,078)
1,590,123	Unusable Reserves	12	1,770,532
1,551,840	Total Reserves		1,725,454



Mike Griffiths, C.P.F.A
Treasurer

Date: 9 July 2021

CASH FLOW STATEMENT

The Cash Flow Statement shows the changes in cash and cash equivalents of the Authority during the reporting period. The statement shows how the Authority generates and uses cash and cash equivalents by classifying cash flows as operating, investing and financing activities. The amount of net cash flows arising from operating activities is a key indicator of the extent to which the operations of the Authority are funded by way of taxation and grant income or from the recipients of services provided by the Authority. Investing activities represent the extent to which cash outflows have been made for resources which are intended to contribute to the Authority's future service delivery. Cash flows arising from financing activities are useful in predicting claims on future cash flows by providers of capital (i.e. borrowing) to the Authority.

2019/2020 £000		2020/2021 £000
68,368	Net (surplus) or deficit on the provision of services	55,211
(78,505)	Adjustments to net surplus or deficit on the provision of services for non-cash movements (Note 24.2)	(51,108)
50	Adjustments for items included in the net surplus or deficit on the provision of services that are investing and financing activities (Note 24.3)	77
(10,087)	Net cash flows from Operating Activities	4,180
4,987	Investing Activities (Note 25)	2,281
305	Financing Activities (Note 26)	2,022
(4,795)	Net (increase)/decrease in cash and cash equivalents	8,483
40,302	Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the reporting period	45,097
45,097	Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the reporting period (Note 21)	36,614

NOTES TO THE CORE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

1. ACCOUNTING POLICIES

1.1. General Principles

The Statement of Accounts summarises the Authority's transactions for the 2020/21 financial year and its position as at the year-end, 31st March 2021. The Authority is required to prepare an annual Statement of Accounts by the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, which require the Accounts to be prepared in accordance with proper accounting practices.

It has been prepared in accordance with the Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom 2020/21, supported by International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) and statutory guidance issued under the Local Government Act 2003.

The accounting convention adopted in the Statement of Accounts is principally historical cost, modified by the revaluation of certain categories of non-current assets and financial instruments.

The Statement of Accounts has been prepared on a going concern basis. The Authority's Auditors, Grant Thornton UK LLP, have reported that they are satisfied with the Management's assessment that the going concern basis was appropriate for the 2020/21 financial statements and the Treasurer expectations is that this will continue for the foreseeable future. Using reserves the Authority has a balanced budget for the Medium Term Financial Plan period and robust and deliverable plans for a balanced budget going forward.

1.2. Accruals of Income and Expenditure

Activity is accounted for in the year that it takes place, not simply when cash payments are made or received. In particular:

- Revenue from contracts with service recipients, whether for services or the provision of goods, is recognised when or as the goods or services are transferred to the service recipient in accordance with the performance obligations in the contract.
- Supplies are recorded as expenditure when they are consumed — where there is a gap between the date supplies are received and their consumption, they are carried as inventories on the Balance Sheet.
- Expenses in relation to services received are recorded as expenditure when the services are received rather than when payments are made.
- Interest receivable on investments and payable on borrowings is accounted for respectively as Income and Expenditure.

- Where income and expenditure have been recognised but cash has not been received or paid, a debtor or creditor for the relevant amount is recorded in the Balance Sheet. Where debts may not be settled, the balance of debtors is written down and a charge made to revenue for the income that might not be collected.
- Accruals of Income and expenditure are subject to a de minimis level of £1,000.

1.3. Cash and Cash Equivalents

Cash is represented by cash in hand and deposits with financial institutions repayable without penalty on notice of not more than 24 hours. Cash equivalents are highly liquid investments that mature in a specified period; no more than three months or less from the date of acquisition and that are readily convertible to known amounts of cash with insignificant risk of change in value.

In the Cash Flow Statement, cash and cash equivalents are shown net of bank overdrafts that are repayable on demand and form an integral part of the Authority's cash management.

1.4. Prior Period Adjustments, Changes in Accounting Policies and Estimates and Errors

Prior period adjustments may arise because of a change in accounting policies or to correct a material error. Changes in accounting estimates are accounted for prospectively, i.e. in the current and future years affected by the change and do not give rise to a prior period adjustment.

Changes in accounting policies are only made when required by proper accounting practices or the change provides more reliable or relevant information about the effect of transactions, other events and conditions on the Authority's financial position or financial performance. Where a change is made, it is applied retrospectively (unless stated otherwise) by adjusting opening balances and comparative amounts for the prior period as if the new policy had always been applied.

Material errors discovered in prior period figures are corrected retrospectively by amending opening balances and comparative amounts for the prior period.

1.5. Charges to Revenue for Non-Current Assets

Services and support services are debited with the following amounts to record the cost of holding non-current assets during the year:

- Depreciation attributable to the assets used by the relevant service.
- Revaluation and impairment losses on assets used by the service where there are no accumulated gains in the Revaluation Reserve against which the losses can be written off.
- Amortisation of intangible assets attributable to the service.

The Authority is not required to raise council tax to fund depreciation, revaluation and
Ref: AU/AC/2021/90807212

impairment losses or amortisation. However, it is required to make an annual contribution from revenue towards the reduction in its overall borrowing requirement equal to an amount calculated on a prudent basis determined by the Authority in accordance with statutory guidance within England.

Depreciation, revaluation and impairment losses and amortisation are therefore replaced by the contribution in the General Fund Balance, by way of an adjusting Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) transaction with the Capital Adjustment Account in the MIRS for the difference between the two.

1.6. Council Tax and Non-domestic Rates (NDR)

Billing authorities act as agents, collecting council tax and NDR on behalf of the major preceptors. Under the legislative framework for the Collection Fund, billing authorities, major preceptors and central government share proportionately the risks and rewards that the amount of council tax and NDR collected could be less or more than predicted.

The council tax and NDR included in the CIES is the Authority's share of accrued income for the year. Regulations determine the amount of council tax and NDR that must be included in the Authority's General Fund. The difference between the income included in the CIES and the amount required by regulation to be credited to the General Fund is taken to the Collection Fund Adjustment Account and included as a reconciling item in the MIRS. The effect on the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services for the year 2020/21 in the CIES is a deficit of £6.426m which is also reflected in the MIRS.

The Balance Sheet includes the Authority's share of the year end balances in respect of council tax and NDR relating to arrears, impairment allowances for doubtful debts, overpayments and prepayments and appeals.

Where debtor balances for the above are identified as impaired because of a likelihood arising from a past event that payments due under the statutory arrangements will not be made (fixed or determinable payments), the asset is written down and a charge made to the Collection Fund. The impairment loss is measured as the difference between the carrying amount and the revised future cash flows.

1.7. Employee Benefits

1.7.1 Benefits Payable during Employment

Short-term employee benefits are those due to be settled within 12 months of the year-end. They include such benefits as wages and salaries, paid annual leave and paid sick leave, bonuses and non-monetary benefits (e.g. cars) for current employees and are recognised as an expense for services in the year in which employees render service to the Authority. An accrual is made for the cost of holiday entitlements (or any form of leave, e.g. time off in lieu) earned by employees but not taken before the year-end which employees can carry forward into the next financial year. The accrual is made at the wage and salary rates applicable in the following accounting year, being the period in which the employee takes the benefit. The accrual is charged to Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services but then reversed out through the MIRS so that holiday entitlements are charged to revenue in the financial year in which the holiday absence occurs.

1.7.2 Termination Benefits

Termination benefits are amounts payable as a result of a decision by the Authority to terminate an officer's employment before the normal retirement date or an officer's decision to accept voluntary redundancy in exchange for those benefits and are charged on an accruals basis to the appropriate service segment or, where applicable, to a corporate service segment at the earlier of when the Authority can no longer withdraw the offer of those benefits or when the Authority recognises costs for a restructuring.

Where termination benefits involve the enhancement of pensions, statutory provisions require the General Fund balance to be charged with the amount payable by the Authority to the pension fund or pensioner in the year, not the amount calculated according to the relevant accounting standards. In the MIRS, appropriations are required to and from the Pensions Reserve to remove the notional debits and credits for pension enhancement termination benefits and replace them with debits for the cash paid to the pension fund and pensioners and any such amounts payable but unpaid at the year-end.

1.7.3 Post Employment Benefits

Employees of the Authority are members of four separate pension schemes:

- Uniformed Firefighters – Original (1992) Scheme

This is an unfunded scheme, which is administered by the Authority in accordance with the MHCLG regulations. For such schemes, as there are no investment assets, IAS19 requires recognition of the liability and pension reserve in the Balance Sheet and transactions in the CIES for movements in the liability and reserve. The pension costs that are charged to the Authority's accounts in respect of these employees are equal to the contributions paid to the pension fund for these employees. The scheme was only open to those firefighters in the scheme as at 31st March 2006 and the employer's contribution is higher than for the new FPS. All contributions are made into a pension fund and equally the payments to pensioners are paid out of the same fund. This is then balanced by a contribution to or from the fund by the Government each year.

- Uniformed Firefighters – (2006) Scheme

On 1st April 2006 a new FPS was established for new firefighters, retained firefighters and for uniformed employees carrying out operational duties in the old pension scheme who wished to transfer to the new scheme. This scheme is an unfunded scheme and operates in the same way as the old scheme except for the reduced level of contribution from employees and employers which reflects the different conditions and benefits of the new scheme. All contributions are made into a pension fund and equally the payments to pensioners are paid out of the same fund. This is then balanced by a contribution to or from the fund by the Government each year.

On 1st April 2015 a new modified section was established for employees who were employed as retained firefighters between 1st April 2000 and 5th April 2006.

- Uniformed Firefighters – (2015) Scheme

On 1st April 2015 a new FPS was established. This scheme is a career average revalued earnings scheme for members starting after the 1st April 2015. Members of the 1992 and 2006 final salary schemes moved into this scheme, unless protection applied. This scheme is an unfunded scheme. All contributions are made into a pension fund and equally the payments to pensioners are paid out of the same fund. This is then balanced by a contribution to or from the fund by the Government each year.

The combined pension fund for uniformed firefighters as at 31st March 2021 had a net deficit value of £1,801m.

- The Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS)

Other employees, subject to certain qualifying criteria, are eligible to join the LGPS, administered by Wolverhampton City Council. The pension costs that are charged to the Authority's accounts, £2.678m in 2020/21 in respect of these employees, are equal to the contributions paid to the funded pension scheme for these employees. Further costs arise in respect of certain pensions paid to retired employees on an unfunded basis. The scheme is, however, funded.

These schemes provide defined benefits to members (retirement lump sums and pensions), which are earned as employees work for the Authority.

These schemes are accounted for as defined benefits schemes:

- The liabilities of the West Midlands Metropolitan Authorities Pension Fund (WMMAPF) and the liabilities of the FPS attributable to the Authority are included in the Balance Sheet on an actuarial basis using the projected unit method — i.e. an assessment of the future payments that will be made in relation to retirement benefits earned to date by employees, based on assumptions about mortality rates, employee turnover rates, etc. and estimates of projected earnings for current employees.
- Liabilities are discounted to their value at current prices, using a discount rate of 2.00% for the FPS and for the LGPS.
- The assets of WMMAPF attributable to the Authority are included in the Balance Sheet at their fair value:
 - quoted securities — current bid price
 - unquoted securities — professional estimate
 - unitised securities — current bid price
 - property — market value.
- The change in the net pensions liability is analysed into the following components:

- Service cost comprising:
 - Current service cost - the increase in liabilities because of years of service earned this year — allocated in the CIES to the services for which the employees worked.
 - Past service cost — the increase in liabilities because of a scheme amendment or curtailment whose effect relates to years of service earned in earlier years — debited to the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services in the CIES within the corporate charges Service line.
 - Net interest on the net defined benefit liability (asset), i.e. net interest expense for the Authority — the change during the period in the net defined benefit liability (asset) that arises from the passage of time charged to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line of the CIES – this is calculated by applying the discount rate used to measure the defined benefit obligation at the beginning of the period to the net defined benefit liability (asset) at the beginning of the period – taking into account any changes in the net defined benefit liability (asset) during the period as a result of contribution and benefit payments.
- Remeasurements comprising:
 - The return on plan assets — excluding amounts included in net interest on the net defined benefit liability (asset) – charged to the Pensions Reserve as Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure.
 - Changes in demographic and financial assumptions — changes in the net pensions liability that arise because events have not coincided with assumptions made at the last actuarial valuation or because the actuaries have updated their assumptions — charged to the Pensions Reserve as Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure.
- Contributions paid to the Pension Fund — cash paid as employer's contributions to the pension fund in settlement of liabilities; not accounted for as an expense.

In relation to retirement benefits, statutory provisions require the General Fund balance to be charged with the amount payable by the Authority to the pension fund or directly to pensioners in the year, not the amount calculated according to the relevant accounting standards. In the MIRS, this means that there are transfers to and from the Pensions Reserve to remove the notional debits and credits for retirement benefits and replace them with debits for the cash paid to the pension fund and pensioners and any such amounts payable but unpaid at the year-end. The negative balance that arises on the Pensions Reserve thereby measures the beneficial impact to the General Fund of being required to account for retirement benefits based on cash flows rather than as benefits are earned by employees.

The top up grant is accounted for as a remeasurement of the net defined benefit liability.

1.7.4 Discretionary Benefits

The Authority also has restricted powers to make discretionary awards of retirement benefits in the event of early retirements. Any liabilities estimated to arise because of an award to any member of staff are accrued in the year of the decision to make the award and accounted for using the same policies as are applied to the LGPS.

1.8. Events after the Reporting Period

Events after the Balance Sheet date are those events, both favourable and unfavourable, that occur between the end of the reporting period and the date when the Statement of Accounts is authorised for issue. Two types of events can be identified:

- Those that provide evidence of conditions that existed at the end of the reporting period — the Statement of Accounts is adjusted to reflect such events.
- Those that are indicative of conditions that arose after the reporting period — the Statement of Accounts is not adjusted to reflect such events but where a category of events would have a material effect, disclosure is made in the notes of the nature of the events and their estimated financial effect.

Events taking place after the date of authorisation for issue are not reflected in the Statement of Accounts.

1.9. Financial Instruments

1.9.1 Financial Liabilities

The Authority has its own portfolio of loans payable directly to the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB); these are initially measured at fair value and carried at their amortised cost except for Other Local Authority debt inherited from the former West Midlands County Council (WMCC) which is held at historic cost. Annual charges are made to the CIES based on the carrying value of the liability multiplied by the effective rate of interest for the instrument.

Debt inherited from the former WMCC is managed by Dudley MBC and redeemed over a period of 40 years from 1st April 1986. Annual charges to the CIES for interest payable were charged on this debt in 2020/21 at a rate of 5.6%.

Creditors are carried on the balance sheet at amortised cost.

1.9.2 Financial Assets

Financial assets are classified based on a classification and measurement approach that reflects the business model for holding the financial assets and their cashflow characteristics. There are three main classes of financial assets measured at:

- Amortised cost
- Fair value through profit or loss, and
- Fair value through other comprehensive income

The authority's business model is to hold investments to collect contractual cash flows. Financial assets are therefore classified as amortised cost, except for those whose contractual payments are not solely payment of principal and interest i.e. where the cash flows do not take the form of a basic debt instrument.

Financial assets measured at amortised cost are recognised on the Balance Sheet when the authority becomes a party to the contractual provisions of a financial instrument and are initially measured at fair value. They are subsequently measured at their amortised cost.

Debtors are carried on the balance sheet at amortised cost.

Any gains and losses that arise on the derecognition of the asset are credited or debited to the Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure line in the CIES.

1.9.3 Fair Value Measurement

IFRS 13 requires that local authorities measure some of their non-financial and some of their financial instruments at fair value.

The objective of the fair value approach is to estimate the price at which an orderly transaction to sell an asset or transfer a liability would take place between market participants at the measurement date. The measurement assumes that the transaction takes place either:

- In the principal market for the asset or liability, or
- In the absence of a principal market, the most advantageous market.

The Authority measures fair value using the same assumptions that market participants would use when pricing an asset or liability assuming that they will act in their own economic best interest.

For non-financial assets the Authority considers the participant's ability to generate economic benefits by using the asset in its highest and best use.

When determining fair value the Authority's valuers use techniques that are appropriate in the circumstances and for which sufficient data is available maximising the use of relevant observable inputs and minimising the use of unobservable inputs.

These inputs are categorised within the fair value hierarchy as follows:

- Level 1 – quoted prices (unadjusted) in active markets for identical assets or liabilities that the authority can assess at the measurement date.
- Level 2 – inputs other than quoted prices included in level 1 that are observable for the asset or liability, either directly or indirectly.
- Level 3 – unobservable inputs for the asset or liability.

1.10. Government Grants and Contributions

Whether paid on account, by instalments or in arrears, government grants and third party contributions and donations are recognised as due to the Authority when there is reasonable assurance that:

- the Authority will comply with the conditions attached to the payments, and
- the grants or contributions will be received.

Amounts recognised as due to the Authority are not credited to the CIES until conditions attached to the grant or contribution has been satisfied. Conditions are stipulations that specify that the future economic benefits or service potential embodied in the asset in the form of the grant or contribution are required to be consumed by the recipient as specified, or future economic benefits or service potential must be returned to the transferor.

Monies advanced as grants and contributions for which conditions have not been satisfied are carried in the Balance Sheet as Receipts in Advance. When conditions are satisfied, the grant or contribution is credited to the relevant service line (attributable revenue grants and contributions) or Taxation and Non-Specific Grant Income (non-ringfenced revenue grants and all capital grants) in the CIES.

Where capital grants are credited to the CIES, they are reversed out of the General Fund Balance in the MIRS. Where the grant has yet to be used to finance capital expenditure, it is posted to the Capital Grants Unapplied reserve. Where it has been applied, it is posted to the Capital Adjustment Account. Amounts in the Capital Grants Unapplied reserve are transferred to the Capital Adjustment Account once they have been applied to fund capital Expenditure.

1.11. Intangible Assets

Expenditure on non-monetary assets that do not have physical substance but are controlled by the Authority as a result of past events (e.g. software licences) is capitalised when it is expected that future economic benefits or service potential will flow from the intangible asset to the Authority.

Internally generated assets are capitalised where it is demonstrable that the project is technically feasible and is intended to be completed (with adequate resources being available) and the Authority will be able to generate future economic benefits or deliver service potential by being able to sell or use the asset. Expenditure is capitalised where it can be measured reliably as attributable to the asset and is restricted to that incurred during the development phase (research expenditure cannot be capitalised).

Expenditure on the development of websites is not capitalised if the website is solely or primarily intended to promote or advertise the Authority's goods or services.

Intangible assets are measured initially at cost. Amounts are only revalued where the fair value of the assets held by the Authority can be determined by reference to an active market. In practice, no intangible asset held by the Authority meets this criterion, and they are therefore carried at amortised cost. The depreciable amount of an intangible asset is amortised over its useful life to the relevant service line(s) in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. An asset is tested for impairment whenever there is an indication that the asset might be impaired — any losses recognised are posted to the relevant service line(s) in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement. Any gain or loss arising on the disposal or abandonment of an intangible asset is posted to the

Other Operating Expenditure line in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Statement.

Where expenditure on intangible assets qualifies as capital expenditure for statutory purposes, amortisation, impairment losses and disposal gains and losses are not permitted to have an impact on the General Fund Balance. The gains and losses are therefore reversed out of the General Fund Balance in the Movement in Reserves Statement and posted to the Capital Adjustment Account and (for any sale proceeds greater than £10,000) the Capital Receipts Reserve.

Software licences are depreciated on a straight line basis over a period of five years.

1.12. Inventories

Inventories are included in the Balance Sheet at the latest price. This does not comply with the standard which requires the lower of cost and net realisable value. The total value of stocks held is approximately £0.983m (2019/20 £0.689m) and therefore any difference in accounting treatment will not materially affect the reasonableness of the figures disclosed within the accounts.

1.13. Overheads and Support Services

The costs of overheads and support services are charged to service segments in accordance with the Authority's arrangements for accountability and financial performance.

The costs of support services provided to the Authority by Sandwell MBC have been recharged in accordance with Service Level Agreements. These specify the level of service to be provided and the charge.

1.14. Property, Vehicles, Plant and Equipment

Assets that have physical substance and are held for use in the production or supply of goods or services, for rental to others, or for administrative purposes and that are expected to be used during more than one financial year are classified as property, vehicles, plant and equipment.

1.14.1 Recognition

Expenditure on the acquisition, creation or enhancement of property, vehicles, plant and equipment is capitalised on an accruals basis, provided that it is probable that the future economic benefits or service potential associated with the item will flow to the Authority and the cost of the item can be measured reliably. Expenditure that maintains but does not add to an asset's potential to deliver future economic benefits or service potential (i.e. repairs and maintenance) is charged as an expense when it is incurred.

Expenditure along with associated grant income on non-current assets are capitalised subject to a de minimis level of £10,000.

1.14.2 Measurement

Assets are initially measured at cost, comprising:

- The purchase price.
- Any costs attributable to bringing the asset to the location and condition necessary for it to be capable of operating in the manner intended by management.
- The initial estimate of the costs of dismantling and removing the item and restoring the site on which it is located.

The Authority does not capitalise borrowing costs incurred whilst assets are under construction.

The cost of assets acquired other than by purchase is deemed to be its fair value, unless the acquisition does not have commercial substance (i.e. it will not lead to a variation in the cash flows of the Authority). In the latter case, where an asset is acquired via an exchange, the cost of the acquisition is the carrying amount of the asset given up by the Authority.

Donated assets are measured initially at fair value. The difference between fair value and any consideration paid is credited to the Taxation and Non-Specific Grant Income line of the CIES, unless the donation has been made conditionally. Until conditions are satisfied, the gain is held in the Donated Assets Account. Where gains are credited to the CIES, they are reversed out of the General Fund Balance to the Capital Adjustment Account in the MIRS.

Assets are then carried in the Balance Sheet using the following measurement bases:

- Infrastructure, community assets and assets under construction — held at historical cost.
- Residential Homes — the current value measurement base is fair value, estimated at highest and best use from a market participant's perspective. The Authority no longer provides residential homes to new tenants and any properties which become or are vacant, are held as surplus assets.
- All other assets — current value, determined on the basis of market value.

Where there is no market-based evidence of current value because of the specialist nature of an asset, depreciated replacement cost is used as an estimate of current value.

Where non-property assets that have short useful lives or low values (or both), depreciated historical cost basis is used as a proxy for current value.

Assets included in the Balance Sheet at current value are revalued annually to ensure that their carrying amount is not materially different from their current value at the year-end, but as a minimum every five years. If an event occurs, such as a dramatic fall in land and property prices, which mean the current values are no longer appropriate, the assets will be revalued again. Increases in valuations are matched by credits to the Revaluation Reserve to recognise unrealised gains.

Where decreases in value are identified, they are accounted for by:

- Where there is a balance of revaluation gains for the asset in the Revaluation Reserve, the carrying amount of the asset is written down against that balance (up

to the amount of the accumulated gains).

- Where there is no balance in the Revaluation Reserve or an insufficient balance, the carrying amount of the asset is written down against the corporate charges service line in the CIES.

The Revaluation Reserve contains revaluation gains recognised since 1 April 2007 only, the date of its formal implementation. Gains arising before that date have been consolidated into the Capital Adjustment Account.

1.14.3 Impairment

Assets are assessed at each year-end as to whether there is any indication that an asset may be impaired. Where indications exist and any possible differences are estimated to be material, the recoverable amount of the asset is estimated and, where this is less than the carrying amount of the asset, an impairment loss is recognised for the shortfall.

Where impairment losses are identified, they are accounted for as follows:

- Where there is a balance of revaluation gains for the asset in the Revaluation Reserve, the carrying amount of the asset is written down against that balance (up to the amount of the accumulated gains).
- Where there is no balance in the Revaluation Reserve or an insufficient balance, the carrying amount of the asset is written down against the corporate charges service line in the CIES.

Where an impairment loss is reversed subsequently, the reversal is credited to the corporate charges service line in the CIES, up to the amount of the original loss, adjusted for depreciation that would have been charged if the loss had not been recognised.

1.14.4 Depreciation

Depreciation is provided for on all property, vehicles, plant and equipment assets by the systematic allocation of their depreciable amounts over their useful lives. An exception is made for assets without a determinable finite useful life (i.e. freehold land) and assets that are not yet available for use (i.e. assets under construction).

The following depreciation policies have been adopted:

- Operational Vehicles - straight line over 10 years.
- Ancillary Vehicles - straight line over 5 years.
- Equipment - straight line over 5 years.
- All property assets have been depreciated in line with their life expectancies.
- Freehold land is not depreciated.
- No depreciation is accounted for in the year of acquisition but is accounted for in the year of disposal.

Wilks Head & Eve (WH&E), of 55 New Oxford Street, London, WC1A 1HB is a RICS (Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors) Regulated Firm, are the Authority's valuers and were instructed to provide valuations for all land and property assets and recommend the appropriate life expectancies. A full valuation of all land and property assets was

completed as at 31st March 2021. The Code requires that land and property assets must be revalued every five years as a minimum but must be revalued more regularly where a five year valuation is insufficient to keep pace with material changes in fair value.

WHE also provide valuations for splitting land and building assets into individual components. Where an asset has major components whose cost is significant in relation to the total cost of the item and which have differing estimated useful lives, these components are depreciated separately. The Authority has adopted this as the basis for depreciation from 1st April 2011.

Where an asset it is deemed to be material for component accounting purposes, i.e. valued in excess of £1m, the following individual components have been identified:

- Main structure
- Roof
- Heating and associated systems
- Tower and associated functions
- Electrical
- Lift
- External

Revaluation gains are also depreciated, with an amount equal to the difference between current value depreciation charged on assets and the depreciation that would have been chargeable based on their historical cost being transferred each year from the Revaluation Reserve to the Capital Adjustment Account.

1.14.5 Non-Current Assets Held for Sale

A non-current asset is classified as held for sale if its carrying amount will be recovered principally through a sale transaction rather than through continued use. The following criteria must be met before an asset can be classified as held for sale under this section of the Code:

- The asset must be available for immediate sale in its present condition.
- The sale must be highly probable; with an active programme to dispose of the asset.
- The asset must be actively marketed for sale at a price that is reasonable in relation to its current fair value
- The sale should be expected to complete within one year of the date of classification.

Assets Held for Sale are valued at the lower of their carrying amount and fair value (market value) less costs to sell at initial reclassification and at the end of each reporting date and are not subject to depreciation. Investment Properties that are to be disposed of are not reclassified as an Asset Held for Sale and remain as Investment Properties until disposed of, reclassified to short term investment properties where they are expected to be disposed of within a year of the balance sheet date.

1.15. Minimum Revenue Provision

Under the Local Government Act 2003, the Authority is required to set aside an amount from revenue as a provision for debt repayment. This amount is known as the MRP.

The calculation is based on Asset Life Method, which is to make a provision over the estimated life of the asset for which borrowing was undertaken.

From 2015/16 onwards the proposed MRP policy was amended to an Annuity base.

The Treasurer has the discretion to make an additional provision.

1.16. Provisions and Contingent Liabilities

1.16.1 Provisions

Provisions are made where an event has taken place that gives the Authority a legal or constructive obligation that probably requires settlement by a transfer of economic benefits or service potential and a reliable estimate can be made of the amount of the obligation.

Provisions are charged as an expense to the appropriate service line in the CIES in the year that the Authority becomes aware of the obligation and are measured at the best estimate at the Balance Sheet date of the expenditure required to settle the obligation, taking into account relevant risks and uncertainties.

When payments are eventually made, they are charged to the provision carried in the Balance Sheet. Estimated settlements are reviewed at the end of each financial year — where it becomes less than probable that a transfer of economic benefits will now be required (or a lower settlement than anticipated is made), the provision is reversed and credited back to the relevant service.

Where some or all of the payment required to settle a provision is expected to be recovered from another party (e.g. from an insurance claim), this is only recognised as income for the relevant service if it is virtually certain that reimbursement will be received if the Authority settles the obligation.

1.16.2 Contingent Liabilities

A contingent liability arises where an event has taken place that gives the Authority a possible obligation whose existence will only be confirmed by the occurrence or otherwise of uncertain future events not wholly within the control of the Authority. Contingent liabilities also arise in circumstances where a provision would otherwise be made but either it is not probable that an outflow of resources will be required or the amount of the obligation cannot be measured reliably.

Contingent liabilities are not recognised in the Balance Sheet but disclosed in a note to the accounts.

1.17. Reserves

The Authority sets aside specific amounts as reserves for future policy purposes or to cover contingencies. Reserves are created by transferring amounts out of the Un-earmarked General Fund Balance in the MIRS. When expenditure to be financed from a reserve is incurred, it is charged to the appropriate service in that year to score against Ref: AU/AC/2021/90807212

the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services in the CIES. The reserve is then transferred back into the Un-earmarked General Fund Balance in the MIRS so that there is no net charge against council tax for the expenditure.

Certain reserves are kept to manage the accounting processes for non-current assets, local taxation, retirement and employee benefits and do not represent usable resources for the Authority — these reserves are explained in the relevant policies.

1.18. Value Added Tax (VAT)

VAT payable is included as an expense only to the extent that it is not recoverable from Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs. VAT receivable is excluded from income.

1.19. Restated Figures

For comparative purposes 2019/2020 figures are provided.

The CIES cost of services, notes 7 and 8 show 2019/2020 restated figures for service expenditure and income as some sections have moved service areas.

1.20. Roundings

Unless otherwise stated, the figures that follow have been rounded to the nearest £'000.

2. ACCOUNTING STANDARDS THAT HAVE BEEN ISSUED BUT HAVE NOT YET BEEN ADOPTED

The Code requires the disclosure of information relating to the impact of an accounting change that will be required by a new standard that has been issued but not yet adopted by the Authority.

The standards introduced in the 2021/22 Code that are relevant to the above are:-

- Definition of a Business: Amendments to IFRS 3 Business Combinations
- Interest Rate Benchmark Reform: Amendments to IFRS 9, IAS 39 and IFRS 7
- Interest Rate Benchmark Reform – Phase 2: Amendments to IFRS 9, IAS 39, IFRS 7, IFRS 4 and IFRS 16

The Code requires implementation from 1 April 2021 and there is therefore no impact on the 2020/21 Statement of Accounts.

The Authority has concluded that there will be no material impact upon the 2021/22 Statement of Accounts.

IFRS 16 Leases – This will require lessees to recognise most leases on their balance sheet as right of use assets with corresponding lease liabilities (there is recognition for low value and short-term leases). The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA)/Local Authority (Scotland) Accounts Advisory Committee Local Authority Accounting Code Board has agreed to defer the implementation of IFRS 16 Leases to 1st April 2022.

3. CRITICAL JUDGEMENTS IN APPLYING ACCOUNTING POLICIES

In applying the accounting policies set out in the Accounts, the Authority has had to make certain judgments about complex transactions or those involving uncertainty about future events. The critical judgments made in the Statement of Accounts are:-

- Insurance – The Authority continues to operate a self-insure scheme for all of its property and vehicle assets.
- No Residual Value of Assets – The Authority assumes that the residual value of plant and equipment will be nil when they are de-commissioned, as the assets are held to provide a service rather than for resale at the end of their useful life. The Authority has determined that the amounts received when assets are decommissioned are negligible and depend on the market demand for the assets at time of disposal.
- Property valued at Current Value – The Authority has had all its land and property assets valued on the basis of current value as at 31st March 2021. The Code requires that land and property assets must be revalued every five years as a minimum but must be revalued more regularly where a five year valuation is insufficient to keep pace with material changes in fair value. In 2011 the Authority introduced component accounting to its land and property assets as part of its valuations.
- Government Funding - There remains a degree of uncertainty about future levels of core funding for local government. The funding settlement for 2021/2022 is a one year only arrangement. Whilst there have been indications that some public sector services may continue to receive growth when the anticipated Comprehensive Spending Review process is clarified (circa October/November 2021), potentially for a three or four year funding settlement period, some Services, including the Fire Service, may still face ongoing core funding reductions. In addition, there are ongoing budget uncertainties, particularly Firefighter pension related issues, that have significant funding implications but at this stage still remain unclear in terms of ongoing cost and whether those costs will need to be found by Fire and Rescue Authorities and/or by Government funding. The Authority has however determined that the level of uncertainty is not yet sufficient to indicate that the assets of the Authority may be significantly impaired because of a need to close facilities and reduce levels of service provision.

4. ASSUMPTIONS MADE ABOUT THE FUTURE AND OTHER MAJOR SOURCES OF ESTIMATION UNCERTAINTY

The Statement of Accounts contains estimated figures that are based on assumptions made by the Authority about the future or that are otherwise uncertain. Estimates are made taking into account historical experience, current trends and other relevant factors. However, because balances cannot be determined with certainty, actual results could be materially different from the assumptions and estimates.

The items in the Authority's Balance Sheet at 31st March 2021 for which there is a risk of a material adjustment in the following financial year are:

- Pensions Liability – Estimation of the net liability to pay pensions depends on several complex judgements relating to the discount rate used, the rate at which salaries are projected to increase, changes to retirement age, mortality rates and expected return on pension fund assets. The Government Actuary's Department (GAD) and Barnett Waddingham provide the Authority with expert advice about the assumptions to be applied (Note 34).

On 16 July 2020, the Government published a consultation on the proposed remedy to be applied to FPS and LGPS benefits in response to the McCloud and Sargeant cases. The consultation closed on 8 October 2020 and HMT published their response to their consultation on 4 February 2021, confirming their approach to remedying age discrimination, in line with their proposals. The liability calculations have been updated to be in line with the agreed final remedy.

FPS

The final remedy will apply to those members that were in active service on or prior to 31 March 2012 and on or after 1 April 2015. At retirement, these members will be given a choice in which scheme they wish to accrue benefits over the remedy period, 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2022. To make that choice all members will be automatically defaulted to the legacy scheme during the remedy period and the reformed scheme benefits kept as an underpin. From 1 April 2022, everyone is assumed to accrue benefits in the CARE scheme.

LGPS

The Scheme Advisory Board, with consent of the MHCLG, commissioned GAD to report on the possible impact of the McCloud/Sargeant judgement on LGPS liabilities, and in particular, those liabilities to be included in local authorities' accounts as at 31 March 2019. This followed an April 2019 CIPFA briefing note which said that local authorities should consider the materiality of the impact. This analysis was to be carried out on a "worst-case" basis, (i.e. what potential remedy would incur the highest increase in costs/liabilities). The results of this analysis are set out in GAD's report dated 10 June 2019. Although GAD were asked to carry out their analysis on a "worst-case" basis, there are a number of other potential outcomes to the case which would potentially inflict less cost to the Employer. For example, the solution proposed by the Government would only apply the underpin to all members who were active on 31 March 2012. This would have less impact than GAD's scenario (which also includes any new joiners from 1 April 2012). IAS19/FRS102 requires to place a best estimate value on liabilities and costs. Consistent with the approach adopted for the McCloud impact estimates made last year, estimates have been adjusted to include only members that were active on 31 March 2012. This is in line with that proposed in the Government's consultation.

Last year due to the impact of Covid-19 on the global financial markets, the valuation of the WMMAPF investment properties were reported on the basis of material valuation uncertainty. The Authority have not been advised that this is the case for this financial year.

- Property, Plant and Equipment – The Authority’s assets are depreciated over the useful life assigned by the external valuer. Assumptions are made about the level of repairs and maintenance which could affect the useful lives assigned to assets.

Last financial year due to the uncertainty and unprecedented set of circumstances of the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic our valuers advised that their valuations were reported on the basis of ‘material valuation uncertainty’ as per VPS 3 and VPGA 10 of the RICS Red Book Global. Consequently, less certainty, and a higher degree of caution, should be attached to the valuations than would normally be the case. Having undertaken their valuations this year they have now removed their narrative with regard to ‘material valuation uncertainty’ as the country now begins its recovery from Covid-19 pandemic.

- Provisions – The Authority has made an insurance provision for employee and public liability claims. The provision is based on the advice of the Authority’s Risk Management advisor. However, the figure could increase or decrease based on the final settlement.

5. MATERIAL ITEMS OF INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

5.1 WMMAPF – Employer Pension Contributions 2020/21 to 2022/23

On 30 April 2020 the Authority made a payment of £7.9m to the WMMAPF in respect of pension contributions for the three years from 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2023. The full payment has been accounted for as a reduction in the Authority’s net pension liability and accounting regulations require that only the amount due in relation to 2020/21 of £2.7m is recognised as a cost to the General Fund this year. Until 2022/23, there will be a difference between the net pension liability and the pension reserve, equal to the amount that has been paid in relation to future years. This difference will remain until the 2022/23 accounts.

6. EVENTS AFTER THE REPORTING PERIOD

6.1 Taxation and Government Grants

The Authority received the 2021/22 Fire Pensions Grant of £5.7m on 28 May 2021. Funding for future years may be considered as part of the Comprehensive Spending Review therefore it is not possible to confirm any grant from 2022/23 onwards.

To help respond to Covid-19 pressures and to support funding, the Authority received from the Home Office, emergency contingency fund grants of £1.4m on 20 April 2021 and £0.5m on 27 April 2021.

To enable local authorities to continue to reducing council tax bills for those least able to pay, including households financially hard-hit by the Covid-19 pandemic the Authority received from MHCLG a Local Council Tax Support grant of £1.4m on 11 May 2021.

7. EXPENDITURE AND FUNDING ANALYSIS

This shows how annual expenditure is used and funded from resources (government grants, council tax and business rates) by the Authority in comparison with those resources consumed or earned by the Authority in accordance with generally accepted accounting practices. It also shows how this expenditure is allocated for decision making purposes between the Authority's services. Income and expenditure accounted for under generally accepted accounting practices is presented more fully in the CIES.

2019/2020 * Restated				2020/2021		
Net Expenditure Chargeable to the General Fund ** £000	Adjustments Between Funding and Accounting Basis (Note 7.1) £000	Net Expenditure in the CIES £000		Net Expenditure Chargeable to the General Fund* £000	Adjustments Between Funding and Accounting Basis (Note 7.1) £000	Net Expenditure in the CIES £000
1,275	290	1,565	Democratic Representation & Brigade Managers	1,317	342	1,659
(2,613)	2,217	(396)	Corporate Charges	(3,099)	(1,196)	(4,295)
1,463	236	1,699	Strategy & Organisational Intelligence	4,520	292	4,812
756	118	874	Communications	768	126	894
7,485	731	8,216	Finance & Resources	7,458	601	8,059
5,667	413	6,080	Digital & Data	5,777	371	6,148
716	153	869	People Services	803	132	935
* 5,379	* 1,236	* 6,615	Training, Health & Wellbeing	5,650	1,057	6,707
* 3,189	* 681	* 3,870	Prevention, Preparedness & Response	3,086	617	3,703
* 5,503	* 1,658	* 7,161	Protection & Organisational Assurance	5,608	1,510	7,118
* 66,599	* 17,666	* 84,265	Command Delivery, Fire Control & Workforce Planning	65,574	16,963	82,537
95,419	25,399	120,818	Cost of Services	97,462	20,815	118,277
(91,085)	38,635	(52,450)	Other Income and Expenditure	(104,257)	41,191	(63,066)
4,334	64,034	68,368	(Surplus)/Deficit on Provision of Services	(6,795)	62,006	55,211
(40,294)			Opening General Fund Balance	(35,960)		
(35,960)			Closing General Fund Balance @ 31 March	(42,755)		

** As reported to the SET.

7.1 Adjustments between funding and accounting

2019/2020 * Restated	Adjustments for capital purposes (Note 7.2)	Net change for the pension adjustments (Note 7.3)	Other statutory differences (Note 7.4)	Total Adjustments
	£000	£000	£000	£000
Democratic Representation & Brigade Managers		308	(18)	290
Corporate Charges	4,586	(2,369)	-	2,217
Strategy & Organisational Intelligence		232	4	236
Communications		122	(4)	118
Finance & Resources		732	(1)	731
Digital & Data		428	(15)	413
People Services		142	11	153
Training, Health & Wellbeing		* 1,155	* 81	* 1,236
Prevention, Preparedness & Response		* 650	* 31	* 681
Protection & Organisational Assurance		* 1,550	* 108	* 1,658
Command Delivery, Fire Control & Workforce Planning		* 17,711	* (45)	* 17,666
Cost of Services	4,586	20,661	152	25,399
Other Income and Expenditure	(6,067)	44,138	564	38,635
Total	(1,481)	64,799	716	64,034

2020/2021	Adjustments for capital purposes (Note 7.2)	Net change for the pension adjustments (Note 7.3)	Other statutory differences (Note 7.4)	Total Adjustments
	£000	£000	£000	£000
Democratic Representation & Brigade Managers	-	318	24	342
Corporate Charges	265	(1,461)	-	(1,196)
Strategy & Organisational Intelligence	-	262	30	292
Communications	-	86	40	126
Finance & Resources	-	548	53	601
Digital & Data	-	332	39	371
People Services	-	119	13	132
Training, Health & Wellbeing	-	1,106	(49)	1,057
Prevention, Preparedness & Response	-	611	6	617
Protection & Organisational Assurance	-	1,538	(28)	1,510
Command Delivery, Fire Control & Workforce Planning	-	16,745	218	16,963
Cost of Services	265	20,204	346	20,815
Other Income and Expenditure	(3,223)	37,988	6,426	41,191
Total	(2,958)	58,192	6,772	62,006

7.2 Adjustments for capital purposes

This column adds in depreciation and impairment and revaluation gains and losses in the corporate charges services line, and within other income and expenditure:

- Other operating expenditure – adjusts for capital disposals with a transfer of income on disposal of assets and the amounts written off for those assets.
- Financing and investment income and expenditure – the statutory charges for capital financing i.e. MRP and other revenue contributions are deducted from other income and expenditure as these are not chargeable under generally accepted accounting practices.
- Taxation and non-specific grant income and expenditure – capital grants are adjusted for income not chargeable under generally accepted accounting practices. The taxation and non-specific grant income line is credited with capital grants receivable in the year without conditions or for which conditions were satisfied in the year.

7.3 Net change for the pension adjustments

Net change for the removal of pension contributions and the addition of IAS19 Employee Benefits pension related expenditure and income:

- For services this represents the removal of the employer pension contributions made by the Authority as allowed by statute and the replacement with current service costs and past service costs.
- For financing and investment income and expenditure – the net interest on the defined benefit liability is charged to the CIES.

7.4 Other statutory differences

Other statutory differences between amounts debited/credited to the CIES and amounts payable/receivable to be recognised under statute:

- For services this represents the impact of accruals for accumulating compensated absences.
- The adjustment under other income and expenditure for taxation and non-specific grant income represents the difference between what is chargeable under statutory regulations for council tax and non-domestic rates that was projected to be received at the start of the year and the income recognised under generally accepted accounting practices in the Code. This is a timing difference as any difference will be brought forward in future Surpluses or Deficits on the Collection Fund.

8. PRIOR PERIOD RESTATEMENTS

Prior Period Restatement of Service Expenditure and Income

The Code requires that the Authority shows its expenditure and income on a service basis. During the year some sections have moved service areas. This note sets out how the net expenditure and income has been restated.

Service	As reported CIES 2019/20	Adjustments	2019/20 Restated
	£000	£000	£000
Training, Health & Wellbeing	6,756	199	6,955
Prevention, Preparedness & Response	3,777	777	4,554
Protection & Organisational Assurance	7,965	(243)	7,722
Command Delivery, Fire Control & Workforce Planning	87,245	(733)	86,512
Gross Expenditure	105,743	-	105,743
Training, Health & Wellbeing	(205)	(135)	(340)
Prevention, Preparedness & Response	(511)	(173)	(684)
Protection & Organisational Assurance	(740)	179	(561)
Command Delivery, Fire Control & Workforce Planning	(2,376)	129	(2,247)
Gross Income	(3,832)	-	(3,832)
Training, Health & Wellbeing	6,551	64	6,615
Prevention, Preparedness & Response	3,266	604	3,870
Protection & Organisational Assurance	7,225	(64)	7,161
Command Delivery, Fire Control & Workforce Planning	84,869	(604)	84,265
Net Expenditure	101,911	-	101,911

9. EXPENDITURE AND INCOME ANALYSED BY NATURE

9.1 The Authority's expenditure and income is analysed as follows:

2019/2020 £000		2020/2021 £000
	Expenditure	
111,485	Employee expenses	115,087
16,121	Other services expenses	15,196
4,586	Depreciation, amortisation and impairment	264
44,138	Pensions interest cost and expected return on pension assets	37,988
1,922	Interest payments	1,830
329	Other operating expenditure	350
178,581	Total Expenditure	170,715
	Income	
(4,224)	Fees, charges and other service income	(3,727)
(426)	Interest and investment income	(118)
(43,318)	Council tax income	(43,516)
(9,932)	Non-domestic rates income from West Midlands Local Authorities	(5,099)
(52,259)	Government grants and contributions	(62,956)
(54)	Disposal of non-current assets	(88)
(110,213)	Total Income	(115,504)
68,368	(Surplus)/Deficit on the provision of services	55,211

9.2 Revenue from contracts with service recipients

The Authority recognises revenue from contracts with service recipients in accordance with the provisions of IFRS 15 Revenue from Contracts with Customers as reflected in the Code of Practice. Revenue is recognised in the financial year that services are provided in accordance with the performance obligations of the contract.

Amounts included in the CIES for contracts with service recipients:

	2019/2020 £000	2020/2021 £000
Revenue from contracts with service recipients:		
Service Delivery – provision of Fire Control	996	1,042
Total included in CIES	996	1,042

Amounts included in the Balance Sheet for contracts with service recipients:

	2019/2020 £000	2020/2021 £000
Receivables included in short term debtors	-	(26)
Payables included in short term creditors	-	-
Total Included in Net Assets	-	(26)

The value of revenue that is expected to be recognised in the future related to performance obligations that are unsatisfied at the end of the year is:

	2019/2020 £000	2020/2021 £000
Not Later than one year	1,016	1,036
Later than one year	1,036	1,059
Amounts of transaction price fully unsatisfied	2,052	2,095

Revenue relates to the recovery of 30% of the total running costs of the Fire Control function. The performance obligations of the contract are met when the services are rendered. An invoice is raised for a fixed amount each month for the service in the month that the service is provided and adjusted at year end for variations.

10. ADJUSTMENTS BETWEEN ACCOUNTING BASIS AND FUNDING BASIS UNDER REGULATIONS

This note details the adjustments that are made to the total comprehensive income and expenditure recognised by the Authority in the year in accordance with proper accounting practice to the resources that are specified by statutory provisions as being available to the Authority to meet future capital and revenue expenditure.

The following sets out a description of the reserves that the adjustments are made against.

General Fund Balance

The General Fund is the statutory fund into which all the receipts of an authority are required to be paid and out of which all liabilities of the authority are to be met, except to the extent that statutory rules might provide otherwise. These rules can also specify the financial year in which liabilities and payments should impact on the General Fund Balance, which is not necessarily in accordance with proper accounting practice. The General Fund Balance therefore summarises the resources that the Authority is statutorily empowered to spend on its services or on capital investment (or the deficit of resources that the Authority is required to recover) at the end of the financial year.

Capital Receipts Reserve

The Capital Receipts Reserve holds the proceeds from the disposal of land or other assets, which are restricted by statute from being used other than to fund new capital expenditure or to be set aside to finance historical capital expenditure. The balance on the reserve shows the resources that have yet to be applied for these purposes at the year-end.

Capital Grants Unapplied

The Capital Grants Unapplied Account (Reserve) holds the grants and contributions received towards capital projects for which the Authority has met the conditions that would otherwise require repayment of the monies but which have yet to be applied to meet expenditure. The balance is restricted by grant terms as to the capital expenditure against which it can be applied and/or the financial year in which this can take place.

2019/2020	Usable Reserves		
	General Fund Balance	Capital Receipts Reserve	Capital Grants Unapplied
Adjustments to Revenue Resources	£000	£000	£000
Amounts by which income and expenditure included in the CIES are different from revenue for the year calculated in accordance with statutory requirements:			
Pension costs transferred to/(from) the Pensions Reserve	(64,799)	-	-
Council tax and NDR transfers to/(from) Collection Fund Adjustment Account	(564)	-	-
Holiday pay transferred to the Accumulated Absences Reserve	(152)	-	-
Reversal of entries included in the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services in relation to capital expenditure (these items are charged to the Capital Adjustment Account)	(4,603)	-	-
Total Adjustments to Revenue Resources	(70,118)	-	-
Adjustments between Revenue and Capital Resources			
Transfer of non-current asset sale proceeds from revenue to the Capital Receipts Reserve	-	-	-
Statutory provision for the repayment of debt (transfer from the Capital Adjustment Account)	884	-	-
Capital expenditure financed from revenue balances (transfer to the Capital Adjustment Account)	5,200	-	-
Total Adjustments between Revenue and Capital Resources	6,084	-	-
Adjustments to Capital Resources			
Use of the Capital Receipts Reserve to finance capital expenditure	-	-	-
Application of capital grants to finance capital expenditure	-	-	83
Total Adjustments to Capital Resources	-	-	83
Total Adjustments	(64,034)	-	83

2020/2021	Usable Reserves		
	General Fund Balance	Capital Receipts Reserve	Capital Grants Unapplied
Adjustments to Revenue Resources	£000	£000	£000
Amounts by which income and expenditure included in the CIES are different from revenue for the year calculated in accordance with statutory requirements:			
Pension costs transferred to/(from) the Pensions Reserve	(58,192)	-	-
Council tax and NDR transfers to/(from) Collection Fund Adjustment Account	(6,426)	-	-
Holiday pay transferred to the Accumulated Absences Reserve	(346)	-	-
Reversal of entries included in the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services in relation to capital expenditure (these items are charged to the Capital Adjustment Account)	(283)	-	-
Total Adjustments to Revenue Resources	(65,247)	-	-
Adjustments between Revenue and Capital Resources			
Transfer of non-current asset sale proceeds from revenue to the Capital Receipts Reserve	-	-	-
Statutory provision for the repayment of debt (transfer from the Capital Adjustment Account)	937	-	-
Capital expenditure financed from revenue balances (transfer to the Capital Adjustment Account)	2,304	-	-
Total Adjustments between Revenue and Capital Resources	3,241	-	-
Adjustments to Capital Resources			
Use of the Capital Receipts Reserve to finance capital expenditure	-	-	-
Application of capital grants to finance capital expenditure	-	-	-
Total Adjustments to Capital Resources	-	-	-
Total Adjustments	(62,006)	-	-

11. MOVEMENTS IN EARMARKED RESERVES

This note sets out the amounts set aside within the General Fund Balance for earmarked reserves to provide financing for future expenditure plans and the amounts posted back from earmarked reserves to meet General Fund expenditure in both 2019/20 and 2020/21.

General Fund:	Balance at 31 March 2019 £000	Transfers out 2019/20 £000	Transfers in 2019/20 £000	Balance at 31 March 2020 £000	Transfers out 2020/21 £000	Transfers in 2020/21 £000	Balance at 31 March 2021 £000
Capital							
Capital Program Shortfall	12,129	1,034	2,784	13,879	2,253	675	12,301
Fire Station Investment	4,018	3,253	-	765	727	-	38
Occupational Health Relocation	200	124	-	76	132	56	-
Insurance							
Insurance Reserve	7,188	245	-	6,943	238	100	6,805
NDR & Local Tax Income Guarantee							
S31 Business Rates Relief	-	-	-	-	-	4,234	4,234
Local Tax Income Guarantee	-	-	-	-	-	623	623
Strategy & Organisational Intel.							
Project Management/Support	175	165	97	107	236	238	109
New Risks	60	19	-	41	-	-	41
Organisational Intel.	63	63	73	73	76	40	37
Communications							
Communications/Media Events	31	43	19	7	-	198	205
Community Engagement	37	63	173	147	142	38	43
Finance & Resources							
Property Maintenance	1,056	188	12	880	207	-	673
Agile Working	-	-	-	-	-	300	300
Vehicle Chargers	-	-	-	-	-	180	180
Pension Admin Grant	-	-	-	-	-	124	124
Loss of Use Recovery	77	68	57	66	69	13	10
Project Management/Support	-	25	39	14	114	100	-
Procurement of Operational Equip.	97	97	66	66	66	-	-
Other	706	708	2	-	-	-	-
Digital & Data							
Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP)	2,026	184	61	1,903	456	33	1,480
ESMCP-Local Transition	1,650	660	331	1,321	186	207	1,342
Other IT Equip. & System Upgrades	365	357	346	354	186	353	521
Staffing	152	145	145	152	102	468	518
Incident Reporting System (IRS)	200	-	-	200	56	250	394
Office 365 Development	180	40	-	140	110	-	30
Enabling Future Technology	302	178	-	124	124	-	-
Management of Information	30	30	-	-	-	-	-
Vision 4 Data Cleansing	14	14	-	-	-	-	-
Firelink Grant	341	341	-	-	-	-	-
People Services							
Safeguarding Arrangements	-	-	56	56	7	-	49
Project Management/Support	-	-	-	-	-	30	30
Training, Health & Wellbeing							
Staff Training & Development	157	345	313	125	129	116	112
Training Equipment/Facilities	122	107	-	15	3	85	97
Health & Wellbeing	211	124	14	101	78	-	23

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General Fund: (Continued)	Balance at 31 March 2019 £000	Transfers out 2019/20 £000	Transfers in 2019/20 £000	Balance at 31 March 2020 £000	Transfers out 2020/21 £000	Transfers in 2020/21 £000	Balance at 31 March 2021 £000
Prevention, Preparedness & Response							
Procurement of Operational Equip	-	-	-	-	-	2,305	2,305
COVID 19 Funding	-	-	459	459	3,455	4,331	1,335
Project Management/Support	-	135	643	508	215	189	482
Community Partnerships	351	235	99	215	202	130	143
Community Safety	88	101	113	100	143	170	127
Education Materials/Facilities	56	33	2	25	0	15	40
Youth Services	-	94	104	10	102	92	-
Protection & Organisational Assurance							
SSRI/RIDGE	-	-	400	400	455	1,287	1,232
Project Management/Support	12	100	185	97	165	231	163
Fire Safety	43	79	59	23	84	136	75
Legal Services	145	55	-	90	90	-	-
Trauma Care Training	10	10	-	-	-	-	-
Command Delivery, Fire Control & WP							
Tech Rescue	774	624	260	410	93	150	467
Command Delivery	314	626	557	245	425	409	229
TOTAL	33,380	10,712	7,469	30,137	11,126	17,906	36,917

Further information on the Reserves Strategy can be found at
<https://www.wmfs.net/about-us/openness/documents/>

12. UNUSABLE RESERVES

31 March 2020 £000		31 March 2021 £000
(45,321)	Revaluation Reserve	(42,072)
(62,693)	Capital Adjustment Account	(66,523)
1,697,233	Pensions Reserve	1,871,451
(237)	Collection Fund Adjustment Account	6,189
1,141	Accumulated Absences Account	1,487
1,590,123	Total Unusable Reserves	1,770,532

12.1 Revaluation Reserve

The Revaluation Reserve contains the gains made by the Authority arising from increases in the value of its property, vehicles, plant, and intangible assets. The balance is reduced when assets with accumulated gains are:

- revalued downwards or impaired and the gains are lost,
- used in the provision of services and the gains are consumed through depreciation, or
- disposed of and the gains are realised.

2019/2020 £000		2020/2021 £000
(42,683)	Balance 1 April	(45,321)
(9,380)	Upward revaluation of assets	(8,391)
5,897	Downward revaluation of assets and impairment losses not charged to the Surplus/Deficit on the Provision of Services	10,768
(46,166)	Surplus or deficit on revaluation of non-current assets not posted to the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services	(42,944)
845	Amount written off to the Capital Adjustment Account	872
(45,321)	Balance 31 March	(42,072)

12.2 Capital Adjustment Account

The Capital Adjustment Account absorbs the timing differences arising from the different arrangements for accounting for the consumption of non-current assets and for financing the acquisition, construction or additions to those assets under statutory provisions. The Account is debited with the cost of acquisition, construction or subsequent costs as depreciation, impairment losses and amortisations are charged to the CIES (with reconciling postings from the Revaluation Reserve to convert current and fair value figures to a historical cost basis). The Account is credited with the amounts set aside by the Authority as finance for the costs of acquisition, construction and subsequent costs.

The Account contains accumulated gains and losses on Investment Properties and gains recognised on donated assets that have yet to be consumed by the Authority.

The note below provides details of the source of all the transactions posted to the Account, apart from those involving the Revaluation Reserve.

2019/2020 £000		2020/2021 £000
(60,284)	Balance 1 April	(62,693)
	Reversal of items relating to capital expenditure debited or credited to the CIES:	
4,152	Charges for depreciation and impairment of non-current assets	3,876
403	Revaluation losses on Property, Vehicles, Plant and current assets	(3,642)
31	Amortisation of intangible assets	31
17	Amounts of non-current assets written off on disposal or sale as part of the gain/loss on disposal to the CIES	18
(55,681)		(62,410)
(845)	Adjusting amounts written out of the Revaluation Reserve	(872)
(56,526)	Net written out amount of the cost of non-current assets consumed in the year	(63,282)
	Capital financing applied in the year:	
-	Use of the Capital Receipts Reserve to finance new capital expenditure	-
-	Capital grants and contributions credited to the CIES that have been applied to capital financing	-
(83)	Application of grants to capital financing from the Capital Grants Unapplied Account	-
(884)	Statutory provision for the financing of capital investment charged against the General Fund	(937)
(5,200)	Capital expenditure charged against the General Fund and HRA balances	(2,304)
(62,693)	Balance 31 March	(66,523)

12.3 Pensions Reserve

Ref: AU/AC/2021/90807212

The Pensions Reserve absorbs the timing differences arising from the different arrangements for accounting for post-employment benefits and for funding benefits in accordance with statutory provisions. The Authority accounts for post-employment benefits in the CIES as the benefits are earned by employees accruing years of service, updating the liabilities recognised to reflect inflation, changing assumptions and investment returns on any resources set aside to meet the costs. However, statutory arrangements require benefits earned to be financed as the Authority makes employer's contributions to the pension fund or eventually pays any pensions for which it is directly responsible. The debit balance on the Pensions Reserve therefore shows a substantial shortfall in the benefits earned by past and current employees and the resources the Authority has set aside to meet them. The statutory arrangements will ensure that funding will have been set aside by the time the benefits come to be paid.

2019/2020 £000		2020/2021 £000
1,807,689	Balance 1 April	1,697,233
(175,255)	Re-measurements of the net defined benefit liability/(asset)	116,026
82,051	Reversal of items relating to retirement benefits debited or credited to the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services in the CIES	75,583
(17,252)	Employer's pensions contributions and direct payments to pensioners payable in the year	(17,391)
1,697,233	Balance 31 March	1,871,451

12.4 Collection Fund Adjustment Account

The Collection Fund Adjustment Account manages the differences arising from the recognition of council tax and NDR in the CIES as it falls due from council tax payers and business rates payers compared with the statutory arrangements for paying across amounts to the General Fund from the Collection Fund.

2019/2020 £000		2020/2021 £000
(801)	Balance 1 April	(237)
388	Amount by which council tax income credited to the CIES is different from council tax income calculated for the year in accordance with statutory requirements	1,435
176	Amount by which NDR income credited to the CIES is different from NDR income calculated for the year in accordance with statutory requirements	4,991
(237)	Balance 31 March	6,189

12.5 Accumulated Absences Account

Ref: AU/AC/2021/90807212

The Accumulated Absences Account absorbs the differences that would otherwise arise on the General Fund Balance from accruing for compensated absences earned but not taken in the year, e.g. annual leave entitlement carried forward at 31 March. Statutory arrangements require that the impact on the General Fund Balance is neutralised by transfers to or from the Account.

2019/2020			2020/2021	
£000	£000		£000	£000
	989	Balance 1 April		1,141
(989)		Settlement or cancellation of accrual made at the end of the preceding year	(1,141)	
1,141		Amounts accrued at the end of the current year	1,487	
	152	Amount by which officer remuneration charged to the CIES on an accruals basis is different from remuneration chargeable in the year in accordance with statutory requirements		346
	1,141	Balance 31 March		1,487

13. OTHER OPERATING EXPENDITURE

2019/2020		2020/2021
£000		£000
(37)	(Gains)/losses on the disposal of non-current assets	(70)
312	Levies	332
275	Total	262

14. FINANCING AND INVESTMENT INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

2019/2020 £000		2020/2021 £000
1,922	Interest payable and similar charges	1,830
44,138	Net interest on the net defined benefit liability/(asset)	37,988
(426)	Interest receivable and similar income	(118)
45,634	Total	39,700

15. TAXATION AND NON SPECIFIC GRANT INCOMES

2019/2020 £000		2020/2021 £000
(43,318)	Council tax income	(43,516)
(9,932)	NDR income from West Midland Local Authorities	(5,099)
(18,857)	Revenue support grant	(19,164)
(25,658)	Business rates retention scheme grants	(30,430)
(594)	Covid-19 Emergency funding grant	(4,037)
-	Covid-19 Local tax income guarantee grant	(624)
-	Covid-19 Sales, fees and charges grant	(158)
-	Capital grants and contributions	-
(98,359)	Total	(103,028)

16. PROPERTY, VEHICLES, PLANT AND EQUIPMENT

16.1 Comparative Movements in 2019/2020

2019/2020	Other Land and Buildings	Vehicles, Plant, Furniture and Equipment	Surplus Assets	Assets Under Construction	Total Property, Vehicles, Plant and Equipment
Cost or Valuation	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
At 1 April 2019	120,675	30,378	2,152	1,875	155,080
Additions	2,916	482	-	1,885	5,283
Revaluation increases/ (decreases) recognised in the Revaluation Reserve	1,031	-	31	-	1,062
Revaluation increases/ (decreases) recognised in the Surplus/Deficit on the Provision of Services	(403)	-	-	-	(403)
De-recognition – Disposals	-	(1,482)	(46)	-	(1,528)
Assets reclassified (to) / from Held for Sale	-	-	-	-	-
Other movements in cost or valuation	-	1,420	985	(2,405)	-
At 31 March 2020	124,219	30,798	3,122	1,355	159,494
Accumulated Depreciation and Impairment					
At 1 April 2019	-	23,502	383	-	23,885
Depreciation charge	2,394	1,731	27	-	4,152
Depreciation written out to the Revaluation Reserve	(2,394)	-	(27)	-	(2,421)
De-recognition – Disposals	-	(1,465)	(46)	-	(1,511)
De-recognition – Other	-	(984)	984	-	-
At 31 March 2020	-	22,784	1,321	-	24,105
Net Book Value					
At 31 March 2019	120,675	6,876	1,769	1,875	131,195
At 31 March 2020	124,219	8,014	1,801	1,355	135,389

16.2 Movements on Balances 2020/2021

2020/21	Other Land and Buildings	Vehicles, Plant, Furniture and Equipment	Surplus Assets	Assets Under Construction	Total Property, Vehicles, Plant and Equipment
Cost or Valuation	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
At 1 April 2020	124,219	30,798	3,122	1,355	159,494
Additions	1,613	300	-	391	2,304
Revaluation increases/ (decreases) recognised in the Revaluation Reserve	(5,166)	-	338	-	(4,828)
Revaluation increases/ (decreases) recognised in the Surplus/Deficit on the Provision of Services	3,640	-	2	-	3,642
De-recognition – Disposals	-	(565)	(495)	-	(1,060)
Assets reclassified (to) / from Held for Sale	-	-	-	-	-
Other movements in cost or valuation	-	(175)	210	(35)	-
At 31 March 2021	124,306	30,358	3,177	1,711	159,552
Accumulated Depreciation and Impairment					
At 1 April 2020	-	22,784	1,321	-	24,105
Depreciation charge	2,423	1,425	28	-	3,876
Depreciation written out to the Revaluation Reserve	(2,423)	-	(28)	-	(2,451)
De-recognition – Disposals	-	(547)	(495)	-	(1,042)
De-recognition – Other	-	(210)	210	-	-
At 31 March 2021	-	23,452	1,036	-	24,488
Net Book Value					
At 31 March 2020	124,219	8,014	1,801	1,355	135,389
At 31 March 2021	124,306	6,906	2,141	1,711	135,064

16.3 Depreciation

The depreciation rates used in the table above are consistent with those described in the Ref: AU/AC/2021/90807212

accounting policies statement.

16.4 Capital Commitments

As at the 31st March 2021, the Authority approved capital expenditure in future years of £16.096m of which £1.353m has been contractually committed leaving £14.743m as the uncommitted sum which relates to expenditure on property, plant and equipment.

The largest of these contractual commitments represents:

	£000
• Vehicle Replacements	439
• Training Facility Improvements	386

16.5 Revaluations

The Authority had all its property assets valued as at 31st March 2021 based on current value. The work was completed by qualified external valuers, WH&E. Valuations were carried out in accordance with the methodologies and bases for estimation set out in the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) Professional Standards manual (The Red Book) and is International Valuation Standards compliant. The use of the manual means there is certainty with the valuation process.

Valuations of vehicles, plant, furniture and equipment are based on current prices where there is an active second-hand market or latest list prices adjusted for the condition of the asset.

17. INTANGIBLE ASSETS

The movement on Intangible Asset balances during 2019/20 and 2020/21 is as follows:

	2019/20 Other Assets £000	2020/21 Other Assets £000
Balance at start of year:		
Gross carrying amounts	797	797
Accumulated amortisation	(654)	(685)
Net carrying amount at end of year	143	112
Additions:		
Purchases	-	-
Amortisation for the period	(31)	(31)
Net carrying amount at end of year	112	81
Comprising of:		
Gross carrying amounts	797	797
Accumulated amortisation	(685)	(716)
Net carrying amount at end of year	112	81

18. FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS

18.1 Balance Sheet

The following categories of financial instrument are carried in the Balance Sheet:

Financial Assets	Non-Current				Current				Total	
	Investments		Debtors		Investments		Debtors		31-Mar 2020 £000	31-Mar 2021 £000
	31-Mar 2020 £000	31-Mar 2021 £000	31-Mar 2020 £000	31-Mar 2021 £000	31-Mar 2020 £000	31-Mar 2021 £000	31-Mar 2020 £000	31-Mar 2021 £000		
Amortised Cost	-	-	-	-	45,097	36,614	1,375	1,176	46,472	37,790
Total financial assets	-	-	-	-	45,097	36,614	1,375	1,176	46,472	37,790
Assets not defined as financial instruments	-	-	-	-	-	-	13,285	19,716	13,285	19,716
Total	-	-	-	-	45,097	36,614	14,660	20,892	59,757	57,506

Financial Liabilities	Non-Current				Current				Total	
	Borrowings		Creditors		Borrowings		Creditors		31-Mar 2020 £000	31-Mar 2021 £000
	31-Mar 2020 £000	31-Mar 2021 £000	31-Mar 2020 £000	31-Mar 2021 £000	31-Mar 2020 £000	31-Mar 2021 £000	31-Mar 2020 £000	31-Mar 2021 £000		
Amortised Cost	(33,675)	(31,535)	-	-	(2,172)	(2,256)	(4,337)	(4,494)	(40,184)	(38,285)
Total financial liabilities	(33,675)	(31,535)	-	-	(2,172)	(2,256)	(4,337)	(4,494)	(40,184)	(38,285)
Liabilities not defined as financial instruments	-	-	-	-	-	-	(7,461)	(14,003)	(7,461)	(14,003)
Total	(33,675)	(31,535)	-	-	(2,172)	(2,256)	(11,798)	(18,497)	(47,645)	(52,288)

18.2 Income, Expense, Gains and Losses

	2019/20		2020/21	
	Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services £000	Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure £000	Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services £000	Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure £000
Amortised Cost:				
(Gains)/Losses on de-recognition	(37)	-	(70)	-
Interest revenue	(426)	-	(118)	-
Interest expense	1,922	-	1,830	-
Total	1,459	-	1,642	-

18.3 Loans Outstanding

The Authority has its own portfolio of loans payable directly to the PWLB. Loans are also outstanding to Dudley MBC, which represent the Authority's share of the outstanding loan debt of the WMCC abolished in 1986.

Under accounting requirements, the financial instruments shown in the balance sheet are shown at "amortised cost". This is the carrying amount and comprises the principal amount borrowed and adjusted for breakage costs or stepped interest loans (measured by an effective interest rate calculation) and includes accrued interest.

The amounts owing are as follows:

	2019/2020		2020/2021	
	Long-Term £000	Short-Term £000	Long-Term £000	Short-Term £000
PWLB	(31,425)	(1,687)	(29,653)	(1,772)
Dudley MBC	(2,250)	(335)	(1,882)	(369)
Total Principal Amount	(33,675)	(2,022)	(31,535)	(2,141)
Plus Accrued Interest	-	(150)	-	(115)
Total Amortised Cost	(33,675)	(2,172)	(31,535)	(2,256)

18.4 Fair Value Measurement

IFRS 13 requires that local authorities measure some of their financial instruments at fair value and to apply the relevant input levels of the fair value hierarchy that are detailed in 1.9.3 of the Authority's accounting policies.

18.4.1 Fair Value of Assets and Liabilities at Amortised Costs

Except for the financial liabilities and financial assets carried at fair value, all other financial liabilities and financial assets held by the authority are carried in the balance sheet at amortised cost. Their fair value can be assessed by calculating the present value of cash flows that will take place over the remaining life of the instruments, using the following assumptions:

- Actual ranges of interest rates at 31st March 2021 of 8.625% to 3.95% for loans from the PWLB;
- No early repayment or impairment is recognised;
- Where an instrument has a maturity of less than twelve months, the fair value is taken to be the principal outstanding or the billed amount.
- The fair value of trade and other receivables is taken to be the invoiced or billed amount.

18.4.2 Financial Liabilities

The fair values are as follows:

	2019/2020		2020/2021	
	Carry Amount £000	Fair Value £000	Carry Amount £000	Fair Value £000
PWLB Short & Long Term Loans	(33,112)	(66,870)	(31,425)	(57,239)
Dudley MBC (WMCC)	(2,585)	(2,585)	(2,251)	(2,251)
Total	(35,697)	(69,455)	(33,676)	(59,490)

Overall, the fair value for 2020/2021 is greater than the carrying amount because the Authority's portfolio of loans includes several fixed rate loans where the interest rate payable is higher than the rates available for similar loans in the market at the balance sheet date.

The fair values for the financial liabilities have been determined by for loans from the PWLB, Link Asset Services provide fair value estimates using both redemption and new borrowing (certainty rate) discount rates. The fair value of WMCC debt is taken to be the same as the amount of principal outstanding.

18.4.3 Financial Assets

The carrying amount and the fair value of the Authority's financial assets are the same due to the short term nature of the transactions.

18.4.4 Fair Value Hierarchy for Financial Assets and Financial Liabilities

The fair value for financial liabilities and financial assets that are not measured at fair value included in Levels 2 in the table below have been arrived at using a discounted cash flow analysis with the most significant inputs being the discount rate.

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	Quoted prices in active markets for identical assets	Other significant observable inputs	Significant unobservable inputs	TOTAL 31 March 2020
	(Level 1) £000	(Level 2) £000	(Level 3) £000	£000
<u>FINANCIAL LIABILITIES</u>				
Loans	-	(69,455)	-	(69,455)
Plus Accrued Interest	-	(150)	-	(150)
Total Borrowing	-	(69,605)	-	(69,605)
Creditors	-	(4,337)	-	(4,337)
Total Financial Liabilities	-	(73,942)	-	(73,942)
<u>FINANCIAL ASSETS</u>				
Cash & Cash Equivalents	-	45,097	-	45,097
Total Investments	-	45,097	-	45,097
Debtors	-	1,375	-	1,375
Total Financial Assets	-	46,472	-	46,472

	Quoted prices in active markets for identical assets	Other significant observable inputs	Significant unobservable inputs	TOTAL 31 March 2021
	(Level 1) £000	(Level 2) £000	(Level 3) £000	£000
<u>FINANCIAL LIABILITIES</u>				
Loans	-	(59,490)	-	(59,490)
Plus Accrued Interest	-	(115)	-	(115)
Total Borrowing	-	(59,605)	-	(59,605)
Creditors	-	(4,494)	-	(4,494)
Total Financial Liabilities	-	(64,099)	-	(64,099)
<u>FINANCIAL ASSETS</u>				
Cash & Cash Equivalents	-	36,614	-	36,614
Total Investments	-	36,614	-	36,614
Debtors	-	1,176	-	1,176
Total Financial Assets	-	37,790	-	37,790

18.5 Nature and extent of risks arising from Financial Instruments

The Authority's activities expose it to a variety of financial risks:

Credit risk – the possibility that other parties might fail to pay amounts due to the Authority.

Liquidity risk – the possibility that the Authority might not have the funds available to meet its commitments to make payments.

Market risk – the possibility that financial loss might arise for the Authority because of changes in such measurements as interest rates.

18.5.1 Credit risk

Credit risk arises from deposits with banks and financial institutions, as well as credit exposures to the Authority's customers.

The Authority does not generally allow credit for customers, such that £0.614m of the £20.892m Debtors balance is past its due date for payment. The past due amount can be analysed by age as follows:

	31 March 2020 £000	31 March 2021 £000
Less than three months	554	571
Three to six months	20	6
Six months to one year	13	19
More than one year	6	18
Total	593	614

18.5.2 Liquidity risk

As the Authority has ready access to borrowings, there is no significant risk that it will be unable to raise finance to meet its commitments under financial instruments.

All trade and other payables are due to be paid in less than one year.

18.5.3 Market risk

The Authority is exposed to risk in terms of its exposure to interest rate movements on its borrowings and investments.

During 2020/21, if interest rates on investments had been 0.25% lower with all other variables held constant, the impact on the CIES would be a fall in interest received of £0.119m (2019/2020 £0.122m). The impact of a 0.25% increase in interest rates would be the same but reversed, interest would increase by £0.119m (2019/2020 £0.122m).

The Authority's borrowing is at fixed rates, therefore there is little flexibility for any movement and impact on the CIES.

19. INVENTORIES

	General Stores		Mechanical Stocks		Heating Oil Petrol/ Diesel		Total	
	2019/20 £000	2020/21 £000	2019/20 £000	2020/21 £000	2019/20 £000	2020/21 £000	2019/20 £000	2020/21 £000
Balance outstanding at start of year	425	441	163	162	100	86	688	689
Purchases	578	824	320	293	576	326	1,474	1,443
Recognised as an expense in the year	(562)	(544)	(321)	(295)	(590)	(311)	(1,473)	(1,150)
Written off balances	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Balance outstanding at year-end	441	722	162	160	86	101	689	983

Inventories are valued at the year end and included in the balance sheet at latest price.

20. SHORT TERM DEBTORS

31 March 2020 £000		31 March 2021 £000
	Financial Instruments	
587	Trade receivables	567
738	Accrued income	527
50	Other receivable amounts	82
1,375	Total Financial Instruments	1,176
	Other Debtors	
6,267	Home Office - Pension Fund top up grant	6,304
-	Home Office – Covid-19 emergency funding grants	1,845
-	Home Office - Other grants	155
-	MHCLG - Section 31 business rates relief grant	4,234
-	MHCLG - Covid-19 Local tax income guarantee grant	624
5,703	Collection Fund	5,489
838	Prepayments	910
477	Sandwell MBC - VAT	155
13,285	Total Other Debtors	19,716
14,660	Total Debtors	20,892

The past due but not impaired amount for local taxation (council tax and non-domestic rates) can be analysed by age as follows:

	31 March 2020 £000	31 March 2021 £000
Less than one year	2,190	2,677
One to two years	851	1,227
Two to six years	1,443	1,421
More than six years	444	138
Total	4,928	5,463

21. CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS

The balance of Cash and Cash Equivalents is made up of the following elements:

31 March 2020 £000		31 March 2021 £000
10	Cash held by the Authority	10
(496)	Bank current account	(138)
45,583	Bank call account	36,742
45,097	Total Cash and Cash Equivalents	36,614

22. CREDITORS

31 March 2020 £000		31 March 2021 £000
	Creditors – Revenue	
	Financial Instruments	
(3,304)	Other entities and individuals	(3,455)
(205)	Central government bodies	(227)
(208)	Other local authorities	(247)
(3,717)	Total Financial Instruments	(3,929)
	Other Creditors	
(5,467)	Collection fund	(11,678)
(1,942)	Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs	(2,217)
(52)	Deferred income	(108)
(7,461)	Total Other Creditors	(14,003)
(11,178)	Total Creditors - Revenue	(17,932)
	Creditors – Capital	
	Financial Instruments	
(620)	Other entities and individuals	(565)
(620)	Total Creditors – Capital	(565)
(11,798)	Total Creditors	(18,497)

23. PROVISIONS

An insurance provision of (£0.664m) has been provided for previous years' employee and public liability claims, it is held in line with recommendations of the actuarial valuation. Whilst the Actuary can give advice about the total value of claims they are not able to confirm when these will be submitted.

24. CASH FLOW STATEMENT – OPERATING ACTIVITIES

24.1 The cash flows for operating activities include the following items:

2019/2020 £000		2020/2021 £000
(436)	Interest received	(426)
1,922	Interest paid	1,865

24.2 The surplus or deficit on the provision of services has been adjusted for the following non-cash movements:

2019/2020 £000		2020/2021 £000
(4,152)	Depreciation	(3,876)
(403)	Impairment and downward valuations	3,642
(31)	Amortisation	(31)
-	(Increase)/decrease in impairment for doubtful debts	(11)
(4,124)	(Increase)/decrease in Creditors	(4,408)
(2,200)	Increase/(decrease) in Debtors	6,243
-	Increase/(decrease) in Inventories	294
(67,340)	Movement in pension liability	(52,943)
(238)	Contributions to Provisions	-
(17)	Carrying amount of non-current assets and non-current assets held for sale, sold or de-recognised	(18)
(78,505)	Net cash (inflows)/outflows from adjustments to net surplus or deficit on the provision of services for non-cash movements	(51,108)

- 24.3** The surplus or deficit on the provision of services has been adjusted for the following items that are investing and financing activities:

2019/2020 £000		2020/2021 £000
50	Proceeds from the sale of property, vehicles, plant and equipment, investment property and intangible assets	77
-	Capital Grants credited to Surplus or Deficit on the provision of services	-
50	Net cash (inflows)/outflows from adjustments for items included in the net surplus or deficit on the provision of services that are investing and financing activities	77

25. CASH FLOW STATEMENT - INVESTING ACTIVITIES

2019/2020 £000		2020/2021 £000
5,037	Purchase of property, vehicles, plant and equipment, investment property and intangible assets	2,358
(50)	Proceeds from the sale of property, vehicles, plant and equipment, investment property and intangible assets	(77)
-	Capital Grants Received	-
4,987	Net cash (inflows)/outflows from investing activities	2,281

26. CASH FLOW STATEMENT - FINANCING ACTIVITIES

2019/2020 £000		2020/2021 £000
305	Repayments of short and long term borrowing	2,022

27. RECONCILIATION OF LIABILITIES ARISING FROM FINANCING ACTIVITIES

	31 March 2019 £000	Financing cash flows £000	Non-cash changes £000	31 March 2020 £000
Long term borrowings	(35,697)	-	2,022	(33,675)
Short term borrowings	(455)	305	(2,022)	(2,172)
Total liabilities from financing activities	(36,152)	305	-	(35,847)

	31 March 2020 £000	Financing cash flows £000	Non-cash changes £000	31 March 2021 £000
Long term borrowings	(33,675)	-	2,140	(31,535)
Short term borrowings	(2,172)	2,022	(2,106)	(2,256)
Total liabilities from financing activities	(35,847)	2,022	34	(33,791)

28. OFFICERS' REMUNERATION

The remuneration paid to the Authority's senior employees is as follows:

Total (Including pension) 2019/2020 £		Salary £	Expenses Allowances £	Total (excluding pension) £	Pension £	Total (including pension) 2020/2021 £
	Senior Officer whose salary is £150,000 or more per year:					
241,821	CFO – Phil Loach	178,654	1,338	179,992	66,638	246,630
	Senior Officers' whose salary is less than £150,000 but equal or more than £50,000 per year:					
49,227	Deputy CFO - Director Service Support (Note 1)	-	-	-	-	-
78,437	Deputy CFO – Community Risk Reduction Programme Executive	146,177	1,380	147,557	41,225	188,782
185,118	Assistant CFO – Enabling Services Programme Executive	137,111	1,580	138,691	48,022	186,713
157,013	Assistant CFO – People Programme Executive	134,264	1,339	135,603	38,668	174,271
124,033	Strategic Enabler of Finance and Resources	107,457	-	107,457	21,921	129,378
114,549	Strategic Enabler Culture (Temporary – Note 2)	-	-	-	-	-
-	Strategic Enabler Portfolio (Note 3)	79,238	1,339	80,577	20,561	101,138
70,490	Strategic Enabler Governance and Strategy	62,240	-	62,240	12,459	74,699
1,020,688		845,141	6,976	852,117	249,494	1,101,611

Note 1 – Former Deputy CFO retired on 30 June 2019.

Note 2 – Temporary promotion to Assistant CFO (22 July 2019 to 2 January 2020). Left the Authority on 2 February 2020.

Note 3 – Comparatives not shown for 2019/2020 as this is a new position from 7 October 2020.

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The Authority's other employees receiving more than £50,000 remuneration for the year (excluding employer's pension contributions) were paid the following amounts:

Remuneration band	2019/20 Number of employees	2020/21 Number of employees
£ 50,000 to £ 54,999	27	42
£ 55,000 to £ 59,999	29	37
£ 60,000 to £ 64,999	14	10
£ 65,000 to £ 69,999	5	16
£ 70,000 to £ 74,999	3	2
£ 75,000 to £ 79,999	3	1
£ 80,000 to £ 84,999	1	3
£ 85,000 to £ 89,999	-	1
Total	82	112

The table above excludes the senior officers who are reported separately.

The numbers of exit packages with total cost per band and total cost of the compulsory and other redundancies are set out in the table below:

(a) Exit package cost band (including special payments)	(b) Number of compulsory redundancies		(c) Number of other departures agreed		(d) Total number of exit packages by cost band [(b) +(c)]		(e) Total cost of exit packages in each band £	
	2019/20	2020/21	2019/20	2020/21	2019/20	2020/21	2019/20	2020/21
£0 - £20,000	-	-	14	-	14	-	15,574	-
£20,001 - £40,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
£40,001 - £60,000	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	50,002
£60,001 - £80,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
£80,001 - £100,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
£100,001 - £150,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
£150,001 - £200,000	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	-	1	14	-	14	1	15,574	50,002

The Authority agreed to terminate the contract of 1 employee in 2020/21, incurring costs of £50k (£16k in 2019/20).

29. MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES

The Authority paid the following amounts to Members of the Authority as allowances and expenses incurred during the year:

2019/2020 £000		2020/2021 £000
168	Allowances	168
13	Expenses	-
181	Total	168

30. EXTERNAL AUDIT COSTS

Fees payable to the external auditor:

2019/2020 £000			2020/2021 £000
36	Grant Thornton UK LLP	Fees payable for the external planned audit work	45
4	Grant Thornton UK LLP	Additional audit fees	10
40		Total	55

31. RELATED PARTIES

The Authority is required to disclose material transactions with related parties - bodies or individuals that have the potential to control or influence the Authority or to be controlled or influenced by the Authority. Disclosure of these transactions allows readers to assess the extent to which the Authority might have been constrained in its ability to operate independently or might have secured the ability to limit another party's ability to bargain freely with the Authority.

Letters have been sent to Brigade Managers, Statutory Officers and current and former Councillors asking them to identify whether they have any relationships with related parties. No members' of the Authority or Chief Officer or parties related to them have undertaken any disclosable related party transactions during the year.

The following material transactions with related parties took place during the year:

2019/2020 £000	Related Party	Nature of Transaction	2020/2021 £000
25,658	Central Government	Business Rates Retention Scheme Grants	30,430
18,857		Revenue Support Grant	19,164
5,713		Pensions Grant	5,713
594		Covid-19 Grants	4,819
43,318	West Midland Local Authorities	Council Tax Income	43,516
9,932		NDR Income	5,099

Grants received are set out in Note 32.

32. GRANT INCOME

32.1 The Authority credited the following grants, contributions and donations to the CIES in 2020/2021:

	2019/2020 £000	2020/2021 £000
<i>Credited to Taxation and Non Specific Grant Income:</i>		
Revenue support grant	18,857	19,164
Business rates retention scheme grants	25,658	30,430
Covid-19 Emergency funding grant	594	4,037
Covid-19 Local tax income guarantee grant	-	624
Covid-19 Sales, fees and charges grant	-	158
Total	45,109	54,413
<i>Credited to Services:</i>		
Pensions grant	5,713	5,713
New dimension training crewing and accommodation	877	877
Fire protection board BRR and protection uplift funding	-	573
Home Office Grenfell infrastructure	-	328
Fire revenue firelink (Airwave new burden)	-	323
Fire reduction partnership	150	139
Home Office pension administration	-	124
Apprenticeship levy	185	122
ESMCP contingency	-	87
National resilience	78	78
Home Office protection board officers accreditation	-	70
ESMCP regional team expenses	-	68
New risks Section 29	49	29
New burdens	8	8
DWP access to work	-	4
ESMCP WMFS project management	89	-
Birmingham City Council heritage	1	-
Total	7,150	8,543

32.2 Grants – Receipts in Advance

The Authority has received the following grant that has yet to be recognised as income as it has conditions attached to it that could require the monies to be returned to the giver. The balance at the year-end is as follows:

Current Liabilities	31 March 2020 £000	31 March 2021 £000
Grants - Receipts in Advance (Revenue Grants):		
Section 31 Business Rates Relief 2020/21	2,311	-

33. CAPITAL EXPENDITURE AND CAPITAL FINANCING

The total amount of capital expenditure incurred in the year is shown in the table below, together with the resources that have been used to finance it. Where capital expenditure is to be financed in future years by charges to revenue as assets are used by the Authority, the expenditure results in an increase in the CFR, a measure of the capital expenditure incurred historically by the Authority that has yet to be financed. The movement in the CFR is analysed in the second part of this note.

	2019/2020 £000	2020/2021 £000
Opening CFR	37,143	36,259
Capital investment:		
Property, Vehicles, Plant and Equipment	5,283	2,304
Sources of finance:		
Capital Receipts	-	-
Government grants and other contributions	(83)	-
Sums set aside from revenue:		
Direct Revenue Contributions	(5,200)	(2,304)
MRP/the Statutory Repayment of Loans Fund Advances	(884)	(937)
Closing CFR	36,259	35,322

Movements in year	2019/2020 £000	2020/2021 £000
MRP/the Statutory Repayment of Loans Fund Advances	(884)	(937)
Increase/(decrease) in CFR	(884)	(937)

34. DEFINED BENEFIT PENSION SCHEMES

34.1 Participation in Pension Schemes

As part of the terms and conditions of employment of its officers, the Authority makes contributions towards the cost of post-employment benefits. Although these benefits will not actually be payable until employees retire, the Authority has a commitment to make the payments (for those benefits) and to disclose them at the time that employees earn their future entitlement.

At the 31st March 2021 the Authority participated in four post-employment schemes:

- The WMMAPF for civilian and fire control employees, administered locally by Wolverhampton City Council — this is a funded defined benefit final salary scheme, meaning that the Authority and employees pay contributions into a fund, calculated at a level intended to balance the pension's liabilities with investment assets.
- The 1992, 2006 and 2015 FPS for fire officers — these are unfunded defined benefit arrangements, there are no investment assets built up to meet the pensions liabilities. Fund Accounts have been set up, into which the Authority and scheme members make contributions and pension payments are made from the fund.

34.2 Transactions Relating to Post-employment Benefits

We recognise the cost of retirement benefits in the reported cost of services when they are earned by employees, rather than when the benefits are eventually paid as pensions. However, the charge we are required to make against council tax is based on the cash payable in the year, so the real cost of post-employment/retirement benefits is reversed out of the General Fund via the MIRS. The following transactions have been made in the CIES and the General Fund Balance via the MIRS during the year:

2019/2020	LGPS £000	Firefighters				Total £000
		Pension Scheme 1992 £000	Pension Scheme 2006 £000	Pension Scheme 2015 £000	Compensation Scheme £000	
CIES						
Cost of services:						
Current service cost	4,769	4,430	100	28,240	590	38,129
Past service costs, including curtailments	-	6,360	(6,720)	80	-	(280)
Administration Expenses	64	-	-	-	-	64
Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure:						
Net interest expense	1,118	37,730	2,050	2,230	1,010	44,138
Total post-employment benefits charged to the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services	5,951	48,520	(4,570)	30,550	1,600	82,051
Other post-employment benefits charged to the CIES:						
Remeasurement of the net defined benefit liability comprising:						
Changes in demographic assumptions	4,087	(46,720)	(2,800)	(3,380)	(1,510)	(50,323)
Changes in financial assumptions	(17,974)	(58,700)	(6,250)	(4,210)	(830)	(87,964)
Experience (gains) and losses	2,956	(12,160)	320	1,500	(100)	(7,484)
Return on fund assets in excess of interest	6,410	-	-	-	-	6,410
Other	(5,781)	(45,168)	88	14,967	-	(35,894)
Total post-employment benefits charged to the CIES	(4,351)	(114,228)	(13,212)	39,427	(840)	(93,204)
MIRS						
Reversal of net charges made to the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services for post-employment benefits in accordance with the Code	(5,951)	(48,520)	4,570	(30,550)	(1,600)	(82,051)
Actual amount charged against the General Fund Balance for Pensions in the year:						
Employers' contributions payable to the scheme	2,542	2,482	88	10,437	-	15,549
Retirement benefits payable to pensioners	53	-	-	-	1,650	1,703

	LGPS	Firefighters				
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2020/2021	£000	Pension Scheme 1992 £000	Pension Scheme 2006 £000	Pension Scheme 2015 £000	Compensation Scheme £000	Total £000
CIES						
<i>Cost of services:</i>						
Current service cost	4,675	2,470	100	29,280	740	37,265
Past service costs, including curtailments	-	-	120	140	-	260
Administration Expenses	70	-	-	-	-	70
Financing and Investment Income and Expenditure:						
Net interest expense	898	31,920	1,580	2,720	870	37,988
Total post-employment benefits charged to the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services	5,643	34,390	1,800	32,140	1,610	75,583
Other post-employment benefits charged to the CIES:						
Remeasurement of the net defined benefit liability comprising:						
Changes in demographic assumptions	(1,862)	-	-	-	-	(1,862)
Changes in financial assumptions	46,155	137,770	13,610	16,860	2,610	217,005
Experience (gains) and losses	(1,547)	(17,070)	770	(32,370)	(440)	(50,657)
Return on fund assets in excess of interest	(17,191)	-	-	-	-	(17,191)
Other	-	(47,502)	98	16,135	-	(31,269)
Total post-employment benefits charged to the CIES	31,198	107,588	16,278	32,765	3,780	191,609
MIRS						
Reversal of net charges made to the Surplus or Deficit on the Provision of Services for post-employment benefits in accordance with the Code	(5,643)	(34,390)	(1,800)	(32,140)	(1,610)	(75,583)
Actual amount charged against the General Fund Balance for Pensions in the year:						
Employers' contributions payable to the scheme	2,678	1,638	88	11,305		15,709
Retirement benefits payable to pensioners	62				1,620	1,682

34.3 Pensions Assets and Liabilities Recognised in the Balance Sheet

The amount included in the balance sheet arising from the Authority's obligation in respect of its defined benefit plans is as follows:

2019/2020	Funded liabilities: LGPS	Unfunded liabilities: LGPS	Unfunded liabilities: FPS 1992	Unfunded liabilities: FPS 2006	Unfunded liabilities: FPS 2015	Unfunded liabilities: Firefighters Compensation Scheme	Total
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Present value of the defined benefit obligation	(140,350)	(632)	(1,441,800)	(70,330)	(103,810)	(39,100)	(1,796,022)
Fair value of plan assets	98,789	-	-	-	-	-	98,789
Net liability arising from defined benefit obligation	(41,561)	(632)	(1,441,800)	(70,330)	(103,810)	(39,100)	(1,697,233)

2020/2021	Funded liabilities: LGPS	Unfunded liabilities: LGPS	Unfunded liabilities: FPS 1992	Unfunded liabilities: FPS 2006	Unfunded liabilities: FPS 2015	Unfunded liabilities: Firefighters Compensation Scheme	Total
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Present value of the defined benefit obligation	(189,027)	(626)	(1,547,750)	(86,520)	(125,270)	(41,260)	(1,990,453)
Fair value of plan assets	124,251	-	-	-	-	-	124,251
Net liability arising from defined benefit obligation	(64,776)	(626)	(1,547,750)	(86,520)	(125,270)	(41,260)	(1,866,202)

34.4 Reconciliation of the movements in the fair value of scheme (plan) assets:

2019/2020	Funded assets: LGPS £000	Unfunded assets: LGPS £000	Unfunded assets: FPS 1992 £000	Unfunded assets: FPS 2006 £000	Unfunded assets: FPS 2015 £000	Unfunded assets: Firefighters Compensation Scheme £000	Total £000
Opening fair value of scheme assets	99,548	-	-	-	-	-	99,548
Interest income	2,360	-	-	-	-	-	2,360
Remeasurement gain/(loss):							
Return on assets less interest	(6,410)	-	-	-	-	-	(6,410)
Other	5,781	-	45,168	(88)	(14,967)	-	35,894
Contributions from Employer	1	53	2,482	88	10,437	1,650	14,711
Contributions from employees into the scheme	834	-	930	40	4,640	-	6,444
Benefits paid	(3,261)	(53)	(48,580)	(40)	(110)	(1,650)	(53,694)
Administration expenses	(64)	-	-	-	-	-	(64)
Closing fair value of scheme assets	98,789	-	-	-	-	-	98,789

2020/2021	Funded assets: LGPS £000	Unfunded assets: LGPS £000	Unfunded assets: FPS 1992 £000	Unfunded assets: FPS 2006 £000	Unfunded assets: FPS 2015 £000	Unfunded assets: Firefighters Compensation Scheme £000	Total £000
Opening fair value of scheme assets	98,789	-	-	-	-	-	98,789
Interest income	2,391	-	-	-	-	-	2,391
Remeasurement gain/(loss):							
Return on assets less interest	17,191	-	-	-	-	-	17,191
Other	-	-	47,502	(98)	(16,135)	-	31,269
Contributions from Employer	7,927	62	1,638	88	11,305	1,620	22,640
Contributions from employees into the scheme	898	-	700	40	4,960	-	6,598
Benefits paid	(2,875)	(62)	(49,840)	(30)	(130)	(1,620)	(54,557)
Administration expenses	(70)	-	-	-	-	-	(70)
Closing fair value of scheme assets	124,251	-	-	-	-	-	124,251

34.5 Reconciliation of present value of the scheme liabilities (defined benefit obligation):

2019/2020	Funded liabilities: LGPS	Unfunded liabilities: LGPS	Unfunded liabilities: FPS 1992	Unfunded liabilities: FPS 2006	Unfunded liabilities: FPS 2015	Unfunded liabilities: Firefighters Compensation Scheme	Total
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Opening balance at 1 April	(145,513)	(633)	(1,558,510)	(83,630)	(74,820)	(41,590)	(1,904,696)
Current service cost	(4,769)	-	(4,430)	(100)	(28,240)	(590)	(38,129)
Interest cost	(3,463)	(15)	(37,730)	(2,050)	(2,230)	(1,010)	(46,498)
Contributions from scheme participants	(834)	-	(930)	(40)	(4,640)	-	(6,444)
Remeasurement gains and (losses):							
Changes in demographic assumptions	(4,056)	(31)	46,720	2,800	3,380	1,510	50,323
Changes in financial assumptions	17,948	26	58,700	6,250	4,210	830	87,964
Experience gains/(losses)	(2,924)	(32)	12,160	(320)	(1,500)	100	7,484
Past service costs, including curtailments	-	-	(6,360)	6,720	(80)	-	280
Benefits paid	3,261	53	48,580	40	110	1,650	53,694
Closing balance at 31 March	(140,350)	(632)	(1,441,800)	(70,330)	(103,810)	(39,100)	(1,796,022)

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2020/2021	Funded liabilities: LGPS	Unfunded liabilities: LGPS	Unfunded liabilities: FPS 1992	Unfunded liabilities: FPS 2006	Unfunded liabilities: FPS 2015	Unfunded liabilities: Firefighters Compensation Scheme	Total
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Opening balance at 1 April	(140,350)	(632)	(1,441,800)	(70,330)	(103,810)	(39,100)	(1,796,022)
Current service cost	(4,675)	-	(2,470)	(100)	(29,280)	(740)	(37,265)
Interest cost	(3,275)	(14)	(31,920)	(1,580)	(2,720)	(870)	(40,379)
Contributions from scheme participants	(898)	-	(700)	(40)	(4,960)	-	(6,598)
Remeasurement gains and (losses):							
Changes in demographic assumptions	1,853	9	-	-	-	-	1,862
Changes in financial assumptions	(46,096)	(59)	(137,770)	(13,610)	(16,860)	(2,610)	(217,005)
Experience gains/(losses)	1,539	8	17,070	(770)	32,370	440	50,657
Past service costs, including curtailments	-	-	-	(120)	(140)	-	(260)
Benefits paid	2,875	62	49,840	30	130	1,620	54,557
Closing balance at 31 March	(189,027)	(626)	(1,547,750)	(86,520)	(125,270)	(41,260)	(1,990,453)

34.6 LGPS assets comprised:

Asset category	31 March 2020 £000	%	31 March 2021 £000	%
Equities	56,236	57	74,836	60
Gilts	11,482	12	10,342	8
Other bonds	4,128	4	7,881	6
Property	8,787	9	9,324	8
Cash	3,545	3	6,075	5
Other	14,611	15	15,793	13
Total Assets	98,789	100	124,251	100

34.7 Basis for Estimating Assets and Liabilities

Liabilities have been assessed on an actuarial basis using the projected unit credit method, an estimate of the pensions that will be payable in future years dependent on assumptions about mortality rates, salary levels, etc. The FPS have been assessed using an approach and model supplied by GAD and certified by them on 18 June 2021. The WMMAPF has been based on triennial actuarial valuations, the last review being 31 March 2019 and assessed by Barnett Waddingham. In calculating the IAS19 figures for the WMMAPF the actuary assumed an investment return of 19.27%.

The significant assumptions used by the actuary have been:

	LGPS		FPS	
	2019/2020	2020/2021	2019/2020	2020/2021
Mortality assumptions:				
Longevity at 65 for current pensioners:				
• Men	21.9	21.6	21.3	21.4
• Women	24.1	23.9	21.3	21.4
Longevity at 65 for future pensioners:				
• Men	23.8	23.4	23.0	23.1
• Women	26.0	25.8	23.0	23.1
Rate of inflation CPI	1.85%	2.85%	2.0%	2.4%
Rate of increase in salaries	2.85%	3.85%	4.0%	4.15%
Rate of increase in pensions	1.85%	2.85%	2.0%	2.4%
Rate for discounting scheme liabilities	2.35%	2.0%	2.25%	2.0%

The estimation of the defined benefit obligations is sensitive to the actuarial assumptions set out in the table above. The sensitivity analyses below have been determined based on reasonably possible changes of the assumptions occurring at the end of the reporting period and assumes for each change that the assumption analysed changes while all the other assumptions remain constant. The assumptions in longevity, for example, assume that life expectancy increases or decreases for men and women. In practice, this is unlikely to occur and changes in some of the assumptions may be interrelated. The estimations in the sensitivity analysis have followed the accounting policies for the schemes i.e. on an actuarial basis using the projected unit credit method. The methods and types of assumptions used in preparing the sensitivity analysis below did not change from those used in the previous period.

A sensitivity analysis for the WMMAPF as at 31 March 2021 is shown below:

Sensitivity analysis	£000	£000	£000
Adjustment to discount rate	+0.1%	0.0%	-0.1%
Present value of total obligation	(185,645)	(189,653)	(193,751)
Projected service cost	(6,863)	(7,092)	(7,327)
Adjustment to long term salary increase	+0.1%	0.0%	-0.1%
Present value of total obligation	(190,171)	(189,653)	(189,139)
Projected service cost	(7,096)	(7,092)	(7,088)
Adjustment to pension increases and deferred revaluation	+0.1%	0.0%	-0.1%
Present value of total obligation	(193,194)	(189,653)	(186,188)
Projected service cost	(7,325)	(7,092)	(6,866)
Adjustment to life expectancy assumptions	+1 Year	None	-1 Year
Present value of total obligation	(198,416)	(189,653)	(181,293)
Projected service cost	(7,413)	(7,092)	(6,783)

The tables below show the sensitivity of the defined benefit obligation to changes in the significant actuarial assumptions and the impact on the total liability as at 31 March 2021 for the FPS:

FPS 1992 Change in assumption*	Approximate % increase to Employer liability	Approximate effect on total liability £m
0.5% increase in real discount rate	-8.5%	128
0.5% increase in long term salaries rate	0.5%	(11)
0.5% increase in the pensions increase rate	8%	(121)
1 year increase in member life expectancy	3.5%	(56)

The weighted average duration of the defined benefit obligation for scheme members is approximately 18 years.

FPS 2006 Change in assumption*	Approximate % increase to Employer liability	Approximate effect on total liability £m
0.5% increase in real discount rate	-16%	13
0.5% increase in salaries rate	7.5%	(6)
0.5% increase in the pensions increase rate	10%	(8)
1 year increase in member life expectancy	3%	(3)

The weighted average duration of the defined benefit obligation for scheme members is approximately 36 years.

FPS 2015 Change in assumption*	Approximate % increase to Employer liability	Approximate effect on total liability £m
0.5% increase in real discount rate	-15.5%	20
0.5% increase in salaries rate	7%	(9)
0.5% increase in the pensions increase rate	10%	(12)
1 year increase in member life expectancy	3%	(4)

The weighted average duration of the defined benefit obligation for scheme members is approximately 35 years.

* Opposite changes in the assumptions will produce approximately equal and opposite changes in the liability.

34.8 Impact on the Authority's Cash Flows

The objective of the LGPS is to keep employers' contributions at as constant a rate as possible. The WMMAPF has agreed a strategy with the scheme's actuary to achieve a funding level of 100% by no more than 17 years with effect from the 2019 valuation.

The LGPS will need to take account of the national changes to the scheme under the Public Pensions Services Act 2013. Under the Act, the LGPS in England and Wales and the other main existing public service schemes may not provide benefits in relation to service after 31 March 2014. The Act provides for scheme regulations to be made within a common framework, to establish new career average revalued earnings scheme to pay pensions and other benefits to certain public servants.

The £7.9m payment to the WMMAPF in April 2020 for employer pension contributions for the LGPS, included payments for the 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021 £2.66m, 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022 £2.63m and 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023 £2.61m.

Expected employers' contributions for the FPS in the year to 31 March 2022 are approximately £13m. On 28 February 2019, GAD published the final reports in relation to the 2016 valuation of the FPS. This included the scheme specific employer contribution rates for the period April 2019 to March 2023. Employer contribution rates increased significantly because of the valuation. To cover approximately 90% of the additional cost, a section 31 government grant of £5.7m was received in 2019/20. In a letter dated 6 February 2020, the Home Office confirmed that a section 31 government grant would be paid to the Authority at the same level in 2020/21 but gave no commitment for future years. The Authority has received in May 2022 the same level of government grant of £5.7m for 2021/2022.

35. CONTINGENT LIABILITIES

35.1 Municipal Mutual Insurance Limited (MMI)

MMI, through which the Authority had part of its insurance, ceased writing new insurance business in 1992 and is currently using its available resources to meet outstanding claims. MMI may not know the full extent of its liability claims as it may take several years for them to arise, however the Company has continued to settle claims in an orderly manner. To prevent the costs associated with an insolvent run off, the Company entered into a scheme of arrangement with its creditors. Following a Supreme Court judgement on 28th March 2012 which found against the Company, it is now highly likely that the scheme of arrangement will be triggered. Once the scheme is implemented, the Authority and others will be called upon to reimburse the company with a proportion (up to 100%) of its claims settled since 1st October 1993. The Contingent Liability is for approximately 50% (£2.060m). Payments of £0.402m (2013/14) & £0.268m (2016/17) have been made and an earmarked reserve is provided for £0.038m. The balance is held in the insurance earmarked reserve (£1.352m).

35.2 Public Service Pensions – Changes to the transitional arrangements to the 2015 schemes

From 1st April 2022 all employees will be moved into the reformed pension scheme. In the case of firefighters this will be the 2015 FPS. As each individual member will be able to select from a choice of benefits, the exact impact on the scheme as a whole is difficult to accurately forecast, though previous estimates have considered a potential figure of £1.5 million per annum. The estimated pension obligations from this matter have been captured within the defined pension liability. The shortfall in employer contributions will be captured in future scheme valuations as an unfunded, past service deficit and reflected in the employer contribution rates going forward.

The Authority is aware of the lodging of the “injury to feelings” claim concerning the transitional arrangements that were put in place when the 2015 FPS came into effect on 1 April 2015. The claim seeks compensation for individual claimants in respect of non-financial damage. If the claim is successful it is possible that the Authority may be liable to make compensation payments. At this stage the value and quantum of any impact is unknown.

OFFICIAL
PENSION FUND ACCOUNT

2019/2020 £000					2020/2021 £000			
1992	2006	Modified	2015		1992	2006	Modified	2015
				Contributions Receivable				
				From Fire Authority				
(2,362)	(41)	(27)	(10,437)	Contributions in relation to pensionable pay	(1,559)	(40)	(28)	(11,305)
(120)	(20)	-	-	Ill health retirements	(79)	(20)	-	-
(928)	(17)	(20)	(4,643)	From firefighters contributions	(659)	(16)	(20)	(4,996)
				Transfers in				
(112)	-	-	(80)	Individual	-	(123)	-	(149)
				Benefits Payable				
40,967	24	8	1	Pensions	42,078	26	8	12
7,616	-	-	-	Commutations and lump sum retirement benefits	7,947	-	-	110
-	-	-	95	Lump sum death benefits	-	-	-	-
				Payments to and on account of leavers				
-	5	-	14	Individual transfers	-	-	-	28
45,061	(49)	(39)	(15,050)	Net amount payable for the year	47,728	(173)	(40)	(16,300)
(45,061)	49	39	15,050	Top up Grant payable by the Government	(47,728)	173	40	16,300
-	-	-	-		-	-	-	-

2019/2020 £000	NET ASSETS STATEMENT	2020/2021 £000
(100)	Commutations and lump sum retirement benefits	(468)
6,267	Top-up receivable from the Government	6,304
(6,167)	Amount owing to General Fund	(5,836)
-		-

NOTES TO THE PENSION FUND ACCOUNT

The fund was established at 1st April 2006 under the FPS (Amendment) England Order 2006 and covered both the 1992 and 2006 FPS. From 1st April 2015, a new FPS and a modified section in the 2006 scheme was established. The fund now includes the 1992, 2006 and 2015 schemes. Before 1st April 2006 the Authority was responsible for paying the pensions of its own former employees on a pay as you go basis. The FPS remain unfunded and consequently the fund has no investment assets. Benefits are funded by contributions from the Authority and employees and any difference between benefits payable and contributions receivable is met by top-up grant from the MHCLG.

Government funding by top-up grant is paid in two installments, 80% of the estimated annual amount is received in August of the relevant year with the balance paid once actual figures have been determined.

Employees' and employer's contribution levels are based on percentages of pensionable pay set nationally by the MHCLG and are subject to revaluation every four years' by GAD. The contribution rates for 2020/21 are shown in the tables below:

	1992 Scheme %	2006 Scheme %	Modified %
Employer's	37.3	27.4	37.3
Employees' Pensionable pay band			
Up to £15,609	11.0	8.5	11.0
> £15,609 to £21,852	12.2	9.4	12.2
> £21,852 to £31,218	14.2	10.4	14.2
> £31,218 to £41,624	14.7	10.9	14.7
> £41,624 to £52,030	15.2	11.2	15.2
> £52,030 to £62,436	15.5	11.3	15.5
> £62,436 to £104,060	16.0	11.7	16.0
> £104,060 to £124,872	16.5	12.1	16.5
> £124,872	17.0	12.5	17.0

	2015 Scheme %
Employer's	28.8
Employees' Pensionable pay band	
Up to £27,818	11.0
£27,819 to £51,515	12.9
£51,516 to £142,500	13.5
£142,501 or more	14.5

The fund is administered by the Authority and managed by the Strategic Enabler of Finance and Resources. Benefits are paid to retired officers, their survivors and others who are eligible for benefits under both the 1992, 2006 and 2015 FPS.

The fund is statutorily prevented from including interest on cashflows and administration expenses in the pension fund. These expenses are borne by the Authority in its main accounts.

The Net Assets Statement does not include liabilities to pay pensions and other benefits after the 31st March 2021. For further information on the liability to pay pensions see Note 34.

The account is prepared in accordance with the same code of practice and accounting policies as outlined in the Statement of Accounting Policies, with one exception that accounting for transfer values are on a cash basis rather than accruals basis.

ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

1. Scope of Responsibility

- 1.1 West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority is responsible for ensuring that its business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for. The Authority also has a duty under the Local Government Act 1999 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.
- 1.2 In discharging this duty, the Authority is also responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of its affairs which facilitates the effective exercise of the Authority's functions and which includes arrangements for the management of risk.
- 1.3 The Authority has complied with the code of corporate governance which is consistent with the principles of the revised CIPFA/SOLACE Framework 2016 published by CIPFA in association with the International Federation of Accountants (IFAC) – Delivering Good Governance in Local Government. The Authority has also complied with the requirements of CIPFA's statement on the role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government. This Annual Governance Statement explains how the Authority has complied with the code and also meets the requirements of Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015, regulation 6 which require the Authority to prepare an Annual Governance Statement.

2. The Purpose of the Governance Framework

- 2.1 The governance framework comprises the systems and processes, culture and values by which the Authority is directed and controlled and its activities through which it accounts to and engages with the community. It enables the Authority to monitor the achievement of its strategic objectives and to consider whether those objectives have led to the delivery of appropriate, value for money services.
- 2.2 The system of internal control is a significant part of the framework and is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level. It cannot eliminate all risk of failure to achieve policies, aims and objectives and can, therefore, only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance of effectiveness. The system of internal control is based on an ongoing process designed to identify and prioritise the risks to the achievement of the Authority's policies, aims and objectives, to evaluate the likelihood and potential impact of those risks being realised and the impact should they be realised and to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.
- 2.3 The governance framework has been in place for the year ended 31st March 2021 and up to the date of the approval of the annual report and statement of accounts.

3. The Governance Framework

The key elements of the systems and processes that comprise the Authority's governance arrangements include the following (adjustments required due to the Covid-19 pandemic are reflected in paragraph 5.11):-

- 3.1 The Authority has produced a Corporate Strategy setting out its objectives and there is regular performance monitoring in which achievement of the Authority's objectives is measured and monitored.
- 3.2 The Authority has established clear channels of communication with the community and stakeholders regarding the production of the Annual Report and consultation on the key priorities of the Service. This also encourages open communication.
- 3.3 The Authority facilitates policy and decision-making via regular Policy Planning Forums and Authority meetings. An Audit and Risk Committee provides independent assurance to the Authority on risk management and internal control and the effectiveness of the arrangements the Authority has for these matters. The constitution of the Committees including the terms of reference is reviewed annually and available on the Internet.
- 3.4 The Authority ensures compliance with established strategies, procedures, laws and regulations – including risk management. The Authority also maintains and reviews regularly its code of conduct and whistle blowing policy. There is a comprehensive induction programme in place and information regarding strategies and procedures are held on the intranet, which continues to be developed. The Authority has a strong Internal Audit function and established protocols for working with External Audit.
- 3.5 West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority will continue to enhance and strengthen its internal control environment through the review of current policies and procedures.
- 3.6 The Authority has corporate risk management arrangements in place which are supported by an approved Risk Management Strategy enabling Managers and other senior officers to identify, assess and prioritise risks within their own work areas which impact on the ability of the Authority and its services to meet objectives. To consider the effectiveness of the Authority's risk management arrangements is a specific term of reference for the Audit and Risk Committee and risk management is a specific responsibility of both the Chair and Vice Chair.
- 3.7 The Authority's Corporate Risk Register identifies the principal risks to the achievement of the Authority's objectives and assesses the nature and extent of those risks (through assessment of likelihood and impact). The Register identifies risk owners whose responsibility includes the identification of controls and actions to manage them efficiently, effectively and economically.

- 3.8 The Authority ensures the economical, effective and efficient use of resources, and secures continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, by having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness as required by the Best Value duty. The Authority plans its spending on an established planning cycle for policy development, budget setting and performance management through the business planning process. This ensures that resources are aligned to priorities and secures best value from the resources that are available.
- 3.9 The Chief Financial Officer is a key member of the leadership team, helping to develop and implement the Authority's strategy. The Authority's financial system is an ORACLE based general ledger and management information system, which integrates the general ledger function with those of budgetary control and payments. Financial Regulations and Contract Procedure Rules are approved and regularly reviewed by the Authority. A rigorous system of monthly financial monitoring ensures that any significant budget variances are identified in a timely way, and corrective action initiated.
- 3.10 The Authority's performance management and reporting of performance management continues to be improved with a more focused Corporate Strategy, the setting of priorities and is supported by regular performance monitoring. Corporate performance is reported on a quarterly basis and this process provides officers and Members with the opportunity to share knowledge and understanding about key performance issues affecting services.
- 3.11 The Authority within its committee framework has an Appointment, Standards and Appeals Committee to promote high ethical standards amongst Members. This Committee leads on developing policies and procedures to accompany the Code of Conduct for Members and is responsible for local assessment and review of complaints about members' conduct. The Authority also has a Scrutiny Committee which undertakes performance management functions and informs policy development.
- 3.12 The Fire and Rescue National Framework for England sets out a requirement for Fire and Rescue Authorities to publish 'Statements of Assurance'. Specifically, Fire and Rescue Authorities must provide assurance on financial, governance and operational matters and show how they have had due regard to the expectations set out in their integrated risk management plan and the requirements included in this Framework. The Authority has approved the Statement of Assurance which is available on the Service's website.

4. Review of Effectiveness

4.1 The Authority has responsibility for conducting, at least annually, a review of the effectiveness of its governance framework including the system of internal control. The review of effectiveness is informed by the work of the statutory officers and principal managers of the Authority who have responsibility for the development and maintenance of the governance environment, the internal audit annual report and comments made by the external auditors in their annual audit letter and other reports.

4.2 Section unit business plans contain a variety of performance indicators and targets that are regularly reviewed.

4.3 The Authority's political governance arrangements, which are appropriately reviewed by officers, set out the responsibilities of both Members and senior managers. In particular the Authority has identified the following statutory post holders:-

- Chief Fire Officer
- Treasurer
- Monitoring Officer

In addition to the statutory posts, the post of Clerk to the Authority has been maintained.

4.4 The arrangements for the provision of internal audit are contained within the Authority's Financial Regulations. The Treasurer is responsible for ensuring that there is an adequate and effective system of internal audit of the Authority's accounting and other systems of internal control as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015. The internal audit provision operates in accordance with the CIPFA Code of Practice for Internal Audit in Local Government. The Authority's Audit Plan is prioritised by a combination of the key internal controls, assessment and review on the basis of risk and the Authority's corporate governance arrangements, including risk management. The work is further supplemented by reviews around the main financial systems, scheduled visits to Authority establishments and fraud investigations. Internal Audit leads on promoting a counter-fraud culture within the Authority.

4.5 The resulting Audit Plan is discussed and agreed with officers of the Strategic Enabling Team and the Audit and Risk Committee and shared with the Authority's external auditor. Meetings between the internal and external auditor ensure that duplication of effort is avoided. All Authority Audit reports include an assessment of the adequacy of internal control and prioritised action plans to address any areas needing improvement.

- 4.6 The Authority's review of the effectiveness of the system of internal control is informed by:-
- The work undertaken by Internal Audit during the year;
 - The work undertaken by the external auditor reported in their annual audit;
 - Other work undertaken by independent inspection bodies.
- 4.7 From the work undertaken by Internal Audit in 2020/2021 the Internal Audit has given a 'reasonable assurance' that the Authority has adequate and effective governance, risk management and internal control processes. This represents an unqualified opinion and the highest level of assurance available to Audit Services. In giving this opinion it is recognised that assurance can never be absolute. The most that internal audit can provide is reasonable assurance that there are no major weaknesses in the Authority's governance, risk management and control processes.
- 4.8 The Authority is able to confirm that its financial management arrangements conform to the governance requirements of the CIPFA Statement on the Role of the Chief Financial Officer in Local Government.
- 4.9 Audit Services have reported and advised on the implications of the result of the review of effectiveness of the governance framework by the sources noted above and that the arrangements continue to be regarded as fit for purpose in accordance with the Authority's governance framework. The areas to be specifically addressed are outlined in 5.5.

5. Significant governance arrangements within the Authority

- 5.1 West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority has a legal duty to provide an efficient, safe and effective fire and rescue service. The key priorities are:-
- Prevention – Safer and healthier communities
 - Protection – stronger business communities
 - Response – dealing effectively with emergencies
- 5.2 These form the basis of the Authority's Annual Plan 2020-23 which sets out the outcomes and priorities based on the Community Risk Management Plan and Medium-Term Financial Plan. The five-minute attendance standard lies at the heart of the Service Delivery Model. The model shows how staff provide the core prevention, protection and response services to make the West Midlands safer, stronger and healthier.
- 5.3 Grant Thornton, the Authority's External Auditors, published the Audit Findings Report for its 2019/2020 audit work which reported an unqualified opinion on the financial statements. It also issued an unqualified value for money conclusion stating that the Authority had proper arrangements in all significant respects to ensure it delivered value for money in the use of resources.

5.4 Based on audit work undertaken during the year an Annual Internal Audit Report was presented to the Audit and Risk Committee on 7 June 2021, Audit work which was completed in 2020/2021 included:-

- Risk Management
- Governance
- Fire Stations – Management of Fuel
- Absence Management
- Data Protection
- Payroll
- Accounts Receivable
- Accounts Payable
- Fixed Asset Accounting
- Budgetary Control

5.5 As a result of these audits the following was identified as the main issue:-

Absence Management

A review was undertaken to provide assurance of compliance with the requirements of the absence management policy. The review identified issues relating to:

- Examples were found of managers not following guidance on the recording of Fit notes (a Fit note is an official written statement from a doctor giving their medical opinion on a person's fitness for work) within the Authority's Human Resources (HR) management systems, including long term absences. In some cases, there was insufficient evidence to cover the total periods of sickness for these employees.
- One instance was found where a manager had made a decision outside of normal absence management procedures without seeking the advice of HR. This creates a risk that the Authority may not be able to demonstrate that actions are applied consistently and equitably.
- There was a lack of record keeping evidencing that an absence for an employee reaching a staged trigger, had been managed in accordance with the Authority's attendance management policy. There were certain mitigating circumstances, as responsibility for monitoring the absence had passed between manager's, but the root cause was that the necessary information had not been properly recorded and correctly updated to the required HR systems, and as such there was no clear trail of information to enable an informed handover to take place.
- There were no additional management checks on a sample of absences that had hit sickness triggers for compliance checking and monitoring.

- 5.6 The issues outlined above, together with any other issues highlighted in the Annual Internal Audit Report have been raised with relevant managers and actions have been taken to achieve improvements.
- 5.7 In February 2020, the Secretary of State for Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) confirmed the Authority's funding settlement for 2020/21, which was a one-year settlement only.
- 5.8 In October 2020, the Treasury confirmed the decision of the Chancellor and Prime Minister that the Comprehensive Spending Review would only set departmental budgets for 2021/22 rather than the anticipated next three or four years, due to the economic disruption caused by Covid-19.
- 5.9 The funding settlement for 2021/22 was therefore also a one year only arrangement and in the Secretary of State for MHCLG settlement announcement there was no indication of further funding levels beyond 2021/22. In planning for the 2022/23 budget, for illustrative purposes a reduction of 5% was reflected in the overall core funding and a further 5% in 2023/24. It should be noted that this is a very provisional figure and there is the potential for the scale of reductions to be of a greater magnitude than this base assumption. Every 1% reduction in core funding represents a loss of circa £0.530m funding for the Authority.
- 5.10 With the anticipation of cuts to government funding continuing into future years, combined with pressures on Council Tax and business rate levels as a consequence of the Coronavirus pandemic, the Authority potentially faces considerable financial pressures which could result in difficulties to deliver an efficient and effective service, which in turn would increase the risk to the communities of the West Midlands. A key aim for the Authority is to therefore identify and deliver further Service efficiencies to ensure the ongoing stability of the Authority's financial position.
- 5.11 Covid-19 Governance Impact 2020/21
 Since March 2020, the Coronavirus pandemic resulted in two nationwide lockdowns and an emergency response, which had impacts on the Authority's "business as usual" during 2020/21.

During the initial period of lockdown, the Authority invoked Decisions under Matters of Urgency (Section 17.1 Authority Standing Orders) enabling the continuity of decision making by the Chief Fire Officer and Chair of the Authority on items of strategic importance. Items agreed and subsequently reported to the Authority, when it re-convened following legislation approving virtual decision-making meetings, included:

- approval of the appointment of a Deputy Monitoring Officer,
- approval of the WMFS key performance targets.

Several meetings were cancelled during the early weeks of the lockdown period

and arrangements were made for Authority Members to be kept informed using weekly Authority Covid-19 briefings via video conferencing. During 2020/21 the Authority held Authority and Statutory Committee meetings virtually, in accordance with the Local Authorities (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority Meetings) Regulations 2020 published by the Government allowing participation by remote attendance during the period that physical meetings were not permitted.

6. Certification

To the best of our knowledge, the governance arrangements, as outlined above have been effectively operating during the year with the exception of those areas identified as requiring improvement. We propose over the coming year to take steps to address the above matters to further enhance our governance arrangements. We are satisfied that these steps will address the need for improvements that were identified during the review of effectiveness and will monitor their implementation and operation as part of our annual review.

Greg Brackenridge
Chair
West Midlands Fire & Rescue Authority

Phil Loach
Chief Fire Officer

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Accruals

Income and expenditure are recognised as they are earned or incurred, not as money is received or paid (see Debtors and Creditors).

Accumulated Absences Account

The estimated cost of any untaken employee benefits.

Balance Sheet

A statement of assets, liabilities and other balances at the end of an accounting period.

Capital Adjustment Account

The fundamental principal of capital accounting is that accounting for non-current assets is separated from accounting for their financing. This is one of two reserves that help to manage this separation. It provides a balancing mechanism between the different rates at which assets are depreciated and are financed through the capital controls system.

Capital Expenditure

Expenditure on the acquisition of a fixed asset, or expenditure which adds to, and not merely maintains the value of an existing fixed asset.

Capital Receipt

Money received from the disposal of land and other assets. Capital receipts can only be used to fund capital expenditure.

Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA)

The only leading professional accountancy body in the UK specialising in the public sector. It has responsibility for setting accounting standards for local government.

Code – code of practice on local authority accounting

The rules and regulations governing the information and layout of the financial reporting statement of the Authority.

Creditor

An amount owed by an authority for work done, goods received or services rendered but for which payment has not been made at the end of the year.

Current Assets

Items from which the Authority derives a benefit but which will be consumed or realised during the next accounting period, e.g. stocks, debtors, cash.

Current Liabilities

Amounts falling due for payment in the next accounting period.

Current Service Cost (Pensions)

The increase in the present value of a defined benefit scheme's liabilities expected to arise from employee service in the current period.

Debtor

A sum due to the Authority but not received at the financial year end.

Deferred Liability

Amounts owed to outside bodies to be paid in predetermined instalments over more than one accounting period; e.g. leasing charges.

Defined Benefit Pension Scheme

A scheme in which the rules specify the benefits to be paid and the scheme is financed accordingly.

Depreciation

The measure of the wearing out, consumption, or other reduction in the useful economic life of a fixed asset, whether arising from use, passage of time or obsolescence through technological or other changes.

Emoluments

These are payments received from employment, usually in the form of wages, salaries or fees.

Employee Benefits

This is the net cost of any untaken benefit e.g. annual leave at the end of the financial year. This figure is shown in the Provision for Accumulated Absences and Accumulated Absences Accounts. The difference between the amounts held on the two balance sheet dates represents the movement in the Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Account.

Fixed Asset

An item from which the Authority will derive a benefit over several accounting periods.

General Fund

The total services of the Authority, the net cost of which is met by Council Tax, NDR and Government Grants.

Government Grants

Assistance by government and inter-government agencies and similar bodies, whether local, national or international, in the form of cash or transfer of assets to an authority, in return for past or future compliance with certain conditions relating to the activities of the Authority.

Heritage Assets

Assets which are primarily held and maintained for knowledge and cultural purposes.

Impairment

A diminution in value of a fixed asset resulting from, inter alia, obsolescence or physical damage.

Interest Cost (Pensions)

For a defined benefit scheme, the expected increase during the period in the present value of the scheme liabilities because the benefits are one period closer to settlement.

International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS)

The set of accounting standards that has been introduced across the private and public sector from 1st April 2010.

Inventories

The value of those items of raw materials and stores the Authority has procured to use on a continuing basis, but which are not used at the balance sheet date.

Liabilities

Amounts due to individuals or organisations which will have to be paid at some time in the future. Current liabilities are payable within one year of the balance sheet date.

Long term Borrowing

The total amounts borrowed from external lenders for capital purposes but not repaid at the balance sheet date.

Long term Debtors

Amounts due to the Authority to be paid in predetermined instalments over more than one accounting period; e.g. car loans to staff.

Materiality

An item is material if its omission, non-disclosure or mis-statement in financial statements could be expected to lead to a distortion of the view given by the financial statements.

Minimum Revenue Provision

An amount that is considered prudent which must be set aside from revenue as provision for the repayment of loan debt.

NDR

Rates which are levied on business properties.

Net Book Value

The amount at which non-current assets are included in the balance sheet, i.e. their historical cost or current value less the cumulative amounts provided for depreciation.

Net Realisable Value

The open market value of the asset in its existing use (or market value in the case of non-operational assets), less the expenses to be incurred in realising the asset.

Non Operational Assets

Non-current assets held by the Authority but not used or consumed in the delivery of services.

Operational Assets

Non-current assets held and occupied, used or consumed by the Authority in the delivery of services for which it has either a statutory or discretionary responsibility.

Past Service Cost (Pensions)

For a defined benefit scheme, the increase in the present value of the scheme liabilities related to employee service in the prior periods arising in the current period because of the introduction of, or improvement to, retirement benefits.

Payment in Advance

Amounts actually paid in a given accounting period prior to the period for which they were payable

Precept

The amount levied upon local authorities in the West Midlands by the Fire Authority.

Provisions

Amounts set aside to meet future liabilities arising from past events but the exact amount and date on which it will arise is uncertain.

Receipts in Advance

Amounts actually received in a given accounting period prior to the period for which they were receivable.

Related Party

The Authority is required to disclose material transactions with related parties, bodies or individuals that have the potential to control or influence the Authority or to be controlled or influenced by the Authority, related parties are deemed to include:

Central Government.

West Midlands Local Authorities.

Members of the Authority or parties related to them.

Chief Officer or parties related to them.

Reserves

Amounts set aside to meet future contingencies but whose use does not affect the Authority's net expenditure in a given year. Appropriations to and from reserves may not be made directly from the revenue account. This is a crucial distinction between provisions and reserves.

Revaluation Reserve

The fundamental principal of capital accounting is that accounting for non-current assets is separated from accounting for their financing. This is one of two reserves that help to manage this separation. It records unrealised revaluation gains arising (since 1st April 2007) from holding non-current assets.

Revenue Expenditure

Revenue Expenditure is money spent on the day-to-day running costs of providing services. It is usually of a constantly recurring nature and produces no permanent assets.

Revenue Support Grant (RSG)

A grant from central Government towards the cost of providing services.

Temporary Loans

This represents money borrowed for a period of less than one year

Useful Life

The period over which the Authority will derive benefits from the use of a fixed asset.

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE SERVICE

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY



Summary of Accounts

2020/2021

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2020/2021 SUMMARY

Introduction

This document is a summary of the Authority's Statement of Accounts for 2020/2021.

The Authority is responsible for the Stewardship of public money and the production of summary accounts allows it to enhance its accountability to the residents of the West Midlands.

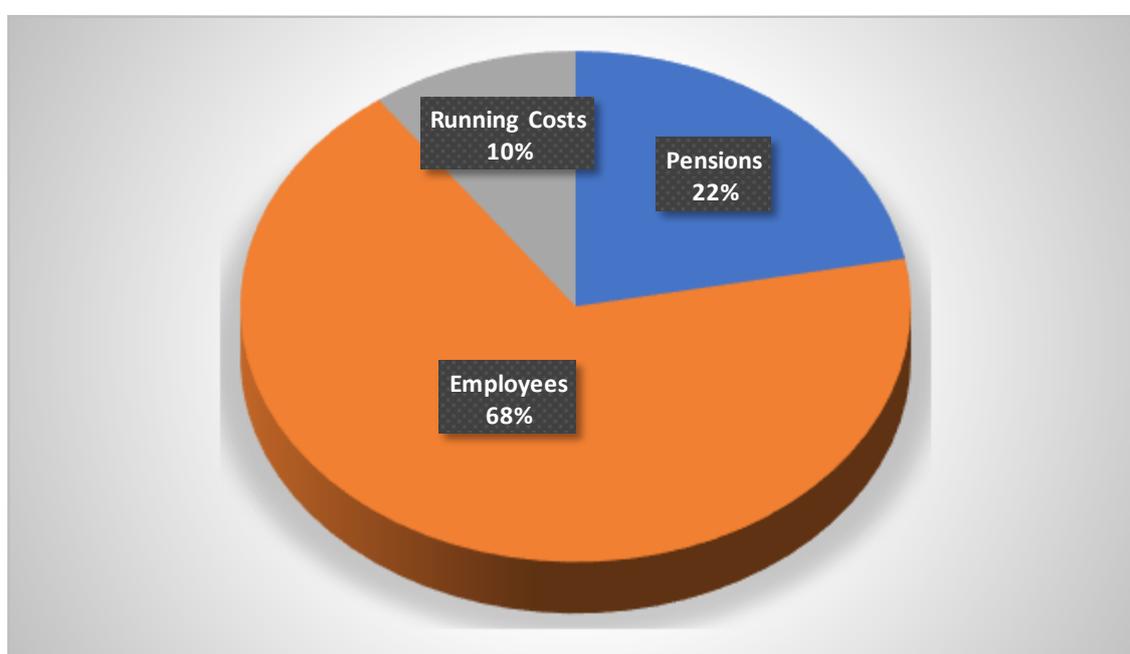
The Authority's 2020/2021 Statement of Accounts is prepared in accordance with CIPFA/LASAAC Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom, under International Financial Reporting Standards.

These summary accounts have no legal standing and are not subject to external audit.

How much did the Service cost in 2020/2021

The majority of the net cost of Fire Service expenditure relates to the cost of services, £118.277m.

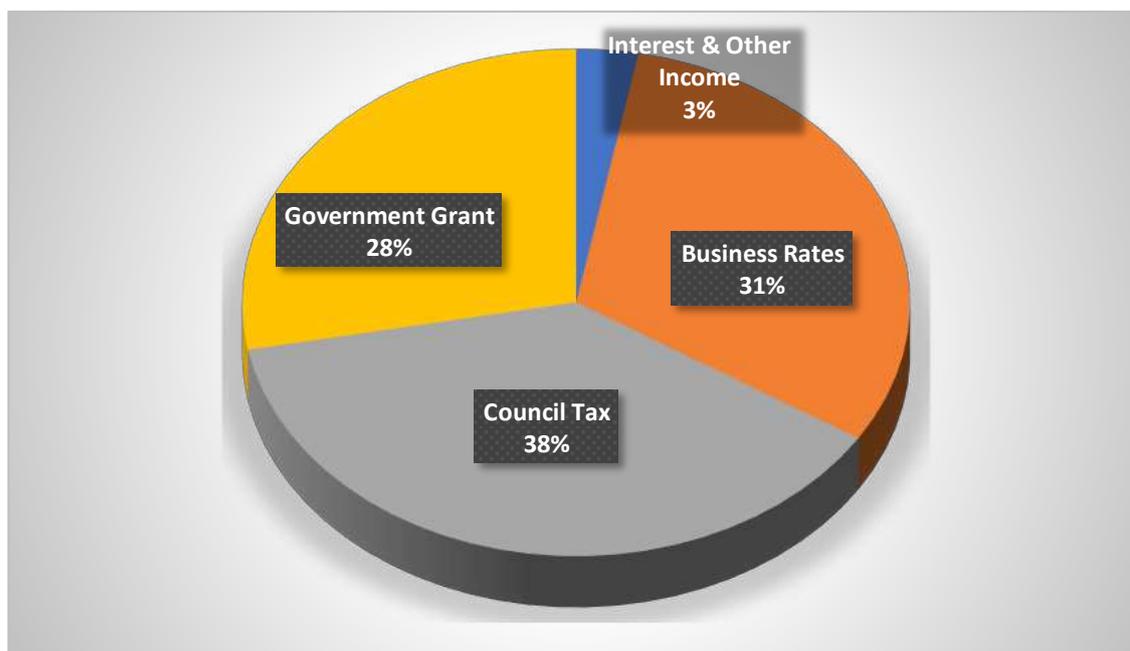
The total Provision of Services in 2020/2021 shows a deficit of £55.211m. Within this deficit is total expenditure of the Authority which for 2020/2021 was £170.715m. The type of costs can be broken down as follows:



How was the Service funded in 2020/2021

The total income of the Authority in 2020/2021 was £115.504m. The majority of funding came from the government in the form of grant and a share of business rates.

The main sources of funding are shown below.



Balances and Reserves

The Fire Authority must consider the level of general balances it wishes to maintain before it can decide the level of Council Tax to charge in any year.

In order to set a balanced budget in 2020/2021 the Authority assumed no movement in general balances. The actual level of general balances increased in the year by £0.015m, leaving £5.838m general balances at the end of the financial year. The Authority holds general balances as funding to meet any unforeseen events which it may need to respond to. Interest is earned on any unused balances.

In addition, as part of the closedown of accounts process, consideration needs to be given to the level of earmarked reserves required. These are amounts set aside to meet specific anticipated future demands. The level of earmarked reserves increased by £6.780m, this brought the total level of these reserves to £36.917m. Interest is earned on any balances until expenditure is committed against the demands identified.

Capital Expenditure and Funding

In 2020/2021, the Authority spent £2.304 million on capital projects.

The expenditure was incurred on the following:-

	£m
Land & Buildings	1.613
Vehicles	0.661
ICT & Equipment	0.030

The total expenditure was financed by direct revenue contributions (£2.304m).

No borrowing was undertaken to assist with purchase of assets during 2020/2021. Borrowing in earlier years meant that at the end of 2020/2021 the Authority had total loans of £33.7m (the interest and principal on any loans needs to be met from future revenue budgets). The value of long-term assets held by the Authority as at 31st March 2021 which the loans had helped fund was £135.2m, of which approximately 94% related to land and buildings and 6% related to vehicles and equipment.

Further information can be found by contacting the Finance Manager at West Midlands Fire Service Headquarters, 99 Vauxhall Road, Birmingham, B7 4HW, telephone number 0121 380 6920 or e-mail kal.shoker@wmfs.net.

The Authority's full 2020/2021 audited Statement of Accounts can be found on our website www.wmfs.net.

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE

19 JULY 2021

1. **TREASURY MANAGEMENT – ANNUAL REPORT 2020/2021**

Report of the Treasurer.

RECOMMENDED

THAT the report and Appendix are noted and the prudential and treasury indicators approved.

2. **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

2.1 The Authority agreed its 2020/2021 Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy and its Prudential Indicators in February 2020. Part of the requirements of the Treasury Strategy and Prudential Code are that periodic reports are presented to Members.

2.2 The annual treasury report covers the treasury activity during 2020/2021 and the actual Prudential Indicators for 2020/2021.

3. **BACKGROUND**

3.1 The Authority is required to produce an annual treasury management report of activities and the actual prudential and treasury indicators for 2020/2021.

3.2 Appendix A, the Annual Treasury Management Report 2020/2021 meets the requirement of both the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management (the Code) and the CIPFA Prudential Code of Capital Finance in Local Authorities (the Prudential Code). The Authority is required to comply with both Codes through regulation issued under the Local Government Act 2003.

4. **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

In preparing this report, an initial Equality Impact Assessment is required and has not been carried out because the matters contained in this report do not relate to a policy change.

5. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

The course of action recommended in this report does not raise issues which should be drawn to the attention of the Authority's Monitoring Officer.

6. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

These are contained in the body of the report and the attached Appendix.

7. **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no environmental implications arising from this report.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Authority's Budget and Precept Report – February 2020
Treasury Management Mid-Year Report – Audit and Risk Committee
October 2020
Link Treasury Services – Treasury Management Bulletins and
Newsletters

The contact officer for this report is Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Gary Taylor, telephone number 0121 380 6006.

MIKE GRIFFITHS
TREASURER

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE SERVICE



Annual Treasury Management Review 2020/21

1. **Introduction**

This Authority is required by regulations issued under the Local Government Act 2003 to produce an annual treasury management review of activities and the actual prudential and treasury indicators for 2020/21. This report meets the requirements of both the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management (the Code) and the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities (the Prudential Code).

During 2020/21 the minimum reporting requirements were that the Authority should receive the following reports:

- an annual treasury strategy in advance of the year (Authority 17/02/2020)
- a mid-year treasury update report (Audit Committee 26/10/2020)
- an annual review following the end of the year describing the activity compared to the strategy (this report)

This report provides details of the outturn position for treasury activities and highlights compliance with the Authority's policies previously approved by Members.

During 2020/21 the Authority complied with its legislative and regulatory requirements. The key actual prudential and treasury indicators detailing the impact of capital expenditure activities during the year, with comparators, are as follows:

Actual prudential and treasury indicators	2019/20	2020/21
Actual capital expenditure	£5.283m	£2.304m
Total Capital Financing Requirement	£36.259m	£35.322m
Financing costs to net revenue stream	2.5%	2.6%

The Treasurer confirms that no borrowing was undertaken for any capital purpose during 2020/21 and that the statutory borrowing limit (the authorised limit), was not breached.

As at 31st March 2021, the Authority's external debt was £33.676m (£35.697m as at 31st March 2020) and its investment totalled £36.742m (£45.583m as at 31st March 2020).

2. The Economy and Interest Rates

UK. Coronavirus. The financial year 2020/21 will go down in history as being the year of the pandemic. The first national lockdown in late March 2020 did huge damage to an economy that was unprepared for such an eventuality. This caused an economic downturn that exceeded the one caused by the financial crisis of 2008/09. A short second lockdown in November did relatively little damage but by the time of the third lockdown in January 2021, businesses and individuals had become more resilient in adapting to working in new ways during a three month lockdown so much less damage than was caused than in the first one. The advent of vaccines starting in November 2020, were a game changer. The way in which the UK and US have led the world in implementing a fast programme of vaccination which promises to lead to a return to something approaching normal life during the second half of 2021, has been instrumental in speeding economic recovery and the reopening of the economy. In addition, the household saving rate has been exceptionally high since the first lockdown in March 2020 and so there is plenty of pent-up demand and purchasing power stored up for services in the still-depressed sectors like restaurants, travel and hotels as soon as they reopen. It is therefore expected that the UK economy could recover its pre-pandemic level of economic activity during quarter 1 of 2022.

The Monetary Policy Committee cut Bank Rate from 0.75% to 0.25% and then to 0.10% in March 2020 and embarked on a £200bn programme of quantitative easing QE (purchase of gilts so as to reduce borrowing costs throughout the economy by lowering gilt yields). The MPC increased then QE by £100bn in June and by £150bn in November to a total of £895bn. While Bank Rate remained unchanged for the rest of the year, financial markets were concerned that the MPC could cut Bank Rate to a negative rate; this was firmly discounted at the February 2021 MPC meeting when it was established that commercial banks would be unable to implement negative rates for at least six months – by which time the economy was expected to be making a strong recovery and negative rates would no longer be needed.

Average inflation targeting. This was the major change adopted by the Bank of England in terms of implementing its inflation target of 2%. The key addition to the Bank's forward guidance in August was a new phrase in the policy statement, namely that "it does not intend to tighten monetary policy until there is clear evidence that significant progress is being made in eliminating spare capacity and achieving the 2% target sustainably". That seems designed to say, in effect, that even if inflation rises to 2% in a couple of years' time, do not expect any action from the MPC to raise Bank Rate – until they can clearly see that level of inflation is going to be persistently above target if it takes no action to raise Bank Rate. This sets a high bar for raising Bank Rate and no increase is expected by March 2024, and possibly for as long as five years. Inflation has been well under 2% during 2020/21; it is expected to briefly peak at just over 2% towards the end of 2021, but this is a temporary short lived factor and so not a concern to the MPC.

Government support. The Chancellor has implemented repeated rounds of support to businesses by way of cheap loans, other measures and by protected jobs by paying for workers to be placed on furlough. This support has come at a cost in terms of the Government's budget deficit ballooning in 2020/21 and 2021/22 so that the Debt to GDP ratio reaches around 100%. The Budget on 3rd March 2021 increased fiscal support to the economy and employment during 2021 and 2022 followed by tax rises in the following three years to help to pay the cost for the pandemic. This will help further to strengthen the economic recovery from the pandemic and to return the government's finances to a balanced budget on a current expenditure and income basis in 2025/26. This will stop the Debt to GDP ratio rising further from 100%.

BREXIT. The final agreement on 24th December 2020 eliminated a significant downside risk for the UK economy. The initial agreement only covered trade so there is further work to be done on the services sector where temporary equivalence has been granted in both directions between the UK and EU; that now needs to be formalised on a permanent basis. There was disruption to trade in January as form filling has proved to be a formidable barrier to trade. This appears to have eased somewhat since then but is an area that needs further work to ease difficulties, which are still acute in some areas.

3. **The Authority's Capital Expenditure and Financing**

The Authority undertakes capital expenditure on long-term assets. These activities may either be:

- Financed immediately through the application of capital or revenue resources (capital receipts, capital grants, revenue contributions etc.), which has no resultant impact on the Authority's borrowing need; or
- If insufficient financing is available, or a decision is taken not to apply resources, the capital expenditure will give rise to a borrowing need.

	2019/20 Actual £m	2020/21 Actual £m
Total capital expenditure	5.283	2.304
Resourced by:		
• Capital receipts	0.000	0.000
• Capital grants	0.083	0.000
• Revenue Contribution to Capital	5.200	2.304
Capital Expenditure Financed from Borrowing	0	0

4. Overall Treasury Position as at 31 March 2021

The Authority's underlying need to borrow for capital expenditure is termed the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR). This figure is a gauge of the Authority's debt position. The CFR results from the capital activity of the Authority and what resources have been used to pay for the capital spend. It represents the 2020/21 unfinanced capital expenditure, and prior years' net or unfinanced capital expenditure which has not yet been paid for by revenue or other resources.

Part of the Authority's treasury activities is to address the funding requirements for this borrowing need. Depending on the capital expenditure programme, the treasury service organises the Authority's cash position to ensure that sufficient cash is available to meet the capital plans and cash flow requirements. This may be sourced through borrowing from external bodies (such as the Government, through the Public Works Loan Board [PWLB] or the money markets), or utilising temporary cash resources.

Reducing the CFR – the Authority's underlying borrowing need (CFR) is not allowed to rise indefinitely. Statutory controls are in place to ensure that capital assets are broadly charged to revenue over the life of the asset. The Authority is required to make an annual revenue charge, called the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP), to reduce the CFR. This is effectively a repayment of the borrowing need. This differs from the treasury management arrangements which ensure that cash is available to meet capital commitments. External debt can also be borrowed or repaid at any time, but this does not change the CFR.

The total CFR can also be reduced by:

- the application of additional capital financing resources (such as unapplied capital receipts);
- charging more than the statutory revenue charge (MRP) each year through a Voluntary Revenue Provision (VRP).

The Authority's Treasury Management Strategy Report for 2020/21 was approved 17 February 2020.

The Authority's CFR for the year is shown below and represents a key prudential indicator.

CFR	31 March 2020 Actual £m	31 March 2021 Actual £m
Opening balance	37.143	36.259
Add unfinanced capital expenditure	0	0
Less MRP	(0.884)	(0.937)
Less VRP	0	0
Closing balance	36.259	35.322

Borrowing activity is constrained by prudential indicators for gross borrowing and the CFR, and by the authorised limit.

Gross borrowing and the CFR - in order to ensure that borrowing levels are prudent over the medium term and only for a capital purpose, the Authority should ensure that its gross external borrowing does not, except in the short term, exceed the total of the capital financing requirement in the preceding year (2020/21) plus the estimates of any additional capital financing requirement for the current (2021/22) and next two financial years. This essentially means that the Authority is not borrowing to support revenue expenditure. This indicator allows the Authority some flexibility to borrow in advance of its immediate capital needs in 2020/21.

	31 March 2020 Actual £m	31 March 2021 Actual £m
External Debt	35.697	33.676
Investments	45.583	36.742
Net Borrowing Position	(9.886)	(3.066)
CFR	36.259	35.322

The authorised limit - the authorised limit is the “affordable borrowing limit” required by s3 of the Local Government Act 2003. The Authority does not have the power to borrow above this level. The table below demonstrates that during 2020/21 the Authority has maintained gross borrowing within its authorised limit.

The operational boundary – the operational boundary is the expected borrowing position of the Authority during the year. Periods where the actual position is either below or over the boundary is acceptable subject to the authorised limit not being breached.

Actual financing costs as a proportion of net revenue stream - this indicator identifies the trend in the cost of capital (borrowing and other long term obligation costs net of investment income) against the net revenue stream.

	2019/20	2020/21
Authorised limit	£44m	£43m
Operational boundary	£40m	£39m
Maximum gross borrowing position	£37m	£36m
Financing costs as a proportion of net revenue stream	2.5%	2.6%

5. Overall Treasury Position as at 31 March 2021

The Authority's investment position is organised with the treasury management service at Sandwell MBC, in order to ensure adequate liquidity for revenue and capital activities, security for investments and to manage risks within all treasury management activities.

Procedures and controls to achieve these objectives are well established both through Member reporting, and through officer activity detailed in the Authority's Treasury Management Practices.

At the beginning and the end of 2020/21, the Authority's position was as follows:

	31 March 2020 Principal £m	Rate/ Return	31 March 2021 Principal £m	Rate/ Return
Fixed Rate Loans:				
PWLB	£33.1	5.3%	£31.4	5.2%
Ex WMCC	£2.6	5.6%	£2.3	5.6%
Total Debt	£35.7	5.4%	£33.7	5.3%
CFR	£36.3		£35.3	
Over / (under) borrowing	(£0.6)		(£1.6)	
Investments:				
Sandwell MBC	£45.6	0.9%	£36.7	0.24%
Net Debt	(£9.9)		(£1.4)	

The maturity structure of the debt portfolio was as follows:

	31 March 2020 Actual £m	31 March 2021 Actual £m
Under 12 months	1.992	2.141
12 months and within 24 months	2.476	0.827
24 months and within 5 years	1.685	2.447
5 years and within 10 years	2.834	1.561
10 years and above	26.700	26.700

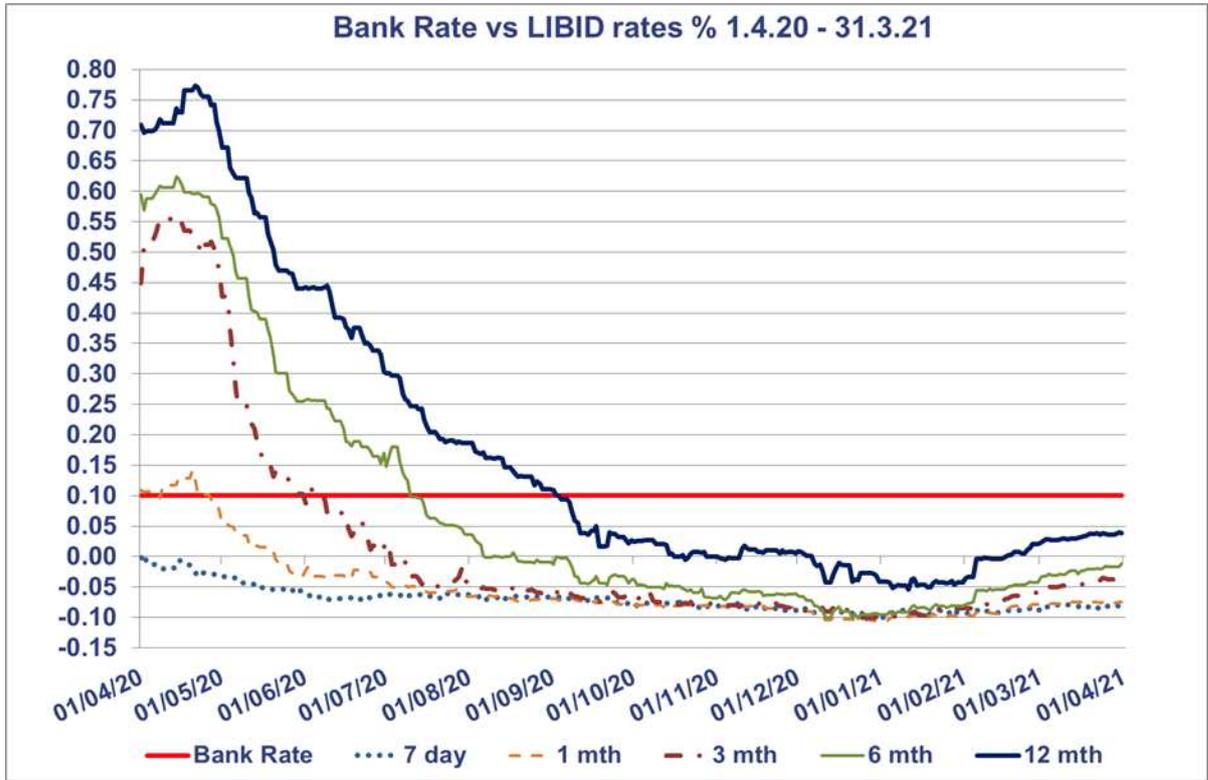
6. **The Strategy for 2020/21**

Investment returns which had been low during 2019/20, plunged during 2020/21 to near zero or even into negative territory. Most local authority lending managed to avoid negative rates and one feature of the year was the growth of inter local authority lending. The expectation for interest rates within the treasury management strategy for 2020/21 was that Bank Rate would continue at the start of the year at 0.75 % before rising to end 2022/23 at 1.25%. This forecast was invalidated by the Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020 which caused the Monetary Policy Committee to cut Bank Rate in March, first to 0.25% and then to 0.10%, in order to counter the hugely negative impact of the national lockdown on the economy. The Bank of England and the Government also introduced new programmes of supplying the banking system and the economy with considerable amounts of cheap credit so that banks could help cash-starved businesses to survive the lockdown. The Government also supplied large amounts of finance to local authorities to pass on to businesses. This meant that for most of the year there was much more liquidity in financial markets than there was demand to borrow, with the consequent effect that investment earnings rates plummeted.

While the Authority has taken a cautious approach to investing, it is also fully appreciative of changes to regulatory requirements for financial institutions in terms of additional capital and liquidity that came about in the aftermath of the financial crisis. These requirements have provided a far stronger basis for financial institutions, with annual stress tests by regulators evidencing how institutions are now far more able to cope with extreme stressed market and economic conditions.

Investment balances have been kept to a minimum through the agreed strategy of using reserves and balances to support internal borrowing, rather than borrowing externally from the financial markets. External borrowing would have incurred an additional cost, due to the differential between borrowing and investment rates as illustrated in the charts shown above and below. Such an approach has also provided benefits in terms of reducing the counterparty risk exposure, by having fewer investments placed in the financial markets.

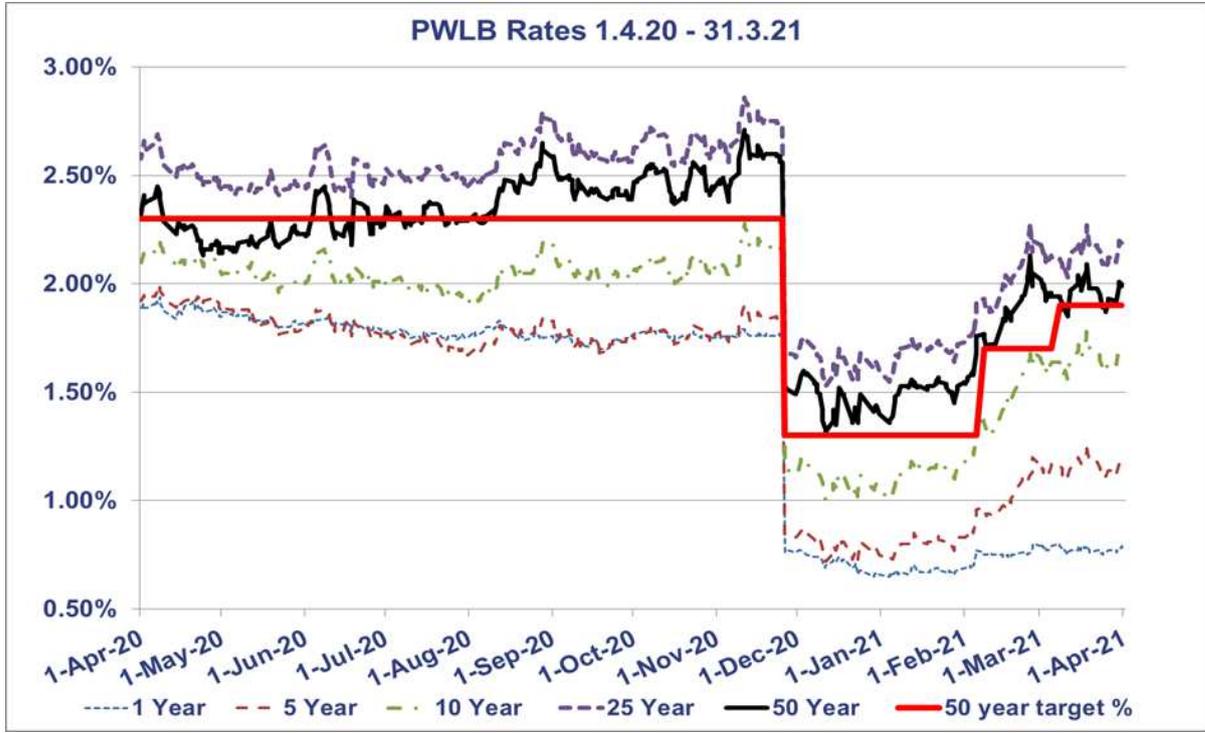
Investment strategy and control of interest rate risk



	Bank Rate	7 day	1 mth	3 mth	6 mth	12 mth
High	0.10	0.00	0.14	0.56	0.62	0.77
High Date	01/04/2020	02/04/2020	20/04/2020	08/04/2020	14/04/2020	21/04/2020
Low	0.10	-0.10	-0.11	-0.10	-0.10	-0.05
Low Date	01/04/2020	31/12/2020	29/12/2020	23/12/2020	21/12/2020	11/01/2021
Average	0.10	-0.07	-0.05	0.01	0.07	0.17
Spread	0.00	0.10	0.25	0.66	0.73	0.83

7. **Borrowing Rates in 2020/21**

The graphs for PWLB rates show, for a selection of maturity periods, the average borrowing rates, the high and low points in rates, spreads and individual rates at the start and the end of the financial year.



8. **Borrowing Outturn for 2020/21**

Borrowing – No borrowing was undertaken during 2020/21.

Rescheduling – No rescheduling was undertaken during 2020/21.

9. **Investment Outturn for 2020/21**

Investment Policy – the Authority’s investment policy is governed by MHCLG guidance, which was been implemented in the annual investment strategy approved by the Authority on 17 February 2020. This policy sets out the approach for choosing investment counterparties and is based on credit ratings provided by the three main credit rating agencies supplemented by additional market data (such as rating outlooks, credit default swaps, bank share prices etc.).

The investment activity during the year conformed to the approved strategy, and the Authority had no liquidity difficulties.

Investments held by the Authority - the Authority maintained an average balance of £49.6m of internally managed funds. The internally managed funds earned an average rate of return of 0.24%. The comparable performance indicator is the average 3 month LIBID rate, which was 0.02%. This compares with a budget assumption of £50m investment balances earning an average rate of 0.20%.

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE****19 JULY 2021****1. REQUEST FOR A DECISION ON ACTION TO BE TAKEN IN RESPECT OF IMMEDIATE DETRIMENT CASES UNDER THE MCCLOUD/SERGEANT RULING**

Report of the Chief Fire Officer.

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report is submitted to request that the Committee in their role as Scheme Manager confirm to the Scheme Administrator what action they wish to be taken in respect of immediate detriment cases following guidance issued by the Home Office.

3. RECOMMENDATION

In line with the legal advice received, it is recommended that the Scheme Administrator continues to apply guidance issued by the Home Office in August 2020 and subsequently updated in June 2021 to cases where a Firefighter retires on or after 1 February 2021 and to any eligible cases of ill-health retirement.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 On 7 December 2020 the Audit and Risk Committee, in its role as Scheme Manager for the Firefighter Pension Schemes, took the decision to instruct the Scheme Administrator to act upon guidance issued by the Home Office in August 2020.
- 4.2 The guidance was updated on 10 June 2021 and included within the further information was a paragraph advising FRAs

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Ref. AU/AUTH/2021/July/20107211

not to use the August 2020 guidance in cases where a member would have been eligible for a “contribution holiday” under the rules of the 1992 Scheme.

4.3 By implementing the updated guidance, the administrator will be providing different options to employees in different positions. This matter raised some concerns and the Authorities Monitoring Officer was asked to provide a legal opinion on three specific questions.

4.4 The questions raised, and subsequent responses (in italics), are shown below:

Q1. If we follow the Home Office guidance, as updated, and do not process cases for members with a contribution holiday entitlement, are we directly discriminating against those Members who by default must have joined the Scheme at the early age?

This example is not an instance of fresh discrimination – the above is an example of ongoing discrimination which the Government seeks to cure. Paragraph 5.21 of the guidance makes it clear the tax and interest implications for Scheme Members who have had a contribution holiday is unknown currently. The guidance is not suggesting that by not processing these Members as immediate detriment cases, nothing will be done to cure the historical discrimination – 5.21 simply says, in effect, ‘wait’ until the tax and interest implication for Scheme Members is known. Following on from this we, as a FRA, do not know the tax or interest implications either. Once the tax and interest implications are known, these Members’ detriment cases can be resolved.

Q2. If we choose to ignore the latest update and continue to process cases under the August 2020 guidance, on what legal basis would be doing this?

I do not advise the June Home Office guidance is ignored. Even though the guidance is described as non-statutory and informal, that does not mean we, as an FRA, are not obliged to follow it. In law, non-statutory guidance is to be followed

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unless there is a good reason not to do so. For context, any decision not to follow the June Home Office guidance is capable of Judicial Review and this applies to any non-statutory guidance issued in England & Wales.

Please bear in mind the Government is also the Taxing Authority and it would be prudent to follow its guidance on the issues of tax and interest for 1992 Scheme Members.

Q3. Do we have the power to take an alternative course of action which may allow us to process all cases whilst still acknowledging the Home Office guidance?

The Pension Administrator has the power to vary the terms of any scheme in accordance with s.61 and s.62 of the Equality Act 2010. This power enables processing of cases, but not (as paragraph 5.21 implies) cases that involve a contribution holiday where the tax and interest implications are currently unknown. Put another way, the guidance is not saying that all cases cannot be processed, just that in the case of Members who have had contributions holiday, FRA's should wait.

4.5 The WMFRA Pensions Board convened an extraordinary meeting on the 1st July 2021, to review the issues and advice set out in this report. The consideration of the Board is set out in Appendix 1.

5. DECISION REQUIRED

5.1 The Committee are asked to approve the recommendation of the Scheme Administrator.

6. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

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

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

The decision of the Scheme Manager in this case may be

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challenged by Members. The challenge would be made through the Firefighters' Pension Scheme Internal Dispute Resolution Procedure. If this process does not resolve the matter, the issue can be taken to The Pension Regulator and finally to the Supreme Court.

8. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no direct Financial implications of this decision.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

FPS Bulletin 37 – September 2020

Public service pension schemes: changes to the transitional arrangements to the 2015 schemes Consultation

Statement UIN HCWS380

Home Office Guidance – McCloud/Sargeant ruling – Guidance on treatment of 'Immediate Detriment' cases – Issue date: 21st August 2020

Minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee meeting 7th December 2020

The contact name for this report is Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Gary Taylor, telephone number 0121 380 6006.

PHIL LOACH
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

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Ref. AU/AUTH/2021/July/20107211

APPENDIX 1

Item 6

WMFRS Pension Board Extraordinary meeting 1 July 2021

The Board met to review the approach taken by the Pension Administrator in application of the Home Office guidance.

The Administrator outlined the actions taken to date in implementing the HO guidance from both August 2020 and June 2021, the decision making process, the impact on serving members and the role of Pension Board in supporting the Scheme Manager in decision making.

The Board, made up of an Independent Chair and representatives from both Employer and Employees, all recognise the emotive nature of the circumstances and the level of scrutiny that should be applied.

The Board asked questions around the approach taken, the similar approach taken by other Services, the communications undertaken with those affected and the process taken in the decision to adopt the HO guidance (including the consultation with HR and Legal advisors).

Observations of the Board included:

- The appreciation of the legal obligation of the service to apply the current/most up to date tax legislation and to implement this efficiently.
- The personal impact on those affected
- The perceived late notice to individuals on the changes to their pension entitlements so close to retirement dates
- The possible exposure to future discrimination claims resulting from the guidance
- The process and timing of the decision to adopt the guidance
- The statutory role of Officers to protect the service in implementing guidance/legislation

These observations are made by the Chair of the WMFRS Pension Board for consideration by the Chair of Audit and Risk Committee

Pension Board

Item 7

30 March 2021 at 09.00 hrs by digital Meeting

Attendance: Neil Chamberlain Chair of Pension Board
Adam Harper, Employee Representative
Emmett Robertson, Employee Representative
Alan Tranter, Employee Representative
Julie Felton, Employer Representative
Kal Shoker, Employer Representative
Paul Gwynn, Pensions Adviser
Cllr Catherine Miks, Chair of Fire Authority Audit
and Risk Committee
Karen Gowreesunker, Clerk to the Fire Authority

1. **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Wendy Browning-Sampson (Employer Representative).

2. **Minutes of Pension Board 09 December 2020**

The Board resolved the minutes of the meeting held on 09 December 2020 be approved as a correct record of proceedings.

3. **Response to McCloud Sargeant consultation (Fire)(July 2020)**

Paul Gwynn provided an update on actions undertaken since the response from Government in January 2021 to the consultation. It was confirmed that West Midlands Fire Service (WMFS) was the first metropolitan brigade and West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority (WMFRA) as Scheme Manager to adopt the Home Office guidance and payments based on same. The Board was requested to confirm their satisfaction and understanding of the Scheme Manager having taken independent legal guidance (from the Monitoring Officer to WMFRA) upon the guidance provided by Government, having adopted the same and that the decision-making process being applied in a

transparent and assured manner. Board Members unanimously confirmed this position.

Paul Gwynn confirmed a process for engaging Pension Schemes Membership had been agreed with Employee Representatives. Communications were being enacted both in writing and by virtual meetings. Adam Harper requested thanks to Paul Gwynn be recorded in the minutes, for the approach he has taken to support Employee Representatives and Fire Brigade Union members. Paul Gwynn in return thanked Adam Harper for assisting to manage membership expectations during this recent period.

The Chair stated assurance with the process for decision making and the Board having been kept informed of legislative developments. Paul Gwynn was requested to ensure documentation related to the process were archived. The Clerk to WMFRA stated the Pension Board should in future review the minutes of each Audit and Risk Committee (in their role as Scheme Manager). This Committee receives the minutes of the Pension Board as a standing agenda item for review. Paul Gwynn advised that the Pension Regulator may in future investigate how a Pension Board has advised the Scheme Manager, WMFS may consider itself in a good position having regular liaison between the Chairs of the aforementioned entities and a contract for legal advice from a Monitoring Officer, but any enhancement of process as described by the Clerk is a valuable addition to existing practice.

Paul Gwynn stated that intermediate detriment payments have commenced, and pension scheme members are signing for their chosen option. The Board discussed potential items of focus relating to these payments, including interest payment, recovery of any money owed from lump sums, tax relief and adjustments, estates where death has occurred prior to payment. There remains uncertainty upon some items, for which the Board will be appraised of developments by level of importance and awareness for decision.

The Chair thanked Paul Gwynn and the WMFS Payroll and Pensions Team for their administratively prompt response to manage the evolving circumstances and their on-going advice to pension scheme members on Remedy. In so doing, the Chair enquired of the projections for team resourcing and scale of work to deliver. Paul Gwynn confirmed the numbers of people retiring were as anticipated, however the process time is estimated to triple to accommodate the changes. There is sufficient experience in the Payroll and Pensions Team to manage at present, together with implementation of some revised processes for calculating estimated projections (limiting to those members retiring within six months or cases involving divorce or death). There would be recruitment of one wholetime pension administrator from April 2021 to enable sustainable efficiency in implementing payment/scheme changes and an upgrade to the pension administration system which would be integrated by November 2021. A budgetary allocation had been identified for both investments.

Julie Felton enquired about the impact of the availability of estimates upon employees who could engage on WMFS provided pre-retirement courses eighteen months in advance of their leaving the Service. Paul Gwynn responded the Annual Benefits Statement provided estimates to advise context within these courses and subsequent retirement planning.

The Chair requested that such administrative discussion and resourcing be circulated outside of the Board meeting. He asserted the specific detail was not a Board role, however the impact to generate risk was and should feature in the Risk Register as appropriate.

Kal Shoker enquired of actions and associated timelines prior to the next Board meeting. Paul Gwynn confirmed there were nil at present, and should that change he would inform Board Members accordingly.

In conclusion to this agenda item, Paul Gwynn appraised the Board of the prospective timetable for revision of Pension Scheme rules. Government has indicated an implementation date of October 2023 following parliamentary approval; hence first consultation draft can be expected approximately April 2023.

4. **Risk Register**

The Board were updated by Julie Felton on the action agreed at the last meeting that four nominated Board Members liaise regarding process and format of the Risk Register. The outcome of a revised structure was presented to the meeting, detailing the level and direction of existing identified risks. Discussion ensued on each risk and the impact of the format revision to content.

The Chair commended the revisional work undertaken to ensure the Register provided a consistent and assured representation of risk. He summarised arising tasks for progression; the format includes columns for mitigation action and comments; Members review all risks to ensure items are relevant and dependencies identified; emerging issues are included and; the Register is re-circulated prior to the next meeting with these updates.

5. **Any other Business**

Paul Gwynn updated the Board of on-going scoping work to realise a cloud-based payroll system. This includes the potential for online access to pension payment details. It was additionally confirmed the process for scanning documents was almost complete.

Adam Harper sought clarification on developments arising from the O'Brien legal case. Paul Gwynn provided a brief overview of the case, which focussed upon access to pension schemes for part-time staff. It was envisaged there would be minimal impact on WMFS, however an administrative process would need to be progressed to locate any previously employed part-time staff or the

estates of these individuals. The legislative parameters for action required are awaited.

The Board meeting ended at 10.30 hrs.

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Pension Board

09 June 2021 at 09.00 hrs by digital Meeting

Attendance: Neil Chamberlain Chair of Pension Board
Adam Harper, Employee Representative
Alan Tranter, Employee Representative
Kal Shoker, Employer Representative
Paul Gwynn, Pensions Adviser
Karen Gowreesunker, Clerk to the Fire Authority

1. **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Wendy Browning-Sampson and Julie Felton (Employer Representatives), Emmett Robertson (Employee Representative) and Cllr Catherine Miks (Chair of the Fire Authority Audit and Risk Committee).

2. **Minutes of Pension Board 30 March 2021**

The Board resolved the minutes of the meeting held on 30 March 2021 be approved as a correct record of proceedings.

3. **Terms of Reference for the Pension Board**

In accordance with the Terms of Reference for the Pension Board, an annual review of performance was conducted. The discussion was all encompassing, with a particular focus upon ensuring the Board implements and strengthens ownership of its probity and guidance function, in relation to the decision-making remit of the Scheme Manager in the entity of the Audit and Risk Committee. The administration and assurance functions of the Board were also addressed, to ensure clarity of delineation between officer roles supporting the Board and the Board itself determining the focus of its agenda. It was agreed the skills of the current Board membership remained valid to the purpose of the

Board. Similarly that recruitment to the Board should account for the business continuity arrangements necessitated by the Covid-19 pandemic and the expertise gained during the analysis of recent legal cases (predominantly Remedy) and developments of the Pension Regulator.

The Chair summarised three specific actions. Firstly, the September Board meeting will be immediately followed by a Board development session to advise a workplan and continuity of remit for 2021/22. Secondly, the production of an Annual Report of the Pension Board for submission to the Audit and Risk Committee. Thirdly, the recruitment proposal provided by Wendy Browning-Sampson in January 2021 be re-evaluated by 25 June 2021 to determine a majority opinion on approach. The outcome will determine if a report is required for submission to the Audit and Risk Committee scheduled for 19 July 2021.

4. **Annual Benefits Statements**

Paul Gwynn updated the Board on progress to release Annual Benefits Statements. Technical issues nationally had delayed preparation however the deadline of 31 August 2021 would be achieved. The plan is to complete statements in stages by each pension scheme, thereby matching resource capacity and focus on each scheme's regulations in blocks. It is anticipated that approximately seventy members of the 1992 Scheme will be transferred into the 2015 Scheme. Paul Gwynn confirmed Government had set April 2022 as the date by which all statements must align to the 2015 Pension Scheme.

Kal Shoker suggested a performance update is provided monthly as part of internal monitoring figures; the outline timeframe and mitigating factors for completion could also be included. The Chair requested this reporting features in the Risk Register.

5. **Risk Register**

The Chair acknowledged progress made to the formatting integrity of the Risk Register. Members were requested to provide feedback to Julie Felton by 25 June 2021 on any risk omissions or mitigations to existing risks, together with confirmation of satisfaction that risk ratings were appropriate. The Chair stated a full and detailed review of the Risk Register will be an agenda item at the September 2021 meeting of the Board.

The outcomes of the review and discussion will be reported through the Board minutes to the 08 November 2021 meeting of the Audit and Risk Committee (the Scheme Manager). The intention being to generate alignment of risk reporting of the Pension Board to West Midlands Fire Service Corporate Risk Register; it was agreed this would enable both registers to reciprocally advise their content.

6. **Remedy**

The Board acknowledged the uncertainty that existed upon this subject, with legislation and outcomes of legal challenge awaited. Paul Gwynn stated it was anticipated that regulation would be enacted from September 2023 with a three-year transfer implementation period to September 2026. It was confirmed the approach for West Midlands Fire Service will be to prioritise cases of sensitivity, such as death related estates or tax issues for current/deferred members.

Alan Tranter commented the importance of establishing criteria for prioritisation, as these would need communicating to pension scheme members. Additionally, the Board understanding how linear the process will be can assist their support to members. The Chair supported this perspective and requested an update on performance of delivery administration at each Board meeting.

Paul Gwynn appraised the Board of a legal challenge from the national Fire Brigades Union to implement Remedy to an earlier timescale. Wendy Browning-Sampson is

monitoring developments and will progress report to the Board.

Discussion ensued upon the implications of the O'Brien case, re-affirming comparable detail from the March 2021 meeting of the Board. It was acknowledged the timescale of buy back created by the court ruling would have implications for the Service. The number of retired members or deceased members estates affected are yet to be established; the Payroll and Pension Team of the Service will need to research payroll archives to confirm the number of cases for progression. Paul Gwynn stated a fundamental aspect of this process is to determine where pension payment liability lies; this is not considered an issue where employed by West Midlands Fire Service however retrospective membership by other authorities has to be ascertained to ensure payment is allocated to the appropriate responsible entity.

The Fire Pension Scheme Remedy Self-Assessment Survey has been received. The Chair confirmed his co-ordination of the response by 30 June 2021.

7. **Systems Update**

Paul Gwynn informed the Board of the imminent contracting to a new pension payment system. It will incorporate a Members website and Self-Service Portal and scheduled to be operable from November 2021. The Chair requested a demonstration of the system be arranged for the December 2021 meeting of the Board.

8. **Update on Topical, Legal and Regulatory Issues**

Paul Gwynn appraised the Board of two IDRPs cases under progression, both which may go forward to the Ombudsman. The cases are regarding a complaint of overpayment and a payment to an Estate that is impacted by Remedy.

The Chair sought clarification the overpayment case was an isolated incident and control measures were place. He requested a separate briefing on the process for payments

and dealing with circumstances of overpayment. Kal Shoker advised the case should be referenced with the Internal Auditors as a matter of good practice. Paul Gwynn stated he would report back to the Board accordingly.

The Chair concluded the discussion with a statement of reiteration, that the role of the Pension Board was of assurance of practice and not a decision-making body.

9. **Any other business**

The Chair expressed the September 2021 meeting of the Board be held in person at Headquarters. Paul Gwynn was requested to provide a written report or presentation slide pack in advance of the meeting, covering issues that merit Board awareness and their preparation for discussion in the meeting.

The Board meeting ended at 10.15 hrs.

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WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE

WORK PROGRAMME 2021/22

Date of Meeting	Item	Responsible Officer	Completed
2021			
19 July 2021	<p>Statement of Accounts 2020/21 (Draft Unaudited Approval)</p> <p>Treasury Management Annual Report 2020/21</p> <p>Monitoring Policies and RIPA (Annual Whistleblowing Report)</p> <p>Minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee held on 7 June 2021</p> <p>Minutes of the Pension Board held on 30 March 2021</p> <p>Minutes of the Pension Board held on 9 June 2021</p>	<p>Treasurer</p> <p>Treasurer</p> <p>Monitoring Officer/ACFO Strategic Enabler (Enabling Services)</p> <p>Democratic Services Officer</p> <p>Democratic Services Officer</p> <p>Democratic Services Officer</p>	<p>Note: deferred from 7 June meeting</p>

	<p>Training Requirements of Audit and Risk Members</p> <p>Audit and Risk Committee Draft Work Plan 2021/22</p> <p>Request for a decision on Action to be taken in respect of immediate detriment cases under the McCloud_Sargeant Ruling</p>	<p>Democratic Services Officer</p> <p>Democratic Services Officer</p> <p>ACFO Strategic Enabler (Enabling Services) / Treasurer</p>	
27 Sept 2021	<p>Terms of Reference of Audit and Risk Committee</p> <p>Audit Findings Report 2020/21</p> <p>Statement of Accounts 2020/21 (for approval)</p> <p>Audit Progress & Sector Update</p> <p>Internal Audit Progress Report</p> <p>Internal Audit Report - Data Governance</p> <p>Minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee held on 19 July 2021</p>	<p>Democratic Services Officer</p> <p>Grant Thornton</p> <p>Treasurer</p> <p>Grant Thornton</p> <p>Audit Manager</p> <p>ACFO Strategic Enabler (Enabling Services) / Data and Governance Manager</p> <p>Democratic Services Officer</p>	

	Audit and Risk Committee Draft Work Plan 2020/21	Democratic Services Officer	
4 Oct 2021 [Authority]	Audit Findings Report 2020/21 Statement of Accounts 2020/21 Minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee held on 19 July	Grant Thornton Treasurer Democratic Services Officer	
8 Nov 2021	Minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee held on 27 September 2021 Audit Progress & Sector Update Internal Audit Progress Report Treasury Management Mid-Year Report 2021/22 Annual Audit Letter 2020/21 Corporate Risk Update Q1 & Q2 2021/22 Annual SIRO report	Democratic Services Officer Grant Thornton Audit Manager Treasurer Grant Thornton ACFO Strategic Enabler (Enabling Services) ACFO Strategic Enabler (Enabling Services)	

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	<p>Audit and Risk Committee Draft Work Plan 2021/22</p> <p>Minutes of the Pension Board held on 08 September 2021</p> <p>Fraud Awareness Training (tbc)</p>	<p>Democratic Services Officer</p> <p>Democratic Services Officer</p> <p>Phil Tromans John Matthews</p>	
<p>13 December 2021 (Authority)</p>	<p>Minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee held on 27 September</p> <p>Minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee held on 8 November</p> <p>Annual Audit Letter 2020/21</p>	<p>Democratic Services Officer</p> <p>Democratic Services Officer</p> <p>Grant Thornton</p>	

2022			
<p>14 February 2022 (Authority)</p>	Tbc	Tbc	
<p>21 March 2022</p>	<p>Minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee held on 8 November 2021</p> <p>Internal Audit Progress Report</p>	<p>Democratic Services Officer</p> <p>Audit Manager</p>	

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	<p>Audit Progress & Sector Update</p> <p>Internal Audit Plan 2022/23</p> <p>Audit Plan 2021/22 (possibly in June 2022 - tbc)</p> <p>Internal Audit Charter – Annual Review</p> <p>Informing the Audit Risk Assessment – West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority 2021/22 (possibly in March 2022 but may need to be June 2022 - tbc)</p> <p>Minutes of the Pensions Board held on 10 December 2021</p> <p>Audit and Risk Committee Work Plan</p> <p><i>Committee Members’ Private meeting with Internal Auditors (to follow Committee)</i></p>	<p>Grant Thornton</p> <p>Audit Manager</p> <p>Grant Thornton</p> <p>Audit Manager</p> <p>Grant Thornton</p> <p>Democratic Services Officer</p> <p>Democratic Services Officer</p> <p><i>Audit Manager</i></p>	
6 June 2022	<p>Annual Internal Audit Report 2021/22</p> <p>Governance Statement 2021/22</p> <p>Monitoring Policies and RIPA (Annual Whistleblowing Report)</p>	<p>Audit Manager</p> <p>Treasurer</p> <p>Monitoring Officer/ACFO Strategic Enabler</p>	

		(Enabling Services)	
	Corporate Risk Update Q3 & Q4 2021/22	ACFO Strategic Enabler (Enabling Services)	
	Audit Plan 2021/22 (possibly in March 2022 - tbc)	Grant Thornton	
	Informing the Audit Risk Assessment – West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority 2021/22 (possibly in March 2022 but may need to be June 2022 - tbc)	Grant Thornton	
	Annual Report of the Audit and Risk Committee 2021/22 for approval	Chair	
	Audit Progress & Sector Update	Grant Thornton	
	Internal Audit Progress Report	Audit Manager	
	Minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee held on 21 March 2022	Democratic Services Officer	
	Minutes of the Pensions Board held on XXXX - tbc	Democratic Services Officer	
	Annual Report of the Pension Board 2021/22	Chair, Pensions Board	

	<p>Audit and Risk Committee Work Plan-2020/21</p> <p><i>Committee Members' Private meeting with External Auditors</i></p> <p><i>Workshop for Members on Statement of Accounts 2021/22</i></p>	<p>Democratic Services Officer</p> <p><i>Grant Thornton</i></p> <p><i>Treasurer</i></p>	
<p>27 June 2022 [Authority]</p>	<p>Governance Statement 2021/22</p> <p>Minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee held on 21 March 2022</p> <p>Minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee held on 6 June 2022</p> <p>Annual Report of the Audit and Risk Committee 2021/22</p>	<p>Treasurer</p> <p>Democratic Services Officer</p> <p>Democratic Services Officer</p> <p>Chair</p>	

<p>XX July 2022 (Audit and Risk Committee 2022/23)</p>	<p>Statement of Accounts 2021/22 (Draft Unaudited Approval)</p> <p>Treasury Management Annual Report 2021/22</p> <p>Audit and Risk Committee Draft Work Plan 2022/23</p>	<p>Treasurer</p> <p>Treasurer</p> <p>Democratic Services Officer</p>
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	<p>Minutes of the Pension Board (tbc)</p> <p>Note: Audit Findings Report 2021/22 (needs to be in Sept 2022)</p>	<p>Democratic Services Officer</p> <p>Grant Thornton</p>
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