

## **West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority**

17 February 2020 at 1100 hours at

Fire Service Headquarters, Vauxhall Road, Birmingham B7 4HW

Present: Councillor Brackenridge (Chair)

Councillor Iqbal (Vice Chair)

Councillors Barrie, Barlow, Cooper, Dehar, Edwards, Gill, Hogarth, Jenkins, Miller, Miks, Spence, Young and Walsh

Mr Gurinder Singh Josan (Representative of PCC)

Mr M Ager, Independent Member

### 1/20 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Mr Ager, Steve Price Hunt, Sarah Middleton, Councillor Catherine Miks and Councillor Kerry Jenkins

### 2/20 **Declarations of Interest**

The Chair and Councillor J Edwards declared a personal non-pecuniary interest in item 13, Firefighters Pensions.

### 3/20 **Chairs Announcements**

The Chair welcomed the Trade Union Representatives to their first meeting.

The next meeting of the Joint Cultural Implementation Plan group would be taking place on the 5 March and the group were moving forward with the actions within the plan.

Members were recommended to read the recently circulated document from the Local Government Association on guidance for Members of Fire Authorities, together with the State of Fire Report

and the Podcast that was available on the Service's Intranet (MESH).

The Local Government Association Fire Conference would be taking place in Blackpool on the 10 and 11 March 2020 and Councillors Brackenridge, Barrie and Walsh would be attending.

The Chief Fire Officer and Chair of the Authority would be attending a meeting with Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services on the 16 March 2020 regarding the Inspection Programme.

At a recent meeting with all local Fire Authority Leaders, support had been received for greater flexibility on raising the council tax precept and a Press Release to this effect would be released shortly.

It was noted that the West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority Council Tax for Band D was still the lowest in the country. Government approval was awaited for confirmation of raising the precept by £5 per year at Band D and this would raise circa £3.5m extra sustainable funding

#### 4/20 **Chief Fire Officer's Announcements**

At the beginning of the meeting, the Chief Fire Officer advised Members of the sad news regarding the death of firefighter Andrew Moore on Sunday 16 February 2020. Thoughts and deepest sympathies were with Andrew Moore's family, friends and colleagues. All WMFS locations, where possible, had been asked to fly flags at half mast from 08.00 hrs on Monday 17 February 2020 until further notice. A book of condolence would be opened at Wolverhampton Fire Station from midday on Monday for any member of staff or Member to pay their respects.

The Authority passed their thoughts and best wishes onto the family, friends and colleagues.

It was noted that firefighters and wider staff had been deeply affected by Andrew's death and were being provided with the support that they needed and the watch had been sent home. Support was also available for Andrew's family.

5/20 **Minutes of the Fire and Rescue Authority 18 November 2019**

**Resolved** that the minutes of the Fire Authority meeting held on 18 November 2019 be confirmed as a correct record.

6/20 **Portfolio Management (3PT)**

The Authority noted the report on Portfolio Management (3PT) which provided a Strategic summary on the progress of delivery of value through 'Our Plan' based on the continual assessment of Investment and Value release within the three programmes of People, Process and Culture which enabled the progression of the Portfolio to be tracked.

It was noted that the Brigade Managers were accountable to the Chief Fire Officer, through the programme aims, to deliver the Strategy of the Service. The Portfolio was led by the Chief Fire Officer to enable the delivery of the Authority's Strategic priorities, aligned to the Integrated Risk Management Plan. The Chief Fire Officer was ultimately accountable for the Programmes and would challenge the delivery and value release to ensure the aims and objectives were being achieved. The Programmes were accountable for Projects. The report provided an overview of the deliverables (aims and objectives) of the three Programmes, supported by the Programme achievements, constraints, active risks and issues.

- Tall buildings

The Tall Building Action Plan continued to be delivered cohesively across all three of the Programmes with progress monitored centrally to ensure this strategic priority-maintained focus.

The Tall Building Action Plan satisfied all the recommendations from the Grenfell Phase One report and assurance was provided to the Home Office via the National Fire Chief's Council (NFCC)

and was reflected within the Service's Corporate Risk Register. The Service was developing a revised Tall Buildings Policy in liaison with the NFCC and influencing the National Operational Guidance Programme.

- Staffing

Overall the staffing arrangement and model continued to work effectively and efficiently in the delivery of the Service Delivery Model. One current issue reported within this project related to the ridership factor which was 15.2 against a target of 13.5 (predominantly due to greater than anticipated levels of sickness absence).

- Attendance management

Attendance management development sessions had been delivered, led by Middle Managers with the support of Business Partners. The sessions covered several key areas regarding absence management with the aims of the sessions being to make a positive contribution to the health and wellbeing of our staff, take a proactive approach to attendance management while implementing the policy with sensitivity, understand responsibilities and improve attendance management to support the delivery of an effective and efficient Service.

- Time off in lieu (TOIL)

Further to a review of the organisational approach to enabling TOIL, a series of recommendations had been made. There was ongoing consultation through the Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) to consider feedback from staff and representative bodies on the recommendations.

- Developing the Strategy

The IRMP had been due to be consulted upon in late 2019 to support the determination of the Authority's strategic priorities 2020/21. However, the consultation had been paused as a direct result of the General Election in December 2019 and due to this

and other contributory factors, the consultation would now be held following the Local Elections in May 2020.

The Strategic Priorities and Outcomes for the Service over 2020-21 had continued to be reviewed by the Strategic Enabling Team and Authority and a separate report identified the recommended Priority and Outcome statements. The IRMP consultation later in the year would support a review of strategic priorities mid-year if necessary and would be timely enough to support a review of strategic priorities for February 2021.

- Cultural Review

A Joint Cultural Implementation Plan was being developed and would be agreed by all stakeholders. A Stakeholder and Steering Group was being established and would be comprised of a diverse group of people. Actions would be delivered through the 3PT environment and progress reported back to the group. A reporting process that would provide stakeholders with an overview of progress against the plan would be determined.

- Safe and Well – value release

The Service was experiencing a steady reduction in the average points per visit and this could be an indication that the Service may not be accessing the most vulnerable members of our communities.

Partnership referrals currently stood at 38% against the target of 40%. However, this represented an 8% increase this year following a data cleanse carried out at the end of 2019/20.

- Tymly – value release

Tymly 2 had been released in November 2019. Positive feedback had been received from crews. The release had resulted in improvements in the recording of partner referrals and this was evidenced via a 75% referral rate in Black Country South. Additionally, Tymly 2 enabled the provision of notification text and email to householders and partners allowing people to keep up to date with appointments and making sure they were available for

our crews at the agreed time and date. This system also worked for internal referrals.

- Digital – controlled use of digital resources

A new process has been bedded in that prioritises Digital requirements and schedules the Digital activity from across the 3PT Portfolio. Regular reports now plotted progress against the agreed plan and provided rationale for any deviation.

- Distributed Training Model

The distributed training model continues to make use of local assets and resources and provides opportunities for WMFS firefighters to undertake training at locations throughout the service area. This localised approach supports the ethos of personal accountability in relation to workforce competence and operational excellence in the delivery of effective, safe and assertive firefighters.

- Funding, budget preparation and monitoring

The Authority's Provisional 2020/21 Finance Settlement had been announced and indicated that Core Funding in 2020/21 would be at the same level as 2019/20 with a CPI increase.

## 7/20 **Budget and Precept 2020/21 and Budget Forecast 2021/21 to 2022/23**

Members had received a budget presentation which had highlighted the key points for consideration at the Policy Planning Forum held on 13 January 2020. The Fire Authority's budget position was subsequently presented at the District Leaders meeting on 17 January 2020. The District Leaders were supportive of the Fire Service and specifically indicated they would support more flexibility in the Council Tax Referendum limits which applied to the Fire Service so that Council Tax for Band D properties could be increased by £5 rather than the current 2% limit.

On 6 February 2020, MHCLG confirmed the Authority's 2020/21 total core funding.

The settlement for 2020/21 indicated Core Funding at the same level as 2019/20, increased by the Consumer Price Index of approximately 1.6%. Compared to the core funding assumptions original made in the February 2019 budget report, this resulted in core funding being circa £2 million higher than anticipated.

The funding settlement was a one year only arrangement. Whilst there had been indications that some public sector services may receive growth when the anticipated Comprehensive Spending Review process was clarified (circa October/November 2020), potentially for a three or four year funding settlement period, some Services, including the Fire Service, may still face ongoing core funding reductions.

Whilst the position in 2020/21 was more favourable than predicted in the February 2019 budget report (circa £2 million), a high level of caution still needed to be applied to future financial years as the funding position remained volatile for the Fire sector.

Consequently, it was proposed to avoid introducing any additional ongoing expenditure commitments within the 2020/2021 budget and to defer the anticipated use of £0.750 million general balances in 2020/2021.

The report detailed the proposed way in which the improved funding position in 2020/21 would be utilised.

It was noted that the Secretary of State for MHCLG announced in the provisional settlement for 2019/20 the Government's aim to increase the local share of business rates retention to 75% from 2020/21 in a way that was fiscally neutral. In September 2019, the Secretary of State 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.

Additionally, the Fair Funding Review, which would affect how funding was allocated and redistributed between local authorities would be introduced from 2021/22. It was noted that further work was required to identify an appropriate approach to develop the

new funding formula for the Fire Service. The Government had indicated that it would 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 would form a view on the best approach. However, this review added another complexity and volatility to long term financial planning.

HM Treasury announced changes to the discount rate for unfunded public sector pensions on 6 September 2018. This, combined with the earlier 2016 Budget announcement, resulted in a reduction to the discount rate from 3% to 2.4%, and had the effect of increasing the employer contributions (to include ill-health costs) from an average 17.6% to 30.2% from April 2019.

The Government Actuary's Department has estimated that the additional cost to the Fire sector would be around £125m per annum. £10m of the additional costs were met by the Fire Sector in 2019/20, with the remaining £115m being provided via a grant under s31 Local Government Act 2003.

For this Authority the increase in the 2019/20 Employer's Pension contributions was estimated to be £6.2m. A s31 government grant of £5.7m was allocated in 2019/20. The Home Office had not indicated what the funding arrangements would be after 2019/20. In a letter dated 6 February 2020, the Home Office provided an update on the issue confirming that s31 government grant would be paid at the same level in 2020/21 but gave no commitment for future years. The budget forecasts from 2020/21 reflect a continuation of the current s31 grant arrangement. However, a reduction or complete removal of the s31 arrangement would create an ongoing budget pressure of circa £6m.

With regard to the Firefighters Pension Scheme and the Court of Appeal judgement, developments meant that the remedy hearing at the Employment Tribunal could now take place. However, what this meant for pension scheme members and their benefits was not likely to be understood for some time. It is estimated that the increase in employer's contribution, for this Authority, if members



moved back to the 1992 Scheme would be in the region of £1.5m per annum. For the purpose of setting the 2020/21 and medium-term budget requirements, pension budgets have been calculated based on the current regulations.

All District Councils had now formally set their Council Tax base and had notified the Authority accordingly. The appropriate precept had now been calculated for each District and was set out in Appendix B of the report. The Council Tax at Band D for 2020/21 would be £61.81, an increase of 1.99% (£1.21 per annum).

The final figures from external funding sources had now been notified and were included within the report. In addition to external funding, it was estimated that the Authority would generate income of £3.243m. The 2020/21 budget did not assume the use of any general balances.

Based on the current forecast of net expenditure in 2020/2021, the Authority's General Balances at 1 April 2020 would be approximately £6 million. At this level, the amount of General Balances would equate to approximately 6% of the Authority's 2020/2021 Net Revenue Budget.

The report provided an overview of the Capital Programme. It was noted that at the time of announcing the funding settlement for 2020/21, no specific announcements have been made by the MHCLG in relation to capital funding. It was noted that the lack of any specific capital funding allocations continues to be an issue for the Fire sector which central Government have been asked to address.

In preparing the draft revenue budget for 2020/21, an expenditure forecast for 2021/22 to 2022/23 had also been undertaken by rolling forward the 2020/21 draft budget; updating for specific known budget pressures, anticipated inflation and pay awards, adding in commitments, adjusting for anticipated staff turnover levels, setting efficiency targets, etc.

The funding settlement for 2020/21 was a one year only arrangement and in the Secretary of State for MHCLG settlement

announcement there was no indication of further funding levels beyond 2020/21. In planning for the 2021/22 budget, a reduction of 2% had been assumed to the overall core funding and a further 1% in 2022/23. A summary of the impact of the indicated reductions in core funding was provided within the report.

With regard to the adequacy of reserves, it was noted that the current level of reserves were considered to be sufficient in all but the most unusual and serious combination of possible events. In this context it was considered that the current level of reserves presented an optimum balance between risk management and opportunity cost. This maintained a suitable and sustainable level of reserves, which included ensuring sound governance and financial stability in the short and longer term.

It was noted that best endeavours had been made to ensure that the budget and reserves were adequate using the information available at this date.

The forecast budget for 2021/22 and 2022/23 showed a balanced budget. However, given the number of issues that could have a significant impact on the Authority's budget position over the period of the medium-term financial plan, the position needed to be kept under review.

A Member commented that this one year settlement is the best position the Fire Authority has received for a decade. With a reduction of £38 million in our government grant funding since 2010 this budget is welcomed, however there remains uncertainty for future funding settlements.

It was also expressed in the meeting that there would be a need to remain cautious as this was just a one-year settlement and the government may introduce further funding reductions in future years. We have adopted a more flexible approach to managing resources to address funding reductions and this has been achieved whilst maintaining our response attendance standards and our response services to the public have been recognised as outstanding. We have in previous years increased council tax which was supported by the public.

A co-opted member commented that the Fire Authority was one of the least well-funded Fire Authorities in the country and that the Authority would need to collectively tell the story of our successes despite receiving continued reductions. This would create a level of understanding of the implications of funding reductions.

Metropolitan Fire Services represent 50% of the risk across the sector and the WMFRA covers the highest risk outside of London. The S151 officer commented that core grant funding is allocated on a needs basis, in recognition of the area, demographics and vulnerability the fire service covers. Whilst the Fire Authority is one of a number who receive a higher proportion of government grant funding, this has reduced since the commencement of CSR. Our reliance on grant funding has meant that as a Fire Service, compared to others where they may rely more on council tax, we have suffered larger reductions.

A member from the opposition thanked the officer for the report and confirmed that the conservative members were supportive of the report. The budget proposed was good and provides a look forward when it is difficult to predict what will happen in future years. The Member asked the Authority to consider the potential to seek an increase in council tax funding and provided the example of the Police receiving a better settlement through these means.

The CFO thanked the Authority for their support for the budget.

Fleet availability is only part of the IRMP, prevention and protection also need to be considered, with a specific focus on protection in anticipation of more requirements placed on these core services as the outcomes of Grenfell are planned for.

Our investment and commitment to digital ways of working will be critical to how we are able to deliver our services in an increasingly efficient and effective way.

The Service will need to continue to keep a balanced fleet within targets and it is pleasing to hear understanding of this approach through the flexible management of resources from the Authority.

Members asked questions regarding the capital investment programme. The S151 officer confirmed that the capital programme was planned for the next three years, with a standard investment of between £3-3.5m per year.

The approach to funding capital investment would need to be considered for the future. The option for the Authority to borrow money will incur interest costs and increases the revenue budget. Efficiencies across the Authority's estate can be considered, however stations are intrinsic to the Service Delivery Model and our attendance standards.

Resolved

That the Authority approved:

- The Authority's Net Revenue Budget for 2020/21 of £100.147 million which includes a council tax requirement of £44.485 million, together with the associated precept levels, resulting in a Band D Precept increase of 1.99%.
- The Authority's capital programme for 2020/21 to 2022/23.
- The Authority's Treasury Management Strategy which includes the Minimum Revenue Provision Statement and Prudential Indicators.

#### 8/20 **Proposed Vehicle Replacement Programme 2020-21 – 2022-23**

The Authority received a report on the proposed Vehicle Replacement Programme (VRP) 2020-21 to 2022-23. The report was submitted to seek the Authority's approval to proceed with the proposed VRP for the financial year 2020/21.

Officers based at Transport Engineering Workshops (TEW) had carried a review of the ongoing VRP. Age profiles and review periods (listed within the report) had been used to determine the type and number of vehicles in the fleet recommended during 2020/21.

To achieve a fleet replacement of the operational appliances within current budget constraints, there would be a requirement to replace six Pump Rescue Ladders (PRLs) and one Business

Support Vehicle (BSV) in 2020/21, six PRLs in 2021/22, and six PRLs and three BRVs in 2022/23.

No aerial appliance required replacement within the next three years.

The introduction of all electric ancillary vehicles would be evaluated during 2020 for suitability prior to the planned purchases in 2020/21. It was noted that the evaluation of all electric vehicles was particularly pertinent due to the Authority's commitment to lowering its carbon footprint, the environmental agenda, and forthcoming Birmingham Clean Air Zone.

In answer to Members' questions, the following points were raised:

- The purchase and replacement of operational vehicles process included consultation with staff across the Service.
- As a result of significant past reductions in funding, the VRP had previously been paused. However, it was now back on track and there was on-going investment.
- It was noted that with three Brigade Response Vehicles (BRVs) due for replacement it was recognised that they had a finite life. In principle, this year would see the initial exploration of a suitable replacement for these type of vehicles in association with a number of stakeholders (to determine their requirements and what would be appropriate).
- The Service would support the local economy where it could although always remaining in line with procurement regulations.
- A Member commented that it was positive to see that the Authority was able to replace its fleet and questioned whether staff were being consulted as part of the procurement process.
- It was confirmed that, where needed, consultation would take place to ensure the vehicles are equipped appropriately. Staff from the Transport Engineering Workshops support this process.
- The CFO commented that in principle in this current year we will begin to consider what is a suitable BRV and include a number of stakeholders to identify what they want and what is appropriate.

Resolved:

The Authority noted the proposed VRP for 2020/21 to 2022/23.

The Authority approved the funding for 2020/21.

The Authority noted the intention to procure a range of vehicles identified in the VRP using the Crown Commercial Services Purchase Framework Agreement RM859, Open EU tenders and other approved Consortia routes that represent value for money to the Authority.

#### 9/20 **2020/21 Property Asset Management Plan**

The Authority received a report for the Authority to approve the 2020/21 Property Asset Management Plan.

It was noted that to ensure the effective and efficient use of land and buildings, a Property Asset Management Plan was essential. Work had been completed over the last 12 months to assess the appropriateness of existing property assets and consider where future investment should be directed. In order to demonstrate the effective use of resources, it was necessary to undertake a fundamental review of property assets which should also be flexible enough to respond to organisational changes. The Property Asset Management Plan involved input from all key West Midlands Fire Service stakeholders and reflected the property and property related priorities over the next five-year period.

Specific actions in relation to the plan were detailed within section ten of the appendix.

In answer to Members' questions, the following points were raised:

- The replacement of efficient lighting at premises continued.
- Issues regarding residential buildings within the Service's property portfolio had been raised previously at the Audit and Risk Committee. It was noted that currently a number of residential buildings were receiving an income. Specific actions in relation to residential buildings was listed within the appendix, including

- Evaluate space utilisation and continue to assess building stock other than Fire Stations (residential buildings)
- Progress planning for Kings Norton Fire Station site flats to alter access and dispose
- Progress potential disposal of terraced houses at the rear of Perry Barr Fire Station

Resolved

That the Authority approved the Property Asset Management Plan for 2020/21.

### 10/20 **Procurement Procedures Policy**

The Authority received a report to approve the revised Procurement Procedures Policy.

The policy had been reviewed in line with the three-year review process. The main changes to the policy were highlighted as follows:

- Remove references to the Procurement Manual (throughout document) compliance with data protection legislation (6.1).
- Quotations above £25,000 to be processed by Corporate Procurement supported by Service Support Administration (6.4).
- Requirement for 3 quotations limit increased from £3,000 to £5,000 (6.4)
- Approval limit of Corporate Procurement Manager increased from £50,000 to £100,000 (6.4 and throughout document)
- Standing Order 01/06 incorporated within this document.
- Retention of documents (throughout document).
- Approval levels amended from various levels (£2,500 to £10,000) to £25,000 for all Budget Holders (6.4 and throughout document).
- Compliance with Off Payment Working Regulations (6.5 & 6.6).
- Include section on managing contracts (6.9.6).

Include use of e-tendering system for contracts above £10,000 (6.14).

- This provision for Facilities Management to award contacts for emergency building works, value increased from £5,000 to £7,500 (6.14).
- Include new section on disposals (6.17).
- Standing Order 01/21 Overseas Aid incorporated (6.18).

Resolved

That the Authority approved the revised Procurement Procedures Policy.

### 11/20 **The Plan 2020-23**

The Authority received a report regarding the approval of the revised Priorities and Outcomes of The Plan 2020-2023.

Following a review of the Authority's Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP), Strategy and budget considerations, the report sought approval of the revised priorities and outcomes for The Plan 2020-2023, which continued to support the Services Vision statement. These priorities and outcomes reflected the changing internal and external environment.

The priorities and outcomes for 2020-2023 were enablers to achieving the Service's vision of Making the West Midlands Safer, Stronger and Healthier, over a three-year rolling period. The priorities and outcomes had been reviewed and amended and were set out within appendix 2 of the report. The rationale for the changes were detailed within the body of the main report (3.4 onwards).

It was noted that The Plan and the proposed amended priorities and outcomes had been presented to Members at the previous Policy Planning Forum.

The Chair noted that he was pleased to see the People statement and that it reflected the outcomes of the Cultural Review.

Resolved

That the Authority approved the revised priorities and outcomes of The Plan 2020-2023.



The Chair thanked officers for the work that has gone into the formulation of the Plan priorities and outcomes, commenting that the inclusion of a people statement with a forward look on the implementation of the outcomes of the Cultural Review through the Joint Cultural Implementation Plan.

#### 12/20 **Pay Policy Statement 2020-21**

The Authority received the Pay Policy Statement 2020/21. Section 38 (1) of The Localism Act 2011 required Fire and Rescue Authorities to produce a Pay Policy Statement for each financial year. There had not been any significant changes to the Statement that must be produced each year before the 31 March 2020. The pay awards, Appendix 1 had been updated.

**Resolved** that the Pay Policy Statement for the financial year 2020/2021 be approved.

#### 13/20 **Monitoring of Finances**

The Authority noted the Monitoring of Finances report.

The Authority's 2019/20 Council Tax requirement is £43.215 million, and the revenue budget is £98.131 million. As part of the Authority's 2020/21 budget setting process, the current year's budget had been reviewed and continues to reflect an estimated transfer from general balances of £1.100m.

Appendix A compared the revenue budgeted to the end of January 2020 with the actuals to that date. Actual spend to January 2020, including commitments, was £80.353 million compared to a projected budget of £80.400 million, an overall favourable variance of £0.047.

Appendix B provided statistical data relating to the Firefighters' Pension Scheme.

Appendix C sets out the scheme analysis of the Authority's approved capital programme for 2019/20 of £9.209 million. Expenditure to the end of January 2020 was shown as £4.133 million.

The main forecast variance within the capital programme related to:

- Vehicle Replacement Programme delayed purchase
- Aston Fire Station refurbishment
- Coventry Fire station refurbishment
- Replacement of Windows and doors at Dudley, Handsworth and Sheldon Fire Stations

14/20 **Phase 1 Report of the Public Inquiry into the fire at Grenfell Tower on 14 June 2017**

The Authority received a report to note the background and content of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry: Phase 1 report of the Public Inquiry into the Fire at Grenfell Tower on the 14 June 2017, and to note the work undertaken to date in respect of tall buildings following the Grenfell Tower fire and the approach taken to considering and addressing the recommendations set out in the Phase 1 report.

The report noted:

- The background to the Grenfell Tower Fire.
- The work undertaken by the Service following the Grenfell Tower fire.
- The inspection of the Service by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) and the subsequent rating of the Service plus the points noted within the HMICFRS report which had been made with specific reference to the Grenfell Tower fire.
- The publication and contents of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry: Phase 1 Report October 2019.
- Organisational assurance – the Service had adopted a structured approach to consider the recommendations and to build on existing planned improvement activity being delivered across the three Programmes under Portfolio. Paragraph 3.20 of the report detailed the key areas of strategic focus.

- The assurance and improvement activity contributing to the effective management of a number of the Authority's Corporate Risks.

The following points were raised during the meeting:

- The Phase 1 Report of the Public Inquiry was published in October 2019. The report contained 47 recommendations which were broken down into 12 headings (listed within the report). The Service would consider its position against the recommendations and where appropriate, take action to ensure continuous improvement in enabling the delivery of our Vision of Making the West Midlands Safer, Stronger and Healthier. It was also noted that some of the recommendations required consideration by Fire and Rescue Services. However, some of the recommendations required the national consideration whilst others would impact directly upon those that were responsible for or owned residential tall buildings. A number of recommendations were specific to London Fire Brigade.
- It was noted that the Phase 1 Report confirmed that the external Aluminium Composite Material (ACM) cladding was the reason for such rapid fire spread which led to the unfortunate and tragic loss of 72 lives.
- The Grenfell Tower Inquiry was comprised of two phases, with the Inquiry's Phase 2 hearings beginning in January 2020. Phase 2 of the Inquiry was an examination of the reasons for why the fire at Grenfell Tower happened, moving focus away from the events of the night of the fire, and will ascertain the underlying causes of the incident, including decisions made in relation to critical aspects of the design and construction of the cladding system, the adequacy of the regulatory regime and the response of central and local government.
- In the aftermath of the fire, the Service had co-ordinated the sector response on behalf of the National Fire Chief's Council (NFCC). The Service had established a 'Comms

Cell' function to primarily collate and identify ACM cladding on tall buildings across all Fire and Rescue Services.

- Fire Safety Officers and station-based crews completed fire safety audits and site-specific risk information visits at 551 residential tall buildings in the seven Local Authority areas that the Service covered. This work included the identification and updating information on ACM cladding and other flammable material attached to building exteriors.
- As a regulator, the Service was one of the few Fire and Rescue Services that had used its legislative powers to ensure that risk was reduced by ensuring that plans were in place to remove unsafe cladding and address compartmentation issues.
- The initial and growing demand on Fire Safety Officers had been proactively managed through the investment of £600k to increase the number of staff by 11 Officers.
- The Service was committed to continuous improvement and excellence in all aspects of its work and continually reviewed all policies, systems and processes in response to organisational intelligence. The Service's associated high-rise policies and procedures had been reviewed, evaluated and developed.
- Fire Control's approach to the provision of fire survival guidance had been enhanced, including the improvement in how such information was shared, recorded and managed between Fire Control and the incident ground.
- The HMICFRS inspected the Service in September 2019. The Service was rated as 'good' in overall terms but remain the only Fire and Rescue Service to have received the 'Outstanding' rating for its emergency response work.
- The Queen's Speech confirmed that an emergency Fire Safety Bill would be progressed quickly to take forward the Phase 1 recommendations related to building control. Following this, more detailed legislation would follow through a Building Safety Bill which would be primary legislation to also take forward the recommendations from the 2018 Hackitt Report 'Building a Better Future'.

- Progress across all areas of related activity was being monitored through the three Programme Boards and reported into the Portfolio on a monthly basis.
- The NFCC were co-ordinating local Fire and Rescue Service updates outlining progress against the relevant Phase 1 recommendations, to provide sector assurance to the Home Office.

Resolved

The Authority noted the report on the Phase 1 Report of the Public Inquiry into the fire at Grenfell Tower on 14 June 2017.

15/20 **Notes of the Joint Consultative Panel held on 4 November 2019**

The notes of the Joint Consultative Panel held on 4 November 2019 were received.

16/20 **Notes of the Policy Planning Forum held on 4 November 2019**

The notes of the Policy Planning Forum held on 4 November 2019 were received.

17/20 **Minutes of the Collaboration and Transformation Committee held on 11 November 2019**

The minutes of the Collaboration and Transformation Committee held on the 11 November 2019 were approved.

18/20 **Minutes of the Scrutiny Committee held on 11 November 2019**

The minutes of the Scrutiny Committee held on 11 November 2019 were approved.

19/20 **Minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee held on 11 November 2019**

The minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee held on 11 November 2019 were approved.

The Leader of the Opposition Group stated that the minutes included details of a good report that the Committee had received

on Vacant Residential Properties that provided members with a great deal of information and details of the options going forward.

#### 20/20 **Notes of the Joint Consultative Panel held on 3 February 2020**

The notes of the Joint Consultative Panel held on 3 February 2020 were received.

Councillor Edwards stated that in agreeing the minutes, further clarity had been requested and the final paragraph had been amended to read.

“The Joint Consultative Panel recommended that the Chief Fire Officer include an independent review of disciplinary processes within the Action Plan of the Cultural Review”.

The Chief Fire Officer acknowledged the recommendation.

#### 21/20 **Death of Councillor Peter Bilson, Former Chair of Fire Authority**

The Chair notified the Authority of the death of Councillor Peter Bilson on Saturday 15 February 2020. Councillor Bilson had been a former firefighter in the West Midlands, a Fire Brigades Union representative and also Chair of the Fire Authority for six years.

Councillor Bilson had been Elected in 1982 and had been the Mayor of Wolverhampton and Chair of the Fire Authority during the Millennium year.

The Chair also stated that Councillor Bilson was currently the Deputy Leader of Wolverhampton and a giant of West Midlands Politics and recommended a one minutes silence be held for Members of the Authority. A joint letter of condolence from the Chief and Chair would be forwarded to Councillor Bilson’s widow in thanks for his long-standing track record of commitment to West Midlands Fire Service and West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority.

The Leader of the Opposition Group stated that he was sorry to hear the sad news about Councillor Bilson and had known him for a number of years as Chair of Authority

Details of the funeral arrangements would be circulated as soon as they were available.

A one minutes silence was held.

### 21/20 **Exclusion of the Public and Press**

The public and press were excluded from the rest of the meeting to avoid the possible disclosure of exempt information under Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

### 22/20 **Planned Procurement Exercise for 2020 - 2021**

The Authority received a report for approval of the tender exercise for the provision of various works, goods and services to West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority during 2020/21 for:

- Thermal Imaging Cameras
- Fire Safety Legal Services
- Pump Rescue Ladders (PRL)
- Command Support Vehicle
- National Framework – Safe and Well Equipment
- Coventry Fire House Refurbishment
- Door and Window Replacements
- Microsoft Office Licences
- Planned Works Framework Agreement

**Resolved** that the tender exercises for the provision of various works, good and services to West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority during 2020/21 be approved.

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