

West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority Best Value Inspection Terms of Reference

The Best Value Inspection will provide direct, independent assurance that the Fire and Rescue Authority is continuing to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. This means the inspection will include:

- All relevant governance concerns that have arisen in relation to the Authority from Autumn 2022 to the present;
- The Authority's current compliance with the accountability and assurance requirements under the National Framework;
- The Authority's likely future compliance with the accountability and assurance requirements under the National Framework;
- In considering the Authority's current and likely future compliance with the requirements of Part 1 of the 1999 Act in relation to its governance functions, the Lead Inspector should have regard to all relevant matters, whenever arising;
- Compliance with the Seven Principles of Public Life, also known as the Nolan Principles, by elected members and senior officers of the Authority;
- The Authority's systems and processes to ensure such transparency of information relating to governance as would reasonably be expected of any public authority;
- Any decisions taken by the Authority to ensure that a culture of fear – with particular respect to escalating with challenge - does not exist, and, where found to exist, the decisions taken by the Authority to address it. This should include assurances regarding the whistleblowing, grievance and disciplinary processes in place at the Authority and their use;
- The Authority's processes and practices for taking action against any member or officer of the Authority who may be found not to have met the standards required of that member or officer. This should include specific focus on bullying, harassment and discrimination;
- The Authority's employment decisions, including but not limited to its recruitment and promotion process (including due diligence processes for shortlisted candidates), salaries and expenses of employees. This should include the Authority's processes and practices for recruitment into senior roles across the Authority and Service, including the issuing of contracts;
- Any matters relating to procurement activities of both a recruitment and non-recruitment nature.
- The Authority's processes and practices for effectively assessing the validity of any complaints made about members of the Authority, including its senior

officers. This should include the provision made by the Authority for the appropriate consideration of such complaints.

The Inspection teams is directed to report the findings of the inspection to the Secretary of State by 31 March 2026. Any extension of this timescale must be agreed with the Secretary of State.