
Report to
Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee

13 December 2006

Report of
Councillor Kevin Foster

Title
Report Back on the Work Of Outside Bodies – West Midlands Fire and Civil Defence Authority

1 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 At their meeting on 10th May, 2005, the Cabinet approved a process of reporting back to the Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee on the work of those outside bodies appointed to by the City Council. This report sets out details of the work of West Midlands Fire & Rescue Authority over the preceding twelve months and details of attendance by the City Council's representatives.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 That Scrutiny Co-Ordination Committee note the vital role of the West Midlands Fire & Rescue Authority in providing both responsive emergency services and preventative fire safety advice to the Citizens of Coventry.
- 2.2 Note that the three City Council representatives on the West Midlands Fire & Rescue Authority must be elected members and therefore recommend that members should continue to be appointed.

3 Information on Work of Outside Body

- 3.1 The key duty of the Fire Authority is to provide emergency cover and to ensure that the level of deaths and injury from fire across the West Midlands are reduced with an ultimate target of zero accidental deaths.
- 3.2 The City of Coventry has four Fire Stations (Binley, Canley, Coventry & Foleshill) that house 7 fire appliances and 1 aerial ladder. Fire Control is located at the HQ in Birmingham and has at its disposal the fleet of 62 Fire Appliances available to the Brigade. In the event of a major incident within the City fire control can call on these resources, as well as specialist units to assist. There are reciprocal arrangements for cover with neighbouring authorities and a strong link with Warwickshire Fire & Rescue Service has been formed. In total the Brigade employs 1,836 full-time uniformed staff, 72 control room staff and 431 non-uniformed staff.

- 3.3 The Fire Service has traditionally been a "response led" service with its main business being reacting to emergency calls for assistance. This has changed over recent years to a prevention-based approach that looks to minimise the risk of fire and prevent them from occurring. A key part of this has been the creation of a strategic reserve of 15 appliances, out of the 62 available, to allow crews to diarise time for fire safety work, as well as ensuring training is carried out effectively. This change of focus has led to changes taking place to night cover across the region to target resources to prevention work. Other changes have led to the scrapping of beds in Fire Stations (prior to this the Fire Service was the only emergency service to allow staff on emergency call to go to sleep) and specific space being created for community work at a number of stations.
- 3.4 The Brigade's progress in reducing the deaths and injuries from accidental fires is noticeable, and in 2004/05 the number of deaths from accidental fires was 12. This figure is the lowest recorded since the Brigade was established in 1974.
- 3.5 The Fire Service is a key part of Coventry's resilience arrangements for dealing with a large-scale terrorist incident or civil emergency. The Fire Service has participated in large-scale exercises with other emergency services and has equipment to assist in dealing with both biological and other terrorist threats.
- 3.6 A key part of this has been encouraging both local authorities and owners of large scale commercial premises to fit sprinkler systems. Coventry City Council, as a matter of policy, fits sprinklers to all new schools and those undergoing significant refurbishment. This policy has acted as a lead for others to follow. The Authority is lobbying on a national level for this to be the norm across the country and this includes an annual visit to the Houses of Parliament every November to lobby both MPs and Peers.
- 3.7 Key developments over the next few years will include the new Fire Headquarters Building in Birmingham that will replace the 1930's era Central Headquarters. The development of a Regional Fire Control Centre in Wolverhampton will see resources deployed on a regional basis. This project is funded by the Government as part of its work to increase the capacity of the UK to respond to civil emergencies.
- 3.8 Further details of the authorities work is contained in the attached Best Value Performance Plan.

4 Benefits to the City Council of the Appointment

- 4.1 The Fire Service is one of the Council's key partners in a range of services and a key part of the response to any civil emergency within the City. As members of the Authority, the City's three elected representatives play a key role in shaping policy and are able to influence the services that are provided to our citizens.
- 4.2 The Fire Authority applies a precept each year to the Council Tax payable within the City and therefore is able to directly influence the level of Council Tax payable by residents. The precept for 2006/07 is £43.18 for a Band D property, and the amount is set each year, in February, as part of the Authorities Annual Budget. The revenue budget for the authority for 2006/07 is £108.877m.

5 Attendance Record and Remuneration for the Appointment

- 5.1 Councillors Foster, Gazey and Mulhall are the City Council's representatives on the West Midlands Fire and Civil Defence Authority. Over the period from the start of the Municipal Year to date there have been six meetings held, of which Councillor Foster has attended 5, Councillor Gazey 4 and Councillor Mulhall 3.

5.2 Members of the West Midlands Fire and Civil Defence Authority receive a £3,000 basic allowance per annum. Councillor Mulhall receives an additional Special Responsibility Allowance of £1,500 as he is the Deputy Lead Member for Performance Management.

List of background papers

Proper officer:

Author:

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Councillor Kevin Foster

(Any enquiries should be directed to the above)

Other contributors:

Papers open to Public Inspection

Description of paper

Location CH61

Schedule of City Council Appointments to Outside Bodies

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY BEST VALUE PERFORMANCE PLAN AND BUSINESS PLAN 2006-2007

S U M M A R Y L E A F L E T

This a summary of what will be included in the West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority's Best Value Performance Plan for 2006/07. This leaflet sets out our approach to **improvements in efficiency, economy, effectiveness and quality** as part of a process of continuous improvement. If you want to make any comment about the Authority's Vision and Mission statements; Corporate Aims; Performance Indicators; targets; proposals for Best Value Reviews; please contact us using one of the methods shown on the last page.

West Midlands Fire & Rescue Authority Members

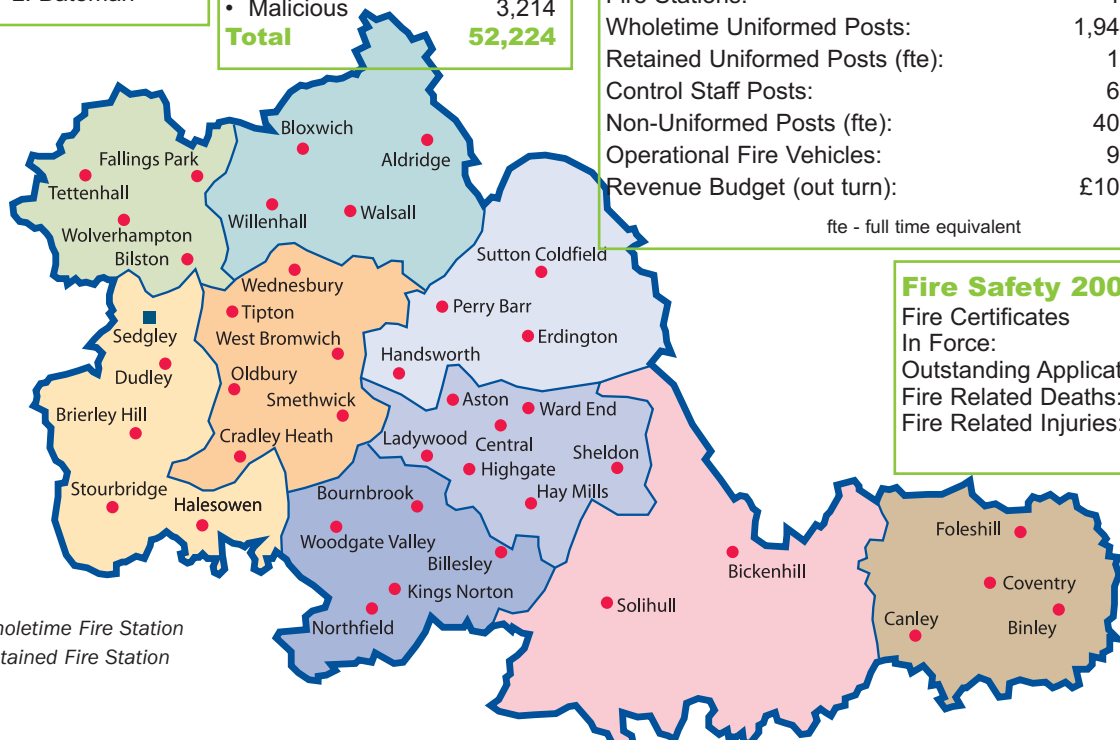
Chair: Cllr. D. Hinton
Vice Chair: Cllr. P. Hogarth
Councillors: 27 in total

Statutory Officers

Chief Fire Officer: F. Sheehan
Clerk: F.N. Summers
Treasurer: L. Bateman

Operational Response 2004/2005

Fires:	21,841
Other Emergency Incidents:	7,094
False Alarms:	
• Good Intent	7,243
• Automatic	
Detection Systems	12,832
• Malicious	3,214
Total	52,224



• Wholetime Fire Station
■ Retained Fire Station

The Authority's Vision Statement is:

“Making West Midlands Safer”

The Authority's Mission Statement is:

“Providing a quality service to reduce risk by:

- Protecting,
- Preventing,
- Responding”

Profile

Area:	91,276 hectares
Population:	2,575,800
Fire Stations:	41
Wholtime Uniformed Posts:	1,944
Retained Uniformed Posts (fte):	10.5
Control Staff Posts:	68
Non-Uniformed Posts (fte):	409
Operational Fire Vehicles:	91
Revenue Budget (out turn):	£107.19m

fte - full time equivalent

Fire Safety 2004/2005

Fire Certificates In Force:	6,478
Outstanding Applications:	51
Fire Related Deaths:	12
Fire Related Injuries:	196

Corporate Aims:

1. Meeting the Fire Authority's statutory duties, standards and expectations.
2. Creating a financial plan which operates within the budget, to ensure the most efficient use of resources.
3. Reducing risk in the community.
4. Working in partnership with stakeholders, locally, regionally, nationally and internationally.
5. Planning for and responding appropriately to all emergencies.
6. Caring for the health, safety and welfare of all our people.
7. Operating within a culture of equality and valuing diversity.
8. Contributing to the well-being of the environment.
9. Developing and supporting sustainable outcomes.
10. Ensuring all our people are competent, enabled and achieving their full potential.
11. Modernising and improving the quality of service.
12. Improving channels of communication.
13. Maximising the benefits from the latest technology.
14. Having a positive attitude to change.
15. Being an influential Fire Authority.

WEST MIDLANDS FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY BEST VALUE PERFORMANCE PLAN AND BUSINESS PLAN 2006-2007

SUMMARY LEAFLET

Performance Indicators

Indicators Relating to Fires	01/02	02/03	03/04	04/05	Target 05/06
The total number of fires	28,249	28,496	32,709	29,931	Deleted Indicator
The number of property and vehicle fires	12,868	11,912	11,175	9,387	9,216
The number of accidental fires in dwellings	2,939	2,720	2,647	2,466	2,422
The number of malicious calls attended by the Brigade	5,176	4,352	4,069	3,214	3,200
The number of false alarm calls due to automatic fire alarms	9,596	10,517	11,861	12,832	12,000
The number of deaths from accidental fires in dwellings	15	22	14	12	9
The number of injuries from accidental fires in dwellings	233	278	198	196	190

We are constantly trying to reduce damage and loss from fire. This is proving to be difficult against the challenging targets we have set. We need your help to continue to focus on these important indicators.

Indicators Relating to Fire Safety

The percentage of dwelling fires where a working smoke alarm was fitted	38.04%	35.57%	38.37%	42%	46%
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We continually campaign for safe homes and for the fitting of life saving equipment such as smoke alarms and sprinklers.

Equality and Diversity Indicators

a) The percentage of Black and minority ethnic uniformed staff	3.90%	4.40%	4.80%	6.00%	5.2%
b) the percentage of Black and minority ethnic population of working age in the Brigade area			*16.00%		*21.17%
c) the percentage of women firefighters	1.18%	1.31%	1.77%	2.10%	2.30%

** Persons aged 18-54 in accordance with the Labour Force Survey (1996 - 1998, 12 quarters).*

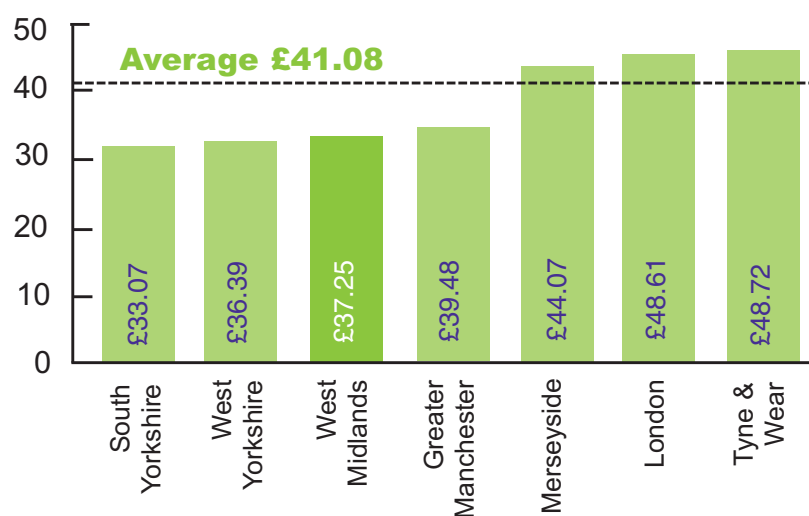
2005/2006 Best Value Reviews

The following table details the service areas identified for review during 2005/2006.

Service Area: **Community Protection Activities**

Influencing Factor: **Part of the five year cycle of Best Value Reviews**

Progress / results from reviews will be detailed in the Authority's Best Value Performance Plan and Business Plan for 2006 - 2007.



How much does your Fire Brigade cost you?

The net expenditure on the West Midlands Fire Service per head of population for 2003/2004 was **£37.25**. The table left, shows how that compares with the other Fire and Rescue Authorities.

S U M M A R Y L E A F L E T

Consultation

The Authority will consult by using a combination of the following methods:-

- **Telephone Hotline**
- **Satisfaction Surveys**
- **General Surveys**
- **Compliments, Comments & Complaints Procedure**
- **Internet**
- **Annual Meetings**
- **Leaflets**
- **Post Incident Surveys**
- **Focus Groups**
- **Targeted Surveys**
- **Publicity Campaigns**

The Authority will consult when:-

- **It has produced its Best Value Performance Plan and Business Plan.**
- **It has drafted proposals arising from a Best Value Review.**
- **It has received guidance from the Secretary of State.**
- **It requires consultees' views for purposes other than those arising from Best Value.**

Our Service to You

We will provide you with a service 24 hours a day, 365 days a year from 41 fire stations across the West Midlands area. Our service is tailored to suit local needs by the Station Commander and staff at your local fire station.

If you want to know where your local fire station is, or would like any fire safety advice, please see details below about how to contact us.

“Corporate services delivered locally”

Customer Satisfaction

Consultation plays a major part in the Best Value process. We consult with our own staff and, wherever possible with you, the public, as part of our information gathering for Best Value reviews.

In a public survey to find out what you thought about your fire brigade, 72% of those who answered said they were “very satisfied” or “satisfied” with the service.

If you have a comment, compliment or complaint about your fire service, please contact:

Public Relations

Tel: **0121 380 6102/6103/6104** (during office hours)
Customer Care Hotline: **0121 380 7404** (24 hour answer phone)
Website: **www.wmfs.net/contact**
Email: **contact@wmfs.net**
Write to: **Public Relations**
West Midlands Fire Service Headquarters,
Lancaster Circus Queensway,
Birmingham B4 7DE.

How to contact us

If you have any comments which you would like to make about this summary leaflet, please forward them to:

Best Value Team,
West Midlands Fire Service Headquarters,
Lancaster Circus Queensway, Birmingham B4 7DE.

Telephone: **0121 380 6125/6126/6062**
Fax: **0121 380 7007**
e-mail: **bestvalue@wmfs.net**

You can also visit our website at **www.wmfs.net**

This leaflet contains summary information about our Best Value Performance Plan and Business Plan 2006-2007. This information can be made available in other languages and formats including large print, Braille and audio tape. Please phone 0121 380 6125, 6126, 6062.