

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

6th JULY 2009

1. VALUE FOR MONEY STRATEGY

Report of the Chief Fire Officer.

RECOMMENDED

- 1.1 THAT the Executive Committee approve the Value for Money (VFM) strategy attached as Appendix 1 to this report.
- 1.2 THAT the Executive Committee note how consultation with Members, staff and the representative bodies has informed and shaped the VFM strategy.

2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report is submitted to seek approval of the Executive Committee of the VFM strategy and to inform the Committee of the consultation which has informed the development of the strategy.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The concept of VFM has been a part of the Authority's approach to service provision for several years, this has included:-
 - The duty of Best Value.
 - The ambitious approach that has been taken to the freedom and flexibility created by the introduction of Integrated Risk Management Planning.
 - The generation of cashable savings as a part of the National Fire and Rescue Service's 2007/08 and 2010/11 efficiency targets.

- 3.2 The improvements which have been created through this approach have been reported in the annual efficiency statements. The Audit Commission report 'Rising to the Challenge' identified that:-
- West Midlands Fire Service (WMFS) is only one of seven fire and rescue services that is spending less in real terms than at the beginning of the previous spending review period and is the best performer nationally with a 16.4% reduction in real term spending. (See Rising to the Challenge Figure 6 page 21 for explanatory information).
 - In 2006/7 WMFS had the second highest level of public satisfaction and in 2007/2008 the lowest council tax precept at band D.
 - The cost per head of population for 2007/2008 at £42.07 was the fourth highest within the family group, with the lowest being £38.27. However, the Authority's cost per head of population needs to be considered against its Index of Multiple Deprivation score which is the second highest in the family group.
- 3.3 The success that has been achieved must not, however, become a barrier to further progress. The Rising to the Challenge report identified a number of initiatives and approaches that have not yet been adopted or evaluated by WMFS. The recent Annual Audit and Inspection Letter identified further scope for improving the processes to manage VFM and the integration of financial and performance management information.
- 3.4 In addition the Government in 2008 launched The Operational Efficiency Programme. This programme allied to the recent worldwide economic decline demonstrate the continued need of the WMFS to provide and be able to demonstrate VFM in the full range of services that it delivers.
- 3.5 The VFM strategy has been created to provide the foundation upon which the Authority can further develop its approach to VFM and is attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

- 3.6 As a transparent and open organisation, WMFS recognised the importance of consultation with both Members and officers at all levels of the organisation in the development of a VFM strategy. Therefore, consultation was undertaken with a Members' Workshop being held at the Policy Planning Forum on 18th May 2009 and a Leadership Discussion Forum on the 3rd June 2009 (this event was attended by a cross section of over 40 WMFS employees from throughout the organisation). Both sessions were extremely informative and have been integral to shaping the VFM strategy.
- 3.8 A one month consultation period with the appropriate Representative Bodies has been completed. Included within this period was an open discussion at a Joint Consultative Panel on 17th June 2009. The key themes arising from all consultation and the changes made to the VFM strategy as a consequence are reflected in the strategy document.

4. **EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

In preparing this report an initial Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out. The initial Equality Impact Assessment did not raise issues which required a full Equality Impact Assessment to be completed.

5. **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

The Fire and Rescue Service National Framework 2008-11, which has statutory power under the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, contains a chapter on Governance and Improvement. Within this there is a section on efficiency and the more effective use of resources.

6. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. However, the proposed strategy will have a significant impact on the future delivery of high quality VFM services.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Rising to the Challenge – Improving Fire Service Efficiency
Audit Commission December 2008

Annual Audit and Inspection Letter – Audit 2007/8
March 2009

Members' VFM Workshop May 2009

Leadership Discussion Forum June 2009

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CHIEF FIRE OFFICER