

Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council

17 October 2017

West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority

Report by Councillor John Edwards, Chair of the Authority

1. Revenue finances

By 2019/20, core funding provided by the Government to WMFRA will have been reduced by 50% (£38 million) since the cuts began in 2011.

A four year settlement offer has been secured from government by the provision of a service efficiency plan for 2016/17 – 2019/20. This produces the following front-loaded core funding reductions during this period:

- 2016/17 £3.278m
- 2017/18 £3.985m
- 2018/19 £1.691m
- 2019/20 £0.690m

2. Capital spending

Coventry and Aston fire station rebuilds are currently taking place. WMFRA has agreed an essential vehicle replacement programme which includes front line fire appliances. Various other items of essential capital expenditure are also included in our rolling capital programme such as IT equipment which is critical to mobilising our emergency response.

Government are still failing to put in place any capital resources for the fire and rescue sector and all capital spending is being financed through ear-marked reserves held by WMFRA. The sector continues to lobby on this matter.

3. Future governance of West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority

Members are reminded that the Government's Policing and Crime Act received assent on 31st January 2017. The Bill provides for Police and

Crime Commissioners (PCC) to assume governance of fire and rescue services. The Act also extends the same provision to elected Mayors in devolved areas like the West Midlands.

On 20th February this year WMFRA agreed unanimously to establish a route to future governance with the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) and elected Mayor and on 3rd March the WMCA also unanimously supported this approach.

On 8th September WMCA progressed this and agreed that a governance review and scheme should be developed and put to all 7 local authorities in the West Midlands for agreement before going out to public consultation at the start of 2018.

This significant change in governance arrangements for West Midlands Fire Service is expected to take 15-18 months to achieve.

4. Year to date performance

Appendix 1 outlines performance indicators to the end of February 2017.

Accidental fires in dwellings are slightly above target and casualties slightly below target. Arson fires in dwellings are above target.

Arson attacks in commercial properties and on vehicles are both over target.

During this 6-month period 120 people were rescued or led to safety from fires by firefighters.

Fire crews attended 1,280 road traffic collisions and extricated 128 people from vehicles.

Despite unprecedented cuts in government funding West Midlands Fire Service continues to maintain its 5-minute target response times to category 1 incidents which threaten life or property.

Our current average time continues to improve on the target and currently stand at 4 minutes: 43 seconds.

Cllr John Edwards
Chair, West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority
October 2017